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Ukraine: Our Comrade Died at the Front. In Memory of Yuriy Lebedev

Monday 5 February 2024, by [DUDIN Vitaliy](#) (Date first published: 31 January 2024).

We have lost another great and close person at the hands of the Russian occupiers. Yuriy Lebedev (1985-2024), the Kyiv native with the nom de guerre (call sign) Comrade, was killed while on a combat mission. He was a convinced socialist, public figure, professional lawyer, and brave officer of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. His heroic death summed up his life dedicated to serving society.

Thanks to people like Yura, Ukraine continues to deter the occupying army and has a chance to achieve prosperity. But his journey as a fighter began back in the relatively peaceful years when Ukrainian capital was lining its pockets by plundering industry, privatizing social infrastructure, and enclosing public space. He contributed to the development of such phenomena on the left-wing activist scene of the noughties as Left Initiative, Save Old Kyiv, [Direct Action](#) student union, Labor Protection independent trade union, Social Alternative, and eventually the Commons journal itself, starting with his participation in the Left Thought network. He easily became the soul of the team, but because of his innate modesty, it was difficult to notice him in the forefront.



May Day march, 2007

It took great courage to be a member of a left-wing radical group that was far outmatched by its ideological rivals in terms of resources and status. For his skills and perseverance, Yura was respected not only among allies. As a convinced romantic, he believed in an alternative society without imposed hierarchies and property inequality. Not only did he believe that a better world is possible, but he was ready to describe his vision of it in great detail, as if he had just returned from the future. When our right-wing opponents accused us, the left, of not being patriotic enough, Yura would half-jokingly mention his status as a reserve officer. At the end of the peaceful 2000s, it was rare to meet someone who was in the army reserve. Standing shoulder to shoulder with Yura at the protests, none of us could have imagined that our Comrade was destined to die commanding a military unit in one of the hottest spots on the planet, near Bakhmut.

Yura was ready to take risks, which made him stand out among civilians and was highly appreciated in the army. He destroyed any stereotypes about the limits of human capabilities, constantly developing himself and teaching others. Despite his impressive workload, he was always ready to help, even at a critical moment. He also knew how to have a good time, immersing himself in the

atmosphere of concerts, poetry readings, and travelling.



Protest against anti-social changes to the Labor and Housing Codes, commercialization of education, restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly, homophobia, and racism, 2010

After graduating from the Faculty of Law at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Yura showed how to use legal knowledge for the good of society. Studying at such a prestigious university did not spoil him, nor did obtaining a lawyer's certificate and working at the Kyivgaz Corporation. In every role, he tried to bring closer an egalitarian society where social priorities prevail over mercantile and selfish interests. His criticism of the neoliberal projects of the Labor [\[1\]](#) and Housing Codes [\[2\]](#) inspired people to resist.

Having already taken a high position [\[3\]](#), Yura clearly and unambiguously warned against the erosion of social support mechanisms: *"Of course, as a citizen, I absolutely do not want any social disasters in Ukraine."*

Comrade convinced a whole generation of young Ukrainian leftists that being detained by law enforcement during a demonstration against illegal construction is not the end of the story, but an adventure — if you know the Constitution of Ukraine. He showed in practice how to achieve justice through legal means, and he took up sport in case it didn't work. When the invasion began, he joined the army without any hesitation. Yura's strong convictions went hand in hand with his willingness to risk his own life.



Yura Lebedev

"As a lawyer, I can't give such advice, but in war, for sure: hit first and with everything you got," he outlined his philosophy, completely subordinating his life to military duty. [\[4\]](#) Given the depth of his immersion in the "subject" and the degree of reflection characteristic of him, Comrade Lebedev could well have become a luminary of Ukrainian military science.

Finally, I would like to add that to me Yura was like an older brother whose example I wanted to follow. He was very diligent and deeply passionate about taking on new projects. During the 20 years of our friendship, he taught me how to write (lawsuits), read (laws), imagine (a revolution), study (political economy), draw (banners), go (to court), speak (at a rally), calculate (utility rates), think (critically), and joke (in hard times). He could do everything but one thing: stop in the face of

difficulties.

...The last time we saw each other was at the March for Kyiv in October 2021. He came there along with thousands of other people in love with the capital. Everyone who knew Yura will long miss his energy and the calmness that reigned in his presence. The loss of such a cheerful person does not pass without a trace. But we can follow Yura's example and continue his struggle: both against the occupiers and [against the new Labor Code](#), which is designed to destroy many social guarantees and levers for the protection of our rights.



March for Kyiv, 2021. Photo by Ivan Verbytskyi

P.S. I express my sincere condolences to Yuriy's mother, daughter, and loved one. Your pain is shared by countless people, but for you it is truly irreparable.

P.P.S. It was reckless of me to congratulate Yura before his birthday because I got confused by his social media profile created to protect his identity. How can I not believe in superstition now? [5] Yura, I'm sorry about that. Let's talk about it again sometime in the future.

Vitaliy Dudin

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P.S.

Commons

<https://commons.com.ua/en/pamyati-yuriya-lebedyeva/>

Footnotes

[1] Кляшторний О., Лебедев Ю., Дудін В. Збірний аналіз негативних положень Трудового кодексу України (2010) [Klyashtornyi O., Lebedev Y., Dudin V. Comprehensive Analysis of Negative Provisions of the Labor Code of Ukraine (2010).]. URL: <https://lebed-michael.livejournal.com/24294.html> [in Ukrainian].

[2] Лебедев Ю. Небезпечно для житла (2010) [Lebedev, Y. Housing Code in Peril (2010)]. URL: <https://commons.com.ua/uk/nebezpechno-dlya-zhitla/> [in Ukrainian].

[3] Інтерв'ю Ю.Лебедева як представника "Київгазу" [Interview with Yuriy Lebedev as a Representative of Kyivgaz]. URL: https://kievvlavst.com.ua/text/jurj_lebedv- nak_proponu_shemu_kupi_proday_pereprodaj_ale_movch_it_pro_te_shho_c_zabavki_mozhut_prizvesti_do_znachnogo_podorozhchannja_gazu52901 [in

Ukrainian].

[4] Відеоінтерв'ю Ю. Лебедева під час служби у ЗСУ [Video Interview with Yuriy Lebedev During His Service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine]. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_BEDdgag08 [in Ukrainian].

[5] In Ukraine, there is a common superstition that premature birthday congratulations bring bad luck. — Trans.