WHY ARE RUSSIAN ATTACKS DESTROYING UKRAINIAN BOOKS?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Russian attacks have destroyed millions of books in Ukraine, including children's picture books, school textbooks and novels. In one strike on a publishing warehouse in Kharkiv, about eight million books were lost. The warehouse was not near a military base, although Ukrainian officials disagree about whether it was deliberately targeted because it contained Ukrainian-language books or was part of wider attacks on storage buildings. The destruction has serious effects because publishers now have fewer books to sell during the school year. The attacks also connect to a much longer history. Under the Russian tsars, publishing in Ukrainian was restricted, and during the Soviet period Russian was often treated as the language of education and culture. Since Ukraine became independent in 1991, Ukrainian publishers have worked to build a stronger national literature. For many Ukrainians, protecting books means protecting their language, culture and right to decide who they are.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

Wars are not only fought with soldiers and weapons. They can also target language, schools, libraries and memories. Destroying books may make it harder for people to learn about their own culture and history. This story shows why language matters so much to national identity, especially for a country that has spent centuries under pressure from a more powerful neighbour.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

"Why might a government try to control another country's language?"

Source: The Guardian

https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2026/oct/04/incinerated-novels-destroyed-warehouses-russia-war-ukrainian-books