

Summary



Solidarity in Wartime – Goethe Institut Ukraine Offers Manifold Professional Support and Initiates Creative Aid Efforts (Mariia Shubchyk, Samira Zahra)

(pp. 580 – 583)

As librarians our work is imbued with the professional mantra »to pick the readers up where they are«. As meeting places, as third places alongside of home and workplace, libraries are now an established concept. Public libraries are centres for exchange and interaction, safe places, and also an important means of being part of and also contributors to community life. Up to now this was the case in Ukraine. But what happens when a large portion of readers must flee from a war, when their homes are destroyed, and when the putative third place has no bomb shelter? What happens when even the library staff must flee?

The answers to these questions are born out of necessity, motivated by the desire to continue to fulfil – despite the terrible current situation – the mission that we have as librarians. There is a reason that libraries are important pillars that support the implementation of the United Nation's 17 goals of sustainability. The initial paralysis did not last long, and soon the shock was transformed into a flurry of new activity.

The shock caused by the outbreak of war and the re-evaluation of many assumptions about the role of culture in a democratic state set into motion some intensive processes of thought and action. The Goethe Institut has very good connections within Ukraine and there is an enormous need to offer support in every possible manner. Hence it endeavours to find the ways and means to secure the vitality of the Ukrainian cultural infrastructure, to make the voices of our partners heard, to remain operational, and to continue supporting the incredible dynamism of Ukraine's multi-faceted cultural life.

Wandering Library: The Twice Evacuated / A Luhansk Regional Library Continues as an Itinerant Library in Cherkasy with New Online and Offline Services (Anastasiia Litashova)

(pp. 584 – 586)

In 2014, at the beginning of the skirmishes in the Donbas region of Ukraine, armed Russian fighters forced their way into the regional scholarly library of Luhansk and threatened its director. The library was then evacuated to territory still under the control of Ukraine. After its evacuation the library had to start up anew in the smaller city of Starobilsk, in the north of the Luhansk Oblast (province). A new library was established under the slogan »Good Library«.

In early March 2022, Russian troops marched into Starobilsk and the library's team had to flee once again. As a result, the staff of the library are now scattered across seven Ukrainian cities. In order for the library to survive and continue to function, a new operational concept has been developed: a wandering library. Its main goal consists of developing a flexible manner of organising library services which all the displaced librarians in all parts of Ukraine can put into effect, regardless of their respective locations. The mission of the wandering library is, first and foremost, to offer help to people in the occupied territories as well as all displaced persons in Ukraine. In the five months since the evacuation, the team has succeeded in remaining in contact with its library patrons. Courses are offered for Ukrainian, yoga, computer technology and media competency. All these activities are offered online. Preparations are also underway to resume offline operations. The target group comprises people who have currently left the occupied areas. At present the main office of the library is based in the city of Cherkasy in central Ukraine.

»Am I Conceivable in the USSR?« / A Remembrance of the Great Russian Writer Mikhail Bulgakov (1891-1940), a Native of Kiev (Jan-Pieter Barbian)

(pp. 604 – 609)

If we read attentively, literature can enlighten and sharpen our insights into the world. We only need to take it seriously and draw our own conclusions. In September 2022 an updated and expanded edition of the 2015 German-language book by Karl Schlögel, »Entscheidung in Kiev« (Engl.: »Ukraine: A Nation on the Borderland«, 2018, rev. 2022), was published. The original edition had been written in reaction to the first attack of Putin's Russia on Ukraine, the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula, in violation of international law. The pleas that this expert and prize-winning historian of Eastern Europe directed toward Germany and the European Union, asking that they respond with decisive countermeasures to the signals of the incipient »destabilisation, fragmentation and atomisation« of a sovereign European state by an imperialistic power, remained unheeded.

By not then discerning the »Zeitenwende« (engl: turn of the times or turning point), the current epoch breaking events caught the West completely unprepared. In his 2008 book »Terror und Traum. Moskau, 1937« (engl: »Moscow, 1937«, 2012) Schlögel had already drawn attention to the ongoing effects of Stalinism on the politics, economy, society, and the souls of the people of Russia. For this depiction, Mikhail Bulgakov's novel »The Master and Margarita« served as his guide and key to understanding. This is but one further proof of the outstanding importance that this novelist has in both the Russian and the world literature of the 20th century.

Translated by Martha Baker