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## МІСЦЕ ПРОВІДНОЇ ВЕРСТВИ У СПАДЩИНІ ДМИТРА ДОНЦОВА

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У статті аналізуються погляди Д. Донцова щодо поділу суспільства на активну меншість і пасивну більшість. Розглянуто місце вітчизняної провідної верстви, її структура, основні риси та роль у розвитку нації та держави.

*Ключові слова:* провідна верства, еліта, активна меншість, нація.

Vadym Markitantov

## THE PLACE OF A LEADING STRATUM IN THE LEGACY OF DMYTRO DONTSOV

*“The essence of the whole political crisis of our time is the crisis of a leading stratum”*

*D. Dontsov*

The article analyzes D. Dontsov's views on the division of a society into active minority and passive majority. The research dwells upon the place of the national leading stratum, its structure, main characteristic features and the role in the development of a nation and a state.

*Key words:* leading stratum, elite, active minority, nation.

With the proclamation of Ukrainian independence, the interest of the society in national ideology began to increase significantly, and during the periods of revolutionary events of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity) it was becoming even stronger. One of the founders of Ukrainian nationalism and the author of its main statements was a prominent Ukrainian thinker Dmytro Dontsov, whose personality is regarded to be quite controversial one in the history of political thought in Ukraine.

D. Dontsov was born in Melitopol on August 17, 1883 (by the Julian calendar) to a wealthy family. In the age of 11 he lost his parents and, together with his siblings, was brought up by his relatives from the maternal side. D. Dontsov received his primary and secondary education in Melitopol, graduating from a secondary school which trained candidates for higher technical schools. In 1900 he moved to Tsarskoye Selo near Saint Petersburg where he completed his secondary education. Then Dontsov entered the Law Faculty at Saint Petersburg University. His seven-year stay in Saint Petersburg significantly influenced his world outlook and spiritual development since there was strong Ukrainian center, and political life had more freedom than in Ukraine [12, p. 66-67].

His views changed from social and democratic to radical and nationalistic ones. D. Dontsov's world outlook was significantly influenced by the ideology of Marxist socialism. He was not only an active socialist, but also an influential publicist opposing “Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism”. However, yet after the First World War the thinker joined the Ukrainian nationalism because of disappointment with practical politics conducted by Ukrainian socialists during the war and revolution [12, p. 23].

His opinion concerning political elite, the national one in particular, during crucial for the Ukrainian development historical moments is relevant to our times. The present period of development of independent Ukraine is such a turning moment when the integrity of the state, its right to existence, future place in the world community and the direction of its development for further decades depend on the quality and role of the political elite.

After revolutions in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Ukraine, there were formed two main theoretical directions connected with problems of national political elite formation. The first one was represented by statist-monarchists with V. Lypynskyi (1882-1931) as the brightest figure. The second one was radical nationalistic, represented by D. Dontsov (1883-1973) in the first place [8, p. 55-57].

The issue of political elite or a leading stratum was very important for D. Dontsov. His opinions on political elite are as relevant nowadays as they were during their formation, particularly, when it concerned a society which was undergoing transformations. In our view, many parallel lines can be drawn between the modern political elite and the leading stratum described by D. Dontsov, and the modern politics increasingly

resembles the one depicted in his works. D. Dontsov outlined his ideas on a leading stratum in his works "Nationalism" ("Націоналізм"), "The Spirit of Our Antiquity" ("Дух нашої давнини") and also in the number of articles the main of which are "The spirit of a Flock and the Spirit of Leadership" ("Дух отари і дух провідництва"), "Where is the strength of an organization?" ("В чім сила організації?") and "A Party or an Order?" ("Партія чи орден?")

The analysis of scientific works dedicated to D. Dontsov's creative legacy showed that the first step had been made towards comprehension and coverage of basic scientific views, particularly from the historiographical perspective. However, the range of problematic points in Dontsov's legacy needs creative interpretation, specification and generalization.

A considerable contribution into studying of political views of the Ukrainian thinker was made by M. Sosnovskiy [12], Ye. Malaniuk [9], B. Kukhta [7; 8], S. Prykhod'ko [10], S. Kvit [6], V. Rieznik [11], I. Shlikhta [13], I. Hlushchenko [1], etc. All of them, except B. Kukhta, dealt with the elite issue only marginally within the context of the coverage either of the overall Dontsov's legacy or his other conceptions.

The objective of the article is to cover main views on political elite in Dmytro Dontsov's legacy.

In his work "Nationalism" ("Націоналізм"), D. Dontsov claimed that the main historical aspect, the ground for any social process and supporting factor of the viable state of the society is active, initiative, brave, zealous of power minority. It is this minority, not a nation, who is capable of forming and implementing the idea and, finally, mobilizing people for struggle in the name of this idea. That is why "only active minority, and never a passive crowd, is a force which creates society," points out the thinker [5, p. 285-290].

In his other work "The Spirit of a Flock and the Spirit of Leadership" ("Дух отари і дух провідництва"), D. Dontsov stated that a crowd needs guidance, that the crowd is ready to follow a real leader who "has courage to point the way and take responsibility for this choice". Such a person (or a group) is ready to fight for their own, strongly believes in the idea and in the fact that they are the ones destined to lead the nation [4, p. 502]. Among representatives of a leading stratum the thinker sees people of belief and action, character and courage, uncompromising attitude to an enemy and rotter in their own ranks which have to be united by common spirit [4, p. 505]. Having been crystallized, such a group has a chance to lead masses and unite the nation. D. Dontsov points out that if there is no such a group, there will never be any unification of nation [4, p. 502].

The nation where a genuine self-conscious leading group was not formed has "the spirit of a flock". Such a nation, in philosopher's opinion, is not an independent factor and does not play a separate role on the arenas of events. In addition, it "can find neither its priest-shepherd, nor its watchdogs...such flocks are either devoured by wolves or get alien watchdogs" [4, p. 502, 505].

In the article "Where is the strength of an organization?" ("В чім сила організації?"), D. Dontsov characterizes the-then elite and reveals its flaws which remain relevant till the present times. In this work the word "elite" is deliberately put into quotes to reflect low level of the existing national leading stratum. Comparing former European, national old-Kyiv and Cossack elites with the contemporary to him leading stratum, the author draws attention to its qualitative inconsistency. Its main disadvantage is the rejection of moral norms which were substituted with the declaration of loyalty to party leadership. As a result, members of the elite were not "noble and wise persons, but bluffers, "hnuhkoshyenky" (those who dance to other's tune), people without principles" who put their own interests above interests of the public. In D. Dontsov's view, such an elite "was harmful to compatriots but not scary for enemies" [2, p. 508]. The part of it could be easily deceived because it was not witty. The other part could be threatened since it was cowardly by nature. One more part could be bribed because of its meanness.

We think that the following words by the thinker concerning a leading stratum are relevant to nowadays and characterize today's national political elite, "Such an 'elite' did not know principles of internal discipline and punishment for crimes and 'mistakes', though victims of these 'mistakes' were hundreds and thousands of naive believers in that 'elite'" [2, p. 508].

D. Dontsov stresses that the basis for creation of the elite have to consist of demands connected with morality. Only honest, wise, brave, noble and distinctive people can lead the nation to victory.

In the article "Party or Order?" ("Партія чи орден?"), D. Dontsov analyses the-then European parties, namely fascist and Bolshevik ones. He persuaded that such political parties turned into 'political orders' since they were based on strict discipline, order and, what is particularly important, were built on the principles of irrational belief in ideological dogmas and the main idea of all orders – the idea of "active minority which leads majority" [7, p. 99]. Ukrainian nationalism lacked such type of a party during the struggle for power in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In his work "The Spirit of Our Antiquity" ("Дух нашої давнини"), D. Dontsov depicts hierarchical society in the foundation of which there is division into castes. "A nation has to be represented... not by 'working intelligentsia', not by a class of farmers, not by a monopoly, but by a separate stratum of 'bow

people” [3, p. 6-7]. The author defines this caste as basic for creation of a leading stratum. However, under the ruling caste he understands something similar to an Order, a stratum separated both socially and spiritually which would not only consist of the best representatives of all classes but also preserve its own spiritual and moral superiority and purity, form and strength.

According to D. Dontsov, society is a community divided into footsteps each of which has clearly defined functions. Any non-hierarchical totality of people is not a society but only a separate flock which has to be led by a shepherd. The thinker is convinced that the absence of a leading stratum in the society is only a fantasy which is impossible to be brought to life [3, p. 135].

The scholar emphasizes that each social layer differs in mental characteristics. “Every state and every respective psychology are good at their own place,” he points out [3, p. 28]. In the case when properties of subordinate classes become distinguishing features of a leading stratum, the society undergoes catastrophe. To avoid such a disaster it is advisable for representatives of one class which move to the other (higher – V. M.) one to adopt its psychology and moral guidelines.

In the article “The Spirit of Our Antiquity”, while considering causes of continuous decline of Ukrainian state, D. Dontsov comes to the conclusion that the defining reason for this is a leading stratum. There are three components of the notion of state, namely, a land, people and a leading stratum. Attention is focused on the last one. A state existed if this caste was wise, brave and morally strong. At the same time, if it was weak or degenerating, the state weakened.

D. Dontsov pays particular attention to characteristics of a national leading stratum at different stages of Ukrainian development. He highlights that Ukrainian state had been under Tatar ruling only for 80 years – from 1240 to 1320. He estimates that Polish ruling lasted for the same number of years (Left-bank Ukraine) – from 1569 (the Union of Lublin) to 1648. Lithuanian and Ruthenian nobles constituted the element which, according to the author, became defining within the period between Princely and Cossack epochs. D. Dontsov connects the process of formation of a new leading stratum with the end of old-princely aristocracy breakup and the beginning of Polish gentry’s decadence. At first, this class was full of enthusiasm, strength and unused energy. This energy was enough to be used during almost three hundred years from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Then this stratum began to decline and decay, turn into “nobility serving Little Russia”. It became to be “thrust with those who could be noted not by their service or merits, but by their ability to seize the land” [3, p. 29]. Cossack gentry has gradually lost all spiritual qualities of a leading stratum, its warlike spirit, interest in national affairs. It was immersed into activities not inherent to a leading stratum the basis of which consisted of the lowest interests, personal wealth and pleasure. One more reason for the decline, which is emphasized by D. Dontsov, was the death toll of the best representatives of the leading stratum in the war and compensation them with a worse element. This has led to the loss of noble features and approval of ideals of the lower caste.

Since 60s of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. the leading role is taken by Narodniks and Marksist intelligentsia. When Cossack gentry was noble, wise, brave, values of this new stratum were completely opposite. Among characteristic features there were indifference to its faith, revulsion to the memory of ancestors, pacifism and the desire to adapt to any force, agreeability, compliance, hypocrisy, cowardly indulgence to the evil, “humanism”, declaring of “misfortune” in order to get mercy, irresponsibility and moral anarchism [3, p. 38-39]. Intelligentsia did not believe that it is the one intended to ensure formation of a new political and social order. However, it was ready to pass this role to masses. The leading stratum did not know ideas of purification of their ranks from unworthy elements deprived of inherent to this caste features. Incapable people without particular praise could become members of the stratum [3, c. 41-42]. This new class has brought new traditions – the traditions of a lower dependent stratum, a mass.

Along with this, D. Dontsov pays attention to main virtues of a leading stratum – nobility, wisdom, courage and mental disposition.

The primacy, according to D. Dontsov, goes to **nobility** without which leading stratum disappears from the history dragging their societies with them. This virtue defines difference and superiority of a leading stratum over the rest of the society. Moreover, this quality is rooted as in stratum’s apprehension, so in the insight of the subservient class. A noble person values dignity, ideals, good-for-nothing serving to a higher aim, fidelity to the word and some asceticism. The author convinces, “A noble affair turns not noble person into a noble-minded one” [3, c. 159].

**Wisdom** means that statesmen have their own point of view concerning the community and the plan of its implementation. Wisdom is the ability to see the world as it is, not as it is desired or pretends to be. Social life through the vision of the leading stratum is an arena of struggle where the strongest wins. To be strong is an ultimate aim and the desired result of a community. Only a powerful state has the priority before others and the greatest chances to survive. Understanding of this will not let its ruler be blinded. It will make him/her unbending and impregnable to deception, demagoguery and hostile propaganda. Wisdom of a ruler

means understanding of the aim which would unite the society with the organizational idea, ensure the “steadiness” of the community in front of threats and create calmness inside it. [3, p. 186].

**Courage**, or bravery, means capability of a leading stratum to get rid of fear. It, along with nobility and wisdom, was the main quality of a leading stratum during the Princely, Lithuanian and Cossack epochs. Courage and fearlessness, in Dontsov’s opinion, has two main manifestations: the first one reveals itself in the struggle against an external enemy and is based on the righteousness of its deeds; the second one lies in strict measures against internal forces which gradually ruin the state. In order to be brave, “members of the leading stratum have to kill in themselves everything unstable, mild and cowardly, have to prevail everything that staggers this fortification, first of all physical weakness, pain, fear of death, temptations which deprive rulers of their power” [3, p. 210]. The most significant sign of victory over oneself is invincibility.

Considering **mental disposition**, D. Dontsov places it into the basis of all above-mentioned virtues of a leading stratum. Defining factors of psychological formation of different groups depend upon racial substance and historical traditions. The author distinguishes four psychological types met in Ukraine: Nordic, Mediterranean, Dinaric and Ostian ones [3, p. 221]. The latter two are the most represented in Ukraine, the first one is the rarest.

Though being common in Ukraine in the past, the Nordic type is found here very rarely. It is a noble race which has qualities of state creators. Its characteristic features are: penetration, endurance, courage, bravery, strength of will, prudence, responsibility, self-restraint, self-confidence, stubbornness, steadiness, ruthlessness, etc. [3, p. 232-234].

The second place by spiritual characteristics is given by D. Dontsov to the type defined by him as formative – the one of Pontus, Mediterranean. This type is somewhat wider-spread than the previous one. This race is restless, energetic and enthusiastic. Its representatives are distinguished because of their quick wit, passionate temper, propensity, ingenuity, talent, romanticism and idealism. They quickly react to changes in attitudes, often get into unfortunate situations but due to their agility are able to get out of these troubles [3, p. 230-231].

A prevailing type of the national leading stratum of the early 20<sup>th</sup> c., in D. Dontsov’s view, was the one of Ostian. It is differentiated by the inferiority complex, hatred of everything noble, self-interest and family nepotism in public and political life, flock kind of thinking, jealousy, crawling in front of power, adaptation, lack of perseverance, etc. Ostians strive for unification because, when alone, they feel themselves in danger. When they join a party, it is only the party in majority. Such a majority is the main obstacle for the formation of a new spiritual stream in the country. Main ideologists of the-then “beggarhood” were recruited from this majority [3, p. 26-28].

Another race significantly represented in the Ukrainian nation was the Dinaric one. Its special features were pride, courage, honesty, defending militancy, attachment to the Motherland, customs, amiability, vulnerability, sociability, etc. It is the type of husbandry culture. “The representatives of the Dinaric race constituted that small group of descendants of former Cossack noblemen (Little Russian gentry) which in April 1918 decided to put an end to demossocialistic anarchy in the name of husbandry ideals of a private owner” [3, c. 230].

The thinker paid considerable attention to formative ideas of a leading stratum, among which he named ideas concerning attitudes to the land, population and authorities. The aim of a community, taking into account the attitude of the leading stratum to the land, is organization of its defense which is indispensable. Foundations of attitudes to the population were the ideals which had to serve to strength and integrity of the national organism – ideas of a Motherland, tradition and historical mission of the nation. Understanding of the authority consisted of eagerness of a leading stratum to have its own power which would be strong outside the stratum but strict and righteous inside it. The idea of an own separate homeland under ruling of a separate leading stratum is a dream goal in towards which, according to D. Dontsov, the whole national community has to move [3, p. 290].

Thus, D. Dontsov’s understanding of the elite as a leading and necessary nation forming and state administrating stratum and its role in the creation and unification of the nation, his academic achievements in the field of elitism have not lost their relevance to modern political conditions under which the independent Ukrainian state develops, struggles for its integrity and future place in the world community. This, in its turn, enables considering prospects for further research of the legacy of the prominent Ukrainian thinker and political activist.

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