

Ukraine: Vpered, a publishing house radically to the left

Monday 18 March 2024, by [LE TRÉHONDAT Patrick](#), [Vpered](#) (Date first published: 18 March 2024).

Vpered [Forward] is a Ukrainian publishing house which is dedicated "to the study of the history and current state of the theory and practice of social transformations, to the analysis of Ukrainian and world reality from the positions class, to the development of Marxist theory as a particular philosophy of practice whose goal is human liberation. » A political ambition expressed in his catalog : Marx, Gramsci, Fanon, Marcuse, Marcel van der Linden and many others. A challenge also to survive in times of war and continue the debate of ideas. Roman and Viktor introduce us to Vpered.



Can you tell us the story of Vpered and why did you found it?

Vpered (Roman): *Vpered* started as an online Marxist journal and has been online since February, 2009 (see: <https://vpered.wordpress.com/>). It's probably the oldest existing left-wing periodical in Ukraine. We put out our first paper book in 2010, and it was *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. We have published ten brochures and books so far. I and my comrades began *Vpered* in search of clarifying social reality for ourselves, of the meaning of what is going on in this country and the world.

Vpered (Viktor): I was not a member of the original lineup of *Vpered*; I joined it in 2017 if my memory serves me well. Just a couple of years before that I rediscovered Marxism which was something my generation—millennials—had largely dismissed as irrelevant.

Can you tell us more about your journal?

Vpered (Roman): *Vpered* puts online texts on revolutionary history, theory and practice written primarily by Marxists, national liberation activists, New Left militants, and dependent development theoreticians, book reviews and pieces on the critique of ideology, etc. We consciously try to avoid being sectarian or campist and do our best to make available to the Ukrainian reader a wide spectrum of social theory from the past 150 years. Though the greater part of the texts brought out by *Vpered* are texts reprinted from old books, pamphlets and journals, written in Ukrainian or translated into Ukrainian before *Vpered*, original texts and translations are representing an increasingly larger share of *Vpered*'s content. Amílcar Cabral, Eldridge Cleaver, Régis Debray, Frantz Fanon, André Gunder Frank, Antonio Gramsci, Ernesto Guevara, Karl Korsch, José Carlos Mariátegui, István Mészáros, Walter Rodney, Theotônio dos Santos, Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, Mario

Tronti and many others 'learnt' to speak Ukrainian in the pages of *Vpered*.

Since February 24, 2022, how have you been working? Have you been able to publish books?

Vpered (Roman): It took us some time to come to our senses after the invasion which was a true shock. Now we continue as usually more or less. We published two books during the war: Samir Amin's *Eurocentrism* (2022) and Roman Tisza's *Man's Liberation* (2023).

Vpered (Viktor): Not only we've been able to publish books but we also do our regular task of translating left-wing/Marxist theory and history articles and essays for our journal.

How do you print your books and how do you sell them?

Vpered (Roman): We order printing at print shops and publishers. We distribute our books using our website and groups with social networking services.

Your publishing house strongly asserts a Marxist identity. Can you tell us about the situation of Marxism in Ukraine?

Vpered (Roman): Paradoxically, after independence it's primarily liberal and mass-market publishing houses who have been keeping Marxist theory alive. Thanks to them the Ukrainian reader has gained access to the writings of Theodor Adorno, Benedict Anderson, Alain Badiou, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, Eric Hobsbawm, Herbert Marcuse et al. translated into Ukrainian. Though the number of titles is limited still it's better than nothing. At the same time, one should notice that the Western Marxism is the uttermost limit permissible for local publishers, and as you can see most of the listed authors fall into this very category.

Several large political parties, such as the Communist Party of Ukraine, declared Marxism, or Marxism-Leninism, to be their official ideology after 1991, although their main ideological drive seems to have been nostalgia for the paternalistic state of the late Soviet Union. But today even this kind of Marxism devoid of revolutionary potential and reduced to the cult of Lenin and the October Revolution, and memories of the 'socialist' welfare state, is out of political arena. In Ukraine, Marxism doesn't exist as a political movement; it doesn't exist as a theory informing a visible political movement. Euromaidan (2013-2014) and the 'Revolution of Dignity' (2014) removed those parties from politics, nothing came about in place of them, and Marxism remains topical for the few left-wing groupuscules, small self-education clubs and propaganda outlets like *Vpered*.

Vpered (Viktor): As Roman rightly mentioned, Marxist or left-wing politics is currently absent from the Ukrainian political agenda, being somewhat embryonic. It is the task of those small groups who are self-educated to fill the void if Marxist thought and politics are to survive in Ukraine.

You have published several Western authors but do you publish Ukrainian authors?

Vpered (Roman): We published Serhiy Ishchenko's *Marxism in 120 Minutes*, a short, 60-page introduction to Marxist history and philosophy, in 2010 and Roman Tisza's *Man's Liberation: Essays on the History of Social Thought in the 20th Century*, a 230-page collection of pieces on Western Marxists, the New Left, and Third World theoreticians, in 2023.

What are your projects?

Vpered (Roman): We have a shortlist of potential authors that includes Antonio Gramsci (two editions of selections from his prison notebooks have been already published but readers want

more), Karl Korsch, Herbert Marcuse, the Praxis Group (Yugoslavia).

Vpered (Viktor): There's another uncharted territory for the Ukrainian reader if we take into account Latin America theorists and revolutionaries, like Ernesto Guevara, or left-wing dissidents of the Eastern Bloc, like Rudolf Bahro, who are undeservedly forgotten even in the West. Those names would definitely be on our longlist.

Vpered (Roman): Well, I can't say that Guevara is forgotten, and I can agree that Bahro faded into obscurity after the 1980's while he deserves more attention.

Do you have relations with other publishing houses in Ukraine or abroad?

Vpered (Roman): No.

Are there other publishing houses in Ukraine similar to yours?

Vpered (Roman): Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung in Ukraine sponsored the reprinting of *The Accumulation of Capital* originally published in Ukraine in 1928, the printing of Marco Bojczun's *The Workers' Movement and the National Question in Ukraine, 1897-1918* and of a collection of essays by/on Rosa Luxemburg. *Commons*, a journal of social critique, occasionally put out collections of articles, pre-COVID-19.

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Vpered

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