

Ukraine: Mazepa, a new voice from the left

Monday 11 March 2024, by [LE TRÉHONDAT Patrick](#), [STARODUBTSEV Vladyslav](#), [YAKOVYSHYN Les](#) (Date first published: 11 March 2024).

Despite the war and all the difficulties it causes, a new website has just appeared in Ukraine, that of the Mazepa institute. It bears the name of Isaac Mazepa (1884-1952), “leader of the Ukrainian left, Prime Minister of the Ukrainian People’s Republic and fighter for the independence of Ukraine” explains the site. “Mazepa’s struggles were entirely determined by the views based on the ideals of the Ukrainian People’s Republic: the struggle for social justice, economic and political democracy, the national development of Ukrainians and the protection of the rights of minorities. The Isaac Mazepa Institute wants to be a leading scientific center of the Ukrainian democratic left. Our international team of researchers and activists works to create a space united by shared democratic and egalitarian ideals, where the spirit of freedom and dialogue reigns in the plurality of opinions. We sincerely wish Ukraine’s victory over aggressive Russian imperialism. We are convinced that a strong democratic society will strengthen the stability of Ukraine and bring closer the final victory of Ukrainians over the eternal enemy and everything it represents - poverty, reaction and lies. » adds the site. Vladyslav Starodubtsev and Les Yakovyshyn co-founders of the site, were kind enough to answer our questions.

Why did you found this new site? What does he want to bring more than other existing Ukrainian left-wing sites like Commons for example?

Mazepa Institute was created, first and foremost, to rebuild public confidence in the Ukrainian democratic Left as a viable intellectual and political alternative to the status quo. The Ukrainian Left is in dire need of rebuilding itself and reconnecting to the Ukrainian public. Our idea is to foster a progressive space full of ideas and tools for those seeking a more equal and just Ukraine.

What meaning does the choice of the name Isaac Mazepa have for you?

Isaac Mazepa served as Prime Minister of the Ukrainian People’s Republic during the country’s hardest times, strongly adhering both to his democratic and socialist views. He was a champion of rights and freedoms of the common folk, embodying the values we seek to promote: freedom, solidarity, and justice. When in exile he upheld the democratic intellectual tradition, eventually becoming one of the founding members of the Ukrainian Socialist Party. We honour his legacy and the memory of all those who dedicated their life to achieving freedom and rights for the Ukrainians.

You want to publish documents on culture, politics, economics, history and philosophy. Can you tell us more?

As of right now the bulk of our work involves creating original and translated materials to rectify the unbalanced public discussion by promoting diverse progressive perspectives in these thematic discussions. As stated, we aim to reinvigorate the intellectual landscape of the Ukrainian Left — we plan to bring the readers the best written materials on a variety of topics while also looking for ways to expand the scope of our work, offering a wider range of resources that support our shared goal.

One of the first articles you published was devoted to the experience of workers' recuperated enterprises in Italy. You say that these companies "are being taken over by their former employees on the basis of self-management" and that "workers have turned to cooperatives to solve unsatisfied social needs". Can you tell us more about the question of self-management and cooperatives in the construction of democratic socialism?

We are trying to build a wide and plural space for discussion, so we don't adopt a one, 'correct' way. In Ukrainian society of twentieth century cooperatives were the main force fighting for creation of People's Republic, to look for each other was one of the main goal of cooperatives, as they described it as «economic self-defence». Evolutionary democratization of enterprises would provide stronger communal connections, democracy and human rights, as well as social defence. We hope for enterprises to become „small republics" and school of self-government and citizen virtue. In our ideal society, hold cooperative would hold absolute majority of influence in the economy side by side with individual and state property.

The site offers a part in English. Why and what do you want to publish there ?

We are offering an English section on our site to ensure accessibility and maximize the impact of our voice on the global scene. We want to engage with international audience, show solidarity and tell our stories. Our goal is to inform and empower international readers through by enabling the Ukrainians to become active participants in the international progressive discourse.

Do you plan to develop relationships with other sites outside Ukraine?

We believe it is crucial for the progressives to foster relationships with each other as only through exchanging ideas and experiences can we all achieve greater success in shaping our societies to become more equal, more just and more democratic. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere, therefore cultivating working relationships with other groups is a necessity — only by working together can we strive for making a better world for all of us.

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