

Georgi L. Manolov

POWER AND PRIVILEGES  
IN POLITICAL HISTORY  
(XXX CENTURY BC – XXI CENTURY AD)

Volume One

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Volume Two

ANTIQUITY, MIDDLE AGES, MODERNITY

Volume Three

THE PRIVILEGES OF POWER IN BULGARIA  
(1878 TO THE PRESENT)





**Professor GEORGI L. MANOLOV**  
**Doctor of Political Science**

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**AND**  
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**VOLUME THREE**  
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## INTRODUCTION

The problem of the formation and development of privileges in politics in Bulgaria is not significantly different from what is happening with their evolution in Europe and worldwide. In this case, the only more substantive difference is that the privileges of power in Bulgaria began „anew“ for the simple reason that the country was liberated from Ottoman tyranny, after which the third Bulgarian state was established. That is to say, the emergence and consolidation of privileges took place immediately after the Liberation, as they found a place as an opportunity for institutionalization and regulation already in the texts of the Tarnovo Constitution (1879). Since then, the privileges of power have become an inevitable companion of political elites, who, depending on the nature of society (authoritarian, totalitarian, democratic), constantly consume one or other state benefits and advantages, legitimised in various normative documents. In this sense, and on the basis of historical development, we can conditionally divide the application of power privileges in Bulgaria into three main stages: the first – from the Liberation (1878) to 1946, or the so-called „capitalist stage“ of the primary and earliest development of this phenomenon (privileges); the second stage includes the „socialist“ nomenklatura privileges (1947 – 1989), which developed enormously in absolutely all spheres of society; and the third is the democratic, or modern, stage of the application of privilege (from 1990 to the present), during which all the benefits of power for the country’s new democratic elites (along the lines of Western democratic models) unfolded with full „legitimate force“.

Through the prism of this tentative periodization, saturated with many significant accents and peculiarities in the construction of the Bulgarian state, the new institutions and political parties, we will also examine the filigree „weaving“ into the pores of statehood of many of the emerging privileges of the elite (in each stage separately), in order to highlight more clearly their significance in Bulgarian politics.

## **Chapter One**

### **„ROYAL“ PRIVILEGES**

### **IN POST-LIBERATION BULGARIA (1878 – 1946)**

The question of the genesis and evolution of privilege in Bulgarian political reality is completely new to our social sciences, with the exception of some sporadic publications (mainly on totalitarian socialism). These usually deal with particular aspects of political privilege, but there are still no specialised in-depth studies on this important issue (privilege). In existing historical and other studies of the political system (post-liberation), for example, such analyses are not found because most of them use a descriptive approach of events instead of their interpretation. This is a serious theoretical challenge, since in order to analyse the state of political privilege, it is first necessary to trace Bulgaria's post-liberation political history if we are to get an adequate picture of its origins, manifestation and spread. The use of such an approach (historical-political) would actually allow us to gain a more rational insight into the nature of all the more important social processes (historical, political, economic, cultural) that have a strong influence on the „emergence“ and „diffusion“ of different types of privilege.

The genesis of political privileges in Bulgaria is an integral part of the establishment of the political system in the country after the Liberation from Ottoman rule. The establishment of this system in the Principality of Bulgaria is determined by a very significant link, which concerns the simultaneous emergence of state institutions and political parties. This genetic process took place with much greater intensity in the case of the state institutions, since shortly after the Liberation they became subject to two main causes that contributed to their formation: universal ones – the universal aspiration of the political elites to impose liberal values, such as democracy, parliamentarism, constitutionalism, pluralism, human rights, etc.; and specific ones – which directly stemmed from our national character and Bulgarian national psychology (the lust for power, the use of power for personal purposes,



illegitimate power enrichment, political egoism and envy, etc.). Adding to all this the rapidly spreading ideological postulates (liberal, conservative, social-democratic) among the then emerging intelligentsia, it can be concluded that the ground for the formation of the new Bulgarian institutions had already been ploughed, including for the „implementation“ of various kinds of privileges.

It should not be overlooked or denied that in this state-forming process a number of important **preconditions** of various kinds – political, economic and cultural – played a significant role, on the basis of which Bulgarian parties were rapidly created and developed.

To the former, or to the prerequisites of a **political nature**, can be attributed the original democratic principles of the Renaissance Bulgarians, found a vivid expression in the feelings of equality and dignity in society. „Democracy (...) – writes **Prof. N. Genchev** – manifests itself in the wide election of representatives in municipal, cultural and political institutions. (...) It is a great conquest of the Bulgarian Renaissance, a lasting foundation of Bulgarian social life, an expression of Bulgarian freedom-loving.“<sup>1</sup> Or, the democratic principles of the Renaissance permanently traced the path to the creation of various organizations and associations on a political basis, on the basis of which the state and party structures subsequently emerged.

The second important prerequisites are **economic** and are entirely related to the rapid development of the market and market relations in Bulgaria on the eve and after the Liberation from the five-century-old yoke. It, the market, resolutely overcame the closed nature of subsistence farming, rigorously defended the established autonomy of Bulgarian craftsmen and „fought“ against the autocracy of the Turkish semi-feudal state.<sup>2</sup> In this way the „channels“ for the evolution of the Bulgarian economic market and for the construction of the subjects (the representatives of the future Bulgarian bourgeoisie) of this market were unblocked then.

And the third essential prerequisites, which occupy an important place in the process of formation of the Bulgarian state, are of **cultural**

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<sup>1</sup> **Genchev**, N. Scientific works. Vol. II. (1973 – 2001). Sofia: Gutenberg, 2003, p. 331.

<sup>2</sup> See **Hadzhiyski**, Ivan. An optimistic theory about our nation. Selected writings in three volumes. Vol. II. Sofia: Iztok – Zapad, 2002, pp. 66; 68.

**and spiritual nature.** These are our enlightenment, Renaissance education and ecclesiastical independence, through which the population became massively involved in the diverse social life.

The aggregate manifestation of these key preconditions leads to the emergence of two organic social phenomena, which the famous national psychologist **Ivan Hadzhiyski** formulated very precisely: the first phenomenon is the **creation of the traditions and the real beginning of Bulgarian democracy (and of Bulgarian nationhood)** with the active participation of the people on the soil of social equality; and the second phenomenon is **the full social, moral and political differentiation of the Bulgarian people into a nation.**<sup>3</sup> Their emergence and development (of the phenomena) gave rise to the conditions for the formation, a little later, of that favourable political-party and institutional environment in which all the Bulgarian parties and the third Bulgarian state were created.

And indeed almost immediately after the Liberation in Bulgaria the first political parties were established:<sup>4</sup> In the Principality of Bulgaria – the Liberal (1879), founded by Dr. Tsankov, P. Karavelov and P. R. Slaveykov, and the Conservative (1879), founded by K. Stoilov, Gr. Nachovich, D. Grekov and others; and in Eastern Rumelia, the Liberal (Kazion) Party (1879), with leaders G. Stranski, St. Chomakov, etc.; and the People’s (Unionist) Party (1881), led by Iv. Evst. Geshov. Not long afterwards, the first mass and left-oriented party was the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party (BSDP), founded in 1891, and the process of the emergence of various political parties accelerated decisively after the Unification of Bulgaria (1885).<sup>5</sup> Thus, a two-party political model was

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<sup>3</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that the first municipal elections in Sofia were held in December 1878, i.e. before political parties were established. The capital was then divided into 14 districts (acting as constituencies), with 11 649 registered residents on the electoral rolls. Those aged 20 and over and those with property were eligible to vote.

<sup>5</sup> The process of formation of the first parties in our country took place on the basis of the pre-liberation political currents of the „young“ and the „old“ in the conditions of the Russo-Turkish War and the temporary Russian rule. Their ideas underwent a complex evolution, gradually replacing the main issue of Bulgaria’s liberation with that of the organisation of the future state government.

established in both territories of the divided state during the initial construction of Bulgarian statehood. This two-party model quickly began to change as the country's new constitution defined the specific institutional parameters of power.

In this context, **the formation of the political party system in Bulgaria began from the time of the drafting of the basic law – the Constitution (1879), and ended in the first decade of the XX century**, as in the Constituent Assembly the deputies united their efforts in two currents – liberal and conservative.<sup>6</sup> Even the two currents from the ideological point of view would continue to dominate the governance of the country for a long time despite their permanent swarming, splitting and splintering into new (related) parties and factions.

It is necessary to note one important feature of the party-forming process in the country until the Unification in 1885. In the opinion of most researchers (historians, political scientists, sociologists) **the Bulgarian political parties by the mid-1880s still had the character of broad political currents**, not of real parties, because the building of vertical structures had just begun.

Along with the formation of the Bulgarian parties, the **Tarnovo Constitution**, which definitively regulated the legal and political framework of the country, was of significant importance for the development of the political market in Bulgaria. It has been repeatedly praised, but from the point of view of the emerging political system this has not always been done. On this occasion, it should be clearly pointed out that, **especially for the evolution of the new political system in post-liberation Bulgaria**, its role is extremely important, since **it (the constitution) legitimises the rules of the democratic process** through its basic principles. These principles, summarized by Prof. D. Sazdov, are: bourgeois centralism and democratism, ministerial responsibility, parliamentary inviolability, liberal-democratic civil rights – equality, universal suffrage, separation of powers, freedom of speech, thought and press, right of assembly and association, guarantees of personal integrity, etc.<sup>7</sup> The positive aspects of the constitution, including the above principles, were something very progressive for its time, but nevertheless, a number of

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<sup>6</sup> See **Sazdov**, D. *The Multiparty Political System and the Monarchical Institute in Bulgaria 1879 – 1918*. Sofia: Stopanstvo, 1993, p. 9.

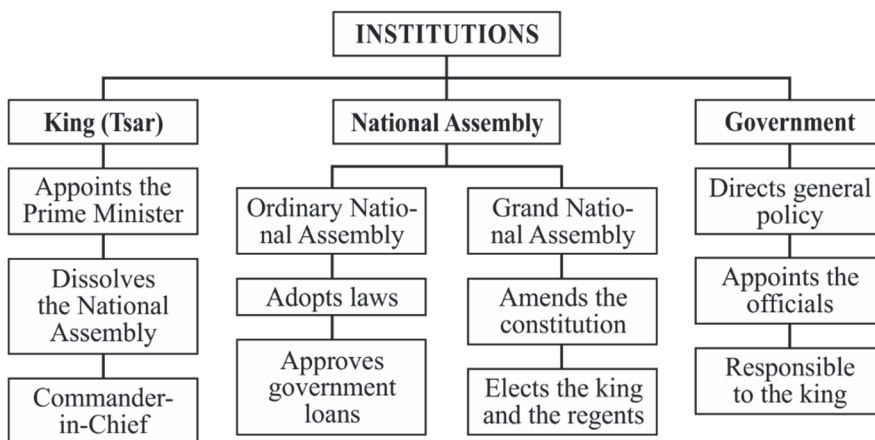
<sup>7</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 146.

negatives (and weaknesses) were also allowed, which negatively affected the qualitative development of the political system of the time. These are, for example, the absence of a flexible mechanism between state institutions (in their communication), the imprecise regularization of the rights of the monarchical institution (the lack of time limits for elections in the case of a dissolved parliament), etc. This is fully true for the clarification of the right to privileges of the political elite, which, with some minor exceptions, are not given more serious attention.

### 1. THE PRIVILEGES OF THE MONARCH

In our political history it is worth noting in particular the essential place occupied by **the monarch (the monarchical institution)** in the construction of Bulgarian statehood from the end of the XIX century. It is important to point out that the role of the monarch contributed to the very evolution of the political system and to the consolidation of privilege, insofar as he had great powers as head of state under the constitution (see *Diagram No. 1*).

**Diagram No. 1. Institutional framework of the Kingdom of Bulgaria**



**Source:** *Todorov, Ant. Elements of Politics. A treatise on the political. Sofia: NBU, 2012, p. 381.*

What are these **powers**?

According to Art. 4 of the Tarnovo Constitution (adopted on 16.04.1879) „The Bulgarian Principality is a **hereditary and constitutional monarchy**, with popular representation“<sup>8</sup>. This form of government affirms the supremacy of the Prince, and subsequently the Tsar, over all other organs of state power. And in the most general form, the legal status of the monarch is defined in Art. 5, according to which „**the Prince is the supreme representative and head of the state**“<sup>9</sup> (*emphasis mine – G. M.*). Depending on this fundamental constitutional clause, the monarch possesses the following more substantial powers: the power of the sovereign is hereditary in the male line of descent in order of primogeniture; has special honorary rights and personal prerogatives; is entitled to privileges and emoluments from the state; the executive power belongs to the prince (king); represents the Principality before other states; issues the relevant state acts (decrees, proclamations, manifestos, royal (throne) speeches, high orders and rescriptions); all legislative power belongs to the Prince and the people’s representation; has unlimited right of legislative initiative; possesses certain powers in the judiciary; etc.<sup>10</sup> Or, as the Constitution enjoins, „The person of the king is sacred and inviolable“ (Art. 8), which confers on him an extraordinary and almost unchecked power.

But anyway – writes **Prof. M. Palangurski** – the established „personal regime“ of the monarch has nothing in common with the classical system of parliamentary democracy. This regime takes the form of an unwritten and unspoken alliance between a monarch and political parties, i.e. an alliance that satisfies the ambitions, agendas and mentalities of both parties.<sup>11</sup> An undeniably true observation, which is confirmed by the subsequent historical development of the country.

In the meantime, we would point out that before a specialized electoral law was adopted, the Provisional Rules for the Election of

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<sup>8</sup> **Bulgarian** constitutions and constitutional projects. Compiled by Veselin Metodiev and Lachezar Stoyanov. Sofia: Dr. Petar Beron, 1990, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> See the more detailed elaboration of these powers in **Tokushev**, D. History of the New Bulgarian State and Law 1878 – 1944. Sofia: Sibi, 2006, pp. 97-106.

<sup>10</sup> See id.

<sup>11</sup> See **Palangurski**, M. The State-Political System of Bulgaria (1879 – 1919). Veliko Tarnovo: Slovo, 1995, p. 23.

Deputies to the First Ordinary People's Assembly (published on 1.08.1879 in the newspaper „Vitoshka“), in Art. 29, literally says: „The deputies (...) shall receive for each day that the session lasts 15 francs in wages, and also for travel expenses to and from 50 centimes per verst“<sup>12</sup>. From this it follows that the future first Bulgarian parliamentarians are fully provided for materially for the rest of their term.

Special attention in the Tarnovo Constitution is paid to **the privileges of the monarch**, which he receives from the state. Chapter VIII, „For the maintenance of the Prince and the Princely House“, explicitly states that **the monarch is entitled to a salary from the State**, the so-called „*liste civile*“ (civil list), *the* amount of which is **fixed in the Constitution at 600,000 francs a year**. This amount cannot be reduced without the consent of the monarch, but may be increased by a decision of the National Assembly. In addition, the adult heir to the throne also has the right (privilege) to certain maintenance from the State.<sup>13</sup> And one more thing – the persons attached to the palace (guards, valets, cooks, waiters, etc.), performing and serving the duties towards the Prince and his family members, are also dependants of the State. In other words, both the rulers (monarchs) of the Third Bulgarian Kingdom (Prince Al. Battenberg, Tsar Ferdinand of Coburg and Gotha and Tsar Boris III) and their families, as well as the numerous serving royal retinue enjoyed various privileges depending on the rank they occupied. Later, in 1911, during the reign of Tsar Ferdinand, a law defining the Tsar's civilian list in a single member increased this list of His Majesty and his serving court to BGN 1,800,000, which was entered in the expenditure part of the then state budget of the monarchy.<sup>14</sup> However, this was not the final figure, as the amount was periodically increased under pressure from Ferdinand, and according to some authors **the**

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<sup>12</sup> Kyurkchiev, N., Ivan Bernev – Bubi. Episodes from the construction of the new Bulgarian statehood 1879 – 1896. Sofia: Iztok – Zapad, 2007, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> See **Bulgarian** Constitutions... Op. cit., pp. 23-24.

<sup>14</sup> See **Georgiev, V.**, St. Trifonov. History of the Bulgarians 1878 – 1944 in documents. Vol. I. 1878 – 1912. Part 1. Restoration and Development of the Bulgarian State. Sofia: Prosveta, 1994, p. 281.

**Tsar's salary in 1911 reached nearly BGN 3 million.**<sup>15</sup> Thus, the monarch's salary, originally fixed in the Constitution, was repeatedly increased, supplemented by various other benefits and privileges (official missions, covering expenses at jewellers with funds from the state budget, etc.). Here, the exaggeration before superiors does not tolerate any restrictions and sometimes exceeds all limits of decency. For example, at the beginning of the XX century, the second Stambolovist government granted a loan of BGN 5 million to supply the navy with war materials. This gave its chief, Paul Pichon, reason to demonstrate his royalism: „Now we are going to buy His Royal Highness a nice yacht“<sup>16</sup>. Apparently, there is some unknowable connection between the country's military needs and „Your Highness's“ yacht that is known only to the sycophant who made the offer. And although it is not being implemented, it is still very indicative of the thinking of senior government officials. For even in supplying the princely palace in Kritchim with timber for a fence, officials from the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture kindly tried to „save“ the monarch the expense and pass it on to the municipality of Ladzhene.<sup>17</sup> In fact, mutually beneficial cooperation is usually within the law and costs neither the ruler nor the politicians in his retinue anything at all, despite the fact that in the end the masraf is always paid by the general taxpayer.

One should not ignore the fact that the Fourth Grand National Assembly in 1893 gave the **monarch** the right **to grant orders** (Art. 59 of the Tarnovo Constitution) and **to authorize loans of up to BGN 3 million** instead of BGN 100,000 (as originally).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, according to some researchers, such as the Croatian Slavist John Purpic, **Ferdinand received an annual salary of about 200,000 dollars, which was 4 times more than the American president at the time.** These new privileges, although motivated by goodwill, to some extent increased the king's power from a subjective point of view and, respectively, created the conditions for various corrupt practices in the granting of loans as

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<sup>15</sup> See **Tahov**, R. The Great Parliamentary Circuses. Chronicle of the scandals in the National Assembly. Sofia: Litus, 2015, p. 146.

<sup>16</sup> See **Penchev**, Pencho D. How the foundations were poured. Towards an Early History of Bulgarian Corruption. Sofia: Riva, 2011, p. 55.

<sup>17</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> See **Tokushev**, D. *Op. cit.*, p. 124.

large as those regulated. More interesting, however, is the question of Ferdinand's **distribution of orders**, which, besides becoming a real passion of his, also „swallowed“ from year to year more and more money for their production. And all this happens for one very simple reason: to be pleasant and „affectionate“ to those to whom he presents the orders, and, of course, to „teach“ them civilized European manners. Or, to put it bluntly, the orders are given out for whatever, because, for example, their number increased from 4 types under Alexander Battenberg to 10 types under Ferdinand Coburg and Gotha.<sup>19</sup> Along with this, due to the new prince's obsessive vanity for awarding all kinds of state orders, the money for their production from various foreign companies increased sharply: from 50,000 gold leva in 1896, all the way to 180,000 leva in 1898. Later, in 1907, when the „civilian list“ of the tsar (prince) was amended by the parliament, the sum of 80,000 leva per year was allocated to the prince personally just for the distribution of orders.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, it can be concluded that Prince Ferdinand was the first Bulgarian statesman (after the Liberation) who turned the receipt of orders (as his privilege) into a selfish order-mania both for himself and for the ruling elite of the time.

According to an old monarchical tradition, **palace life** under Prince Ferdinand „abounds and overflows“ with his typical **pomp, ostentation and opulence**. This is evidenced by M Buchanan, the daughter of the English minister plenipotentiary in Sofia, who said: From time to time (...) theatrical performances, masked balls or entertainments were held in the palace – always pompous and lavish, elaborate in every detail of service, food and order. As soon as you entered the palace, you were greeted by **a whole company of the Prince's bodyguards**, standing on each step of the broad staircase, **splendid in their scarlet uniforms with serge sashes, their hats of grey astragan with eagle feathers attached by clips adorned with jewels**. You are ushered into a hall in white and gold and wait for the Prince to enter before going into the **huge dining room with a large horseshoe-shaped table covered with lovely flowers. You ate from priceless china place set-**

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<sup>19</sup> See **Nikolov**, Gr. *Mysteries of Power and Royal Estates*. Sofia: Ciela, 2004, p. 24.

<sup>20</sup> See id.



**tings, gold and silver trays: the service was impeccable, the food wonderful; a hidden orchestra played loud enough to mask any lull in conversation, but never so loud as to drown it out.** The glitter of the orders, the motley of the uniforms; the prince with his regal bearing which so many rulers lack entirely; his keen penetrating eyes; the guards in their scarlet and serge splendour; the little Prince Boris with his dark sad eyes-all this made up a picture full of colour, a little unreal and fantastic, and gave one the feeling that one was on a stage, taking part in a musical comedy or a Ruritanian romance, that at any moment a bomb might burst, or the troops of some hostile neighbouring country might burst into the hall with a clang of sabres and a triumphal march....<sup>21</sup> (*emphasis mine – D. M.*). Naturally, such a fairy-tale atmosphere could be created in many other places that are attractive to the political elite, but here the royal splendour is boundless, because it is covered by uncontrolled state funds... In fact, there are enough of such cosy royal places, which is evident from a report by the Minister of Finance on the value of Alexander Battenberg’s estates, namely:

1. The palace in Varna (together with all the lands)	1,420,000 BGN
2. The Manezh in Sofia	259,000 BGN
3. Chiflik in Gorna Banya (together with the cattle)	250,000 BGN
4. Garden in Sofia (with accessories)	222,000 BGN
5. The Little Palace in Sofia (with accessories)	155,000 BGN
6. House with a chapel in Sofia	80,000 BGN
7. Garden cooking and other gadgets in the Sofia Palace	58,000 BGN
8. Furniture in the Ruse Palace	56,000 BGN
9. Everything	2,500,000 BGN

**Source:** See **Radev, S.** *The Builders of Modern Bulgaria. Vol. I and II.* Sofia: Zaharii Stoyanov, 2014, p. 647.

With such splendid and varied facilities of the monarch, it is not difficult to guess that in the lavish princely corridors, party after party,

<sup>21</sup> Citation: **Constant, St.** *Ferdinand the Fox – King of Bulgaria.* Sofia: Interfed, 1992, pp. 212-214.

banquet after banquet, soiree after soiree (at state expense) were thrown to permanently strengthen the young Bulgarian statehood.

This uncontrollably lavish princely extravagance deepened enormously under Battenberg's successor, **Tsar Ferdinand, who remains in Bulgarian history as one of the biggest spenders of state funds and consumers of privileges.** Although Art. 51 of the Tarnovo Constitution says: „State properties belong to the Bulgarian Principality and may not be enjoyed by the Prince or his relatives“<sup>22</sup>, and therefore they (the properties) are managed by the so-called „Intendency“ (state structure). The „Majesty“ was spread in several huge palaces: the „Crow“ (Vrana), Tsarska Bistritsa, Sitnyakovo, Krichim, Saragjol, the construction of which was entirely financed by the state. Moreover, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Tsar Ferdinand's coming to power, a report on the capital investments of the Ministry of Finance states that **BGN 4.4 million were invested in the construction of the palace and the Euxinograd port** alone (the lev was then fully gold-plated and equal to 1 French franc); while during the same period (20 years) a total of BGN 7.8 million was spent on high schools throughout the country, the National Assembly building, the Central Post Office, the National Theatre, the State Printing Office and various hospitals.<sup>23</sup> These capital investments still represent an enormous value, because **the valorisation of the amount from the golden lev to the current dollar or euro actually converts those 4.4 million golden leva to today's 110 – 115 million dollars.**<sup>24</sup> That is why palaces are always considered state property, which is only enjoyed by the monarch but never his private property for the elementary reason that there are no deeds in his name.<sup>25</sup> But something else is more important: **during his entire reign Ferdinand of Coburg and Gotha was a complete ward of the state, since he enjoyed a complex set of privileges,** from free food to his endless trips to our and foreign towns and palaces, castles and residences, casinos and gambling halls, etc., all at the expense of the people.

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<sup>22</sup> See **Bulgarian Constitutions...** Op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>23</sup> See „*Maritza*“ **newspaper**, 25.06.2003.

<sup>24</sup> See id.

<sup>25</sup> The question of the ownership of the royal estates in Bulgaria (after the changes of 1989) is not the subject of the present paper and therefore we interpret it here only according to the topic of privileges.

The picture of royal privileges would not be complete if we did not take into account the fact that **His Royal Majesty enjoys free state transport**, which is another kind of political-power privilege. For example, in 1919 alone, after Ferdinand's abdication, under his son Boris, the royal car fleet had 10 cars and 15 trucks, almost all of the Mercedes brand. The palace car fleet was transferred to the special list of the palace's Intendency (the state institution that looked after the royalty), and in 1920 alone, BGN 120,000 were spent on servicing this fleet. In 1938 the budget allocated 1.5 million leva for it, and of this 692,000 leva were allocated for salaries alone. On top of that, petrol for the Tsar's cars was imported from Italy and Romania, parts were generally imported from Germany, and tyres – from as far away as Japan.<sup>26</sup> And, as is well known, these transport costs were not only used for state purposes, but also for dozens of personal journeys, distant royal feasts, countless hunting pleasures and a number of other whims and indulgences of the royal chamber (and its loyalist ruling elite).

Hardly anyone would be surprised that the royal palace „Vrana“ grows a whole menagerie of **environmentally friendly food products** for the special feeding of royalty and grandees. It could not be otherwise, since the most fertile fields, livestock farms and famous companies (including the royal residences themselves) are engaged for the food of the Bulgarian monarchs. Add to this the hiring of the best chefs (and serving staff) and the royal table is always a favourite place for all kinds of feasts, which we will illustrate with an evening menu from the royal palace.

### **Menu from a dinner at the palace in Sofia in 1894**

Cold broth  
(Tsuko)  
The Diplomat Pie  
(Johannisberg, 1868)  
Veal fillet sauce „Bordeaux“  
(Chateau Leoville, 1875)  
Jelly foie gras pate

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<sup>26</sup> See **Nikolov**, Gr. Op. cit., p. 138.

Turkey „Sucre“ with minced meat (breast)  
(Clo Vujo, 1875)  
Cherry sorbet with wine „Romances“  
Baked bacassine with canapés  
(Suho Imperial)  
Salad  
Green beans à la English  
Eclair with chocolate  
(Chateau Ikem, 1878)  
Ice cream Pistachio, Dessert  
(Muscat Rivialsalt)

*Source: See Constant, St. Op. cit., p. 214.*

There is no doubt that the menu is for royals! It is indeed delicious! And, yes, it is indeed nutritious! No one doubts that, only one question is not very clear: Why, tell me why is this free royal meal the poor Bulgarian peasant's treat?

**Ferdinand** himself gave an answer for all these royal whims and fancies in his book „Advice to the Son“ (1891), in which he most vulgarly blasphemed the Bulgarian people, **calling them „smelly Bulgarians“, „Balkan poturnaks“, „a nation of Bakali and Bazirgians (Targashi)“, etc. „We are descended“, reminds the Majesty, „from a foreign dynasty, alien to the Bulgarian blood and soul; we have nothing in common with that inferior race, and therefore have no need of the affection of the Bulgarian people, for our other interests are guaranteed by that people on account of their fear and servility“**<sup>27</sup> (*emphasis mine – G. M.*). This cynical attitude of the „blue-blooded“ Coburg, called Ferdinand the Fox, fully explains the millions of leva spent on private-personal coupons siphoned off from the state coffers (without accounting for them, of course).

But it is not the one who eats the pie who is crazy, but the one who gives it to him for free!

Of course, to these privileges of the king must be added all the others that „rightfully“ belong to the crown: **transportation expenses,**

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<sup>27</sup> Citation: **Tahov**, R. Ferdinand composed a tyrant's manual – In: „*Trud*“ newspaper, 28 – 29.05.2022.

**special service, hunting trips, free vacations, royal guards, state residences, etc.**, which were entirely covered by the state treasury. In other words, all those privileges enjoyed by the European monarchs of the time were „assigned“ to the Bulgarian king as well, so that he would not be left behind in his royalist political life (and not only!).

## 2. PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES

As can be assumed, the next category of people receiving and consuming solid state **privileges** is the newly created political elite in Bulgaria (after the Liberation) in the face **of the deputy representation**. These privileges, as we have emphasized, basically „lie“ on Art. 139 of the Constitution and on account of this **the salaries of the deputies** are permanently increased depending on the political conjuncture. This happened at once, as early as 1880, when we already had our own currency and system of measurement, with daily allowances being converted to 15 leva and travel costs becoming 60 stotinki per km – a hefty sum, given that at that time two leva covered the daily budget of an average family; bread and milk were 20 stotinki and quality meat cost 60 stotinki per kilo; while 100 leva was a large salary.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, MPs' salaries only went up, because MPs vote themselves increased: in 1893 they voted for a 20 leva daily allowance; in the First World War, for the credit of having got the country into the great carnage, they voted as follows: „From 15 October 1917 until the end of the war, MPs get an extra 30 leva a day“. And after the national catastrophe, the Chamber legalized the following: „The daily allowance of the deputies is set at 250 leva a day from 28 October 1921“<sup>29</sup>. And one more thing that is regulated: according to the Tarnovo Constitution, all deputies who did not live in the place where the parliament sat received both wage money and all travel expenses for both directions (according to Art. 139). Thus, in practice, MPs living in the capital did not receive any remuneration for their work in the National Assembly. Here the presumption – points out **Prof. T. Galunov** – is that every elected deputy went

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<sup>28</sup> See „*Trud*“ newspaper, 10 – 11.07.2021.

<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*; **Tahov**, R. The Great... Op. cit., p. 339.

to serve the fatherland, and therefore did not have to receive any specific financial benefits. That is why the metropolitan deputies receive nothing, while the provincial deputies receive only the sums they need to ensure their presence in Parliament.<sup>30</sup>

During the Second World War, however, popular representation fell into short supply. Therefore, with the date 25.12.1941, Prime Minister Bogdan Filov chronicled in his diary: „In the morning, the budget committee considered the budget draft of the Supreme Government. There was a lot of talk about the deputies' daily wages, which many wanted to increase from 14,000 to 15,000 a month“<sup>31</sup>.

„Fifteen grand for nothing!“ concludes the author of these data, Rosen Tahov, and to a large extent he is absolutely right.

In the historical archives one can also find very interesting data about the „**food privileges**“ of the Bulgarian MPs, for whom it is needless to say what culinary comfort (and cheap prices) they enjoyed during their mandates. In this case, however, we are talking about something other than the cheapness of MPs: the great parliamentarians of Bulgaria also become voracious gourmets, insofar as almost all of them are master gourmets with sophisticated taste – they munch on onion rings and fillets, slurp quality soups, munch over steaks, emphasize juicy meatballs, drink sparkling wine, etc. Here is what **Rosen Tahov** writes on this occasion in a critical and extensive study of Bulgarian parliamentarism:<sup>32</sup>

On 25.11.1884 the National Assembly opened its doors. The building was consecrated with a water blessing and a banquet. Then for the first time the meatballs enter the sacred forge of laws. „Sredets“ Newspaper points out: „After the divine service performed by our clergy, headed by His Eminence Metropolitan Bishop Kliment, the invitees sat down to eat and drink at the breakfast prepared for the occasion. Many cheers were pronounced, as usual in such circumstances, when patriotism is thrown into the arms of merriment, or vice versa,<sup>33</sup> merriment stirred up and inflamed patriotism.“

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<sup>30</sup> See **Galunov**, T. The Majoritarian System and Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria. From the Restoration of Bulgarian Statehood to the Early 1890s. Veliko Tarnovo: Faber, 2014, p. 22.

<sup>31</sup> See **Tahov**, R. The Great... Op. cit., *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 123-129; 365-369.

<sup>33</sup> *vice versa* – the opposite

The chamber is always inhabited by folk with a wide bite and a deep gulp. Here is Boris Vazov, brother of the national poet and professional deputy. He is the author of the handbook „Parliamentary booklet necessary for every MP“. He first consumed 12 meatballs, wiped his moustache and ordered the waiter: „Well, it's time for the main course...“.

One evening in „Hladna pochivka“ the banker Iliya Palazov announced that he had a grandson. „Eat and drink as much as you can!“ the happy grandfather invited the audience. „Iliya, we've eaten and drunk too much, how can we accept your treat?“, the artist Alexander Bozhinov jerked. Boris, who was eating his ninth meatball, jumped and snapped, „Iliika, go on, Iliika! Don't be pessimistic, people!“.

Aleksandar Stamboliyski was also a famous gargantuan. The village leader developed a culinary theory according to which the volume of food is directly proportional to human health. Even after he went straight from the parliament to prison, he found a way to stuff himself with food. „More than once he would eat through force, believing that the more one ate, the healthier one would be“, testified a fellow villager. „Oh, I've had my fill... and I'd eat more, but there's no room... Too bad I don't have another stomach...“, Stamboliyski stammered as he rose from the table.

Our lawmakers showed what they were capable of even abroad. In April 1942, a Bulgarian parliamentary delegation visited fascist Croatia. There they were welcomed with a sumptuous table. A mountain of meatballs was served in the middle. Twice the size of those in Bulgaria. The guests grabbed their forks, pricked, chewed and mashed. When they returned, they poured their delight into the press.

„The MP Mr. Iv. Batenbergski told us that what he saw he would never forget,“ the newspaper „Utro“ reported. Croatia is a model of the rule of law, Ivancho pleaded. There is order, law and justice everywhere. The army and the youth march in formation. What about the workers? „Everyone is disciplined. In their eyes shines the fire of willing sacrifice at the altar of the motherland“, shows his admiration our fellow compatriot.

Boris III was at the end of his tether. Prime Minister Bogdan Filov wrote in his diary, „The king is outraged by the „Croatian inclination“ of our deputies, who are ready to subject themselves for a feast“.

Parliamentary meatballs are eaten in the parliamentary buffet. At the beginning of the XX century they cost 20 stotinki a piece and quickly ran out. Coffee costs 7 stotinki. For a pint of beer the MPs are ready to give 15 stotinki. For a hundred grams of brandy they are willing to give 30 stotinki. For this reason, **in 1909, Speaker Hristo Slaveykov forbade journalists to enter the buffet.** In their defence came forward Aleksandar Stamboliyski, who ate heartily, but allowed others to consume.

„Why this culinary lustration?“ asks the agricultural leader. „For many reasons“, replies the leadership. – One of them is that the buffet of the National Assembly cannot be turned into a pub because it is reserved for the rest of the gentlemen deputies and nobody else.“<sup>34</sup>

By the way, for the intelligent Bulgarian reader, the magnificent image of Aleko Konstantinov’s Bai Ganyo has long since become a symbol of vulgarity, thick-eyedness and gluttony. We will therefore here take the liberty of a short quotation from „Bai Ganyo in the Palace“<sup>35</sup> to characterize the true face of most of the royal deputies who, like starved beasts, destroy everything on their way to the monarch’s innumerable „state“ tables laden with delicious food and drink.

„Oho! Uncle Ganyo, Christ has risen from the dead! Were you at the palace, at the fast breaking?“

„Who, me? Who’ll be there if not me“, Uncle Ganyo answers, twists his left mustache, and glances at me slyly, as if he wants to say: „while there are fools in the world, Uncle Ganyo doesn’t miss the windfall“.

„So, how was it? Was it funny?“

„Hey, who cares if it was funny or not, there was a bi-i-ig wind-fall! I got drunk like... this... You know, the Holy Week, I fasted, fasted, I swelled by this damned beans, and some sauerkraut juice, I was starving. On Saturday I didn’t eat at all. And they arranged the fast breaking at two o’clock at night. While I was at church, as if three hundred leeches were sucking in my stomach. I spat, spat at last there was no spittle left. You try to smoke – but you can’t, it’s bitter in your mouth. They said „Christ has risen from the dead!“ at twelve o’clock; how could you wait till two! I told my family to go home and to break their fats

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<sup>34</sup> **Tahov**, R. The Great... Op. cit., pp. 123-129; 365-369; „*Trud*“ newspaper, 10.02.2021.

<sup>35</sup> **Konstantinov**, Aleko. Selected works. Sofia: Balgarski pisatel, 1978, pp. 301-304.



alone and entered The Red Crab. There, my brother, full with people like me – top-hats, epaulets, medals. They were also waiting the bell to ring at two o'clock. I sat at a long table and saw two bachelors breaking their fast. They arranged that table with snacks, pigs, and even wine from Varna – my mouth watered. When I saw just the pig's crackling, I lost my head. So, what, I had to ask these bachelors: „What are you eating there? A pig? Very good! Well... this... a little bit with some crackling...“. But no. I am shy since I was a little boy... (Oh, give me your cigarette-case, you smoke good tobacco, Ivan's not good, it smells like ma-khorka...)\*. And those bachelors started to munch, so I got angry looking at them and turned away. I tried to spit but I had no spittle! My guts were like glued. I thought of ordering a beer but I changed my mind. Why did I starve for two days...? I turned away not to look at those, and they, as if deliberately, munch all the time and praise the pig. You know, I wished to get up and grab that damned pig from their mouths... I wish I could bend to press my stomach – hunger is not so ravenous like that, but I can't bend. My tail-coat is tight; it may tear at the back. Hey, the hell with it! And the collar was starched hard, scratches my neck like a saw... My sight grew dim. I went out of the Crab and headed to the palace. It's just not proper to go in early. I've got a friend, a bodyguard, a good friend of mine, and some kind of relative, you know, but it's still not properly. And if you enter early anyway, they won't invite you at the table. I went around the gates, my legs hurt. So, I hear drrrr... a phaeton, and after a moment drrrr... another phaeton. They entered the palace, thank God! I twisted my moustaches, cleared my throat and, come on, I went after them. A shaven boy rushed to take my coat off but I mumbled „sorry, mister, mind your business“ and I didn't allow him to undress me. He ashamed and went to undress the others. How could I allow him to undress me, brother? The sleeves of my coat, that is to say not the sleeves but the lining inside is torn like... this. Never mind. I got upstairs but first I peered into the rooms downstairs – the tables were arranged – a neat job. A lot of people gathered. We waited for a while and then the prince and the princess appeared. This time they were really Christian host and hostess.

„Did you kiss their hands again?“

„Well, of course... I would kiss hundreds of hands for such a table. Never mind. This ordeal passed, my brother, and we dashed down

the stairs... Believe me or not, but I jumped down three steps at a time, I almost crashed against the mirror but I didn't allow anybody to get ahead of me. I got my hands on the caviar and started rowing with a spoon, shame on me if it was less than half a kilo. That fish with mayonnaise, those snacks, I even don't know their names, so, my mouth gaped... Leave it! I ate, ate, stuffed myself... I still wonder how my stomach didn't burst. And the drinks...! I don't remember how I've got home – kill me, if you want, but I still don't remember... Phew...! My head still aches by this damned champagne... Leave that alone but I stuffed my pockets with cakes, and they were so soft, the hell with them, they daubed in my pocket... So, good bye.

„Good bye, Uncle Ganyo.“

Sofia, April 5th, 1895.

*Aleko Konstantinov*“

*(Source: Konstantinov, Aleko. Uncle Ganyo. Veliko Tarnovo: Abagar Publishing House, 2007. ISBN 978-954-427-735-2.*

*Aleko Konstantinov International Foundation – Svishtov, 2007*

*Dimitar Dobrev – translation from Bulgarian, 2007*

*Borislav Angelov – proof-reader, 2007)*

Even Ferdinand, who does not like to see politicians bully their stomachs, is outraged by this unscrupulous parliamentary gutsiness. That is why the prince abhors gluttonous excesses, because food should be sacred, he preaches. Statesmen are not pigs, but cavaliers of the fork and spoon, adds the descendant of Louis XIV.

And indeed the monarch decided to teach the gourmets a lesson, as his choice fell on Dimitar Vachov – a deputy in six national assemblies and a lover of rich food. When Vachov became Minister of Education in 1899, Ferdinand invited him to dinner at the palace. „See how I leave him hungry“, the prince whispers to the courtiers, and then he has a good meal before they set the table, placing Vachov beside him and gradually asking him for this or that, and he out of deference keeps answering him without even putting a morsel in his mouth.<sup>36</sup> It even goes so far as to unite the gluttonous deputies in a culinary society, the sole object of which is to avoid such unpleasant pitfalls in gratifying the

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<sup>36</sup> See **Tahov**, R. The Great... Op. cit., pp. 367-368.

„gourmet lust“ of the deputies. Among those initiated into this society is the notorious MP and politician Dimo Kazasov, who unravels the mystery surrounding this unique gastronomic conspiracy, unparalleled in then civilised Europe:

„In Sofia there existed a Secret Culinary Society, among which one day I found myself, introduced by my friend Professor Dimitar Mishaykov, with whom we edited the magazine „Zveno“. This was in 1928. Mishaykov invited me to dinner at the „Balabanov“ restaurant, which was located where the Art Gallery is today (117, Rakovski Str.). Instead of the common lounge, he took me to a room where Prime Minister Lyapchev, Minister of Foreign Affairs Atanas Burov, Chairperson of the National Assembly Prof. Todor Kulev, the director and sub-director of BDZ, the engineers Karakashev and Bozhkov, the bank directors Boyadzhiev and Milushev, the industrialists Iv. K. Balabanov and Petrovich, etc. All my fellow travellers were personally known to me.

My surprise was great when we were served oysters along with the abundant and rare hors d'oeuvre of caviar, crabs, smoked fish, mushrooms, etc.

„Where did these oysters come from?“ I asked Mishaikova.

„Ask your former director“, he replied.

I turned to Vlado Karakashev, who told me that the oysters had been pulled out of the rocks at Galata by a diver. I was surprised by their taste, surpassing that of the famous Portuguese oysters.

After dinner Mishaykov explained to me that he had introduced me to **a closed culinary society which gathered once a month for a common meal served with the earliest rarities of our land: the first lambs, chickens, quails, deer, pheasants, etc., the first tomatoes, cucumbers, asparagus, artichokes, sterlets, sturgeons, mackerels, etc.**<sup>37</sup> (*emphasis mine – G. M.*).

The culinary delights and feats of the Bulgarian MPs can be recounted with many more examples, facts and incidents, which will again and again confirm the above quoted, confirming the maxim that low prices and good food are among the most loved by our elected people.

The „dignified compassion“ of the Bulgarian parliament of the late XIX and early XX centuries found a particularly strong expression in

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<sup>37</sup> Citation: **Tahov**, R. The Great... Op. cit., p. 368.

the granting of pensions to the relatives of the revolutionaries and fighters who died for the freedom of their homeland. Having secured themselves decent **pensions** thanks to their deputiership, the deputies passed a special **law to provide financial support to the relatives of the Bulgarian patriots who died for the national liberation**. And while according to this law the deputies generously grant sums of BGN 500 – 1000 to various people, they literally mock the relatives of our fallen famous patriots with some miserable sums. Such is the case of **Botev's widow – Veneta**, who after long begging to the authorities and St. Stambolov **received the „colossal sum“ of BGN 30 posthumous pension for her husband** (despite the fact that for many years she cared for St. Stambolov together with Hr. Botev in Romania); the example of the relatives of the Apostle of Freedom V. Levski, who are left to their fate, without a single lev from the state, because even his sister's alms of BGN 50 is taken away (and Levski's brother – Petar, died as an invalid in 1881 in begging); the case of the disgusting quarrels in the National Assembly whether the two sisters of Angel Kanchev should receive BGN 30 or 40 (!?! ) post-combatant pension (which after a while is taken away)<sup>38</sup>; etc. By the way, these are by no means all the „victims“ of parliamentary egoism. After the Liberation the National Assembly outright mocked the surviving fighters and the families of the dead. The echoing deputies reduced from BGN 200 to 100 the pensions of Panayot Hitov, Philip Totyu and Ilyo Voyvoda; they cut the material support for the sisters of Hadzhi Dimitar and Stefan Karadzha, etc. While, in contrast, the „golden“ widow Poliksena Stambolova was additionally „gilded“ with a BGN 7200 annual pension, and after the death of Teodor Theodorov his wife was pensioned with BGN 2000 a month.<sup>39</sup>

But the most glaring case here is that of the singer **Johanna Loisinger**. She, the „poor thing“, is **Alexander Battenberg's widow**, but she has nothing to do with Bulgaria, because she became his wife after the prince abdicated. Nevertheless, in 1893 the Seventh National Assembly endowed her with a fantastic sum. „I have the honour to inform you“, President Georgi Zhivkov telegraphed her, „that the Chamber of Deputies, at its meeting yesterday, voted unanimously to grant you and your

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<sup>38</sup> See „*Zhalt Trud*“ newspaper, No. 45, 6.11.2021.

<sup>39</sup> See **Tahov**, R. The Great... Op. cit., p. 48.

dear children a pension of 40,000 francs for life“. (This same Zhivkov once lashed out at Zaharii Stoyanov: „What book have you written about Hristo Botev? Don't we know what a vagabond he was!“ he gushed.)<sup>40</sup>

No matter, the then Bulgarian parliament won with obvious superiority the undisguised „privileged“ competition in high rank, menial servility and monarchical kneeling. Is it any wonder, then, that a significant part of Bulgarian society at the time did not at all share the respect of its own popular electors, a point magnificently expressed by Toma Izmirliiev (brother of Hr. Smirnenski) in his poem „Deputy“:

Deputy! Deputy!  
It is a miracle craft!  
You sleep and slumber in a pure bliss,  
and if you get bored, brother,  
you stand up with a swagger,  
you swear at one or two  
then you go back to sleep on cue,  
true to your holy duty...  
Deputy! Deputy!  
Sweet and dear craft -  
honor, money, immunity,  
in the train – a free ticket as an opportunity,  
and on top of that,  
when you get bored,  
Come on, brother, let's go to Paris  
Supported by the state for zero merits...  
Deputy! Deputy!  
When you're in trouble, dear brother,  
You then prepare your own creative project  
with someone's signature for greater prospect,  
and following that astonishing feat  
your commission right away  
is increased by groundless greed  
with two hundred levs a day!  
Deputy! Deputy!

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<sup>40</sup> See id.

This is God's grace!  
Effortless and with no pain  
you procure your monthly pay!  
You need no gold mines,  
nor deals unpleasant or money from fines-  
the whole treasury before you lies  
waiting for you to spend it wise!<sup>41</sup>

This poet's realistic assessment of the work of the MPs is extremely objective and indicative, and therefore hardly needs comment...

### 3. EXECUTIVE POWER AND PRIVILEGES

The next **privileged stratum** in the Bulgarian post-liberation society was that of **the top executive**, whose main representatives – **ministers, officials, bureaucrats**, etc., actually enjoyed many state benefits and advantages. What is special here is that the first law on the bureaucracy in Bulgaria was passed as early as 1880, as well as some special laws for the bureaucrats of the various departments.<sup>42</sup> And although these laws attempted to regulate the rights and duties of the clerical class (by reducing the rights of office, prohibiting participation in partisan activities, drawing up strict salary tables, etc.), they failed to solve the problem of remuneration, as a large difference in salaries between the various ministries and departments resulted. Illustrative in this case are the figures fixed for the **salaries** received (as at 1896): prime minister, BGN 21,000; minister, BGN 18,000; president of the National Audit Office, BGN 8,400; constable of the capital, BGN 3,000 (plus BGN 600 for his horse's feed); etc.<sup>43</sup> This is one of the reasons why the bureaucratic civil service in Bulgaria was then held in high esteem, as all the salaries in the hierarchy were very respectable for those times. This may also explain the almost continuous increase in the number of civil

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<sup>41</sup> See „*Trud*“ newspaper, 10 – 11.07.2021.

<sup>42</sup> Such laws were established later, as follows: in 1882, 1903, 1906, etc. (See **Kochankova**, Anna. Bulgarian institutions: spatial practice and documentary heritage (1879 – 1912). Sofia: Heron Press, 2006, pp. 41-47.

<sup>43</sup> See „*Dneven trud*“ newspaper, 11.07.1997.

servants in the ministries and their salaries, which will be illustrated in the proposed table below.

**Table No. 1. State officials by ministry and the cost of their salaries in BGN (levs) in 1896 and 1904**

No.	Ministries, departments and offices	1896		1904	
		Number	Pay	Number	Pay
1.	Foreign Affairs and Confessions	119	375 740	186	528 960
2.	Home Affairs	5290	5 916 815	5321	4 807 178
3.	Public Education	969	2 575 951	1976	4 268 507
4.	Finance	2520	3 803 754	3308	4 295 586
5.	Justice	2440	3 508 401	2715	3 336 593
6.	The War	4309	8 493 778	7123	13 048 466
7.	Trade and agriculture	1774	2 405 240	2812	4 071 868
8.	Public buildings, roads and communications	3204	4 631 656	5439	6 075 924
9.	Office of the National Assembly	44	94 320	46	77 160
10.	Office of the Council of Ministers	7	21 000	6	11 700
11.	Office of the Palace	5	21 920	12	42 160
12.	Supreme National Audit Office	72	18 340	96	213 420
	All	20 743	32 099 515	28 940	40 777 582

*Source: Georgiev, V., St. Trifonov. Op. cit., pp. 266-267.*

From the figures in the tabular representation it is perfectly evident that there has been a steady upward trend in the number of civil servants in the state and in the value of their salaries in the following progressive order (for the period 1896 – 1904.): **1) in the Ministries and Departments** – 72 and 79% increase respectively in the number of civil servants as well as in the money for salaries; **2) the greatest increase in financing** in the Ministries of War, of the Interior, of Public Education, of Finance and of Public Buildings, Roads and Communications; and **3) the most solid rise in the expenses** for the administrations (offices) of the institutions of the National Assembly, the Royal Palace and of the civil servants of the Supreme National Audit Office. In other words, the Bulgarian state then spent too much of the people’s „steam“ on the entire bureaucracy, and especially on higher salaries as

part of its privileged status according to the imposed hierarchy of government. This increase in the number of officials – writes P. Penchev – is, however, disproportionately large in relation to the expanding functions of the state. For example, at the very end of the XIX century, one of the budgets of the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture allocated 200,000 levs for secondment, and 40,000 levs for assistance to farmers, for the distribution of seeds, etc. It so happens that 200,000 levs are spent to see the result of 40,000! Similarly in 1901 the revenue appropriated by the National Assembly for the Ministry of Public Buildings, Roads and Communications was used to maintain a bloated clerical apparatus, not for roads.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the cries against the creation of a so-called „bureaucratic proletariat“ (P. Penchev) in most cases find no serious ground for development, since the incumbent state bureaucrats and officials in ministerial offices, cabinets and departments are sufficiently well paid and, moreover, are regular consumers of additional funds and privileges.

Let's bring another interesting fact: **at the end of the XIX century, Bulgaria was ahead of even countries with established democratic (and bureaucratic) traditions in the number of officials per capita.** For example, by 1899 in Bulgaria, according to various estimates, there were between 10 and 12 bureaucrats per 1,000 people. For comparison, in Germany the ratio was 5 bureaucrats per 1,000 people, in Austria-Hungary – 1.5 per 1,000, in Romania – 4.5 per 1,000, and so on.<sup>45</sup> And although in the early XX century it was reported that the salaries of Bulgarian bureaucrats were lower than those of their Western counterparts, it can be concluded that during this period, clerical careers continued to provide a glamorous and affluent life by the modest standards of the time. Thrift and careful handling of money enabled civil servants to amass a certain fortune.<sup>46</sup> It is for this reason that the civil service attracts many able young people and they turn away from creative but risky business activities. Agricultural production, commerce, industry, etc. are therefore deprived of their „intelligent forces“

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<sup>44</sup> See **Penchev**, P. D. Op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>45</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>46</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 46.



who direct their ambitions in priority to the state apparatus and political parties.<sup>47</sup> From this situation to the large-scale spread of privileges (and corruption), the step is very small and painless, as is evident from the extremely flexible, lucrative and adaptable **privileged system** created **for the fighters and workers of Bulgarian national liberation** from Ottoman rule. And if anyone thinks that the „leakage“ of political (unaccountable) privileges was left escaping, without blocking it, only under totalitarian socialism, he is deeply mistaken. On the contrary, the perfect system for draining state finances through the so-called „active fighters against fascism and capitalism“ (we will talk about them in Chapter Two) began almost immediately after the Liberation with the legalization of numerous **privileges for the fighters and the militiamen**. This system of special post-liberation privileges is thoroughly examined by Assoc. Prof. Tsv. Kyoseva, to whose precise and correct formulations we proceed in our exposition.

In all times after the Liberation from Ottoman rule – points out **Assoc. Prof. Tsv. Kyoseva**<sup>48</sup> – a certain stratum of Bulgarians received special pensions and privileges for services to the Fatherland: first of all, such were granted to the volunteers and the so-called „fighters“ – the fighters for the liberation of Bulgaria. This was done by the **Improvement of the Condition of Poor Fighters and Volunteers Act of 1880**, supplemented in 1884. The reason for its appearance was primarily the poverty into which the former fighters for the freedom of Bulgaria fell. The law aimed at appreciating their services to the Fatherland through some kind of remuneration rather than payment, because it was believed that „such services are not paid for with money“.

In order to ensure the existence of fighters and volunteers in peacetime, the philosophy of the law took the following as its starting point: to give those „able to work“ the option **of choosing land with a one-off inventory allowance of 100 to 400 francs plus exemption from land tax for one year; or civil service for those who could, by virtue of their education, manage it. Moreover, fighters and volunteers have priority in the appointment to the service over all others.** The „unfit“ or „physically and mentally defective“ receive a life pension of 100 to

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<sup>47</sup> See id.

<sup>48</sup> Here and on the next few pages these privileges are discussed under: **Kyoseva**, Tsv. *The Secret of Politicians*. Sofia: Unicat, 2012, pp. 125-127.

300 francs a year. And as the Bulgarian lev was then golden and equal to the French franc, it appears that the average monthly pension of the militiamen ranged from about 10 to 30 leva a month, which was not much even for those times. **Privileges were also provided for the children of fighters and volunteers or their closest relatives – they paid no school fees, received a scholarship and inherited, although not in full share, together with the widow the land or pension.** A candidate for privileges must prove his participation in the popular movement by producing „a certificate from the Company in which he served, or a ticket from the hospital“, and if none, a certificate from five recognized militiamen or fighters, to be confirmed by the local municipal government (the pension and privileges could be revoked only in the case of „drunkenness and dissipation“).

And since it is believed that liberated Bulgaria should not leave its fighters begging for alms, **the law was passed by an overwhelming majority. Thus, for the first time in the new Bulgarian history, the beginning of the state support was not based on length of service, but on the patriotic criterion of „merit“.** Moreover, under the law, **by 1.01.1896, 2,682 fighters and volunteers and their families were rewarded with 107,473 acres of land and 485,191 leva for furnishing with equipment, and 438 people received cash pensions totalling 176,802 lv.** Presumably, with these measures, the fighters and volunteers have been rewarded, the problem has been exhausted and the law should be terminated.

But what happens? **In 1895, instead of being nullified, under the pressure of political partisans, the law was totally modified in order to continue receiving privileges and to widen the circle of persons who could benefit from it.** New categories of combatants were admitted and **pensions were allowed to be inherited by the relatives of the fighter or volunteer after his death.** One of the most important amendments, which totally changes the philosophy of the law, is the **admission of the right of fighters and volunteers to exchange the land allocated to them for cultivation in exchange for cash pensions. This changed the whole philosophy of the law and, instead of ending its operation, in effect began a long-standing vicious practice of using state rents for private purposes.**

Some economists and publicists of the late XIX century predicted that the 1895 Act would bring „disastrous demoralization“ to the fighters and volunteers circles. A prophecy that indeed proved accurate. For **in just three years (from 1896 to 1899) the fighters and volunteers „grew“ from 438 almost threefold to 1,428, and by 1900 they numbered over 1,600.** It turns out, however, that the completion of the past by the victors became the reason in objective reality for the law of post-facto increase of the „deserving“ for the Fatherland to begin to operate. And the merits of the fighters and volunteers, accumulated most often in their young age, become a springboard for a life career. Moreover, all this led to a change in the public attitude towards this category of Bulgarians, because the press began to publish opinions that if the law was not stopped, the fighters and volunteers would become 10,000 people. Thus, from the well-deserved general enthusiasm and recognition of their merits, characteristic of the first years after the Liberation, the mood towards them began to degenerate into accusations of „false patriotism“, „baronery“, „endless whims“, „personal gains“, etc. Under the influence of these sentiments, the privileges of the volunteers and fighters began to be curtailed, and during the reign of St. Stambolov’s rule, an educational requirement was introduced for the state and municipal administration, which in practice took away the advantage of the fighters and volunteers to occupy these offices. In addition, a new law of 1897 defined as volunteers and fighters only „those who participated with arms in hand“, and their children lost their scholarship in case of poor grades. It even came to such anecdotal situations as the request of 350 inhabitants of Bratsigovo to the National Assembly to take away the pension of BGN 50 from a certain Angel Mizhorkov, who was giving money with interest and collecting property.

On their part, however, the fighters and volunteers defended their privileges firmly and in order to defend them to the end, after 1882 they **founded their own fighter and volunteer companies, which after the arrival of Prince Ferdinand in Bulgaria were placed under his official patronage.** Their main tasks were to oppose the curtailment of the rights of the fighters and volunteers, and in 1897 – 1898 the First and Second Congresses of the fighters and volunteer societies were held. They were mainly concerned with the drafting of a bill to correct all irregularities and „injustices“, deciding also to issue a special organ

of the society for this purpose, the „Yunak“ newspaper (the first issue of which appeared in 1898).<sup>49</sup> And one final thing – the laws on the privileges of the fighters and volunteers continued to operate until 1944, when the new heroes of the government – the active fighters against fascism and capitalism – came to take their place in our slandered Bulgarian homeland...

The essential question naturally arises: **why did the privileges of power in our country find such fertile ground for development after the Liberation?**

This question has no unambiguous answer, so here we will examine only some of its key aspects (causes, prerequisites) of socio-political and economic nature in the context of the national psychology of the Bulgarian national character.

One and perhaps the most important aspect of the question posed is historical and directly relates to **the broken socio-historical continuum in the natural evolution of the Bulgarian political and economic elites**. Due to five centuries of Ottoman rule, these elites lost their aristocratic roots long ago in the functioning of the second Bulgarian state (before slavery), which practically meant the formation of entirely new elite strata in all spheres of social life. This applies with full force to the building of our bourgeois elite before the Liberation, which according to **Ivan Hadzhiyski** suffered a real tragedy because it was torn between the need to preserve the Turkish market and the need to participate in the heroic period of Bulgarian history. But it errs historically, as it prefers the former, not participating in the revolutionary struggles, not creating heroic personalities and failing to form people and morals of great style.<sup>50</sup> That is to say, a large part of this elite (the bourgeois elite) remained on the tail of a free Bulgaria despite the fact that it was involved in the construction of the new state through various participation in political institutions. And not only that: the establishment of the personal regime, palace bluster, corruption and partisanship finally decimated the Bulgarian bourgeoisie. „...It not only failed to create its own class style, which, according to the rule that the dominant ideology at a given time is the ideology of the dominant class,

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<sup>49</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>50</sup> See **Hadzhiyski**, Ivan. *Life and spirituality of the Bulgarian people*. Vol. I. Sofia: LIK, 2002, p. 445.

it also failed to impose on the social strata below it by way of example and imitation, but it also turned stylelessness, facelessness, spinelessness into a social style. The official state of Bulgaria became a country of small cheats, of petty people. **It has come to this fall that in order to be made a minister, the first condition is: not to be independent, i.e. not to have and not to be able to have your own opinion and attitude to things, nor the will to impose it.** The few great men of our big bourgeoisie, men of great style and class, like Mih. Madzharov, who, contrary to their personal interests, had the courage to tell the cruel truths right in the face of the ruling tops of their own class, naturally remained in the shadows. **Our bourgeoisie is ashamed of its history. And rightly so: it lined up behind Ferdinand, together with the politicians, the military, the professors, the writers, to help him organize the two pogroms against the Bulgarian people**<sup>51</sup> (*emphasis mine – G. M.*). Or, we should conclude that, to a considerable extent, both our economic and political elite (after the Liberation) is not prepared to engage effectively (for objective and subjective reasons) in the state governance of the country, and therefore very easily succumbs to seductive privileges and corruption schemes.

It is essential to note one more circumstance on this occasion, which refers to the problem of **political democracy**, which in Bulgaria, like the elites being formed, **has an immature character, a homegrown party system and low public popularity.** Because, as Prof. N. Genchev, „Bulgarian political democratism will be continuously marred by the lack of historical experience, by the inherited slavish traits of social behaviour. It will soon be called into question by the personal regime of the palace trying to patronize political novices...

But the most important thing is that (...) **democracy has a short life in Bulgarian history.** (...) That is why political life will follow an undefined line, quickly changing its direction through coups or palace intrigues<sup>52</sup> (*emphasis mine – G. M.*). This is the deepest, fundamental and basic reason for the negative or immature and ineffective development of political democracy in our country during the post-liberation

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Genchev, N. Op. cit., p. 307.

capitalist era. There is, however, something else that, without „ideological obtrusiveness“, we need to unravel and clarify, and which again concerns Bulgarian capitalism and the views of our economists.

In a number of his publications, and especially in his informative article „Capitalism in Bulgaria“ (1931), the liberal economist **St. Bochev** substantiated his thesis that capitalist development in Bulgaria was not only not formed naturally, but was to a considerable extent undesirable by the Bulgarian people. In particular, „**Bulgarian people** – the author writes – **are unsympathetic towards capitalism**“, while „...**in those countries** (*the developed ones – author's note*), **at least in the beginning, it was regarded as a source of common welfare** and had the most vigorous public and state protection (...) while in our country it is seen as an unnatural appendage to the economic structure of the country“<sup>53</sup>. For **Bulgaria has always vacillated between the progressive European civilization created by industrial production and the collective (and statist) theories which, in various forms, have always promised welfare to the people.**

It is important to point out that in his extensive analysis of Bulgarian capitalism the economist St. Bochev very successfully captures the fundamental reasons for its slow development. „First of all,“ emphasizes Bochev, „**our national psyche is egalitarian: we are all equal and we must remain equal, even in poverty and misery. We do not tolerate distinguished personalities – neither generals, nor statesmen, nor public figures, nor even poets and writers. Anyone who manifests himself by his talents immediately attracts the unfriendly gaze of all: he is dragged down by public opinion, even his obvious merits and qualities are denied him, and only after his death for a day or two can we allow him to remain in the place he has won for himself...** (*emphasis mine – G. M.*).“

This psyche remains the same towards the people of capital and capitalism; it transfers its hostility to the system itself. Not that anyone has ever given up its goods, but let another have them!“<sup>54</sup>

From these remarkable reflections of St. Bochev it can be concluded that **capitalism in Bulgaria has always been a „civilizational**

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<sup>53</sup> See **Bochev, St.** Capitalism in Bulgaria. Sofia: Bulgarian Science and Culture, pp. 100; 102; 253.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

**problem**“ (R. Avramov) as a consequence of the acute deficit of cultural entrepreneurial capitalism in which public good and individual profit go hand in hand in the name of nationally responsible intentions and needs.

Next (and as an important aspect), as a consequence of the rampant incompetence in the state, logically arises another distinctive quality of the rulers – **their political immorality**, which in varying degrees „strikes“ the entire political class, as well as all social spheres of society. And the paradox here is that, **although only in the Constitution, privileges are nevertheless regulated**, which, however, is no barrier to their being regularly violated as a gross manifestation of immorality in politics.

In this context, it should be emphasized that the political amorality of the dominant minority is motivated by **the spreading untouchability of the top political functionaries from the laws and the law in the Bulgarian state**. This fact in itself implies the formation of a particular type of psychological and political thinking (and behaviour) in the new dominant oligarchy, which finds expression in its profligate consumption of power and in its brazen behaviour during the practical realisation of its political responsibilities. This, in turn, automatically demoralizes politics by replacing what is valuable in political morality with what is cynical, demagogic and cultureless in real political life.

As the antipode of the Western political culture, the manifested culturelessness in politics has historically preserved the birthmarks of „managerial orientalism“ in the Bulgarian state. Its vicious conception is contained in **the monstrous party-political partisanship**, which in the late XIX century was magnificently grasped (and revealed) by the Czech researcher **K. Jireček**, who in his work „The Principality of Bulgaria“ writes: „In domestic politics the fiercest partisan malice, all kinds of intrigues, which flourish in the East, reigns supreme. Sofia is a veritable cauldron of witches. Whoever has had occasion to live a few years among the local political society will feel a nightmare all his life at the scent of this poisonous brew. Moreover, the most incredible political and semi-political gossip is often circulated there, day in and day out. (...) The unprejudiced assessment of local talents, especially of political opponents, is exceptional. (...) Hence the rapid aggrandizement of political greats and the remarkable phenomenon that people who have

enjoyed the greatest respect for some time are again quickly cast low from their pedestal“<sup>55</sup>.

This fair assessment of the partisan coteries in Bulgarian political life will be supplemented only in passing by a few more distinctive features whose immoral parameters exceed the „Bai Ganya“! These are, for example, political arrogance, blatant careerism, simple-minded power-mongering, spiritual poverty, „ethical“ venality, personality imbecility... and, in general, the pretentious imperious fatness and cartoonish obscene political language, behind which the oligarchic overlords demagogically conceal their own amoral powerlessness in running the state.

**Therefore, one of the main reasons for the poor formation and immature development of Bulgarian political democracy (1878 – 1944) was not only the lack of an aristocratic political elite or the total manipulation of the electorate, but first and foremost the fact that after the Liberation neither democracy had any ground and traditions, nor parties were adequate to the people’s power, nor capitalism was accepted by the people as a new social system.**

The other substantive aspect of the question is directly related to **the role of political subjects – parties** – in the socio-political life of the country. They are a reflection of the real political reality, carry a negative charge and predetermine the stagnant character of the political system (and democracy).

During the post-liberation period under review, the actual state of Bulgarian parties in socio-political and intra-party terms was almost always unstable and unfavourable: they were torn by **internal contradictions, party infighting and fierce power struggles**. On this occasion **Al. Stamboliyski** rightly points out that no morality, value and honour can be spoken of in the parties and that no ethical norm can stop their mad rush to the state rostrum, using it for personal gain (through compliments, murder, threats, beatings, theft, lawlessness, etc.). **„Thus constituted,“** writes the agricultural leader, **„the political parties, both in their composition and in their aims and means, have become (...) veritable political gangs, which stalk their victim – the state treasury – every minute, and which suck the blood and sweat of the popular**

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<sup>55</sup> **Jireček**, K. The Principality of Bulgaria. Sofia: Hristo G. Danov, 1897, p. 335.



**masses with tigerish impetuosity. Power – this is the silent and frosty winter night, during which and through which this rabble of vicious human beings crucifies uncontrollably and painlessly in the middle of the darkened political-social field**<sup>56</sup> (*emphasis mine – G. M.*). This assessment can be applied to all Bulgarian parties in the period after their creation and up to now, because power, money, corruption and privilege have always been the number one goal of their leaders and managements. It is completely valid for Al. Stamboliyski, who distinctly displayed the same morals in politics when he became Prime Minister of the country (we will interpret this later).

The next distinctive aspect stems from the fact that our post-liberation ruling class has over time become **a classical political oligarchy and a privileged caste**, which legally determines for itself the amount of state privileges to be enjoyed. The scale of these privileges, however, exceeds all reasonable limits, because we are talking about the state's budgetary resources, which are allocated annually by the so-called „political elite“. In this sense, the attitude of disregard for laws and rules, the use of the power of administrative office for personal gain and the drive to extract maximum profits from the voiceless rural masses create a fertile breeding ground for major corruption at various levels of the governance apparatus. An expression of the above characteristics in the Bulgarian administration is given by B. Boev, who writes: „In our country the minister is everything, for him there are no laws in most cases, and he rules on the basis of his inner conviction, i.e. out of fear of himself“<sup>57</sup>. This is why the attitude of Bulgarian politicians towards their own people is hardly associated with any democratic image,<sup>58</sup> and with any democratic political system.

The fourth significant aspect is derived from the previous ones and can be defined without a drop of doubt as excessive **corruption of the ruling Bulgarian elite**. Dozens and dozens of examples can be cited here of major misuse of state funds by a whole cohort of senior politicians, such as Teodor Teodorov (1919), Rayko Daskalov (1920), Kon-

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<sup>56</sup> **Stamboliyski**, Al. Political parties or professional organizations. Sofia: BZNS Publishing House, 1920, pp. 59-60.

<sup>57</sup> Citation: **Penchev**, P. D. Op. cit., pp. 33-34.

<sup>58</sup> See id.

stantin Muraviev (1925) and many others, but in this respect the prominent agricultural leader Al. Stamboliyski remains unrivalled as prime minister. Proof of this is that in the villa in the village of Slavovitsa (Pazardzhik) after the assassination of the Prime Minister, the commission appointed by the Ministry of Finance found **a huge amount of money in various currencies**, which are accurately described: 1,941,200 Swiss francs, 187,050 French francs, 15,500 Czech crowns, 620 English pounds, 3,672 German marks, 2,002,067 Bulgarian leva, as well as his and his children's deposit books. Data from the archives of the Treasury of the Council of Ministers have also been obtained, which show when and for what Stamboliyski took money from the state treasury. It can be seen that **for the period from 2.02.1920 to 16.03.1923 Stamboliyski withdrew from the state treasury BGN 147,186,046.045<sup>59</sup> and for most of them there are no justifying documents.** Most often the sums were withdrawn to the „Military Needs“ and „Defence of the National Cause“ funds, which was generally justified in the conditions in which he governed – the need to prepare the peace treaty and prevent the total bankruptcy of the state, etc. But among the necessary funds (for example, to finance his European tour and the stay of the Bulgarian delegation in Paris for the preparation of the peace treaty) there are also unjustified expenses for the Prime Minister's personal needs. There are references to funds withdrawn for missions abroad, with no indication of where and for what purpose the mission was; for trees received for the Prime Minister's personal holding, etc.<sup>60</sup> The Prime Minister's personal allotments were in most cases drawn out single-handedly, without the approval of the Council of Ministers, and some of them were even given to Stamboliyski's relatives. This fact is attested in the personal notebook of the Prime Minister: Stamboliyski's brother-in-law, the deputy Grigor Boyadzhiev, received the most, and for the period 22.06.1920 – 19.05.1921 he took BGN 1,529,000.<sup>61</sup>

There is also too much information about the wedding that Stamboliyski held for his daughter Nadezhda on 17.07.1921 with the son of his associate Grigor Boyadzhiev – Ivan. For the agricultural leader, this

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<sup>59</sup> See **Kyoseva**, Tsv. Op. cit., pp. 57-58.

<sup>60</sup> See id.

<sup>61</sup> See id.

was a major state event that continued in the village of Bulgarski Karaagach for three whole days with a lot of splendor and grandeur. The prominent liberal politician Petar Peshev recounts: the wedding was truly royal, because Stamboliyski sent military commands, state trucks and cars to the village to transport the wedding guests and materials for the Bengal fires and illuminations. Three bands of military music were also sent, including the Home Guard, to play for the people and to entertain the wedding guests. And to „top it all off“ the musicians were forced to don the party orange bands on their lapels...<sup>62</sup>

What a wedding: three days of eating, drinking and partying... and the state they milked... (Some authors claim that the wedding „swallowed“ over BGN 4 million of state steam!)

We can only speculate whether the agricultural helmsman also considers his own party to be part of the political rabble that sucks the blood and sweat of the popular masses with tiger-like zeal (as Stamboliyski himself claims for the other parties)!

And the last aspect that stands out as an answer to the question raised about the spread of privileges in post-liberation Bulgaria finds expression in a critical report of the MP Yanko Sakazov entitled „What have the deputies done this year?“ (1895) as a report to his New Pazar constituents, namely: „...Thirdly, **the salaries of the officials and officers had to be reduced.** The salaries of the Prince, and of ministers, and of great officials and officers, all had to be reduced. It is only **in our poor Bulgaria that such large salaries have been heard and seen.** With all the yearly expenses, the prince has about 1,600,000 levs of silver a year, the first minister 21,000 levs, the other ministers 18,000 levs each. To the generals, whom we cannot count on, 12,000 levs etc. A great officer and a great clerk takes a year’s salary which will feed 20 houses of artisans and 30 houses of peasants.

When there is talk of reducing the salaries of officials and officers, one should not forget about the travel and subsistence allowances of MPs.

Fourth: we **had to abolish the pensions**, which, to our shame and disgrace, were handed out to young, healthy and healthy people, who during their service received large and excessive salaries, and in

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<sup>62</sup> See id.

retirement received a pension as high, if not even higher, that in addition they were engaged in trade, so they took away the bread of so many people.

So **if all these reductions were made:** of the army, of the civil servants, of the large salaries, if the pensions were removed, there would be **a saving of at least 15 million leva for the state**, and with this the tax burden of the population would be lightened by 30 leva per year per house.

What did the majority of MPs do? It did not dare to cut a single penny from the military budget, on the contrary, it accepted an increase of several tens of thousands of leva. It reduced the salaries of the scribes, the despatchers and the lower officials in general, while it did not push a single penny to those who received from 3 to 7 and 8 thousand leva a year. It left the salary to the prince and the ministers. It left the pensions to remain pensions, and it cut them only here and there<sup>63</sup> (*emphasis mine – G. M.*). Or, to put it another way, **the Bulgarian post-liberation governing oligarchy showed no will or desire to curb and reduce its bloated political privileges**, which speaks only of one thing: the newly created state and its institutions were to a considerable extent used for personal selfish purposes, easy enrichment and family self-establishment (of course, on the back of the then state). Because, according to Gr. Nachovic „An oligarchy of 5 – 6 thousand people, well connected with each other by reason of their interests, has seized the town halls, district and municipal offices and is sucking the blood of the people, whom it despises and repels from the government“<sup>64</sup>. Moreover, this **outright „political greed“ of the oligarchy is characteristic of the entire capitalist stage of development** that we are considering, notwithstanding the many changes of various governments (and parties) and for which we have already provided ample facts and evidence.

Taken as a whole, the above reasons, preconditions and aspects **for the „introduction“ of privilege into Bulgarian political life after the Liberation are indeed of a very broad and complex social, political and**

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<sup>63</sup> Citation: **Hadzhiyski**, Ivan. Life and spirituality... Op. cit., p. 491.

<sup>64</sup> **Nachovic**, Gr. From the diaries. Compiled by: Andrey Pantev, Nikolay Igov. Sofia: St. Kl. Ohridski, 1999, p. 124.

**economic nature**, which is complemented by the specifics of our national psychology formed over the centuries. This – on the one hand. Second, one cannot help but note that **the privileges of power in our country were legitimized from the very beginning in the Tarnovo Constitution**, even though it served in most cases as a political screen for politicians (and especially for deputies), which is why they did not diminish but retained and increased their benefits and benefits from the state (as in the case of pensions). Third, it is extremely important to note that **a long-standing tradition** began in the 1880s, **which continues to this day, of granting state privileges to freedom fighters against previous political regimes** (the so-called „militia fighters“), whose extraordinary streak (of tradition) has not lost its historical validity. With this „great contribution“ to European political history, our ruling elite (oligarchy) ranks at the forefront of the countries of Europe in the degree of privilege of their rulers who participated in our liberation from Ottoman rule. Of course, we are not talking here at all about those Bulgarian patriots who, out of purely patriotic motives, risked their lives for the freedom of their homeland (there are tens of thousands of them) and before whom we can only bow, but about something quite different: about those of our compatriots who, using the mechanisms of power, obtained personal and family privileges for several generations, as if the Russo-Turkish war of liberation had ended in 1944, and not in 1878. Fourth, there is another peculiarity (difference) compared to Western countries and it concerns the fact that **in post-liberation Bulgaria the different types of censors were not applied as an essential variety of political privileges** in the use of universal suffrage (only men according to the Constitution). This is a great conquest of the Tarnovo Constitution, as real voting rights were given to Bulgarian citizens, and literate people were elected as deputies, without any property and censor restrictions (privileges). Fifth, despite the broad democratic rights guaranteed by the Constitution, in the absence of a parliamentary tradition and in combination with the monarch's great powers, the foundations were quickly laid during the period under review for the construction of **a corrupt and clientelistic political model**,<sup>65</sup> in which privileges totally proliferated, with the symbiosis between the ruling

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<sup>65</sup> See **Penchev**, P. D. Op. cit., p. 42.

elite and the bureaucratic class reaching paradoxical proportions. This model is largely due to the extremely strong patriarchal clan ties (inherited from Ottoman feudal relations), which by their very nature imply the toleration of various clientelistic networks (and channels) and multiple privileges as a solid bulwark of power. Finally, it should be summarized that despite the inherently democratic and anti-feudal character of the **constitution** of the time, **one of its fundamental principles, equality, was grossly violated by the ruling class throughout the capitalist stage of development** because the power privileges of the political elite were continuously expanded and increased regardless of resistance to them. Apparently, the entire political elite in Bulgaria at that time (regardless of the party-ideological profile) hardly respected the maxim, on the one hand, that laws apply to absolutely everyone in a given country, while, on the other, that „every privilege undermines the law and destroys it“ (At. Burov). Something that has been confirmed in an unprecedented way by the „socialist“ stage in our modern history (after 1944) with the creation of a special system of privileges for the elite of the workers-peasants.

## Chapter Two

### THE NOMENKLATURA „SOCIALIST“ PRIVILEGES (1947 – 1989)

It is fair to note that the establishment of communist power in Bulgaria did not take place immediately on 9 September 1944, because after that date an intensive political process began, which ended in late 1947 and early 1948 with the establishment of the Soviet-type totalitarian regime. This political process consisted of several important events that radically transformed the political, economic and social system, and they were: 1) the then opposition parties (part of the ruling coalition of the Fatherland Front – FF) were now banned and disbanded, and the others either dissolved themselves or, like the BZNS, adopted the Communist Party's program as their own. Thus, from mid-1948, **the only real political entity** in the country **was** practically the **BCP**; 2) in December 1947, after a successful referendum in favour of the establishment of a republic, a new constitution was adopted, in which **Bulgaria was proclaimed a people's republic**; and 3) **at the end of 1947, industry was nationalised**, with the economy gradually passing into state hands, with the consequent introduction of central planning in the country.

All this qualitatively changes the nature of political institutions and the importance of elections for the development of the political process in the country. For the de facto abolition of multipartyism changes the meaning of elections as an instrument of political mobilisation and political participation. During the communist rule in Bulgaria, 10 elections for the National Assembly were regularly held (1949, 1953, 1957, 1962, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1981, 1986), and the participation of the electorate in them usually varied between 98,6% (1949) and 99,9% (1971, 1976 and 1981)!!!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See details in **Todorov**, *Ant. Op. cit.*, pp. 379-399.

**The so-called „Dimitrov Constitution“, adopted on 6.12.1947, introduced for the first time in Bulgarian history the universal suffrage for all citizens of both sexes who had reached the age of 18.** Of course, this provision was as democratic as possible, but the great paradox was that its introduction coincided with the disappearance of the very meaning of political elections as multiparty, since the parties (with the exception of the BCP and the BZNS) were subsequently destroyed and dissolved.

During the so-called „socialist“ period, **a second constitution was adopted in 1971** (by referendum), from which a new stage in the country's institutional development began. However, the differences in the constitutional structure before and after 1971 are not significant, apart from the introduction of several new elements: first, **the Council of State was structured as a collective state organ of the republic**, but the post of its president became more important than that of the prime minister (in the 1947 Constitution The Prime Minister is more influential), as the National Assembly elects the Council of State (which in turn elects its own chairperson); and secondly, **Art. 1 was introduced in the Constitution, or the principle of the „leading role of the Bulgarian Communist Party“ in society** (such a provision was missing in the previous 1947 Constitution, although a one-party system had already been established), and the monopoly position of the BCP in the political life of the country was already legally established after 1971.<sup>2</sup>

Realistically speaking, state institutions continue to exist, they are branched out, they cover all social activities and extend their state presence everywhere, but this is completely formal because at every level they are under the control, or more accurately, under the general management of party organisations. This creates **a dual institutional structure, the state and the party**, which are parallel and between which there are almost the same institutional correspondences. Therefore, **the National Assembly corresponds to the Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party** – the two bodies convene once every 4 or 5 years so that there is a correspondence between them so that **the main decisions of the party congresses become decisions of the parliament immediately afterwards; the State Council elected by the National Assembly corresponds to the Central Committee (CC) of the BCP**, which

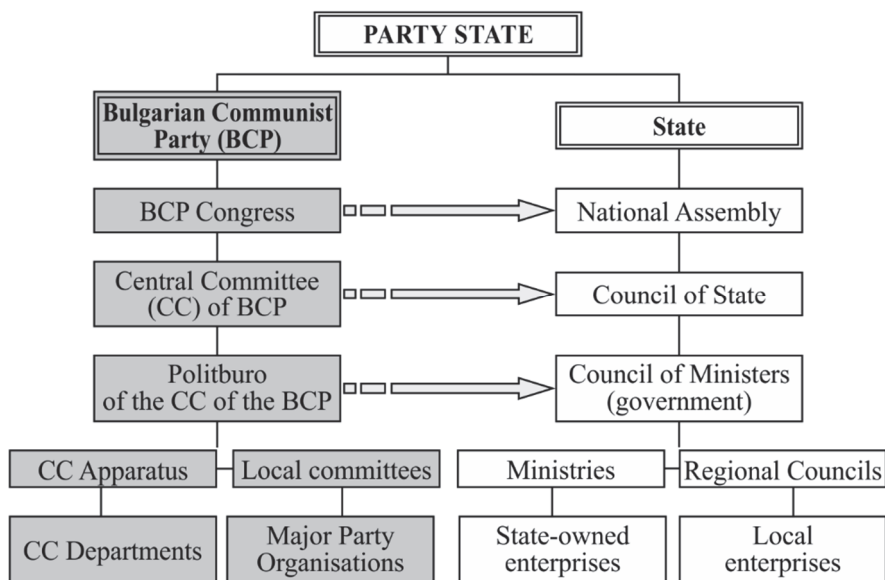
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<sup>2</sup> See id.



convenes for meetings periodically; **the Council of Ministers (the government) elected by the National Assembly corresponds to the Politburo of the CC of the BCP (elected by the Plenum of the CC).** In this sense, the control of party organs and committees over state institutions is twofold: once, through the members of the BCP who hold the relevant state posts; and second, through the decisions taken by party organs, which become absolutely binding on state organs, especially after 1971<sup>3</sup> (see *Diagram No. 2*).

**Diagram No. 2. Institutional structure of totalitarian power in Bulgaria**



*Source: Todorov, Ant. Op. cit., p. 392.*

It is evident from the diagram that the real power lies not so much in the state institutions as in the party institutions within the meaning of Art. 1 of the Constitution. Further, **the real government is not so much the Council of Ministers as the Politburo of the BCP Central Committee**, which meets periodically and takes the most im-

<sup>3</sup> See id.

portant decisions, and the ministers, who are also members of the Politburo, have much more clout than their other counterparts. In this context, the ruling Communist Party (especially in the 1980s, when it approached one million members in numbers) took on a very different institutional function: First, the BCP ceased to be an ordinary party, albeit under a one-party regime; and secondly, since the Politburo is the de facto government, and it is elected as a result of a complex system of multi-level elections (of delegates to municipal, district and regional conferences of the BCP and to the Congress), in its totality it now represents the citizens with de facto voting rights (because the Politburo is elected only in the institutions of the BCP, whereas the National Assembly, which elects the government, is elected by universal suffrage, and only members of the Central Committee, who are elected only by the delegates to the Party Congress, are entitled to vote for the Politburo). So **the party essentially finds itself in the absurd function of the de facto electorate, the national electorate, which is however narrowed because it is selected against the formal national electorate, where the ratio in the 1980s, for example, was approximately 1 : 6.3 (i.e. one-sixth of adult citizens have de facto suffrage).**<sup>4</sup>

From such a point of view, the BCP organisations themselves make more political sense to the people than the elections for MPs because of the total monopoly of one-party rule. This, on the one hand, completely depersonalizes the institutions of state power (parliament, government) and deprives the people of any reasonable political sense of participation in the whole political process (unless they are members of the Communist Party); on the other hand, however, it shows unequivocally that this power is totalitarian, that it does not recognize any principles and that it is ultimately doomed to failure because of its anti-democratic character and unsuitability to exercise its powers in the new socio-political realities of the late XX century.<sup>5</sup>

However, in order to get an even more specific picture of the nomenklatura privileges and the different ways in which the financial re-

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<sup>4</sup> See id.

<sup>5</sup> See **Manolov**, G. Introduction to Political Science. Second supplemented and revised edition. Plovdiv: VUSI, 2020, pp. 335-338 et seq.

sources are spent, we will turn our attention to some more specific areas of their investments.<sup>6</sup> For Bulgaria in particular, these are of two main types:

**The first strand involves the resources invested in the creation and maintenance of an overly large privileged financial-property base of the ruling BCP and its political and social satellites. This financial-wealth base of the ruling Communist Party has very broad and rich parameters. It includes huge property holdings and financial resources of the Party and its „satellites“ – the other political parties, social and political organizations, social movements, etc. The ruling Communist Party mainly, but also its satellites, own and dispose of two types of property holdings without control – legal, or formally legalized property; and illegal, unlegalized property, for which documents are most difficult to find.**

**1) The legal properties** of the ruling communist parties are: party homes, buildings and premises for various party needs, together with all their furnishings; special sanatoriums, hospitals and rest homes of various kinds; specialized halls, clubs and party educational institutions; and other similar properties. In totalitarian Bulgaria, for example, 87 special party homes were built in the nine districts of the country at a total cost of about 150,200 million leva at the old prices.

**2) The illegal assets** of the ruling Communist Party can never be determined with precision, since access to them is strictly forbidden and they are guarded most closely by the ruling party nomenklatura. Yet this category of property includes mainly the special residences and villas, the hunting grounds and the rest homes therein, the special funds set aside illegally in „black“ coffers for the personal needs of the rulers (of these we shall speak later).

The size of the material possessions and means of the ruling communist party and its satellites in Bulgaria is large and impressive enough, as the data and facts about our country show.

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<sup>6</sup> Such is, for example, the research of D. Gribachev „The Drama of Socialism in the Twentieth Century“, which analyses some of the problems mentioned above. From here on and in the next few pages we draw on the exposition in this book of the issues we are considering (See **Gribachev, D.** The Drama of Socialism in the XX Century. Plovdiv: Paisii Hilendarski, 1997, pp. 172-173; 174-177).

The official data show that during the totalitarian period in our country the ruling Communist Party and its satellite organizations and movements (37 in total) were generously provided with huge sums of money from the state budget. This was done by secret decisions, and only in some cases were these deeply hidden decisions „dressed up“ by „secret“ decrees of the Council of Ministers. **The funds obtained from the state budget in this way in the period 1949 – 1990 amounted to the colossal sum of BGN 3 billion and 562 million at the old prices before the changes. Of this total, the ruling Communist Party received for itself (from the republican budget) a cash subsidy of about 2 billion lev. The remaining amount of BGN 1 billion and 562 million is allocated to other political parties, organisations and movements.**<sup>7</sup>

From the very fact of the receipt by the ruling Communist Party and its satellites of budget funds amounting to BGN 3.5 billion logically follows **the question** of where these huge sums of money have gone, or for what these, created with the work of millions of Bulgarians, people's funds have been used.

Although the data are still incomplete, they **give us the following answer to this question.**

The total amount of BGN 3 billion and BGN 562 million allocated by the state treasury was used for two main purposes:

**One part of this total amount** of BGN 1 billion 313 million was directed and used for the creation of various property values, **of which BGN 808 million went to the party property of the ruling BCP alone**<sup>8</sup>. In its material expression, the created property values (movable and

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<sup>7</sup> This monetary subsidy (BGN 1,562 billion) to the satellites of the Communist Party (BCP) is divided into „fat pies“ as follows: the „fraternal“ Agricultural Union (BZNS) receives BGN 164 million; the party's combat political reserve (DKMS) – BGN 353 million; the all-people Fatherland Front – BGN 127 million. The Union of Active Fighters against Fascism and Capitalism – BGN 68 million; and the remainder of BGN 235 million was provided to meet the „needs“ of other social organizations and movements, such as the Movement for Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship (BGN 75,5 million), the Committee for Bulgarians Abroad (BGN 24,6 million), the DRNZ „G. Kirkov“ (BGN 15,5 million), the Women's Union (BGN 6,8 million), the Committee for the Defence of Peace (BGN 4,8 million), the Atheist House (BGN 2,8 million), the Committee for Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia and Africa (BGN 1,8 million) and the Defence Assistance Organisation and others – BGN 103,5 million (See *Ibid.*, p. 175).

<sup>8</sup> See *id.*

immovable property) consist of various properties, buildings and furnishings, residences, party homes, special rest stations, bases and villas, sanitary and hospital facilities, educational and resort complexes and a number of others. All these properties, of course, are available and preserved material assets, which, after the collapse of totalitarian socialism, should have been put to much better use in the interests of the people and the state.

**The other and significantly larger part** of the total state subsidy, which amounts to BGN 2 billion and BGN 249 million, is purely and simply irretrievably wasted by the ruling party, which invests BGN 1 billion and BGN 192 million for its purposes.

**The second direction** of squandering the allocated funds from the state budget for party needs is the unofficial, hidden and uncontrolled accumulation and use of material and financial resources to provide a rich system of **privileges**<sup>9</sup> to the ruling class in society. This system extends to all spheres and areas of life of the totalitarian society (similar to the privileges of the nomenklatura in the former USSR), starting from the sphere of natural goods and endowments to all ramifications of the spiritual sphere.

As a counterpoint to the above „unscrupulous“ facts and figures about „socialist“ privileges, we would like to remind you of what party finances should be used for, according to a recent instruction of the BCP: „Cash should only be spent on party needs such as: paying rent (...) decoration of party clubs and their furnishings (...) purchase of stationery; training of party activists and newly admitted Communists; exchange of experiences with similar party organizations (...) refreshments at reporting and election meetings and conferences (...) for flowers and other materials in connection with (...) national holidays and manifestations“<sup>10</sup>.

Probably the former Bulgarian totalitarian rulers have either forgotten or have not read the instructions at all (?!?), since they so generously write, distribute and absorb millions and millions of „party“ funds at the expense of the impoverished Bulgarian people...

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<sup>9</sup> See more details on the economic privileges of the nomenklatura under socialism in **Gribachev, D.** Op. cit., pp. 176-181.

<sup>10</sup> **Instructions** of the Central Committee of the BCP. Collection. Sofia: Partizdat, 1987, p. 117.

Thus, in opposition to this totalitarian nature of power, both in the 1947 Constitution and in the 1971 one, the ruling Communist Party explicitly stipulated that **all citizens of the People's Republic of Bulgaria were equal before the law and that no privileges based on nationality, origin, sex, race, creed, religion, property, and social and material status were recognized** (in Art. 71 of the Dimitrov Constitution and Art. 62 of the Zhivkov Constitution, respectively). Furthermore, **the state is obliged to ensure the equality of citizens** by creating conditions and opportunities for the exercise of their rights and the performance of their duties.<sup>11</sup> However, these deeply democratic clauses remain only on the books as good wishes, since long before the 1947 Constitution a whole cavalcade of political privileges were regulated among the ruling communist elite that had nothing to do with any equality in society.

These privileges – let us recall – are so many and so varied because they are almost a complete copy of those applied in the former USSR, which we have already examined in detail in Volume Two. We shall therefore differentiate them into several main groups, starting from the bottom upwards according to their historical origin.

### 1. GENESIS OF PRIVILEGE UNDER „SOCIALISM“

In the newly formed after the revolution nomenklatura, the consumption of power privileges was not at all left behind by the previous authoritarian rulers after the establishment of the communist regime in the country (9.09.1944). This happened **immediately after the return of Georgi Dimitrov from the USSR (1945), who in the severe conditions of post-war deficit personally recommended to introduce the system of the so-called „special supply“ for the senior party and government cadres (Stalinist model) of the „socialist“ republic.**<sup>12</sup> In this way, a part of the privileges of the political (nomenklatura) elite were legitimized already during the initial domination of the regime, which resulted in a whole series of laws and regulations, namely: **1) the Support of Victims in the Struggle against Fascism and Capitalism Act** (State Gazette, No. 224, 12.10.1944) with four subsequent additions:

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<sup>11</sup> See **Bulgarian** Constitutions... Op. cit., pp. 42; 62-63.

<sup>12</sup> See **People's Republic of Bulgaria** from beginning to end. Sofia: Ciela, 2011, p. 106.

to allow the unlawful wives of the people's fighters (with whom they lived without marriage) to receive financial assistance (from 1.07.1945); for financial support to the yataks of partisans, relatives of left-wing intellectuals and persecuted ethnic minorities (Jews and Gypsies) in large cities (from 12.08.1945); for financial support to blood relatives of anti-fascist heroes up to the third degree of kinship and to in-laws up to the first degree of kinship (from 13.05.1945); and the granting of special sums to the minor brothers and sisters of the national heroes; **2) Ordinance-Law on the recognition of the rights of graduates in holding state, municipal and public office to writers and members of the Writers' Union who have no higher education** (from 24.10.1944) (it circumvented the Law on Posts, Censuses and Salaries); **3) Ordinance – Amendment and Supplement to the „Regulations on Appointment, Transfer, Dismissal (and for Competitive Examination) in High Schools and High School Classes“**, which established a privileged procedure for the appointment of 11 categories of people – partisans and spouses of partisans; spouses and children of those murdered by the fascist dictatorship; political prisoners and their spouses; those who actively supported the partisan struggle; those unemployed due to accusations of leftistism and anti-fascism, (...) as well as teachers dismissed from other settlements with a minimum grade of „Very Good“ (from 28.10.1944); **4) A decree of the Council of Ministers on the creation of a true people's intelligentsia**, which allowed the people's heroes and their helpers to be admitted without examinations (and without educational qualifications) to the higher educational establishments, the lack of secondary education being compensated by preliminary training of 6 to 12 months in the so-called „workers' faculties“ (rabotnicheski fakulteti – rabfak).<sup>13</sup>

To these earliest privileges of the new Fatherland Front government we should add the well-established **transport privileges**. This happened as early as 30.09.1946, when all 15 luxury royal cars were inventoried and confiscated for the benefit of the state, a special compartment was created for government cars and ordered to be used only by

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<sup>13</sup> See details in: **Vodenicharov**, P. Welfare and privileges for the elite. A critique of the social policy of the totalitarian Bulgarian state [online]. <http://www.history.swu.bg/pv.pdf>.

ministers. In addition, a request was made for the purchase of 5 Packard cars from the US, totaling \$8800, with the explanation to the people that they were gifts from American workers!!!<sup>14</sup> And shortly thereafter, in late December 1946, a new proposal was discussed by the Department of Transportation to purchase 40 Packards (20 five-seaters and 20 seven-seaters), the delivery of which would cost a total of \$150,000.<sup>15</sup>

Another curious moment is from a **Politburo meeting on 23.12.1946, where by Minute No. 151 it is resolved:** 1) the former special royal train (including the luxury carriages with numbers 51, 52 and 53) was to be used only for the needs of the Prime Minister; 2) the remaining 9 carriages were to be placed at the disposal of the Minister of Transport, and on his order could be used by other ministers for important state and public affairs; and 3) it was specified that only ministers, their families and their closest aides and assistants could ride in the luxury saloon-cars. Along with this, the meeting decided to allocate one official car to each minister and two to the Prime Minister.<sup>16</sup> In other words, the tradition of the first men of the state being packed in super-luxury cars and trains to ensure their security, work, leisure and rest has been observed again.

During the years of totalitarianism, after the liquidation of the opposition parties, **the Bulgarian parliament**, despite its four-year mandate, literally had purely representative and almost formal functions. It is not permanently active, as it is now; it meets in several sessions during the year to vote on laws and declarations written by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The number of deputies is between 250 and 350, reaching up to 400, and the number of MPs increases in parallel with the reduction of the functions of the parliament. Formally speaking, the BCP does not have a monopoly position in parliament, as the seats are divided among the Communist Party, the BZNS, the DKMS and the non-party, but thanks to Art. 1 of the Constitution (1971), the leading role in society belongs entirely to the BCP. Thus, deputies enter parliament only after approval by the ruling party and its satellites (party nomenklatura, executives, prominent workers, agricultural workers, intellectuals, etc.), who implement party policy. Thus, the National

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<sup>14</sup> See **Nikolov**, G. Op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>15</sup> See id.

<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 141.



Assembly actually became a place for a short but highly prestigious (and paid) „official rest“ for regime loyalists and individuals. In other words, being a deputy then was not a profession as it is today, because deputies did not receive salaries and did not have official cars. They are, however, **paid travel allowances; are entitled to 200 leva a month representation money; use official transport when they have to (in Sofia); rest in the state stations of the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers (at low prices); eat at symbolic prices in the restaurants and canteens of the government; etc.** And all this is just to go to the capital several times a year to vote on laws and decisions already written (and approved by the Central Committee of the BCP).<sup>17</sup>

Of course, among this deputy composition most are representatives of the nomenklatura class in Bulgaria (especially the upper and middle classes), who together with prominent representatives of the working class, working peasants and the popular intelligentsia give the image of the „socialist“ state. In this sense, a significant part of the leading nomenklatura cadres are on a „double privileged dependence“, as they are entitled to receive separate benefits and advantages both along parliamentary (and party) lines and by their respective place of work.

## 2. THE PRIVILEGES OF ACTIVE FIGHTERS AGAINST FASCISM AND CAPITALISM (ABPFK)

Back in 1944, according to the propaganda of the time, the building of a classless socialist society began in Bulgaria. A significant number of citizens firmly believed that there would be no more „oppressed and humiliated“. And in order to secure support for the construction of the new life, the state redirected its substantial funds from the socially weak groups to reward the new rulers and their supporters – the so-called „**active fighters against fascism and capitalism**“. Initially, these were partisans and Yataks, helped because of the sacrifices they made in the anti-fascist resistance, most of them joining the struggle in 1944

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<sup>17</sup> The data on the maintenance of deputies in the totalitarian Bulgarian state in the period 1944 – 1989 are very scarce and are not disclosed at all on the website of the National Assembly. Therefore, we have used the official information on this issue from the printed media in our country (See „*Minaha godini*“ newspaper, 26.07.2021).

when the outcome of the war was already clear.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, immediately after 9.09.1944 the partisan elite of the Bulgarian Communist Party began to exaggerate their own participation in the resistance, ignoring the merits of the representatives of the other left parties – the Social Democrats and the farmers, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and the sacrifice of the soldiers and officers in the final stage of the war against Hitler's Germany from 1944 – 1945.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the claims of former underground activists and partisans for new privileges to be granted to them by the state increased enormously. Thus, in **June 1945, the Ordinance-Law<sup>20</sup> on people's pensions was passed**, the philosophy of which was similar to that of the 1880 Fighters' and Volunteers' Act – to give people's pensions to those physically injured in the struggle to alleviate their existence. It **introduced for the first time the category of „fighters against fascism and capitalism“**, namely „all Bulgarian subjects who, in the period from 9.06.1923 to 9.09.1944, suffered in the struggle against fascism and as a result became disabled with at least 30% loss of working capacity“. The percentage of invalidity shall be certified by a medical document, which shall also include a finding as to whether the person's state of health was the result of his anti-fascist activity. In the event that anti-fascists have died, survivor's national pensions are granted to their wives, minor children and parents. Contrary to the declared rigid and conservative norms of communist morality, this ordinance-law also allowed the illegitimate wives of the people's fighters, i.e. those with whom they lived conjugally without being married, to receive financial assistance as well.<sup>21</sup> A gesture to the party comrades who, together with their girlfriends, fought around the clock against the „monarcho-fascist dictatorship“!

Another particularly important point in the Ordinance-Law is that it pre-expands the number of „fighters“ to include persons who have

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<sup>18</sup> For example, in the Second Insurgent Operational Zone, 54,5% of partisans joined partisan units in 1944, 39,4% in 1943, 4,52% in 1942, and only 1,7% in 1941 (See **Kyoseva**, Tsv. Op. cit., p. 127).

<sup>19</sup> See id.

<sup>20</sup> At that time, the old XXV National Assembly did not exist and a new one had not yet been elected. The government governed by emergency legislation – so-called „ordinance-laws“, i.e. not passed by the representatives of the people (parliament) (See *ibid.*).

<sup>21</sup> See id.

contributed to the struggle against fascism „as public figures, people of science, art and literature“, with the certification of the fact that a person is a fighter against fascism and capitalism by the new people’s power. To this end, he is first issued with a note from the local committee of the Fatherland Front describing his specific participation in the struggle and the circumstances under which he suffered. On the basis of this note, the person receives from the relevant municipality the necessary certificate<sup>22</sup> as an active fighter against fascism.

This Ordinance-Law, barely adopted, has been amended several times, all with the aim of further expanding the number of fighters. For example, an addition of 12.08.1945 included the Yataks – those who gave shelter to the people’s fighters when they were hiding from the police – to the lists of those assisted. A new, third, addendum of 13.05.1946 followed, according to which financial support was also given to blood relatives of heroes up to the third degree of kinship and to in-laws up to the first degree of kinship. A fourth addendum dated 28.06.1946 made the minor siblings of heroes also subject to assistance. Thus, from personal assistance because of participation in the struggle, the law was transformed into patrilineal privilege.<sup>23</sup>

Later, or in **1957, the Pensions Act** came into force, which provided for special merit pensions and people’s pensions, the amount of which exceeded disability amounts by many times. According to it, **the people’s pensions are in three categories: the first** – for members of the central, district and regional leaderships of political and anti-fascist organizations, as well as for assistants to the central leaderships – commanders, chiefs of staff and political commissars or intendants of brigades, detachments and units and their deputies; **the second** – for members of the leadership of the political and anti-fascist organisations in the districts and regions, as well as for collaborators to the regional and district leaderships, commanders, political commissars of bands and their deputies; and **the third** – for other participants in the struggle against fascism and capitalism.<sup>24</sup>

During „socialism“ the preferential distribution of pensions to one social group was carried out in parallel with their withdrawal from

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<sup>22</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>23</sup> See *id.*

<sup>24</sup> See *id.*

other Bulgarian citizens. Because on **14.01.1948** the **Law on deprivation of the right to a pension of persons who had shown fascist activity** was issued. On the basis of it, the pensions of those who disappeared during the period from 9.09.1944 to 30.03.1945 in connection with the events of 9.09.1944, of those convicted by the People's Court<sup>25</sup> and of all other persons whom the authorities considered to have fascist manifestations were suspended. Here, the right to decide which persons have fascist manifestations is the prerogative of the boards of the district people's councils, which give an opinion to the Pension Board on the suspension of these pensions. For their part, the Soviets gather information about the persons „in the way they see fit“, using the Fatherland Front Committees and other pro-Communist mass organisations for this purpose. Consequently, the activities of mayors, assistant mayors, policemen, etc., who worked during the period before September 9, 1944, were not recognized as length of service,<sup>26</sup> which needs no comment at all.

It is necessary to recall that a special institution was established in 1959 by a decision of the Central Committee of the BCP of the Soviet Union to take care of the implementation of the rights and privileges of the fighters – the **Committee of Active Fighters Against Fascism and Capitalism (KABPFK)**. It divided the combatants into **four categories** according to their contributions to the underground movement, with the corresponding amounts of pension received as follows: the first category included anti-fascists who had died, those sentenced to death and those who had been partisans for more than one year; the second category included those who had participated in the partisan movement for more than six months, as well as political prisoners and immigrants; and the third and fourth categories included Yataks and all other participants in the anti-fascist fight (these four categories receive pensions from BGN 730 to 150). **A fifth category** was added, who received only BGN 45. This amount of the people's pensions is consider-

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<sup>25</sup> Only in the period between 20.09.1944 and 6.10.1944 the number of those killed without trial or conviction and disappeared was about 20,000. Separately, those convicted by the People's Court numbered 9,155, but the actual number of those affected was much higher (See *ibid.*, p. 128).

<sup>26</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 129.

ably higher than those received by the majority of unprivileged Bulgarian citizens. And one more thing – an extremely important new point is that in order to be granted a people's pension to a fighter, it is no longer necessary to have a percentage of disability. It is accepted that the harsh conditions of the anti-fascist struggle must have impaired the health of the applicants, which affected their working capacity. However, another important condition for obtaining a people's pension was introduced – that the applicant had not changed to communist ideas, and for this purpose he presented a relevant document<sup>27</sup> (I wonder what this document is).

The continuously increasing preferences regarding the pensions of the fighters against fascism and capitalism continued in the following years. For example, **at the end of 1969**, an amendment to the „Regulations for the Implementation of the Pensions Act“ was adopted, according to which **the amount of the pensions of active fighters was increased and the people's pension was defined as additional to the old-age pension**; on 1.01.1970, a further Supplement to the Pensions Act was adopted, in which the retirement age for active fighters was set lower for length of service and old age – 55 years for men and 50 years for women, and a requirement of 15 years of minimum service<sup>28</sup> etc.

But this is not all that is connected with the privileges of these fighters, because since the end of the 1960s some of the benefits and privileges of the active fighters began to be passed on to their children and grandchildren (for example, the privileged admission to universities), which totally discredits the idea of a just „socialist“ society, as a small nomenklatura-oligarchic stratum constantly acquires a number of new and new advantages (privileges) to the detriment of the vast majority of people in Bulgaria.

In general, since the late 1960s and early 1970s in Bulgaria (by special Decree No. 31 of 25.08.1969), the improvement of **the material and social situation of revolutionary cadres** was further regulated **by increasing the existing privileges<sup>29</sup> (and rights), as follows: the right to apply for a job – priority over all other citizens; pension rights – use of**

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<sup>27</sup> See id.

<sup>28</sup> See id.

<sup>29</sup> See **Pushkarova, Iva**. Privileges in the totalitarian state [online]. *www.justicedevelopment.bg*, p. 14.

**all kinds of pensions, only for ABPFK; social rights – special medical care, access to housing funds, etc.; educational rights – priority studies in secondary and higher schools without competitive examinations, etc.; and all sorts of other rights – access to hunting farms, villas, residences, etc.** Or, to put it shortly, „nomenklatura communism“ in action.

There is, however, another drastic fact of Bulgarian totalitarian reality, which can hardly be found in other countries of totalitarian socialism. **It refers again to the special pension privileges of the social caste of „active fighters against fascism and capitalism“ (ABPFK) created by the regime, and in particular to their numbers and the money spent on their pensions.** According to some data, **the total number of persons receiving three types of pension as of 31.12.1989 was 73,258, of which 45,830 were purely privileged personal and hereditary „people’s“ pensions for persons declared ABPFK.**<sup>30</sup>

Incidentally, we would note that the privileges of the nomenklatura class extend so deeply into the various social spheres that **in 1969, the Ordinance on the use of public baths was adopted**, which contained special clauses for the people’s heroes: children under 5 and **ABPFK were entitled to free use of public baths, to a free sheet and a free stall in the bath**, etc.<sup>31</sup> And all this provided that the bath ticket then cost some 5 stotinki???! The Ordinance forgot to mention whether the calves in the public bathrooms will scrub the Mormon nomenklatura bodies with money or for free!???!

Apart from the privilege for a certain category of people, the two types of „people’s“ pension have a very impressive quantitative dimension. **The state budget expenditure for their payment in 1989, for example, amounted to BGN 45 million.** However, this is an amount „allocated“ by the state budget for only one year, and the same pensions were received for nearly 20 consecutive years. **During these 20 years of the „operation“ of this special advantage (1970 – 1989), the state treasury spent the enormous sum of BGN 749 million at the then prices for the two types of „people’s“ pension!...**<sup>32</sup> This is also the price the people have to pay for the „special merits“ of this same special layer of society. For in the country then only pensions were periodically

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<sup>30</sup> Citation: **Gribachev**, D. Op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>31</sup> See **State Gazette**, No. 100, 26.12.1969.

<sup>32</sup> See **Gribachev**, D. Op. cit., p. 180.

updated by special decrees and edicts, as incidentally happened with all the privileges of the nomenklatura class and its satellite layers.

Why such an ugly mockery of a beautiful, alluring and utopian ideal, and only to the extent of a degenerate privileged lifestyle? Here is probably one of the most precise and well-reasoned answers given by the great Bulgarian writer Georgi Markov in his essay „Ideas, Ideology and Reality“, which we will quote verbatim:

„And so the people in our country who came to power in the name of a new, fairer, and more dignified human life, in just five years created, strengthened, and developed to the highest degree the notion of privilege and privileging society. **The freedom fighters and communists of yesteryear have now lined up on the list of the privileged and demanded to be paid everything with interest, of course at the expense of the people.** Heroes and pseudo-heroes thought it only natural that, at a time when the people were tightening their belts, they should gorge themselves on the products of the special supply and fight among themselves to gain a more privileged position. **Former guerrillas, political prisoners and their helpers rushed to the public treasury for privileges and demanded to be paid. Anyone who had had whatever collision with the police was considered absolutely entitled to drain the Bulgarian people for at least twenty years.** Someone had once said that communism was an idea for aristocrats or the most self-conscious intellectuals. That is why there were very few true heroes who survived, who knew that their heroism was over the moment they were paid. **Vast numbers materialized their unfulfilled death sentences in such a flamboyant manner that one has the impression that they considered the world to be indebted to them for all eternity. The newly emerged rulers competed on inventing feats in the past in order to get more.** At some point, it seemed that all the party men were gripped by the obsession to find something heroic in their past at any cost and prove it in order to get the appropriate badge, recognition and entitlement to some privilege. Thousands of cowards and nobodies did each other favours with biographical data in order to pass themselves off as pure revolutionaries in order to get to the stake. (...) **Of course, we must make a new distinction here – that there is a huge difference between the privileges given to the people of labour, such as the heroes of socialist labour, the noble miners or the noble shepherds, on**

**the one hand, and the party elite, on the other. The tiny privileges given to the former are only an addition to the medal and do not change their social and societal status. Whereas the second privilege makes you a member of a select society which cannot be called a class as it has no class roots but is a caste.** Belonging to a caste is a kind of noble rank from the time of the Sun King. (...)

**For it is indeed a tragic joke to watch all these former sons and daughters of the village, former herdsmen, cowherds and donkey-herders, who are now trying to live the life of Madame Pompadour and give out aristocratic manners in the name of... communism**<sup>33</sup> (*emphasis mine – G. M.*).

Yes! The writer is absolutely right, but this is only the beginning of the lavish nomenklatura-privileged life of a handful of oligarchs in the „socialist“ society.

In the enjoyment of various types of benefits and privileges, there are also those that affect **ordinary party members** (nomenklatura) depending on their party position (member of the Communist Party, party secretary, party group leader, etc.). These privileges apply to the entire party mass of the Communist Party, which at the end of 1989 numbered nearly 1 million people. Thus, in practice, **party membership in the Communist Party is in itself a great privilege, from which follow a number of other advantages for party members** (compared to non-party members), such as: faster promotion in the hierarchy of managerial positions; priority in employment in all social spheres; priority in applying to the specialized state bodies and services (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Committee for State Security, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc.); easier and faster procedures for issuing important documents (international passport, etc.); and so on and so forth. These, as is implied, are crumbs compared to the regulated and unregulated privileges of the senior and middle nomenklatura, but they are instead implicitly imposed as the most essential „certificate of loyalty“ to the BCP, on the basis of which a dizzying political career is built.

Along with the privileges of party members, there are others that directly apply to **a narrow circle of people, mainly from the artistic and**

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<sup>33</sup> **Markov, G.** When the clocks have stopped. New distant reports on Bulgaria. Sofia: P. K. Yavorov, 1991, pp. 154-155.



**creative intelligentsia**, and who, thanks to their high social status, „consume“ a number of benefits and advantages. To these we can include: prominent writers and poets; famous composers and singers; venerable painters and actors; popular journalists and public figures; eminent scientists and researchers (from various fields of science), etc., who literally became the fodder of totalitarian power. Therefore, these **favoured individuals of power** (partisans and non-partisans) constantly enjoy its support in the form of a number of special privileges, such as: priority receipt of apartments and nice villa plots; free holidays in specially built for them creative homes; provision of long-term expensive business trips to fabulous places in foreign countries, etc.<sup>34</sup> Naturally, among them there are indeed many deserving intellectuals who have proven their talent and professionalism, but there are also those for whom party membership is an end in itself, power and career for the sake of personal and family well-being.

The next nomenklatura echelon, which consumes a number of privileges, is the so-called „middle nomenklatura“. This privileged nomenklatura group includes all middle-level activists and leaders, or the **so-called „middle-level nomenklatura“ (secretaries of regional and district committees of the BCP, chairmen of district people’s councils, leaders of mid-level caucus social organizations – the FF, the DKMS, the BPS, etc.)**. This group is considerably larger than the composition of the senior nomenklatura and, accordingly, its privileges depend on the rank and position they occupy in the party-state hierarchy. For these persons of the group is characteristic the access to special supplies, hunting, provision of various material privileges, acquisition of apartments, villa plots, use of official cars and chauffeurs, almost free recreation, etc., i.e. again secured material future of the generation and relatives.

The interesting thing about them is that they sometimes move demagogically in the streets, they don't use their cars to demonstrate superiority and material wealth over others, but they never forget to purposely take care to arrange and accommodate their relatives in prestigious offices for material gain.<sup>35</sup> They consume privileges with no

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<sup>34</sup> See details in **Chirov, Al.** *The Nomenklatura, Democracy and Transition*. Sofia: Ciela, 2009, pp. 122-123.

<sup>35</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 121.

less joy and pleasure because of the important positions and leadership positions they occupy both at the centre and at the grassroots, and literally become local gauleiters. Their children in law entered foreign language schools in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Lovech and elsewhere, studied as students in the universities of the USSR and other then socialist countries, mainly law and international economic relations (as well as some other prestigious specialties). And the rest, who for one reason or another stayed in Bulgaria, usually enrolled in history, sociology, law. And after graduating, they entered the workforce without any difficulties, in a nomenklatura direction, in leading positions in the state and economic apparatus, in the diplomatic corps, in our overseas commercial companies.<sup>36</sup> These are people who show high self-confidence and capacity to dispose of the office they have been given, and by their actions largely contribute to entrenching corruption in society, thereby demoralising the minds of ordinary working people and totally discrediting equality before the law. Ultimately, it is up to these people, without formalities and obstacles of a subjective nature, to get you a passport to the West, a nice villa plot near Sofia and on the Black Sea coast, an apartment, to help you take up a better-paid job (if you are a member of the BCP), to save you the trouble of a lawsuit, or to get you other benefits and perks that are either out of reach for the ordinary citizen or require „a lot of walking the walk“. This is the element of nepotism,<sup>37</sup> or as it is now fashionable to call it, „he is a son of a bitch, but he is our son of a bitch“ (in Victoria Nuland’s phrase). These privileges of the middle echelon of the nomenklatura are not small at all, because it is the reserve cadre of the senior nomenklatura persons in all spheres of public life, it benefits many people and brings a number of material benefits, since they are loyal to the Party.

How beautifully the poet said it:

Give him nice and golden pear,  
And there will be no moan or tear.

*Radoy Ralin*<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>37</sup> See *id.*

<sup>38</sup> **Ralin**, Radoy. *Hot peppers (Lyuti chushki)*. Second edition. Sofia: Balgarski hudozhnik, 1990, (no page).

### 3. THE PRIVILEGES OF THE SENIOR POLITICAL NOMENKLATURA

As one might suppose, the various types of privileges in communist Bulgaria were most widely extended and used by the top echelon of the party – the senior nomenklatura. These totalitarian privileges, which are partly regulated primarily by various party decisions (of the Politburo and the Central Committee of the BCP), have no equal in their magnitude, since they are intended for an extremely limited circle of nomenklatura personages (party oligarchy) from the top party-state leadership of the country.

To what has been said about these privileges so far, we will add only a few striking facts: **first**, they, the privileges, were further „legalized“ **back in 1956**, when the party elite in Bulgaria legitimized them with **Protocol „A“ of the Politburo**, and **two years after that, Decision „B-12“ of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the BCP was adopted for the creation of a non-accountable fund for the maintenance of those in power in the country**; **secondly**, in 1963, the **Communist Party of Bulgaria established a fund for the maintenance of those in power. The Politburo of the Central Committee of the BCP made new decisions (reflected in Protocol „B-13“) to improve the work of guarding, supplying, and servicing the senior Party and state nomenklatura** (as well as the delegations and guests of the Party and the government); and **third**, by virtue of these „normative“ documents, sec.i.e., the protocols, **the care of the senior party-state echelon is entrusted to the Safety and Security Directorate (SSS)**,<sup>39</sup> which diligently fulfills all the nomenklatura’s privileges and whims (from the free food of the senior elite to the empty planes that drones them around the world at the people’s expense). Thus, only under the unaccountable fund, the additional annual maintenance of the powers-that-be is as follows: **20,000 leva for the first secretary of the Central Committee of the BCP; 5,000 leva for each of the other secretaries** (against an annual salary of nearly 8,000 leva until the monetary exchange in 1962); the granting of all the properties of the former royal court for the use of the new senior republican nomenklatura (by Decree of the Council

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<sup>39</sup> See **Lalov, K., V. Veleva.** Power, Money, Communism. Sofia: Trud, 2007, pp. 24-25.

of Ministers of the People's Republic of Belarus of 5.02.1947)<sup>40</sup>, etc. Thus, **since 1963, the privilege of being thoroughly taken care of entirely at the expense of the state has been given to the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the BCP, the Chairperson of the Presidium of the National Assembly (at that time – the Head of State), members and prospective members of the Politburo, Secretaries of the BCP, Deputy Chairmen of the Council of Ministers, Ministers and the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers.**<sup>41</sup> That is, the highest party-state nomenklatura in the social and political hierarchy.

To illustrate all that has been said about the totalitarian privileges of the communist nomenklatura, we will cite a few more facts from **K. Lalov and V. Veleva „Power, Money, Communism“**, which on the basis of rich documentary material objectively reveal the vicious nature of these privileges. Here are the striking facts that the authors deal with: **first fact** – „...for the period 1979 – 1989, **2,860,039 BGN** were distributed from the Safety and Security Directorate treasury to the top executives according to their positions and **paid in hand (...)**“ (*for food for the senior nomenklatura – author's note*); **second fact** – for the period 1985 – 1989, under the preferential regime, the senior leadership of the BCP purchased 51 cars, for which BGN 702,719 were paid, while the market value of the cars was BGN 3,624,256 and only on this item **the entitled have deprived the state by BGN 2,921,537!**“; **third fact** – for the years 1968 – 1989, from the secret extra-budgetary accounts of the „Financing of Special Departments“ office, the „first“ rulers were **„paid representative funds in the amount of BGN 17,804,850“**<sup>42</sup> (*emphasis mine – G. M.*). Moreover, the amounts have been repeatedly increased during these 21 years, without any changes at all being made to the notorious Politburo minutes!!!

The total recapitulation of the above three obvious facts about the size of these totalitarian privileges of the nomenklatura alone points to **the colossal figure of about BGN 23,586,426**, which is truly staggering, because it is directly „extorted“ illegally from the state budget of the country.

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<sup>40</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>41</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>42</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 36; 39; 84.

On the basis of these enormous financial resources used for all possible **privileges of the senior leadership in Bulgaria**, let us present in a little more detail **the areas of realization** of these privileges during the „socialist“ construction as follows:

#### - Salaries

The remuneration of the senior nomenklatura during „socialism“ was one of the strictest „secrets“ of the state then. Yet, after the democratic changes, the data show that while **the average salary (by 1989) of ordinary working people was BGN 180, that of the highest nomenklatura was in the range of BGN 1200 – 2000** (of the General Secretary of the BCP, members of the Politburo, secretaries of the Central Committee, etc.).<sup>43</sup> Naturally, this is only the net salary of the top Bulgarian nomenklatura, without taking into account here all the other nomenklatura privileges which the nomenklatura itself accrues to itself and which we shall consider.

#### - Food

During the era of „socialism“, the eligible members and candidates of the Politburo and the secretaries of the Central Committee and their families were also provided with **extremely good quality vitamin food**. This is because the Safety and Security Directorate (UBO) also took care of one more thing – all the products that were served on the table of the „most responsible comrades“ went through a proper chemical and bacterial analysis in the laboratory of the management beforehand. This laboratory was set up by Secret Order No. 191 of the Council of Ministers of 12.10.1966 in order „to carry out the overall activity of controlling foodstuffs for radioactivity which are used in the special supply system of the UBO“. In Art. 8, it is ordered that „the overall work of the establishment of the laboratory and its future activities shall be carried out with due secrecy!“<sup>44</sup>. After passing through the control of the laboratory, the products are prepared in the canteen maintained by the UBO (the restaurant in the Rila Hotel in the capital, for members of the Central Committee, and in the Vrana and Boyana, for members of the Politburo) and distributed to the homes, and limits are set to cover the cost of the food for those entitled from the UBO budget.

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<sup>43</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>44</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 33.

Within these limits, at first (1962 – 1973), **members of the Politburo were given BGN 450 per month, with an additional BGN 150 for each member of a family of more than three, but not more than BGN 300.** Thus, the limit for prospective Politburo members and CC secretaries was BGN 400 per month. But where the family is larger than three, the extra is BGN 100 each (eligible families include both parents and their wives).<sup>45</sup>

The recapitulation shows that for 26 years **in the period 1963 – 1989 Todor Zhivkov received BGN 345,100 for food from the state budget**, Pencho Kubadinski (*deputy chairperson of the Council of Ministers and chairperson of the National Council of the FF – editor’s note*) – BGN 286,950, Stanko Todorov (*Prime Minister from 1971 to 1981 and Speaker of Parliament from 1981 to 1990 – editor’s note*) – BGN 282,100, Grisha Filipov (*member of the Council of State, Prime Minister from 1981 to 1986, deputy in five parliaments – editor’s note*) – BGN 221,800.<sup>46</sup>

Although they regularly receive cash for food when the beneficiaries are on holidays in sanatoriums, rest stations, hunting lodges and farms, they do not pay for the food and drink they consume. This expenditure on account of the UBO amounted to BGN 71,828 in just five years from 1985 to 1989.<sup>47</sup>

In the words of a direct witness of the nomenklatura „food privileges“ – Damyan Damyanov (son of the communist activist Rayko Damyanov) in the third entrance from the side of Lege Str. of the hotel „Rila“ there was a shop for luxury goods, from which mainly the children and wives of the nomenklatura went to shop. Usually they shopped for about BGN 50 – 60 000 per year for imported goods of the second direction (Western): expensive cosmetics, expensive clothes, expensive cars, etc., and from 1971 – 1972 quality Western machinery (mostly Japanese) was imported. And although they were imported in currency, they (the goods) were paid for in Bulgarian leva at the official exchange rate then – 96 stotinki for one dollar.<sup>48</sup>

Of course, in the restaurant and the shop of this nomenklatura hotel there is access to a limited circle of people, namely: the central

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<sup>45</sup> See id.

<sup>46</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>47</sup> See id.

<sup>48</sup> See „*168 chasa*“ newspaper, 16 – 22.12.2022.

nomenklatura apparatus of the Central Committee of the BCP – 265 people; about 20 people members and candidates of the Politburo; over 130 people ministers, secretaries of the Council of Ministers, senior officials in the Council of Ministers; privileged wives and mistresses of the senior nomenklatura and some people's ministers. And since 1971, when the State Council was established, another 200 members and officials have been added to them.<sup>49</sup> That is, **there are about 300 – 400 senior nomenklatura persons (and other nomenklatura positions) who are almost totally dependent on the „socialist“ state and who are totally privileged in the purchase of food and other expensive but in most cases scarce durable goods** (e.g. household appliances, refrigerators, TV sets, cars, etc.).

In what order were the meals and the sale of goods carried out in the Rila complex?

According to D. Damyanov there were three main levels: on the first one the entitled person could go and eat in the Rila canteen at preferential prices; on the second one the main shopping was done by the designated nomenklatura; and on the third level the food was distributed to the nomenklatura homes of the „god-chosen“ social rulers. Moreover, the prices of the takeaway menus were extremely popular – 35 stotinki for kebapche, 6,50 leva/kg of sausage, 3,50 leva cheese for export in a tin, 2 – 3,50 leva Bulgarian cheese, etc. Moreover, food could be taken from the canteens of the complex without restrictions for the journey, and prominent right-holders loaded trunks with onions, sausages and salami to feed their family as well as possible.<sup>50</sup> And all this is documented, because, for example, these 300 or so people in 1982 or 1983 bought and took about 1 ton of sausages and meat, 500 – 600 kg of tomatoes, 300 kg of cheese, 250 – 300 kg of strawberries, etc.<sup>51</sup> In this case, only alcoholic drinks and wines were paid for by the nomenklatura at special low prices, which, however, did not reduce their consumption but, on the contrary, steadily increased it, since the entitled people bought qualified drinks every day (thousands of bottles a month) for their relatives, friends and acquaintances.

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<sup>49</sup> See id.

<sup>50</sup> See id.

<sup>51</sup> See id.

During the Chernobyl accident (1985), when the radioactivity of the atmospheric deposition increased about 10,000 times (during the period 30 April – 2 May) **in the famous hotel „Rila“ was cooked take-away food for 50 – 60 people – members of the Politburo (and in the canteen-restaurant were allowed to eat a total of 250 people)**, which was entirely imported products, including lamb was delivered all the way from Australia and New Zealand.<sup>52</sup> And all this was going on amidst dozens of propaganda measures at the time that radiation levels were within limits and that it was not at all dangerous to the general population!!!

#### **- Housing**

Especially for housing, the UBO secured **the apartments of the members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the BCP**, fully furnishing them and maintaining them permanently. During the audit appointed in 1990, the State Financial Control (SFC) found that, in order to maintain the flats and villas of the entitled persons, **the UBO provided them with one domestic maid and one female guest worker – up to four days a week. In addition, the UBO budget also covered all heating, lighting, water, and other living expenses of the beneficiaries. And for the use and servicing of the villas, the authorities pay into the UBO’s budget... BGN 12 per month!**<sup>53</sup> And we do not calculate at all the fact in what way the housing is obtained – without order, in the most prestigious quarters, in the center and in the nicest places..., when the ordinary Bulgarian waits five years or more to live in a modest flat in a prefabricated apartment block...

#### **- Education**

As is well known, taking care of the education of the nomenklatura is one of the most important privileges for them. For this reason, the system of privileged access to higher education is being established gradually, with the number of privileges and their grounds multiplying more and more with each passing year. **Only a month after coming to power, the FF government issued a decision giving priority in applying to higher education to „participants in the People’s War of Liberation, partisans, concentration camp guerrillas,“ as well as to all those affected by discriminatory laws under the previous regime.** The Decree

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<sup>52</sup> See „168 chasa“ newspaper, 13 and 19.06.2019.

<sup>53</sup> See Lalov, K., V. Veleva. Op. cit., p. 32.



of the Council of Ministers of 13.12.1944 enabled all prospective students – combatants from the front – to enrol at the University of Sofia, giving them credit for the winter and summer semesters of the academic year 1944 – 1945.<sup>54</sup> Thus, as early as the spring of 1946, the systematic institutionalization of privileges for various social groups having a common class-party and social „denominator“ began. First of all, privileged admission was established for front-line fighters, orphans of the wars and resistance, political prisoners, concentration camp inmates and partisans, who were given the right to compete with each other for 20% of the places for each specialty. Then, in the autumn, a second group of privileged persons – the widows of the war and resistance dead – was legalised, and a further 20% of places were allocated to war invalids. Subsequently, the admission system developed by the representatives of the university college was finally violated by the XVIII Decree of the Council of Ministers of 18.10.1946, which demanded a further increase in the number of students by 20%. At the same time, two faculties of the University of Sofia, the Faculty of History and Philology and the Faculty of Theology, due to lack of sufficient applicants, admitted students without examination.<sup>55</sup> Thus, as early as 1946, practices emerged that would gradually become institutionalized as basic elements of the socialist admission system – **admission with privileges and admission without examination.**<sup>56</sup>

Let us note that there are two main criteria by which privileges in access to higher education can be distinguished: the first is the nature of their grounds – academic or social; and the second is how these privileges operate – directly, i.e. by guaranteeing direct admission to a certain category of applicants, or indirectly, i.e. by providing a greater opportunity for a certain group of applicants to enter higher education by setting quotas for them. If we apply both criteria at the same time, we obtain 4 groups of privileges: a) direct academic; b) indirect academic; c) direct social; d) indirect social.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> See **Boyadzhieva**, P. Social Engineering. Policies for admission to higher education during the communist regime in Bulgaria. Sofia: Institute for Studies of the Recent Past, 2010, p. 121.

<sup>55</sup> **History** of Sofia University. Authors. Sofia: St. Kl. Ohridski, 1988, p. 251.

<sup>56</sup> See **Boyadzhieva**, Op.cit., Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> See id.

However, this privileged system of higher education, which on the face of it also has a social character, is extremely well disguised by a „nomenklatura socialist veil“. For it is so artfully designed that ultimately higher education is to be entered and completed by nomenklatura cadres and their offspring, regardless of whether they meet the legal requirements. Or, as P. Boyadzhieva points out: **the privilege of „being outside the scope of the rules“ is reserved for children of parents with a certain social status and social role: „Every year, the Central Committee of the BCP compiled lists of unclassified prospective students, children of the senior management hierarchy, and famous cultural and social figures.** It was a great battle to harm the „child“ at any cost on this list – a „sesame“ for the university gates. The list was approved by the Secretary of the Central Committee and no one else was allowed to add to it. Subsequently, the minister only signed it and sent it to the respective rector, who was obliged to enroll the honored students. A few rectors were dismissed and publicly reprimanded because they had dared to enrol some of their own people through the list. And to blunt the resentment in the universities themselves, unranked children of university academics were also included in the lists<sup>58</sup>. Or, the privilege of „being outside the scope of the rules“ is, on the one hand, a trademark for the children and grandchildren of the top communist nomenklatura (and its layers), and on the other, invariably guarantees their graduation from higher education regardless of their intellectual capabilities, and at some of the most prestigious Bulgarian (and foreign) universities.

#### **- Health**

It has been a public secret since the time of „socialism“ that all high-ranking nomenklatura comrades are treated in the specialized Government Hospital in Sofia, for which exceptional health care is provided, and completely free of charge for all prominent patients.

By decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the BCP, **a large amount of foreign currency was spent from the budget of the BCP to pay for the treatment of certain persons in Paris, London, Vienna, Bonn and Washington, for which 599,293 leva were spent.** One

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<sup>58</sup> See **Boyadzhieva, P.** The Hidden Lessons of Higher Education Admission Policies under the Communist Regime. Bulgarian Communism. Debates and interpretations. Collection of articles. Sofia: Centre for Academic Research, 2013, p. 192.

more thing, no cases of treatment in socialist countries have been established, the majority of those treated being former and present leaders or members of their families, with high income and with rights to purchase non-socialist currency at a certain privileged rate. Thus, for example, 28,577 leva were spent for the treatment of Kiril Nestorov in the Federal Republic of Germany and England; for Ivan Panev in the Federal Republic of Germany and France – 33,561 leva; for David Elzar – 34,848 leva; for Lydia Lukanova in the Federal Republic of Germany and Austria – 30,311 leva; for Elena Doinova in the Federal Republic of Germany – 6,026 leva, etc.<sup>59</sup> Of course, almost none of the ordinary Bulgarians can afford such costly treatment abroad for the simple reason that they neither have surplus currency, nor do they have the appropriate connections with the ubiquitous nomenklatura (to help them).

#### - Holidays

One of the most attractive nomenklatura privileges for the top noblemen is to go on holiday without money in our picturesque resorts and special residences. Here is how the first nomenklatura heads of state vacationed, according to **Kiril Lalov**, who audited the sites: „In violation of the rules and regulations of the UBO, about BGN 2 million are annually budgeted in the „Other People’s Contentment“ account. These funds were used to meet the expenses of the entitled persons in rest homes and stations, and **their limit for free food was increased by 30% specifically for rest days**. Fruit and refreshments served on the beach or in the rooms were not included in this limit.

The main site visited in summer time by the entitled persons is „Euxinograd“. There, in the Tsar’s chambers, the leaders of the People’s Republic and the Communist Party soared in their greatness to the Tsar Boris III, hated for his blue blood. There Zhivkov unleashed his construction fantasy...

**The value of the old palace of BGN 2,800,884 has been increased by newly built buildings for BGN 42,191,496 and furnishings for BGN 4,590,000. Or, the government throws for its chambers in „Euxinograd“ a total of BGN 49,582,380.** In addition to the hotel buildings and food blocks (kitchen facilities), buildings for medical services, kindergartens, a greenhouse for flowers and shops were built. An indoor sports pavilion,

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<sup>59</sup> See **Lalov**, K., V. Veleva. Op. cit., pp. 51-52.

a volleyball and tennis court, a bowling alley with a swimming pool, a boat hangar, a summer cinema, etc. were built for leisure purposes.

**The maintenance of the Euxinograd alone cost the budget of the UBO for the period 1985 – 1989 BGN 7,531,129. The twenty-three eligible persons and their families were served by 202 employees, for whom BGN 2,906,785 were paid in wages, excluding the Social Security.**

Apart from the wine cellar of the palace, the right holders also visited the Shabla reserve, where a fisherman's hut, a pheasantry and solar greenhouses for vegetables were built for them<sup>60</sup> (*emphasis mine – G. M.*).

One can only guess who, when and at what value squandered the wrong people's money for personal desires (and pleasures) in the paradise place „Euxinograd“ – the monarch Ferdinand of Coburg and Gotha or the communist Todor Zhivkov. Obviously, various scholars and experts have yet to examine these important moments of the totalitarian rule of „socialist“ Bulgaria...

#### **- Transport**

This privilege is one of the sweetest for the **senior nomenklatura and their families, because they travel absolutely free on planes and other means of transport** to a variety of destinations around the world. For example, as early as 1971, by order of the State Defense Committee, the specialized group of government aircraft was reorganized into an independent air squadron, „Air Squadron 28“, under the command of the head of the UBO. The regulation on the use of government aircraft (again given in the secret Protocol B-13 of the Politburo of the Central Committee) was initiated unilaterally by Todor Zhivkov (and later by Decision 252 of the Politburo of the Central Committee in 1987), and **for the period 1985 – 1989 13 451 000 leva were spent for the maintenance of „Air Squadron 28“**.<sup>61</sup>

In checking the logbook, the audit carried out by the State Audit Office found that **the majority of the flights carried out by aircraft and helicopters were entirely for personal use**. Visits were made mainly to seaside and mountain resorts and hunting farms. The flights were one-

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<sup>60</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>61</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 46.

way and were also used by persons who were not members of the Government and the Politburo; by Vladimir and Evgeny Zhivkovi and by the families of members and candidates for membership of the Politburo. The large number of flights for personal use is also due to the fact that some of the party and state leaders or their wives do not get along with each other and, in order not to spoil the mood, order separate planes.<sup>62</sup> In other words, almost the entire senior nomenklatura and their „prominent“ offspring „tour“ the country's state aircraft to every possible route at home and abroad to make a fool of themselves, using this privilege gratuitously (including ordering empty plane trips to pick up nomenklatura daughters and sons from noisy party-goers!) In other words, the state's airplanes are used as private ones, always at the disposal of the authorities, and no one holds accountable those highly respected nomenklatura rulers who take advantage of this expensive boon (along with their families and children) without any problems.

#### **- Residences, palaces, holiday homes and hunting farms**

According to some authors, this privilege remains unrivalled in the People's Republic of Bulgaria, as the construction of luxury residences, homes and farms is like a hobby for the communist elite. The main initiative for their construction, of course, was that of Todor Zhivkov, and **only in the last 25 years (1964 – 1989) of his rule were built: 30 residences, between 50 and 60 holiday homes and special huts, as well as 15 hunting farms – owned by the Central Committee of the BCP and the Council of Ministers.**<sup>63</sup> Or the number of these nomenklatura recreation and rest homes is over 100, which is an impressive figure compared to this type of homes in other socialist countries, including the former USSR. Moreover, the construction of each of these objects cost between BGN 5 and 15 million (as of 1962 – 1963), and their maintenance – about BGN 5 – 6 million,<sup>64</sup> which actually represents an extremely large state sum by „socialist“ standards, given that they (the sites) were used only sporadically – during vacations, holidays, hunting, etc. And only by a limited group of people high in the hierarchy of the

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<sup>62</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>63</sup> See „*168 chasa*“ *newspaper*, 10 – 16.02.2022.

<sup>64</sup> See *id.*

state, i.e. the nomenklatura oligarchy.<sup>65</sup> In other words, while the „socialist“ workers languish in wooden bungalows during their vacations, the red elite annually luxuriate in picturesque palaces and holiday homes that contain absolutely everything produced as luxury (and scarce for the people) goods in „rotten“ capitalism.

#### - Villas and cars

One of the most characteristic privileges of the senior nomenklatura in Bulgaria is the **state construction of private villas for the senior party and state leaders**. This is evident from the financial audits carried out by the State Financial Control in 1990, which established that the construction of private villas and apartments for the entitled was taking place alongside state construction. What is atypical in this case is that **there is absolutely no regulation for the construction of private facilities**.<sup>66</sup> As a result, all materials are actualized at wholesale prices, and in almost all cases the high-rise villas are built without design documentation and signed contracts. In this way, the highest party-state leaders and the leading nomenklatura cadres from the middle management echelon build private villas in picturesque natural places (for example, Dragalevtsi district, Boyana villa zone in Sofia) without investing a single penny of their personal money. In fact, here is what a reference shows about the amount of extraordinary construction of villas of part of the senior Bulgarian nomenklatura in our „socialist“ homeland (*see Reference No. 1*).

The uneventful life of the senior Bulgarian nomenklatura would have been impossible if it had not benefited from **high-quality Western goods for personal use (cars, machinery, etc.), which were hardly imported into the country back then**. Usually these goods arrived in Bulgaria as UBO goods, for which no **taxes, duties or surcharges were paid** in order to benefit from the nomenklatura. The goods thus delivered came out at much lower prices than the retail prices at which the population in the country was buying. In addition, **the owners of cars and motorcycles** imported under the „second-hand scheme“, which require

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<sup>65</sup> According to other authors, the number of these nomenklatura houses is twice as small, as some of them are not counted among those listed above. This, however, does not change their nature and purpose at all, i.e. to serve at low prices the top nomenklatura grandees, their families and escorted offspring.

<sup>66</sup> See **Lalov**, K., V. Veleva. Op. cit., pp. 69-70.

an invoice, are **issued fictitious invoices** by UBO, in which the amounts are absolutely arbitrarily inflated.<sup>67</sup> **As a result of this preferential treatment**, several dozen Western-made cars were purchased for more than BGN 700,000 **between 1985 and 1989**. And in 1990, the expert appointed by the order estimated the market value of the cars at over BGN 3,600,000, or on this account alone, **the beneficiaries of the right to purchase the cars drained the State by almost BGN 3 million!**<sup>68</sup> And all this while the ordinary mortal Bulgarian citizens are waiting for 5 – 6 years to get a car of socialist production, not stopping to dream about modern western cars...

### Reference No. 1.

СУ "ХИДРОСТРОЙ" СОВИЯ

#### С П Р А В К А

Относно: Размера извършено строителство на вилни от вилна зона "ДРАГАЛЕВИЦА", внесени суми в Управлението от собствениците и дължимите суми, като разлика между стойностите на вилите по държавни цени и цени за населението.

№ по-№	№ пред. обект.	Име, презиме	Ст/ст по цени насел./дресно/	Внесени Суми	Дължими суми по цени насел./дресно/	Ст/ст по цени на едро	Дължими суми по цени на едро
1	2	3	4	5	6/4-5/	7	8 / 7-5/
1.	225	Александър Лялов	81532.16	49375.00	32157.16	62717.06	13342.06
2.	505	Владимир Бонев	-	-	-	-	3015.00
3.	224	Белко Палин	33504.08	25772.37	7731.71	25772.37	-
4.	222	Димитър Стоянов	86033.27	33096.00	52937.27	66179.44	33083.44
5.	221	Добри Джурев	73305.02	32000.00	41305.02	56388.48	24388.48
6.	223	Иван Ачанов	42131.70	16815.00	25316.70	32409.00	15594.00
7.	219	Кръсто Тричков	48456.68	34000.00	14456.68	37274.37	3274.37
8.	220	Огнян Дойнов	345233.27	70000.00	275233.27	265564.06	195564.06

- Забележка: 1/ Владимир Бонев - отнесена загуба от извършена грешка, първични документи няма.  
2/ Изходните данни са взети от разшировка към баланса, приложена ч. XII. 984 год., като първични документи за възстановяване на разшировката в Управлението не съществуват.

Гл. счетоводител:

/Н.Благова/



Директор:

И.А.Александров/

<sup>67</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>68</sup> See *id.*



## BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION „HIDROSTROY“ SOFIA

## REFERENCE

On: The amount of construction work carried out on villas in the „Dragalevtsi“ villa zone, the amounts paid to the Authority by the owners and the amounts due as the difference between the values of the villas at state prices and the prices of the population

Order No.	No of object	First name, Last name	Values by price location (retail)	Amounts deposited	Amounts due by price location (retail)	Value at wholesale prices	Amounts due at wholesale prices
1	2	3	4	5	6 (4-5)	7	8 (7 - 5)
1	225	Alexander Lilov	81532.16	49375.00	32157.16	62717.05	13342.05
2	505	Vladimir Bonev	-	-	-	-	3015.00
3	224	Velko Palin	33504.08	25772.37	7731.71	25772.37	-
4	222	Dimitar Stoqnov	86033.27	33096.00	52937.27	66179.44	33083.44
5	221	Dobri Djurov	73305.02	32000.00	41305.02	56388.48	24388.43
6	223	Ivan Achanov	42131.70	16815.00	25316.70	32409.00	15594.00
7	219	Krystyu Trichkov	48456.68	34666.00	14456.68	37274.37	3274.37
8	220	Ognyan Doynov	345233.27	70000.00	275233.27	265564.06	195564.06

Remark: 1/ Vladimir Bonev – attributed loss from service rendered, no primary documents.

2/ The source data is taken from an extension to the balance sheet attached to December 1984, as primary documents to restore the extension in the Management does not exist.

Chief Accountant: Signed – *ill*  
/N. Blagoeva/

Manager: Signed – *ill*  
/eng. A. Aleksandrov/  
Round seal – *ill*

**Source:** Lalov, K., V. Veleva. *Op. cit.*, p. 72.



### - Gifts for anniversaries, weddings and christenings

In accordance with Order No. 80 of the Council of Ministers (1963) (with no funds provided in the UBO budget), Protocol B-13 of the Politburo (1962) stated: funds should be provided to cover expenses incurred by Politburo members as follows: for the First Secretary of the Party, the Chairperson of the Council of Ministers and the Chairperson of the Presidium of the National Assembly – BGN 3,000 per year; for other members of the Politburo – BGN 1,500 (if these limits were exceeded, the differences would be paid by those entitled).<sup>69</sup>

Under this item **for the period 1985 – 1989, BGN 748,864 were spent by 31 persons at the expense of the UBO budget in the form of donated items and cash** (here, too, the circle of eligible beneficiaries was expanded by the verbal order of Todor Zhivkov). Zhivkov himself spent BGN 434,279 in this form, spending BGN 51,704 only on New Year's gifts, weddings and anniversaries; also – Milko Balev spent BGN 41,948; Dimitar Stoyanov (Minister of Interior, member of the Central Committee's Politburo – editor's note) – BGN 22,898, etc. It is noteworthy that those entitled generously give gifts when they are both on home leave and on holiday, at private celebrations in the country and on private visits abroad.<sup>70</sup> And something extra: although Todor Zhivkov exceeded the limit by BGN 409,279, Milko Balev – by BGN 35,448, and Dimitar Stoyanov – by BGN 16,391, this difference was not paid by them, the repeatedly quoted audit states.

### - Hunting and fishing

It would be a real miracle if, under the conditions of totalitarian one-party rule in Bulgaria, its venerable **nomenklatura leaders did not organize lavish hunting orgies (and outings)** in specially built hunting farms. Here the historical tradition is fully respected, because over time the general secretary and his retinue set up a fabulous hunting party, which on weekdays and holidays shoots specially watched game all over the country. What is interesting is that in these farms, besides having special breeding of rare animal specimens, it always happens that the first party and state leader kills the most wanted animals. This is done with a deliberately selected efficient mechanism according to

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<sup>69</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>70</sup> See *id.*

which the first leader never loses because he is the best hunter in the totalitarian state. Here are just a few examples to support this.

In 1984, the hunting farm „Mazalat“ was established – Sevlievo municipality, in which the hunting lodge was built at a cost of BGN 1,015,412 and in which a special bear sanctuary was built especially for Todor Zhivkov. In it, 13 Carpathian bears are kept, and three caretakers are appointed to feed the bears with bread, rice, sugar, marmalade and other foodstuffs. Thus, under this regime, the reflexes of the wild bears are equalized with those of domesticated animals.<sup>71</sup>

When Todor Zhivkov wished to hunt bears – K. Lalov and V. Veleva write – the following happened: opposite the stand hunt location (the place where Zhivkov would shoot) the bushes and trees were cut down, forming a path on both sides, to which a fence net was attached. The targeted bear is placed in a crate and transported to the trailhead. The bear is then chased along the trail, with the result that it must appear at the other end opposite comrade Zhivkov, who must in turn shoot it. And he always shoots it unerringly! Because comrade Zhivkov’s shot is duplicated by Stoyan Chakarov, who must be next to him<sup>72</sup> (he is the UBO in charge of hunting farms).

Thus, for the period 1985 – 1989 the hunting farm „Mazalat“ was visited 71 times. There, the championship in hunting was held by Pencho Kubadinski – 41 times, followed by Vladimir Zhivkov – 12 times, Todor Zhivkov 10 times, etc. Therefore, from the budget of the UBO during this period only for the maintenance of this farm a total of BGN 2,332,000 was spent,<sup>73</sup> which is pure wasteful usurpation of national wealth.

But in order to get a more concrete idea of how this usurped national wealth in Bulgaria functions in the interests of a small handful of nomenklatura grandees, we will illustrate things with a concrete fact about the costs, brought forward by D. Gribachev, which was made for the Kormisosh reserve in the Bulgarian Rhodope mountains (where a splendid residence for the top nomenklatura elite was built for millions of leva). According to unofficial data, BGN 2 – 3 million of state funds are spent annually on this reserve alone, and the same reserve and the

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<sup>71</sup> See id.

<sup>72</sup> See id.

<sup>73</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

residence attached to it are visited and used by dozens of senior nomenklatura grandees who „stay“ there only a few times and a few days throughout the year. **The conclusion** from this fact is obvious enough: **the maintenance of the leisure, entertainment and pleasures of each of the ten nomenklatura grandees in this reserve costs the people and the society from BGN 200 to 300,000 per year at the old (then) prices...** And this is the price of this privilege alone, in a reserve! However, with dozens of similar reserves and residences in the country, the total cost to the people of supporting the rightful greats in totalitarian Bulgaria (within the limits of this privilege) could be calculated by anyone!!!...<sup>74</sup>

The waste made in the use of this special privilege by the senior nomenklatura does not end with this particular fact. Directly linked to it is another monstrous fact of waste affecting the economy and personal properties of hundreds of residents of this mountainous region. In order to satisfy the hunting „passions“ and whims of the high nomenklatura grandees, thousands of wild pigs were bred in the Kormisosh reserve, **which in 1987 alone caused devastation and damage in the former Smolyan district, amounting to the enormous sum of BGN 12,620,000.** This devastation (and in just one year) included a destroyed potato crop of 187,554 acres, plus thousands more acres of ruined forest meadows and other areas of local public and private farms of the people. Calculations made at the time showed that **one wild boar destroys about BGN 1000 worth of crops a year,**<sup>75</sup> which means that the wild boars bred on this reserve are as good as gold!...! And all this – for the sake of „satisfying“ the hunting pleasures (amusement) of only a dozen senior nomenklatura grandees, who (despite hundreds of people’s grievances about the damage done to them) categorically forbid to introduce any regulation of this spontaneously bred swine herd (!?!) – the author concludes.

#### **- Nomenklatura secondment**

In order to be able to cover all possible expenses of the senior nomenklatura in their constant travels, international visits, hunting trips, etc., **a secret decree was issued for the beneficiaries, in which much higher amounts of daily and lodging allowances were approved**

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<sup>74</sup> See **Gribachev**, D. Op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>75</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 179.

during their official missions and specializations abroad. According to it, **the increase in these expenses was: 7 times higher travel allowances for the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the BCP and the Chairperson of the Council of State; 6 times for the members of the Politburo; 5 times for the Chairperson of the Council of Ministers; 4 times for each of the ministers.**<sup>76</sup> These accruals are many times greater than the statutory travel allowances for ordinary mortal citizens, which is why they are also classified by the party-state institutions.

After 10.11.1989, an audit found that during the period 1986 – 1989 all our embassies abroad were forced to bear all the expenses for breakfasts, lunches and dinners of party and state leaders who did not pay their bills. And in almost all cases, officials and close relatives travelled with the nomenklatura grandees.<sup>77</sup> Virtually all the overseas trips of the Bulgarian top nomenklatura are made only with state funds, at the expense of the respective embassies, and come free of charge to the party comrades on secondment. In essence, this means only one thing – an unreasonable and unjustified waste of the people’s money for personal pleasures in the form of state business.

**- Secret off-budget accounts and cash of the senior nomenklatura**

One of the most disgusting privileges of the nomenklatura oligarchy are **the secret off-budget accounts and the cash given to the „socialist“ rulers.** These accounts are 4 in total – 2 BGN accounts and 2 currency accounts (in Russian rubles and US dollars), and any documents about them are only available for the period from 1.01.1987 to 31.12.1989, while absolutely everything for the previous years has been destroyed. This – on the one hand. Second, according to § 12 of the Order No. 341 of the Bureau of the Council of Ministers dated 5.09.1972, „the unused funds in currency and levs from the budget departments of the Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Interior, UBO and others for the import of special property should be blocked by the end of the relevant financial year in a special account at the BNB in the name of the Minister of Finance, Special Department.“ And on the basis of this order, **over time, BGN 1,893,026,790 have been transferred to this account and disbursed.**<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> See Lalov, K., V. Veleva. Op. cit., pp. 59-60.

<sup>77</sup> See id.

<sup>78</sup> See ibid., p. 82.

How were these colossal nearly two billion Bulgarian levs spent?

The amounts in these accounts were specified annually for all three departments personally with Todor Zhivkov (for the Central Committee of the BCP, the Council of Ministers and the State Council), after which he verbally informed the Minister of Finance of the total amount, on the basis of which the Minister in turn prepared a letter to the Chairperson of the BNB.<sup>79</sup> Naturally, this was done in complete secrecy, so that even the letters were taken and hand-delivered in person.

In this context, **Order No. P-107 of the Council of Ministers of 1968** (confidential and never promulgated) is entitled „**On Certain Extra Expenses**“ and refers entirely to the money that the beneficiaries take depending on their post.<sup>80</sup> This Instruction is related to Protocol B-3 of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the BCP, which refers to the additional sums of the VIPs in the Party and the State. Few know the contents of these two documents, which confer god-chosen status on two dozen party comrades, because they say verbatim:

The Council of Ministers orders:

**As from 1968, representation money shall be paid to executives in annual amounts as follows:**

President of the Council of Ministers	15 000 lv.
President of the Presidium	15 000 lv.
First Deputy Chairperson of the Council of Ministers	8000 lv.
Deputy Chairperson of the Council of Ministers	
- member of the Politburo of the Central Committee	7000 lv.
Deputy Chairperson of the Council of Ministers	6000 lv.
Minister – Member of the	
Politburo of the Central Committee	7000 lv.
Minister – candidate member of the	
Politburo of the Central Committee	5000 lv.
Minister – Member of the Bureau of the	
Council of Ministers	4500 lv.
Minister	3500 lv.
Chairperson of the Bureau of the National Assembly	3500 lv.

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<sup>79</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>80</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 83.

It has also been added in a hand-written manner  
Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers

2000 lv.<sup>81</sup>

It is of particular importance to note that **this representative money is not taxable, is at the personal disposal of the beneficiaries, is spent at their discretion and is absolutely unaccountable.** They are paid annually and their amount and method of disbursement are without prejudice to the decisions on additional and other emoluments of the persons concerned which have been taken to date.<sup>82</sup> Thus, **for 21 years only, from 1.01.1968 to 31.12.1989, representative funds amounting to BGN 17,804,850 were paid to the people with power that be from the secret extra-budgetary accounts of the Office for the Financing of Special Departments, and during that period, without any changes being made to the order, the amounts were repeatedly increased.**<sup>83</sup>

Such solid „semi-legal“ incomes, not even a penny of which has been earned, can indeed be envied (including by feudal kings and monarchs), because the top nomenklatura oligarchy perpetuates a grand scheme for hoarding money in the conditions of one-party monopoly and planned „socialist“ economy.

**- Payment of supplementary payroll (wages)**

Under this nomenklatural privilege, which is little known, similar to Order No. P-107 of the Council of Ministers, **additional cash is regularly written and distributed to high-ranking power figures.** These funds are formed according to the respective nomenklatura position (party and state) and essentially represent something like today's additional material stimulation of civil servants in our country, with the difference, however, that their amount is determined completely arbitrarily, since they approve the amounts for themselves (*see Reference No. 2*).

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<sup>81</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>82</sup> See *id.*

<sup>83</sup> See *id.*



Reference 2.

Приложение № 8

до  
Министерства на финансовия  
Секция

Справка

Контентно: изнайдените суми по действащата вярност

№	Име, презиме и фамилия	Почтенна заплата в денари	Брутен СРЗ					Всичко:
			1985г.	1986г.	1987г.	1988г.	1989г.	
1	Петко Кевелъ Кубашичски	100	1392	1392	1392	1392	1392	6921
2	Илия Савичев Кевелъ	150	2038	1566	-	-	-	3604
3	Стефан Кевелъ Кевелъ Кевелъ Кевелъ	300	5674	5928	-	-	-	11602
4	Кривошея Кевелъ	300	4176	4176	4176	4176	4176	20880
5	Бранка Кевелъ Кевелъ	300	4176	4176	4176	4176	4176	20880
6	Петко Кривошея Кевелъ	150	2016	2016	2016	1008	-	7056
7	Света Кевелъ Кевелъ	300	4272	4272	4272	4272	4272	21360
8	Вилимир Кевелъ Кевелъ	150	2160	2160	2160	2160	2160	10800
9	Марко Кевелъ Кевелъ	400 300 св. 1980г.	5760	5760	5760	5760	4268	27408
10	Петко Кевелъ Кевелъ	250	3576	3576	3576	3576	3576	17880
11	Татяна Кевелъ Кевелъ	80	1248	1144	-	-	-	2392
12	Кирил Кевелъ	250	3480	3480	3480	3480	3480	17400

№	Име, презиме и фамилия	Почтенна заплата в денари	4	5	6	7	8	9
13	Борис Миланов Миланов - за премия за работа	650	9312	9312	9312	9312	9312	46560
14	Татко Кривошея Кевелъ	250	3480	3480	3480	3480	3480	17400
15	Георги Владимиров Кевелъ	250	3480	3480	3480	3480	3480	17400
16	Благовест Кривошея Кевелъ	100	1200	1200	1200	1200	1200	6000
17	Славко Савичев Кривошея	350 350 св. I 1980г. св. II 1981г.	5376	5376	5376	5376	5376	27156
18	Елмаз А. Кривошея - Блага А. Кривошея	450 300	6091	6091	7218	7320	7320	34040
19	Борис Кевелъ Кевелъ - за изключителна работа	450	4563	-	-	-	-	4563
20	Марко Кривошея Кевелъ	100	1200	1200	1200	1200	1200	6000
21	Петар Кевелъ Кривошея	100	1200	1200	1200	1200	1200	6000
22	Вилимир Кривошея - само за 1986г.	360 350	-	781	-	-	-	781
23	Марко Кривошея Кевелъ - по 6 месеци вярност	100	-	2376	1382	613	-	4371
24	Иван Кривошея Кривошея	649	-	-	-	868	-	868
25	Александар Кривошея Кривошея - заплата	500	-	-	-	2055	-	2055
Стор:			75920	74142	64656	64049	62480	341397

Гл. счетоводител:

(Секция за финансово-статистика)

Annex No. 8

To  
Ministry of Finance  
Sofia

**REFERENCE**

Subject: amounts paid under the supplementary statement

No. by order	First name, middle name and surname	Basic Monthly Supplement	Gross salary fund					
			1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	Total:
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Pencho Penev Kubadinski	100	1392	1392	1392	1392	1353	6921
2	Iliya Simeonov Kashev	150	2088	1566	–	–	–	3654
3	Feim Yuseiniv Chaushev – Petar Yuriev Chaushev from April 1985	370 440	5674	5928	–	–	–	11602
4	Krastyu Trichkov	300	4176	4176	4176	4176	4176	20880
5	Drazha Deleva Valcheva	300	4176	4176	4176	4176	4176	20880
6	Penko Hristov Gerganov	150	2016	2016	2016	1008	-	7056
7	Sava Atanasov Dalbokov	300	4272	4272	4272	4272	4272	21366
8	Dimitar Petrov Dimitrov	150	2160	2160	2160	2160	2160	10800
9	Mako Petrov Dakov from 1989	400 300	5760	5760	5760	5760	4368	27408
10	Nencho Stanev Nenchev	250	3576	3576	3576	3576	3576	17860
11	Pavlina Encheva Naydenova	80	1248	1144	–	–	–	2392
12	Kiril Ignatov	250	3480	3480	3480	3480	3480	17466

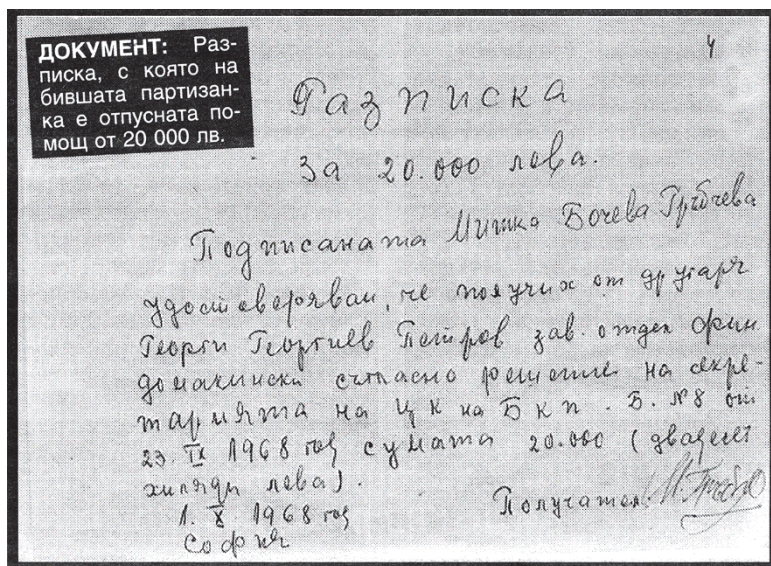
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13	Boris Milanov Manov (until moving on to another job)	650	9312	9312	9312	9312	9312	46560
14	Gancho Krustev Simeonov	250	3480	3480	3480	3480	3480	17400
15	Georgi Vladimirov Stoilov	250	3480	3480	3480	3480	3480	17400
16	Blagovest Hristov Sendov	100	1200	1200	1200	1200	1200	6000
17	Slavcho Stamenov Transki from October 1989	200 350	5376	5376	5376	5376	5592	27090
18	Elmaz Ah. Tatarova – Blaga Asp. Tatarova – from 1987	400 500	6091	6091	7218	7320	7320	34040





### - One-off cash grants

Similar to the royal „privileged gestures“, in the Bulgarian totalitarian reality the highest nomenklatura caste (the oligarchy), which rules the levers of power (the Politburo of the Central Committee of the BCP), has always been very benevolent and very generous to its loyal comrades when they fall into trouble. Such was the case of the then prominent anti-fascist and communist General Mitka Grabcheva, who was **granted a hefty one-off financial grant** at her request after the death of her husband. This was based on the decision of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the BCP of 23.09.1968. Grabcheva received the cosmic sum of **BGN 20,000** for those standards (*see the attached Receipt*). In addition, her pension was increased to BGN 200, and her granddaughter was not forgotten either, because BGN 100 a month was given from the cashier’s office of the Central Committee of the BCP for her upbringing until she reached the age of 8.<sup>85</sup> Naturally, other high-ranking nomenklatura cadres also receive similar small cash allowances, regardless of all the other benefits and advantages enjoyed by the nomenklatura oligarchy in our country.



<sup>85</sup> See „168 chasa“ newspaper, 2 – 8.10.2015.

**DOCUMENT:** A receipt granting the former guerrilla BGN 20 000.

**RECEIPT**  
For BGN 20.000

I, the undersigned Mitka Bocheva Grabcheva, certify that I have received from Comrade Georgi Georgiev Petrov, Head of Financial and Household Department, according to decision No. 8 of 23.09.1968 of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party with the sum of 20.000 (twenty thousand leva).

1.10.1968  
Sofia

Recipient: Signed – *ill*

*Source: „168 chasa“ newspaper, 2 – 8.10.2015.*

#### **4. THE PRIVILEGES OF THE FIRST PARTY AND STATE LEADER**

As a prominent figure of the Bulgarian and international communist and workers' movement, Comrade Todor Zhivkov – General Secretary of the Central Committee of the BCP and Chairperson of the State Council of the People's Republic of Bulgaria – from the very beginning of his career decided absolutely everything, including who should receive what privileges, as he had enormous power in the Party and the state. This is evident from secret **Decision A of 1956**, which „legitimised“ the enjoyment of a number of privileges – state villas, free transport, special services, home care, etc.<sup>86</sup> Subsequently, the 60th Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 1958 was adopted, which regulated the receipt of so-called „**representation money**“. Thus, according to this regulation, the General Secretary **received about BGN 20,000 in unaccountable money per year**,<sup>87</sup> which colossal sum for that time was equivalent to the value of two apartments. And although

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<sup>86</sup> See id. at 16 – 22.12.2021.

<sup>87</sup> See id.

the data on these sums are top secret, it is nevertheless revealed that in 1984 alone T. Zhivkov **was given BGN 284,000 for representation, food and furniture**,<sup>88</sup> apparently in order to help him financially, to prevent him from falling into a state of extreme poverty. That is, the privileges for the first man in the state have been steadily increasing despite the low standard of living in the country.

In this context, **in the period 1985 – 1989 alone, Todor Zhivkov received more than BGN 1 million in gifts in addition to his salary above the limit of BGN 434,279 of state money.**<sup>89</sup> This represents a predatory waste of money to satisfy power and personal ambitions, which stems from sole power and can only be defined in one way – blatant impunity and brazen demagoguery towards his own people and country. In addition, the **so-called „food limit“** is changing enormously and permanently, because, for example, back in 1974, the UBO **increased this limit for the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the BCP to BGN 1,300 a month** (with an average salary of BGN 142)<sup>90</sup> and, of course, with the knowledge of the first leader. And one more thing – since **May 1981** the expenses for T. Zhivkov and his family were already estimated at **BGN 1,500 a month!** (with an average salary of BGN 171), which is an extremely good sum against the background of the general misery (and poverty) of the Bulgarian „socialist“ worker. Thus, **for some 26 years only (1963 – 1989), Todor Zhivkov personally received BGN 345,100 for food from the state budget,**<sup>91</sup> without any socially useful work having been put in!

We cannot miss the indisputable fact that **the 1982 decision allows the General Secretary and Politburo members to receive 1/3 of their salary in currency,**<sup>92</sup> which does not cancel their right to buy a certain amount of currency at the official rate. Through this exclusive privilege, our communist bigwigs usually buy luxury Western cars (including their children's), quality durable goods, etc., despite the fact that the payment of salary in currency is prohibited by law.

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<sup>88</sup> See id.

<sup>89</sup> See Lalov, K., V. Veleva. Op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>90</sup> See ibid., p. 35.

<sup>91</sup> See ibid. p. 36.

<sup>92</sup> See „168 chasa“ newspaper, 16 – 22.12.2021.

## Reference Extract No. 3.

ДО  
МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА ФИНАНСИТЕ  
ДЪРЖАВЕН ФИНАНСОВ КОНТРОЛ  
Г Р . С О Ф И Я

С П Р А В К А - И З В Л Е Ч Е Н И Е  
от партидата на ТОДОР ХРИСТОВ ЖИВКОВ - по  
сметка 346 - "Клиенти по специални лични  
сметки" за периода от 01.01.1985 година до  
31.12.1989 г.

1985 г о д и н а

I. <u>Получена валута II направление</u>		
IV.	2/49 за Т.Славков 160 долара	335.80
IV.	2/51 за Т.Славков шв.фр.	402.07
IV.	2/52 за Т.Славков 1000 долара	2098.78
VI.	2/1984 за Т.Славков 300 долара	634.20
VII.	2/2699 за Т.Славков 300 долара	634.20
VII.	88 - справка 2084 долара	4405.57
VII.	89 - справка Евг. 490 долара	1035.86
VIII.	2/2989 Е.Ж.-ГФР	684.81
XII.	2/4807 Е.Ж. ГФР марки	219.66
ВСИЧКО:		10450.95 лв.



2.

<u>II. Получена валута I направление</u>		
IV.	2/1301 полски злоти	217.85
XII.	2/4552 чехски крони	160.00
XII.	2/4776 румънски леи	567.76
ВСИЧКО:		945.61
<u>III. Ушиване дрехи</u>		
II.	14/56 ушиване палто за Тошко	58.28
IV.	14/69 костюм и каскет	125.00
VIII.	14/96 3 мъжки костюма	360.00
ВСИЧКО:		543.28
<u>IV. Химическо чистене, гладене, поправка</u>		
VI.	14/9 12 бр.костюми	120.00
<u>V. Получени от касата левове</u>		
VIII.	2/2932 за Цвет.Маркова	500.00
О Б Щ О:		<u>12559.84</u>

1986 г о д и н а

<u>I. Валута II-ро направление</u>		
II.	2/433 от касата на УБО за Т.Ив.Славков	
	380 долара	753.78
II.	2/434 от касата на УБО за Т.Ив.Славков	
	950 зап.марки	741.89

4.

IV. Ушиване и покупка дрехи

II.	14/15 парт.№24/ф-ра 006971/II.86г. поправка костюми,панталони,сака	130.00
IV.	14/62 ф-ра 6972/17.04.86г. поправка сака и панталони	220.00
VII.	14/51 поръчки 74,75/07.08.86г.ушиване 2 костюма,поправка пантал.ЦНСМ	358.69
XI.	14/71 квит.за изпл.1 бр. жилетка	30.65
XII.	14/38 кв.от 12.86г. ушиване костюм на Т.Славков ЦНСМ	135.82
ВСИЧКО:		875.16 лв.

V. Покупка машини

XI.	28/19 ф-ра 203/10.86г. плетачна машина за 81327.25 йени	933.12
XII.	28/19 ф-ра 234/24.12.86г. окомплект.за плет.м-на 51311.60 йени	572.15
ВСИЧКО: 132638.85 йени		1505.27 лв.

О Б Щ О: 18080.74 лв.

1987 г о д и н аI. Закупена валута I направление

14.IV.	2/952 получени 16900 п.злоти	197.73
15.V.	2/1309 получени 80 рубли	80.00
25.V.	15/12 получени 199 рубли	200.99



		9,
29.03.	14/81 хим.чистене на дрехи	7.60
29.04.	14/75 хим.чистене	6.90
29.04.	30/ хиг.услуги	120.00
10.05.	30/ хиг.услуги	90.00
10.05.	28/27 закупени 6 бр.кожи сив каракул от СССР	187.86
30.06.	30/ хиг.услуги	30.00
28.07.	30/104 хиг.услуги	120.00
29.07.	14/ хиг.услуги	39.73
31.07.	4/374 ушиване костюм з-д "Дружба"	87.60
31.08.	30/104 хиг.услуги	140.00
02.09.	30/62 такса за шоф.курсове Т.Славков	220.00
29.09.	2/2261 получени чрез ген.Милушев	300.00
19.10.	21/1 покупки от м."Рила"	19207.33
31.10.	14/90 хим.чистене дрехи	54.05
31.10.	14/2 ушиване 8 бр.ризи	86.40
31.10.	14/2 хим.чистене дрехи	16.50
08.12.	2/4204 направа на златен мост	92.80
08.12.	2/4205 лекарства по рецепти	524.68
08.12.	2/4206 златен мост	14.00
08.12.	4/145 ушиване мъжки костюми	444.80
21.12.	14/54 ушиване 1 бр. балтон	160.00
21.12.	14/54 хим.чистене на дрехи	58.75
26.12.	14/17 хим.чистене	13.05
	<b>ВСИЧКО:</b>	<b>23291.95</b>
	<b>О Б Щ О:</b>	<b>75693.66</b>



TO  
THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE  
STATE FINANCIAL CONTROL  
SOFIA

**REFERENCE-EXTRACT**

from the batch of Todor Hristov Zhivkov –  
account 346 – „Customers on special personal accounts“  
for the batch from 1.01.1985 to 31.12.1989

Year: 1985

I. Currency received, II direction

IV.	2/49 for T. Slavkov 160 dollars	335.80
IV.	2/51 for T. Slavkov Swiss francs	402.07
IV.	2/52 for T. Slavkov 1000 dollars	2098.78
VI.	2/1984 for T. Slavkov 300 dollars	634.20
VII.	2/2699 for T. Slavkov 300 dollars	634.20
VII.	88 – reference 2084 dollars	4405.57
VII.	89 – reference Evgenia 490 dollars	1035.86
VIII.	2/2989 E. Zh. – GFR	684.81
XII.	2/4807 E. Zh. – GFR marks	219.66
<hr/>		
	TOTAL:	BGN 10,450.95

**2.**

II. Currency received, I direction

IV.	2/1301 Polish zloty	217.85
XII.	2/4552 Czech crowns	160.00
XII.	2/4776 Romanian lei	567.76
<hr/>		
	ALL:	945.61

III. Sewing of clothes

II.	14/56 sewing a coat for Toshko	58.28
IV.	14/69 suit and cap	125.00
VIII.	14/96 3 men's suits	360.00
<hr/>		
	ALL:	543.28

IV. Dry cleaning, ironing, repairing

VI.	14/9 12 suits	120.00
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V. BGN received from the treasury

VIII.	2/2932 for Tsvet. Markova	500.00
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TOTAL:	<u>12,559.84</u>
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Year: 1986

I. Currency II direction

II.	2/433 from the UBO treasury for T. Iv. Slavkov 380 dollars	753.78
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II.	2/434 from the UBO treasury for T. Iv. Slavkov 950 Western marks	741.89
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**4.**

IV. Sewing and buying clothes

II.	14/15 batch No 24/invoice 006971/11.86 year repair suits, trousers, jackets	130.00
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IV.	14/26 invoice 6972/17.04.86, repair jackets and trousers	220.00
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VII.	14/51 orders 74,75/07.08.86 sewing 2 suits, repair trousers, Centre for new goods and fashion	358.69
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XI.	14/71 receipt for payment of 1 vest	30.65
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XII.	14/38 receipt dated 12.1986 sewing suit of T. Slavkov, Centre for new goods and fashion	135.82
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ALL:	BGN 875.16
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V. Purchase of machines

XI.	28/19 invoice 203/10.1986 knitting machine for 81327.25 yen	933.12
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XII.	28/19 invoice 234/24/12/1986 complete for knitting machine 51311.60 yen	572.15
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ALL:	132,638.85 yen		BGN 1505.27
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TOTAL:	<u>BGN 18,080.74</u>
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Year: 1987

I. Purchased currency I direction

14.IV.	2/952 16900 Polish zloty received	197.73
15.V.	2/1309 80 rubles received	80.00
25.V.	15/12 199 rubles received	200.99

**6.**

III. Sewing and repairing of clothes, dry cleaning, fabrics, etc.

26.VI.	14/94 trousers repair	30.00
28.VII.	4/436 sewing of linen and mending	150.00
28.VII.	14/77 tailoring and alterations	580.00
28.X.	8/17, 12/35 funeral expenses P. Zhivkova	239.68
28.X.	14/98 sewing and repairing of suits	320.00
28.X.	30/80 portrait of P. Zhivkova	12.62
ALL:		1332.30

IV. Household and hygiene materials

26.VI.	15/8 reference	2.84
28.VII.	30/109 hygiene services	200.00
28.VII.	30/95 hygiene services	210.00
30.IX.	30/94 hygiene services	150.00
31.X.	30/96 hygiene services	130.00
17.XI.	30/96 hygiene services	130.00
29.XII.	30/31 hygiene services	120.00
ALL:		942.84

V. Electronic equipment

25.V.	28/4 protocol 9635.42 DM wire antennas	9225.72
26.VI.	30/90 reversing 4817.71 DM	4612.86
ALL:		4612.86

<u>VI. Purchase from Rila</u>		
29.XII.	20/10 Purchase from Rila	807.90
		<b>9.</b>
29.03	14/81 dry cleaning of clothes	7.60
29.04	14/75 dry cleaning	6.90
29.04	30/ hygiene services	120.00
10.05	30/ hygiene services	90.00
10.05	28/27 purchased 6 grey karakul wool from USSR	187.85
30.06	30/ hygiene services	30.00
28.07	30/104 hygiene services	120.00
29.07	14/ hygiene services	39.73
31.07	4/374 sewing of a suit factory „Druzhiba“	87.60
31.08	30/104 hygiene services	140.00
02.09	30/62 fee for driving lessons, T. Slavkov	220.00
29.09	2/2261 received through General Milushev	300.00
19.10	21/1 purchases from Rila store	19,207.33
31.10	14/90 dry cleaning of clothes	54.05
31.10	14/2 sewing of 8 shirts	86.40
31.10	14/2 dry cleaning of clothes	16.50
08.12	2/4204 making a gold dental bridge	92.80
08.12	2/4205 prescription medicines	524.68
08.12	2/4206 golden dental bridge	14.00
08.12	4/145 men’s tailoring	444.80
21.12	14/54 sewing of 1 piece of trousers	160.00
21.12	14/54 dry cleaning of clothes	58.75
26.12	14/17 dry cleaning	13.05
	ALL:	23,291.95
	TOTAL:	<u>75,693.66</u>

*Source: Lalov, K., V. Veleva. Op. cit., pp. 52-56.*

All in all, paradoxical as it may seem, **the first party and state leader of „socialist“ Bulgaria lived entirely at the expense of the state,**

**because he paid almost nothing for his food and household consumption, although he received cosmic representative, personal and state money, which even today has a high value (see Reference-excerpt No. 3).**

Particularly fractious are the cases of the notorious cash honoraria of **Todor Zhivkov**, which he received by brazenly circumventing the law. This tempting privilege was implemented by means of a strictly confidential order, thanks to which **royalties** amounting to BGN 1,750,888 were charged and **paid to** the General Secretary by all publishing houses, from which income tax of BGN 710,107 were withheld. Thus Zhivkov received a **net sum of BGN 1,040,781**, which would not have been such an impressive amount had it not been for violations of state and party requirements.<sup>93</sup> Plus, the author takes his money only in cash, without writing out an account for a fee, using blank expense vouchers which contain no details of other income received over the years.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, when the cashier of the Central Committee of the BCP was examined in 1990, the State Financial Control audit found the following: T. Zhivkov **was receiving huge fees** on the basis of a personal order, he **was circumventing the law by not paying the due taxes**, and on top of that he **was not paying the due party membership fee**.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, first, these bombastic fees for his party speeches and reports (at plenums, conferences, congresses, etc.) were not written by him, but by the huge Central Committee apparatus (and the dozens of party nomenklatura grandees) who prioritised this to justify their high salaries and inflated privileges; and second, only for the period 1985-1989, the auditors found documents proving that from these notorious volumes **the publishing houses made a drastic loss of BGN 2,178,732 of state money!**<sup>96</sup> This is a „huge contribution“ to world book publishing, because you lost over 2 million on production costs, and you paid over BGN 1 million in royalties to the author!?!

So it can be convincingly concluded: **in Bulgaria, long before the democratic changes, Todor Zhivkov became the first „socialist“ millionaire, who, however, as a true Marxist-Leninist, was proud of the**

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<sup>93</sup> See **Lalov, K., V. Veleva.** Op. cit, p. 21.

<sup>94</sup> See *id.*

<sup>95</sup> See *id.*

<sup>96</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 15.

**fact that in his country there were no rich and poor, because there was equality and justice!**

Like any caring father, Comrade Zhivkov is extremely careful in the upbringing of his children, so that they are not deprived of anything that is due to them, and especially of the lavish privileges of the nomenklatura. This is reflected in the unrestrained granting of many and many benefits (and privileges) by the first man in the state to his closest relatives – children, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, etc. Here is what D. Damyanov writes about the incredibly „modest“ **Lyudmila Zhivkova** (member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the BCP and chairperson of the Committee for Culture) and the unaccountable benefits she enjoyed. „Lyudmila **made BGN 250,000 – 300,000 from an „open account“ on markets.** She had a currency account – she spent stamps, francs, English and Italian pounds, but not dollars. She bought outfits from all over the world, her shoes were packed in 2 – 3 rooms. **Airplanes flew with her clothes from Paris, London, Milan.** (...) She had obtained a permit from the manager of the „Euxinograd“ canteen and did whatever she wanted. This huge chair housed the royal collection of model ships, expensive aristocratic clocks – things that had not been destroyed by the partisans on 9.09.1944. Lyudmila had **permission to buy these expensive antiques for leva.** At some point these things **just evaporated.** Lyudmila Zhivkova paid for them, they were packed for her and then nobody knew where they went. (...) She also had a telephone at her disposal and could order pills even from Germany. At one point it happened that instead of ordering food, she switched to medication to keep fit...“<sup>97</sup> (*emphasis mine* – G. M.). Thus for many years the „red queen“, affectionately called by the nomenklatura oligarchy „the faithful daughter of the Party and the people“, lived her life peacefully.

Even more arrogant and debauched is the behaviour of his other offspring – his son **Vladimir Zhivkov**, who does not comply with any rules, regulations and laws at all. „Zhivkov had left Vladko – writes D. Damyanov – to do whatever he wanted, neither interested in reading nor in writing. (...) He would go to bars and meet bartenders, various bohemians, they would get him drunk. He **had an unlimited shopping account.** He would go to the Rila Hotel and order his two bodyguards

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<sup>97</sup> See „*Retro*“ newspaper, 11 – 17.09.2021.

to load 20 bottles of cognac, 30 bottles of wine, appetizers – to drink this and that. Then he would sign the note that was then brought to Zhivkov. He ordered Kashev (the head of the UBO) to fix things. **Vladko was making bills of BGN 100,000 a year just for treats.** The notes are preserved by the last head of the UBO, Georgi Milushev<sup>98</sup> (*emphasis mine* – G. M.). In this way, little Vladko deservedly got the fame of a drunkard playboy, even though his daddy elevated him to one of the highest positions in the state.

However, the above facts are only a small part of **the splendid privileged (and rapacious) life of Vi. Zhivkov**, as he „squeezed“ the state treasury by the handfuls with the covert consent of the Secretary General, which the documents for the period 1985 – 1989 eloquently testify, 1) a total of **BGN 356,864 was spent by the state on Vladko** (as the Bulgarian people ironically call him) and his alcoholic coterie **for security, transport, food, drinks, orgies, etc.**; 2) **two Mercedes cars and one Volkswagen car have been provided** by the state for Vladko’s personal use (without any justification), **and BGN 8,070 have been spent** on fuel alone; BGN 66,404 have been spent on wages and portions (for the drivers and the security guards), BGN 66,988 for travel expenses abroad, or **a total of BGN 141,462**; 3) two accounts were opened by the State for Vladko in Special Account No. 346 of the UBO „Clients in Special Personal Accounts“, into which **an advance of BGN 120,000 was transferred for the construction of the villas of the offspring** (and of the granddaughter Evgenia Zhivkova), etc.; and 4) **BGN 233,000 were** allocated and **spent** by the State **for Vladko** from the aforementioned account in one quinquennium alone, out of which BGN 135,469 were spent on purchases at the Rila store and orders at embassies, BGN 42,000 on expenses at his villa, BGN 41,555 on the purchase of foreign currency,<sup>99</sup> and so on ad infinitum... There is hardly a child who does not want such a loving and generous father, as long as this does not come at the expense of the state money, which has been distributed to the heirs of the nomenklatura...

Without being formally included in the eligible list, Todor Zhivkov’s brother-in-law – **Ivan Slavkov**, also „benefited“ from the privileges

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<sup>98</sup> See id.

<sup>99</sup> See **Lalov**, K., V. Veleva. Op. cit., pp. 9; 41; 45; 76.

over the years as the head of television and the Bulgarian Olympic Committee. This is shown by the audit of the SFC in 1990, which established that he received **from the state television a total of BGN 94,942 for the period 1975 – 1988** as fees for writing literary scripts, bonuses, etc.<sup>100</sup> During the same period, the famous bohemian playboy Ivan Slavkov (known by the nickname Bateto) **received a total of BGN 30,138** under the tariff for **royalties**, performers' and other **fees** in film production, and he personally set the amount of his **bonus** and signed his orders **for a total of BGN 20,234**.<sup>101</sup> And another thing – it is clear from the analysis of Ivan Slavkov's account at the UBO that for the period 1985-1989 Zhivkov's son-in-law used state money as a privilege as follows: **currency purchased and services rendered for a total of BGN 61,351**. (including Western currency for BGN 16,221 and purchases from the Rila store for BGN 8947.41); a motorcycle purchased from Japan for 416,620 yen (in 1986); a new Honda motorcycle purchased for BGN 10,020, or about 1 million yen (1988), etc.<sup>102</sup> In these purchases, most of the currency and goods were received by Todor Slavkov (son of Bateto) but paid for by Ivan Slavkov, which does not surprise us at all.

The famous fashion designer **Evgenia Zhivkova** (daughter of L. Zhivkova and granddaughter of T. Zhivkov) also benefited from the privileged nomenklatura. She was still a student at Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“ used her grandfather's two accounts (one for the purchase of currency, goods and services, amounting to BGN 155,943, and the second – for the construction of his villa and that of Vladko), purchasing Western currency for BGN 78,000 (with UBO money) for her and for Todor Slavkov, which was used to buy two cars for BGN 58,575 (one was for Ani Mladenova – T. Zhivkov's nurse).<sup>103</sup> Or, the same woman who made him very poor because she only mended his socks... and that's it!?!

Apparently, this general „poverty“ of the Zhivkov family is hereditary, because on the same account of Zhivkov the UBO bought knitting and sewing machines for Evgenia Zhivkova worth BGN 18,080! This is

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<sup>100</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>101</sup> See *id.*

<sup>102</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>103</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 40.



where Evgenia's business started. In 1991 she established her fashion house „Women Style“, starting with knitwear, some of which she exported to Japan, Italy, Austria. Although she always claimed that she started her business with one needle and two hooks...<sup>104</sup>

In 1990, the audit of the SFC found out that **the granddaughter of the First diplomat had been lavish on the state, costing it dearly, because Evgenia spent BGN 85,400 on her grandfather's parties; BGN 189,000 on the joint account for the construction of the villas with Vladimir Zhivkov; and another BGN 193,505 on her personal account. Or, in just 5 years, „Women Style“ drained as much as BGN 467,905!**<sup>105</sup> Moreover, Evgenia Zhivkova bought BGN 56,943 of Western currency on her personal account, and our embassies supplied her with BGN 38,018 of furniture, kitchen furniture and other goods, and a car for BGN 24,882. Evgenia also frequently emptied the warehouses of the **Rila store in Sofia – in 5 years she bought goods from there for BGN 71,709** (including 54 sweaters, 149 blouses and shirts, 344 stockings and socks, 103 pairs of shoes and 8 pairs of boots, 104 m of silk fabric, 65 m of woolen and 499 m of other fabrics, 167 kg of yarn, 7 TV sets and 7 cassette players, 15 gold items, etc.).<sup>106</sup> And one last thing – the prominent granddaughter had been developing this „for the benefit of the family“ activity since her school and student years with budget money („donated“ by the state), acquiring great experience in the fashion business, which is why today she is successfully parading on the louche catwalks, probably becoming close with the world's top brands, such as „Coco Chanel“ for example...

As a conclusion to the analysis of the fairy-tale privileged world of the high nomenklatura, we will only point out that about 50 km from the capital, in the area of Botevgrad, a **huge anti-nuclear shelter** was built to **shelter the party elite from the horrors of a possible war.**<sup>107</sup> Essentially, it was a kind of underground hotel several floors underground, with a canteen, spare food stores, etc., including a huge cinema. It (the hideout) is where, in the event of a possible nuclear con-

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<sup>104</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>105</sup> See *id.*

<sup>106</sup> See *id.*

<sup>107</sup> See „*Dnes*“ newspaper, 2.03.2022.

flict, the rulers must move with their families in order to run the country and safeguard their families from the bombs that will be dropped on the entire Bulgarian nation...

All that has been stated so far about the acts of the Bulgarian nomenklatura and its privileged standard of living under „socialism“ will be illustrated at the end with a part of G. Markov's „Our Week-days“, which reveals in an incredible way the huge social gulf between the nomenklatura rulers and the common people.

„Indeed, the vast majority of the people of the overlords and their families had never used a tram. They had the big black limousines with the curtains, which at first were seagulls and later Mercedes. **We witnessed the most vulgar display of inequality ever shown in our entire history – special provisioning.** I am sure that one day historians and historical psychologists will refer the members of our Politburo, the great majority of the members of the Central Committee and their various equivalents to some very strange category of ‘human beings’. For how else can one explain the fact that **while 8 million were suffering, starving, going through severe daily hardships, the elite had built for itself a veritable paradise. The special supply wagons were delivering to the homes of the important comrades the finest food our land produced. In our meatless days they ate roast lambs and suckling pigs, smoked onions, special salami, pure butter cheese, the finest cheeses, not to mention wines, clothing, supplies of luxuries and comforts that the common people could not even dream of. On top of that, as if to further emphasize ‘communist justice’ they received all this at symbolic prices, that is, they paid nothing. Members of the Politburo also paid absolutely no private bills in restaurants or other public places. Everything was at the expense of the state.** Occasionally, they tossed leftovers to their chauffeurs or maids, through whom we got to know what life was like at the top.

Then, in those years, began and developed one of the most famous phenomena in our country – theft. Need drove people to all sorts of, sometimes ingenious, tricks to earn a little more money. I would not be exaggerating if I said that almost everyone who had access to money had sticky fingers. People stole everything and from everyone, but especially from the state. The main protagonists, of course, were the managers of restaurants, shops, various commercial enterprises, forest

farms, housewives, shopkeepers, buyers, accountants, etc. Water took a large part in this activity – not only wine and brandy were diluted, but we bought moist sugar, moistened products, diluted milk. Everyone’s moral justification was that he was getting back what the state had robbed from himself.”<sup>108</sup> (*emphasis mine* – G. M.).

Against the background of these „blatantly unjust“ facts, data and documents about the fantastic privileged life of the top party-state nomenklatura and its loyal satellite layers at all levels in Bulgaria, it is **high time to reject all propaganda myths** about our socialist past: the myth of the modest and honest T. Zhivkov; the myth of his decent family; the myth that he cared for the people but was greatly lied to by his subordinates; the myth that Gorbachev prevented him from doing the reconstruction; the myth that he made two Bulgarias; the myth that he industrialized the country, and so on. And these myths should be debunked, not out of any personal motives, but simply because Bulgarian „socialism“ had long ago exhausted its possibilities and totally collapsed in the face of history under the onslaught of its own political and economic unfitness. As, by the way, happened to the entire former world socialist system in the late 1980s.

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Both from a theoretical and a practical point of view, it would be interesting to make some **fundamental generalizations (and conclusions) about the privileges of the Bulgarian „socialist“ nomenklatura**, drawing on the rich and well-reasoned material we have presented on this issue. This is important to do because for more than three decades of democratic transition, fables and fallacies continue to be „sown“ about the venerable communist elite and its political traitors who made it possible for „real socialism“ to collapse.

**First**, we must once again explicitly recall that the development of a whole broad system of nomenklatura privileges in Bulgarian „socialist“ society is primarily due to the imposed **one-party political system (and power)** in the country, which creates objective preconditions for their development. These, of course, are not normal privileges that derive from the functions of power and that are rightfully due to the

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<sup>108</sup> **Markov**, G. Distant Reports on Distant Bulgaria. Vol. I. Sofia: Ciela, 2016, pp. 104-106.

high-ranking (and other) officials in the state. On the contrary, these privileges are extra-legal, cater to specific minorities, are mass in nature (for minorities) and totally corrupt people,<sup>109</sup> because they deepen inequalities in society. A circumstance already noticed by K. Marx, who pointed out that „**when the ruling party in a society begins to create privileges for itself, it is doomed**“,<sup>110</sup> as incidentally is happening with the ruling party in our country.

**Second**, similar to the privileges of the Soviet nomenklatura, a whole system of benefits (and privileges) is developing in „socialist“ Bulgaria, which totally serves the top nomenklatura (and other elements and layers of it) in the face of **the nomenklatura oligarchy** as the core of the new political class in our country. The privileges of the oligarchy extend to absolutely all spheres of society, encompassing **a small circle of high-ranking personages** (about 800 people) and their attendant nomenklatura layers (about 10,000 people) in 1980, who enjoy according to the hierarchy and „by right“ one or other state benefits (see *Table No. 2 and the accompanying chart*). This nomenklatura elite **has almost unlimited privileges** and literally exploits the state as if it were its own fatherland. Because, as we have already pointed out, these god-chosen people get everything almost for free, free of charge and without any restrictions – from the food, housing, cars, residences, money, travel allowances, etc., to the countless parties, drinks and soirees of the nomenklatura’s children **at state expense**. For example, in addition to what has been said so far about the financial dimensions of privileges, we will add the fact that, according to some authors, since 1979, from the treasury of the UBO, **nearly BGN 3 million**<sup>111</sup> have been **paid in hand** personally by the head of this office to **the senior nomenklatura oligarchy** to meet their personal, domestic and sometimes official needs. Practically, this is how a **hidden party black cash** is maintained, from which about several thousand people totally pump and exploit the state budget, bathing in a carefully concealed fairy-tale life and wealth. This is precisely why **the nomenklatura oligarchy is given**

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<sup>109</sup> See **Semov**, M. National Psychology. Vol. II. The Bulgarian and Power. Varna: Slavena, 1995, p. 188.

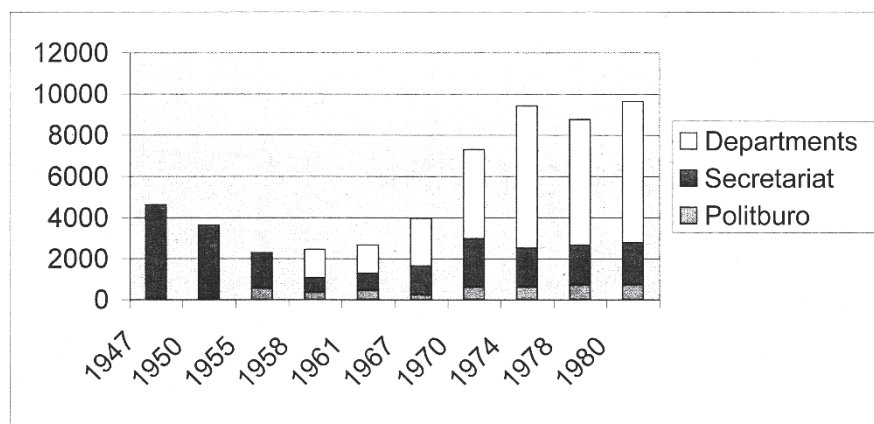
<sup>110</sup> Citation: *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

<sup>111</sup> See **Chirov**, Al. *Op. cit.*, p. 117.

the aptly popular **name of the „red bourgeoisie“**, since it is this oligarchy that has been digging the abyss of socio-political inequality year after year. And not only that. It is called the „bourgeoisie“ because it hypocritically speaks against it, and lives sumptuously just like it, when the Bulgarian people „squirm“ to make ends meet every month with their miserable wages...

**Table No. 2. Number of posts and composition of the nomenklatura of the Central Committee of the BCP**

	1947	1950	1955	1958	1961	1967	1970	1974	1978	1980
Politburo			574	370	468	252	619	627	725	746
Secretariat	4621	3655	1721	689	812	1403	2369	1877	1935	2035
Departments				1385	1394	2316	4313	6923	6112	6872
Total CC	4621	3655	2295	2444	2674	3971	7301	9427	8772	9653



**Source:** *Vezenkov, Al. The Power Structures of the Bulgarian Communist Party 1944 – 1989. Institute for the Study of the Recent Past. Sofia: Open Society, 2008, p. 128.*

**Third**, it is no exaggeration to say that in many, many respects the benefits and advantages of power under consideration in this country constitute **genuine neo-feudal privileges**, the implementation of which by the nomenklatura class not only has nothing to do with socialist ideals, but is literally superior to feudal political privileges in general (see Table No. 3).

**Table No. 3. The main privileges of the political elite in feudal France and „socialist“ Bulgaria**

No.	France (Decree for the abolition of privileges 1789)	No.	Bulgaria (Privileges of the elite in 1989)
1.	Abolition of the feudal regime	1.	High wages (at a special rate for those eligible)
2.	Abolish the right of the elite pigeonholes	2.	Food (low prices)
3.	Removal of hunting rights, use of the reserve and rabbit grazing land	3.	Housing (at preferential prices)
4.	Abolition of senoral justice without compensation	4.	Education (by list from party authority)
5.	Abolition of tithes and substitute taxes	5.	Health (specialised hospitals)
6.	Abolition of lifetime land annuities in kind and in cash	6.	Holidays (special homes)
7.	Eliminate the ability to buy and sell judicial and municipal offices	7.	Transport (low and free fares)
8.	Abolition of various cash privileges in the payment of subsidies	8.	Residences, palaces and hunting farms (only for the higher nomenklatura)
9.	Abolition of all private privileges of the provinces, etc.	9.	Villas and cars (construction and purchase with state funds)
10.	Abolition of privileges in various positions in all public spheres	10.	Gifts and anniversaries (spending state money)
11.	Abolition of giving funds to foreign royal courts	11.	Hunting and fishing (in special hunting farms)
12.	Abolish excessive pensions, benefits and salaries	12.	Nomenklatura missions (at a separate high tariff)
13.	Abolition of titles of nobility (by special decree of 16.06.1790)	13.	Secret off-budget accounts (with political decisions)
		14.	Receiving cash (with secret decisions on nomenklatura)
		15.	Supplementary payroll payments (senior elite only)
		16.	One-off cash allowances (for members of the Politburo and the Central Committee of the BCP)
		17.	Pension benefits

As can be seen from the table, **nomenklatura privileges under socialism are to a considerable extent a social, political and legal absurdity, since a full 200 years after the Great French Revolution abolished the privileges of power, they found deep „political ground“ in all the governing structures of the so-called „socialist society“.** This is one of the reasons for the headlong collapse of the so-called „socialist system“ in most countries where it has been established, including Bulgaria.

**Fourth, it can be said that privileges in the feudal absolutist society in the Middle Ages (and especially in the Late Middle Ages) were something quite natural and common due to the existence of acute social class differentiation of different social groups (and layers) – aristocracy, clergy, nobility, bourgeoisie, peasantry, etc. Therefore, they fully benefit the dominant and ruling feudal-oligarchic classes. Conversely, privileges in „socialist“ societies are in complete contradiction to the then communist ideological doctrine, which promoted equality, fraternity and justice among the people, which is why they (privileges) are an absolutely unnatural and imported product of archaic historical epochs, serving the dominant nomenklatura oligarchy to the detriment of the state and the people.**

**Fifth, feudal political privileges in the Middle Ages had one very important feature: they were respected, valued and maintained by a section of society because they marked out the membership of certain social groups above the other classes in society.** That is to say, they are in most cases a mark of belonging to the rich and aristocratic classes of the state (clergy, nobility, etc.), which distinguishes them from all other social groups, classes and strata. While „socialist“ privileges are not only not accepted by the whole society, but also become a symbol of state-political parasitism in the totalitarian state.

**Sixth, privilege in general is the complete antithesis of equality in society, and in this sense both absolutist political privilege and totalitarian „socialist“ privilege are a gross violation and disregard of political equality and disregard of any human rights in the medieval era and throughout the past XX century.**

**Seventh, from the foregoing exposition of this paragraph of the present study, one important conclusion emerges, which we have already partially stated, namely: through the manner in which nomenklatura privileges are organized, obtained, and enjoyed at all levels, it**

can be categorically argued that they **constitute a substantial form of legalized corruption** and an opportunity to conceal numerous illegal acts. Therefore, we will only outline here some of the most characteristic facts in this area, which provide additional insight into this phenomenon in Bulgaria. For example, according to D. Gribachev, the overseas companies established in the 1980s under the totalitarian regime in Bulgaria (nearly 400 in number) **siphoned off from the state treasury nearly 1.5 billion dollars of the people’s money**, much of which was connected with various forms of waste, nomenklatura and corruption abroad. In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the totalitarian regime in Bulgaria was forced to prosecute (albeit covertly from the public) a number of cases for gross abuses of power and corruption. Such are the notorious cases against deputy ministers and other nomenklatura figures involved in big scams, such as Mr. Zhivko Popov, Mr. Georgi Vutev, Mr. Biser Dimitrov, etc., from which it is clear that abuses amounting to tens of millions of currency levs were committed. For example, in the Zhivko Popov case alone, it was revealed that **more than 3 million of the country’s foreign currency was wasted on lunches, dinners, bribes, tips and other illegal expenses.**<sup>112</sup>

One other specific strand of corruption and abuse of power of the top nomenklatura in Bulgaria is expressed in some special benefits they receive from the exercise of power. For the consumption of such benefits it is enough to point out only two more specific facts: according to the investigative authorities, for example, the former Bulgarian dictator **T. Zhivkov embezzled for himself and for other persons the „modest“ sum of BGN 26 million** only by way of exceeding his power; the son of the same dictator – **Vi. Zhivkov**, in turn, managed to obtain from the UBO authorities only **for 4 years (1985 – 1989) pocket money in the amount of BGN 711,000**, which he squandered left and right in the country and abroad to satisfy his caprices and whims.<sup>113</sup> And this is just a small added touch to the total lawlessness and abuse of power of the ruling nomenklatura during the time of „socialism“.

**Eighth**, another important characteristic of **privileges** in our country is reflected in the undeniable fact that all of them are of an

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<sup>112</sup> See **Gribachev**, D. Op. cit., p. 164.

<sup>113</sup> See id.



illegal (unlawful) or semi-legal (semi-lawful) nature, insofar as some of them **have been established only by subordinate legal acts – decrees, ordinances, decisions, etc.** This subterfuge of the totalitarian regime can be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, because the by-laws regulate the privileges (but also can always be supplemented and amended) for the eyes of the socialist workers; but on the other hand, it is a flagrant violation of any kind of equality, since the constitution is violated due to the lack of specialized legislation. And more – in this way the nomenklatura throws dust in the eyes of the people that a just „socialist society“ is being built, believing that „The people are really very happy with life!“.

**Ninth**, like any dominant and exploiting class, the **nomenklatura** in the Bulgarian state **has over time become a parasitic-propagating social group or caste** that cares for nothing but its own self-rule, enrichment and dissolute lifestyle. This is because it has immense power which entitles it to almost everything, as the nomenklatura families (at the top level) with few exceptions have an absolute caste consciousness. They can spit on the laws and rules of the country and no one can tell them anything.<sup>114</sup> One can even say that totalitarian privileges have been elevated into a kind of political cult that everyone aspires to in their caste-parasitic lives, as the entire nomenklatura class always leads. And it is perfectly natural that this class of bums collapsed with a bang in the early 1990s, only to get the new democratic privileges in our country afterwards.

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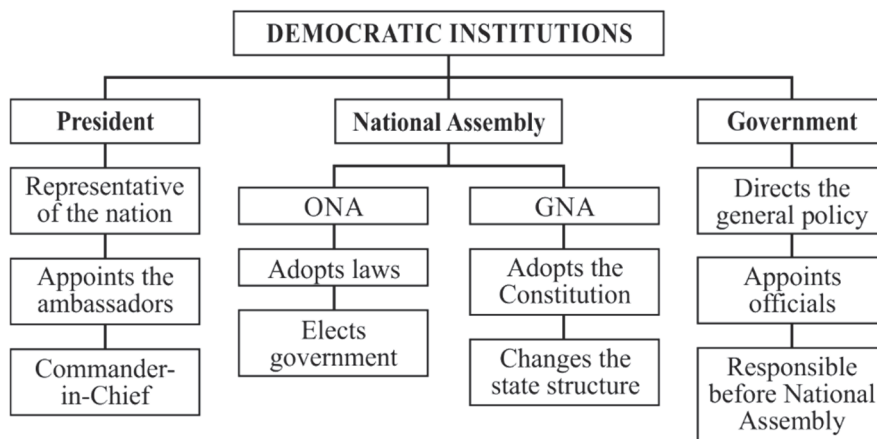
<sup>114</sup> See **Markov**, G. The Bulgarian's Walking Through Torments. Essays. Part III. Sofia: Communitas Foundation, 2016, pp. 88-89.

### Chapter Three

## DEMOCRATIC PRIVILEGES OF THE POLITICAL ELITE (1989 TO THE PRESENT)

After the collapse of totalitarianism in 1989, the transition to democracy and a market economy in Bulgaria created a new institutional structure in the country. In Bulgaria, one of the main instruments of the transition became the so-called „Round Table“ (3.01. – 15.05.1990) – a forum where the authorities and the opposition agreed on the basic parameters of the future constitutional and institutional framework. Plus, the Round Table is not only an instrument for negotiating and pacifying the transition, but also an important element for legitimizing the new elites in society. Because at this forum several very significant changes were agreed: one is in the current Constitution (from 1971) with the abolition of Art. 1 (on the leadership role of the BCP) and of the State Council and the introduction of the institution of the President, assisted by a Vice President; the other is the calling of elections for a Grand National Assembly to adopt a new constitution and the rules for holding these elections; and the last is related to the depolitization of the army and the police and the dissolution of the political police (part of the State Security).

The agreements of the Round Table subsequently led to the adoption of **the new Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (13.07.1991)**, which introduced a democratic regime of government based on the following principles: popular sovereignty, political pluralism, separation of powers, equal civil rights, guarantee of private property; separation of religious institutions from the state; prohibition of political parties established on ethnic, religious or racial grounds, etc. In addition, new institutions are created – President, Constitutional Court, etc. (*see Diagram No. 3*).

**Diagram No. 3. Institutional structure of the Republic of Bulgaria**

*Source: Todorov, Ant. Op. cit., p. 398.*

In terms of content, the new institutional structure of the Republic of Bulgaria has the following characteristics and peculiarities:

First. The president is directly elected by the voters and his work is assisted by the vice-president, but he has no ability to dissolve parliament and no legislative initiative.

Second. Parliament is a single-chamber parliament, with the only institutions that are able to balance it to some extent being the president and the Constitutional Court.

Third. The Constitutional Court is appointed by three different institutions – the Parliament, the President and the Judiciary (through respective quotas), which makes it relatively independent in the state.

Fourth. The various special services (the National Intelligence Service – NIS, the State Agency for National Security – SANS, the National Investigation Service, the National Security Service – NSS) are subordinate either to the government or to the president, which also creates conditions for a balance of powers.<sup>1</sup>

The state authorities **in Bulgaria as a republic with parliamentary government** are organized in three relatively independent and

<sup>1</sup> See more details on the institutional-state structure of the Republic of Bulgaria in: **Manolov, G.** Introduction... Op. cit., pp. 338-340; and **Todorov, Ant.** Op. cit., pp. 397-399.

autonomous areas: **1) legislature** – exercised by the National Assembly (parliament), composed of 240 deputies directly elected by the voters for a term of 4 years, and the Constitution also provides for the convening of a GNA – Grand National Assembly (composed of 400 deputies) to resolve important issues, such as changes in the state structure, territory, the basic principles of the political regime, etc.; **2) executive power** (government) – composed of the consists of a prime minister and ministers, who are elected by the National Assembly and subject to parliamentary control; **3) Judiciary** – consists of a court, a Prosecutor’s Pffice and an investigating authority, which are independent of other types of authority under the constitution; **4) The President of the Republic**, who together with the Vice President is directly elected by the people for a term of 5 years, and who in our view, generally speaking, has more of a representative function; and **5) a Constitutional Court**, which ensures that the Constitution and laws of the country are not violated.<sup>2</sup>

With this new image of democratic power in Bulgaria in the post-totalitarian society, the possibility of a handful of empowered party oligarchs accepting all sorts of illegitimate privileges is abruptly dropped, because by the constitution the state now becomes a republic with parliamentary rule. That – on the one hand. On the other hand – by virtue of this constitutional clause, the Bulgarian parliament is the institution that basically has the power to determine the various types of privileges, including its own. All of these, the privileges, derive from the constitutional clauses, are democratic in nature, and to some extent meet the public demands of the people for a more efficient and quality functioning of government. Therefore, before examining in more detail the question of the state of political privileges in post-totalitarian Bulgaria (and up to now), we will clarify in a thesis the constitutional grounds for their regulation (of privileges) in the state.

First of all, it should be pointed out that the new Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria contains all the democratic rights, principles and clauses that unequivocally regulate both the freedoms and rights of citizens and the pluralistic nature of the political system. In this sense, the basic law stipulates that Bulgaria is a state governed by the

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<sup>2</sup> See id.

rule of law, which is governed in accordance with the Constitution and the laws of the country and which ensures the life, dignity and rights of the individual. Furthermore, power is changed through elections, on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage, by secret ballot,<sup>3</sup> which is the foundation for the implementation of democratic values.

**The rights (and privileges) of MPs** are precisely **regulated** in the Constitution: in Art. 69 it is stated that they are not criminally liable for the opinions they express and for their votes in Parliament; in Art. 70 it is stated that they may not be detained in custody and prosecuted, except for general crimes, and then with the permission of the National Assembly, which is the so-called „immunity“; and Art. 72 states when the powers of deputies can be terminated prematurely – upon resignation, upon final conviction, upon a finding of unelectability or incompatibility, and upon death.<sup>4</sup> In addition, a special Art. 71 stipulates that **MPs receive a remuneration, the amount of which is determined by the National Assembly itself.** In other words, most of the democratic norms that legitimise the rights, duties and privileges of MPs in our country are broadly complied with.

It should be particularly noted that the 2014 Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly devote an important place to the ethical norms of conduct of deputies. In this „code of ethics“, the starting point is the understanding that in their activities, MPs must respect the rule of law and protect the public interest, guided by „the principles of non-alignment with private interests, openness, accountability and transparency“.<sup>5</sup> According to the ethical norms, **the MP is obliged** to comply with the following more fundamental requirements of conduct: not to exercise his/her rights „in the private interest of a natural or legal person“; not to allow himself/herself to be „placed in financial dependence or other relationship with natural or legal persons“; to declare assets, income and expenditures in the country and abroad (in accordance with the statutory procedure); to declare the existence of a private interest (if any) when introducing bills, voting, etc.; **not to use his**

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<sup>3</sup> See **Constitution** of the Republic of Bulgaria. Sofia: Sibi, 2017, pp. 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>5</sup> See **Rules** of Procedure of the National Assembly. – In: SG, No. 97/25.11.2014; and **Bliznashki**, G. Parliamentary Law. Sofia: St. Kl. Ohridski, 2015, pp. 201-204.

or her official position to „obtain special privileges or benefits“ (Art. 145, § 1 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly), and not to accept gifts unless they are protocol gifts and are worth up to 1/10 of his monthly salary, etc. <sup>6</sup> (*emphasis mine* – G. M.). These are important rules that deepen the regulation of the rights, privileges and obligations of Bulgarian MPs, which, among other things, are a kind of barrier against various corrupt deals.

The process of regulating parliamentary privileges began with the promulgation of the Rules of Procedure of the Grand National Assembly (1990), which formally legalized the new democratic privileges in force in the post-totalitarian transitional period in a special Annex No. 2. Over the years, and notwithstanding the changes they have undergone, these privileges have become definitively established in Bulgarian parliamentary-political life, and since the beginning of the new millennium they have been regularly regulated in special „Financial Rules“ to the respective Rules of Parliament (immediately after the next elections). Therefore, we will analyse the scope of MPs’ privileges in the current XLVII National Assembly (elected in November 2021), as they differ in almost no way from the well-established benefits of MPs in previous parliaments.

## 1. LEGISLATURE (PARLIAMENT)

And so, according to the „Financial Rules“ of the National Assembly’s budget in 2022, **the privileges** of the Bulgarian MPs are differentiated into **two main types: the first** stems from Art. 69 and 70 of the Constitution<sup>7</sup> and is related to the **so-called „deputy immunity“**, which covers the criminal immunity and criminal inviolability of MPs and which can only be waived with the permission of the National Assembly and, when the National Assembly is not in session, of its President (or, if arrested at the scene of the crime, the MP can be detained without permission); and **the second** relates to **the salaries and benefits** of

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<sup>6</sup> See id.

<sup>7</sup> See **Constitution...** Op. cit., p. 20.

MPs, which are regulated in the „Financial Rules“ for the implementation of the National Assembly budget<sup>8</sup> (as an annex to the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly).

In turn, **the parliamentary remuneration of MPs consists of two parts – basic and supplementary**, the latter most often seen as reimbursement of some expenses<sup>9</sup> incurred by the MPs. This implies:

**I. According to Art. 5 and 6 of the Financial Rules, the basic remuneration of Bulgarian MPs shall be regulated** as follows:

1. Members of the National Assembly shall receive a basic monthly remuneration equal to three average monthly salaries of persons employed under labour and service relationships in the public sector, according to data of the National Statistical Institute. The basic monthly remuneration shall be recalculated each quarter taking into account the average monthly salary for the last month of the preceding quarter. Remuneration shall be paid by bank transfer.

2. The President of the National Assembly shall receive a monthly remuneration 55 per cent higher than the basic monthly remuneration referred to in Art. 5, the Vice-Presidents of the National Assembly – 45 per cent, the Chairpersons of the Parliamentary Committees and the Chairpersons of the Parliamentary Groups – 35 per cent, the Vice-Chairpersons of the Committees – 25 per cent, the members of a Standing Committee – 15 per cent, and the Secretaries of the National Assembly – 10 per cent.

3. In the case of co-chairmanship of the parliamentary group, one chairperson shall be entitled to a remuneration.

4. A Member of the National Assembly who holds more than one executive office shall receive the higher remuneration among them – for one office, and for the other offices shall receive remuneration as a member.

5. Members of the National Assembly shall receive remuneration for participation in subcommittees, temporary committees, and working groups elected by the standing committees, in proportion to the time of their work, but not exceeding 5 per cent of their basic monthly

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<sup>8</sup> See **SG**, No. 109/21.12.2021.

<sup>9</sup> See more details on these issues in: **Bliznashki**, G. Op. cit., pp. 196-199.

remuneration. In the event of an extension of the duration of the temporary committees and working parties, it shall be decided whether those participating in them shall receive additional remuneration.

6. The remuneration under the preceding paragraphs shall be paid by bank transfer.

**II. According to Art. 7 to 12 of the Financial Rules, the additional remuneration of the deputies shall be:**

1. Additional monthly remuneration for length of service and professional experience shall be added to the basic monthly remuneration – 1 per cent for each year of service, for PhD – 10 per cent, and for the degree of Doctor of Science – 15 per cent of the basic monthly remuneration for a Member of the National Assembly.

2. Members of the National Assembly shall be insured for all insurable events at the rate of the third category of work and shall be insured under a life insurance policy.

3. All additional expenses for an attendant and assistant of a Member of the National Assembly with a disability shall be borne by the budget of the National Assembly.

4. The transport expenses of a Member of the National Assembly shall be recognised when travelling by state and municipal intra-city transport, rail, road and water transport – first class, and a sleeping place for the entire internal transport network.

5. The transport expenses of Members of the National Assembly on private bus lines in connection with their activities as Members of the National Assembly shall be recognised.

6. Transport expenses incurred by Members of the National Assembly elected in districts with air connections and adjacent districts and located more than 250 km from Sofia shall be recognised up to a total of 40 air tickets per year – one-way or return, and for the rest – up to a total of 12 air tickets per year – one-way or return, in connection with their activities as Members of the National Assembly.

7. Members of the National Assembly who do not have a family home on the territory of the Sofia Municipality shall be provided, free of charge, with a home in Sofia from the mandated housing fund of the National Assembly, with the costs of major repairs, standard furnishings, security by means of signal-security equipment or otherwise,



taxes and fees under the Local Taxes and Fees Act being borne by the budget of the National Assembly.

8. Members shall be entitled to accommodation and daily allowances at the expense of the National Assembly when visiting constituencies. The amount of the daily allowance and the limit of the travel allowance when travelling by own car shall be determined by the President of the National Assembly (this matter shall be regulated by an internal act issued by the President of the National Assembly).

9. The Member of the National Assembly shall have the right to a working room in Sofia, provided by the National Assembly, with the necessary technical and communication means, as well as to an official web page on the Internet, maintained on the server of the National Assembly.

10. The National Assembly shall bear the additional expenses of the Members of the National Assembly organised in parliamentary groups and of the Members of the National Assembly not belonging to a parliamentary group in the amount of 2/3 of the basic monthly remuneration of the Members of the National Assembly referred to in Art. 5. The amounts shall be paid to the Members of the European Parliament by bank transfer on the basis of a decision of the parliamentary groups. The decision shall specify the allocation of the funds, their accounting and control. These funds shall be used to pay for assistants, consultations, expertise, premises and other activities related to the work of the Members of the National Assembly and their constituencies. Members of the National Assembly organised in parliamentary groups and Members of the National Assembly not belonging to a parliamentary group shall publish on their website information on the funds spent, indicating the recipients of the funds (first and last name or title).

11. The budget of the National Assembly shall include funds for the entertainment expenses of the President and Vice-Presidents of the National Assembly, of the Chairpersons of the Parliamentary Groups, of the Chairpersons of the Standing Committees, as well as funds for entertaining guests invited by the National Assembly.<sup>10</sup>

12. Preferential prices (non-market) in all pubs, bars and restaurants of the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers, ministries, etc.

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<sup>10</sup> See **SG**, No. 109, 21.12.2021.

13. Extremely low prices for recreation and rest of the deputies in all departmental rest stations of the National Assembly (Euxinograd, Sunny Beach, Velingrad) and the Council of Ministers (*see Table No. 4*).

**Table No. 4. Privileges of Members of the Bulgarian Parliament**

No.	Privileges of the deputy
<b>I.</b>	<b>Basic remuneration</b>
1.	<b>Salary</b> (equal to three public sector averages, updated every three months according to NSI data)
2.	<b>Other cash allowances</b> (amounting to 2/3 of the monthly salary for assistants, experts and expenses in parliamentary business)
<b>II.</b>	<b>Additional remuneration</b>
1.	<b>Cash allowances</b> (on salary) as follows: - 55% for the Chairperson; - 45% for the Deputy Chairperson of the National Assembly; - 35% for heads of parliamentary groups and committees; - 25% for deputy committee chairs; - 15% for participation in committees
2.	<b>Additional money to the basic amount</b> - 15% for „Doctor of Science“; - 10% for PhD; - 1% for length of service and professional experience (for each year of service)
3.	<b>Other extras</b> - parliamentary fleet with official drivers; - Entitlement to subsistence allowance (when visiting constituencies); - petrol for travel in private cars (subject to limits set by Parliament); - free state, public and rail transport (with the right to redeem bus tickets from a private company)
4.	<b>Preferential prices</b> - in departmental restaurants, bars and restaurants of the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers, ministries, etc.; - in the departmental rest and recreation stations of the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers

Such are the officially regulated **privileges** of a part of the Bulgarian political elite in the face of **240 MPs** in our democratic parliament. They **cover a number of public areas, such as privileges in wages (triple the average salary in our country), additional financial means (for**

hiring experts, etc.), social benefits (low prices in departmental rest facilities), special allowances (for seniority, for scientific degrees, etc.), increased holidays (many more days than usual), transport benefits (including payment for fuel for the private car, etc.). And to what extent and how the budget money for privileges is used economically can be seen from the analysis we are going to make about the official spending in the Bulgarian Parliament.

#### - Salary

On the basis of the already quoted „Financial Rules“ to the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly in the current XLVII Parliament, the basic gross monthly remuneration of a Member of Parliament for the first time becomes BGN 5616, which is a very decent amount for our standard of living. To this should be added the allowances mentioned above, namely: 15% for participation in a committee, or a total of BGN 6458; 35% on the salary of the chairperson of a committee, or a total of BGN 7581; 55% on the salary of the Chairperson of the Parliament, or a total of BGN 8704; 15% for the degree of Doctor of Science, or a total of BGN 8718; 2/3 of the salary – for assistants, experts, consultants, etc., or between BGN 8,000 and BGN 12,000 (including all other cash allowances). That is to say, the basic monthly gross salary of a deputy averages about BGN 10,000, not including here the other perks such as transport, holidays, medical services, etc. These monetary remunerations are very high indeed, especially when compared to the official salaries and pensions in our country (see Tables No. 5 and 6).

**Table No. 5. Salaries in Bulgaria in December 2022 (in BGN)**

No.	Economic activities	2020	2021	Change	Change in %
1.	Total	1468	1676	+208	14.2
2.	Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	969	1113	+144	14.9
3.	Extractive industry	2059	2224	+165	8.0
4.	Manufacturing industry	1240	1366	+126	10.2
5.	Production and supply of electricity, heat and gaseous fuels	2431	2695	+264	10.9
6.	Water supply; sewerage services	1145	1245	+100	8.7
7.	Construction	1045	1210	+165	15.8
8.	Trade; repair of cars and motorcycles	1273	1400	+127	10.0

9.	Transport, storage and communications	1245	1351	+106	8.5
10.	Hospitality and catering	643	991	+348	54.1
11.	Creation and dissemination of information and creative products; telecommunications	3502	4038	+536	15.3
12.	Financial and insurance activities	2399	2602	+203	8.5
13.	Real estate transactions	1494	1421	-73	-4.9
14.	Professional activities and research	2007	2288	+281	14.0
15.	Administrative and support activities	1142	1368	+226	19.8
16.	State management	1649	1875	+226	13.7
17.	Education	1748	2002	+254	14.5
18.	Human Health and Social Work	1671	1981	+310	18.6
19.	Culture, sport and entertainment	976	1420	+444	45.5
20.	Other activities	978	1128	+150	15.3

*Source: www.nsi.bg; „Trud“ newspaper, 15.02.2022.*

**Table No. 6. Pension growth in Bulgaria (2011 – 2021) (in BGN)**

No.	Another year	Minimum pension	Maximum pension
1.	1.01.2011	136.08	700.00
2.	1.06.2012	145.00	700.00
3.	1.04.2013	150.00	770.00
4.	1.07.2014	154.50	840.00
5.	1.07.2015	157.44	910.00
6.	1.07.2016	161.38	910.00
7.	1.07.2017	180.00	910.00
8.	1.10.2017	200.00	910.00
9.	1.07.2018	207.60	910.00
10.	1.07.2019	219.43	1200.00
11.	1.07.2020	250.00	1200.00
12.	1.01.2021	300.00	1440.00
13.	25.12.2021	370.00	1500.00

*Source: www.nsi.bg; „24 chasa“ newspaper, 12.03.2022.*

It can be seen with a naked eye from the above tables that in Bulgaria there is a **huge differentiation in the pay** of MPs and other citizens, which is reflected in the following comparative data: **1) compared to wage earners in the first three socio-economic activities**

alone, MPs receive 2.5 times higher pay than workers in the sector „Creation and dissemination of information and creative products“; 3.7 times higher pay in the sector „Production and supply of electricity, heat and gaseous fuels“; and 3.8 times more money in the area of „Financial and insurance activities“; and 2) compared to the minimum pension the MP’s salary is 27 times more!?! , while compared to the maximum pension – 6.7 times (based on the average MP’s salary of BGN 10,000 as a comparison). This is an absolute anomaly in the ways and mechanisms of remuneration of different types of work, because in the case of MPs, every quarter an update is made depending on the average wage (which is usually increased) and the growth of inflationary processes, while in the case of all other workers in the public sector, remuneration is increased based on annual inflation (and the financial performance of individual economic entities). **Therefore, this huge pay gap between MPs and citizens is the greatest political privilege of MPs, because it does not rest on any real basis and objective performance criteria, hence both the extreme inequality and the staggering poverty of the people of Bulgaria.**

The truth dictates to recall that since the beginning of the democratic changes there have been six attempts (in the last 10 years) to reduce or freeze MPs’ salaries, which have failed because they have never been met with any eagerness or enthusiasm. On the contrary, they have been rejected by the entire popular representation because of a lack of political will and because parliamentarians everywhere in the world receive high salaries (only, in our view, for a job well done, whereas this is not exactly the case here).

**- Allowances for experts, consultants, assistants**

It may sound bizarre, but there was talk of a „black treasury“ in the XL Bulgarian Parliament, which in 2006 was shaken by another scandal because it turned out that MPs were illegally turning over BGN 2 million a year. The money in question was money given to hire experts, advisers and assistants, which was about 2/3 of the basic monthly salary of MPs (over BGN 700) at the time (according to Art. 5). This money is transferred to the leaderships of the parliamentary groups by the administration of the National Assembly, with which,

however, **the deputies are paid by hand without concluding any contracts.**<sup>11</sup> This, it is understood, is a flagrant violation of tax laws, the Labour Code and the country's legal framework in general. This vicious practice continued until the XLVII National Assembly, because, for example, **in the XLII National Assembly, the funds for representation expenses are now about BGN 1500 per deputy,** the only „new“ change being that MPs have to report every three months to their parliamentary group,<sup>12</sup> without, however, any mechanisms for both control and taxation (unlike all other natural and legal persons). There is, however, a new issue here: **in Art. 11 of the Financial Rules of the XLVII National Assembly it is written that the said amounts will be received only by bank transfer, which is, however, a small but positive step** towards solving this pressing problem in Bulgarian politics. This, however, does not abolish the „rule“ that these funds should be accounted for by the MPs with the relevant documents after their expenditure, even though they receive them by bank transfer!!!

#### **- Transport privileges**

Particularly revealing are the monetary extravagances of MPs when enjoying **transport privileges** in parliament. For example, in the XLII Parliament (20.05.2013 – 30.07.2014), the Bulgarian taxpayer paid nearly **BGN 1,784,310 for various official trips** in the country and abroad (for a little more than a year) in departmental vehicles (about 100 pcs. only of the Parliament), of which: BGN 1,117,906 – for visits to the districts in which they were elected; BGN 764,804 – travel; BGN 315,890 – daily allowances; and BGN 97,162 – for hotels. In addition, 152 MPs drove 1,434,457 km around the country in their official cars and fuel on the principle of „get to know the country to love it“. The situation is similar **in the XLIII Parliament, where only in 2015 the MPs travelled 1,457,091 km in their official limousines, i.e. they actually travelled 36 times around the globe,** and together with their travel, accommodation and daily allowances, this amount **swells to nearly BGN 2 million a year.** Similarly, **the MPs' private cars are paid for with fuel,** which is equivalent to four MPs' basic salaries per year, despite the fact that the parliamentary leadership has introduced a ceiling for

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<sup>11</sup> See „*Standard*“ newspaper, 16.06.2006.

<sup>12</sup> See „*Sega*“ newspaper, 4.06.2013.

these trips, which is: for distances over 500 km from Sofia – BGN 8,582; from 400 to 500 km – BGN 7,462; from 300 to 400 km – BGN 5,570; from 200 to 300 km – BGN 4,477; from 100 to 200 km – BGN 2,955; up to 100 km – BGN 1,866; and for those who travel around their constituencies in the capital – BGN 1,586.<sup>13</sup> This trend of almost indiscriminate spending of state funds on the transport of deputies, with few exceptions, has persisted over the years, because: during the **XLIV National Assembly**, in just six months of its work (in 2017), 791,000 km were travelled in official cars and **almost BGN 1,400,000 were spent by deputies on business trips around the world and at home** (of which over BGN 818,000 were paid for business trips in Bulgaria, and over BGN 483,000 were paid for the kilometres travelled in their personal cars); **in 2019, our Parliament spent a total of BGN 1,547,000 on business trips** (BGN 1,140,000 of these expenses were for trips within the country only, and BGN 433,000 abroad), with the largest amount of money **for travel expenses – BGN 955,000; and in 2020, transport and other expenses are just over BGN 1,320,000**, and a large part of this is for travel – BGN 812,000, for daily allowance – BGN 368,000, and **visits to Bulgaria „swallow“ BGN 1 206 000 for official trips around the country, for which over 1,320,000 km have been covered, equivalent to about 54 tours of our homeland.**<sup>14</sup> Of course, in the years 2020 and 2021, there is also some reduction in this expenditure, which is commendable, but it is due to the Covid-19 pandemic and not to any special measures to cut parliamentary spending. It is obvious, however, that this last privilege (transport and others) is highly sought after, as it literally provides new, additional „labour“ wages, especially given the large transport service costs of all parliaments.

#### **- Recreation and rest in Bulgarian fashion**

Since forever, all Bulgarian deputies have enjoyed the benefits of the state, which provides them with wonderful conditions for recreation and rest in its departmental villas, rest homes and representative residences. In them, every year, a large number of MPs (and their families) stay after long and exhausting „political work“ on the MPs' banks, of course, at extremely decent and privileged preferential prices. This

<sup>13</sup> See, respectively: „*Trud*“ newspaper, 2.10.2015; „*Monitor*“ newspaper, 23.01.2016.

<sup>14</sup> See, respectively „*24 chasa*“ newspaper, 11.01.2018; „*Monitor*“ newspaper, 4.02.2020; and „*Monitor*“ newspaper, 11.01.2021.

happened then (it still happens today) mainly in the recreational facilities of the Council of Ministers, where, according to pre-drawn lists of eligible persons (again, nomenklatura!), the MPs recover their strength for the next parliamentary season. It is interesting to note here that the prices are always very low, which is why several governments (mostly caretaker governments) increase them in order to get at least a little closer to market prices (see Table No. 7, 8, 9).

**Table No. 7. 1994**

Holiday base	Secretaries, chauffeurs and other staff		Senior government officials		From President to MP		Free admission	
	Lv.		Lv.		Lv.		\$	
	Apart.	Room	Apart.	Room	Apart.	Room	Apart.	Room
Bankya	80	64	160	128	320	256	30	15
Bansko	80	64	160	128	320	256	30	15
Varna	80	64	160	128	320	256	50	20
Velingrad	80	64	160	128	320	256	50	20
Narechen	80	64	160	128	320	256	50	20
Pamporovo	64	56	128	112	256	224	30	20
Primorsko	64	46	128	96	256	192	25	11
Sunny Beach	80	64	160	128	320	256	40	24
Hisarya	80	64	160	128	320	256	50	20
Borovets	80	64	160	128	320	256	30	24

*Note: Rates are per bed per night.*

*Source: „24 chasa“ newspaper, 18.12.1994.*

**Table No. 8. Overnight stays in rest stations of the Council of Ministers (1996 – 1997)**

Prices	Senior officials	Free admission	Foreigners
<b>Apartment</b>			
Summer'96	BGN 320	BGN 590	\$30.
Summer'97	BGN 6600	BGN 14 000	\$80.
<b>Room with 2 beds</b>			
Summer'96	BGN 256	BGN 470	\$15.
Summer'97	BGN 5400	BGN 11 000	\$40.

*Source: „Trud“ newspaper, 25.07.1997.*



**Table No. 9. 2003**

Rest stations	Officials of the Council of Ministers, the National Assembly and the Constitutional Court	Bulgarian citizens – free admission
<b>Sunny Beach</b>		
Luxury apartments	BGN 19	BGN 40 – 60
Room with 2 beds	BGN 11	BGN 30 – 60
Room with 3 beds	BGN 16	BGN 36 – 29
<b>Varna</b>		
Apartment	BGN 19	BGN 52 – 44
Room with 2 beds	BGN 10	BGN 34 – 26
Room with 3 beds	BGN 15	BGN 45 – 33
<b>Primorsko</b>		
Small apartment	BGN 11	BGN 34 – 25
Room with 2 beds	BGN 7	BGN 26 – 18

*Source: „168 chasa“ newspaper, 13 – 19.06.2003.*

It is clearer from the above tables that the difference in holiday rates for mere mortals and „state mortals“ (in this case MPs) is traditionally sensitive and too large, as the rates are set by decree of the Council of Ministers. This – on the one hand. Second, these rates do not apply only to specific politicians, because they apply to their families, children and relatives, as well as to a number of officials and bureaucrats of the executive branch, who are also clamouring for crusts of the delicious state pie called „power“. Thus, lower-ranking officials from other departments – relatives and friends of ministers, MPs and bureaucrats – also benefit annually from the privileges established for lawmakers. And that is why, despite the periodic price increases in the government stations, **a financial audit of the 14 holiday bases of the Council of Ministers (in 1996) found a loss to the state of BGN 4.5 million from the sale of alcohol without excise duty from the cellar in the Euxinograd residence, with a total budget for the bases of over BGN 106 million<sup>15</sup> per year** (the alcohol drinks were bought by privileged people at low prices, then resold in the black market). In addition, ac-

<sup>15</sup> See „Maritza“ newspaper, 17.04.1997.

commodation in the holiday bases was paid for below the regional average and the prices of drinks and food were not in line with the market. Plus **the prices of the residences are not based on real income, but only on the material put into them. For example, in the case of the notorious MP's meatballs, MPs pay only for the minced meat, which is what makes the item so cheap. The rest is at the taxpayer's expense. And more – a room in the Council of Ministers' hotel in Bansko, for example, at the end of 1996 cost about BGN 600, while a night in normal accommodation in the area was somewhere around BGN 3000, the difference being covered by the money allocated from the budget**<sup>16</sup> (how could the MP's meatball not be in demand and tasty!). In other words, some folk in the entitlement are not only holidaying too cheaply, they are also doing illegal business thanks to the low MP rates at the various government stations. By the way, this parliamentary privilege is highly sought after and appreciated because it provides great conditions for relaxation and rest at absolutely symbolic prices compared to the high salaries of MPs.

#### **- Preferential food prices**

The privilege of low prices for MPs' food has always been the focus of public attention, the symbol of which today is the famous parliamentary meatball, which, as we have seen, has a centuries-old „political history“. However, this is not at all abnormal, since as of the beginning of the post-totalitarian transition in 1992, a covert revival of privileges began in the form of coupons for the reduction of the MP's meal (*see the attached coupon, published in the „Trud“ newspaper of 2.09.1992*). On one side of this coupon are printed 22 cans (for the monthly working days during which the MP is entitled to receive a reduced meal from Parliament worth 4.00 lv.). The voucher is valid only for meals in the canteen and buffet of the National Assembly and is not valid for periods of paid annual leave and sickness absences of more than three days. And although this coupon caused a scandal in the work of the Parliament, the „food privileges“ of the deputies successfully made their way into the next chambers of the Bulgarian Parliament. Thus, although no new tariff for the food of MPs was introduced, after the abolition of the 1994 coupon, the then prices for public servants (including MPs) were

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<sup>16</sup> See „168 chasa“ newspaper, 2 – 8.05.1997.

regulated, which naturally differed drastically from those of products and meals for ordinary people (see Table No. 10).

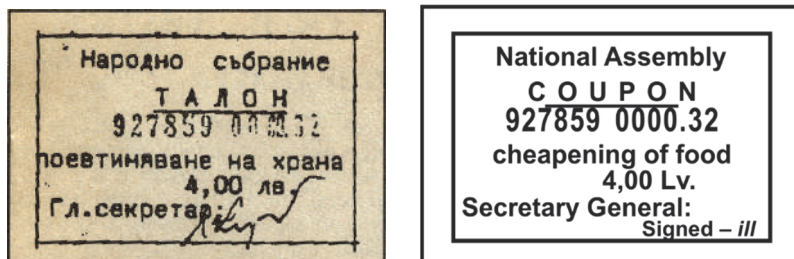


Table No. 10. Table of „social justice“ (1994)

Types of expenses in BGN Category of Bulgarians	Bed per night	Steak with garnish	Two kebabs with garnish	Crumbed cheese	Beer	Coffee
Deputies and Ministers	34 – 57	14.90	14.70	18.0	7 – 12	2.50 – 4.00
Unemployed and socially disadvantaged	35	53.0	32.0	47.0	10 – 16	5.0
Ordinary holiday-makers in social recreation	120 – 180	53.0	44.0	47.0	10 – 16	5.0

Source: „Trud“ newspaper, 2.08.1994.

As the above figures tell us, **the difference in food prices for politicians and commoners is almost everywhere double, only as a reduction for the entitled and to the detriment of the people.** Something that has always been the case and which irritates the public enormously because it is totally unfair (and not so lawful either).

Although it sounds surprising to many, in 1996, „driven“ by inflation, the Videnov parliament increased the food of our MPs by 8%, which led to a jump in the price of the famous meatball to BGN 21.50, which was more a coercive measure than a public need realized by the

government. This is immediately confirmed by the mass visit to government stations, where the new prices, following the crisis in power since the summer of 1997, have again been adjusted according to the wishes of the MPs and some senior politicians in the country (*see Table No. 11*).

**Table No. 11. 1997**

Prices at the Council of Ministers station in Sunny Beach		Prices of drinks and meals in small pubs around Sunny Beach	
Tea	124 lv.	Tea	400 lv.
Schwartz Coffee	100.74 lv.	Coffee	800 lv.
Natural juice	696 lv.	A glass of natural juice	1200 lv.
Muffin	427 lv.	Soft drink in a can	2500 – 3000 lv.
Salad	596 lv.	Salad	1800 – 2500 lv.
Tarator	307 lv.	Cappuccino	1500 lv.
Fish soup	734 lv.	Soups	1800 – 2000 lv.
Minced meat roll	2000 lv.	Cooked dishes with meat	7000 – 8000 lv.
Skewer of chicken	2236 lv.	Coca-Cola cup	1000 lv.
Grilled pork fillet	3574 lv.	Cup of min. water or soda	500 lv.
Fried turbot	3704 lv.	Fried turbot	9000 lv.
Potato stew	384 lv.	Fried potatoes	1500 lv.
Melon, watermelon or other fruits	300 – 400 lv.	Fresh fruit dessert	3000 lv.
Ice cream 100 g	546 lv.	Sundae	3500 lv.
Pasta	182 lv.	Pasta	2000 lv.
Pair meatballs with juice	1066 lv.	Bottle of wine	6000 lv.
Pair of grilled meatballs with garnish	1400 lv.	Mixed grill	11 000 lv.
Pair of grilled kebabs with garnish	1600 lv.	Pair of grilled kebabs with garnish	4500 lv.
Zagorka beer	440 lv.	Bottle of imported beer	4000 lv.
Bottle of Kamenitsa beer	220 lv.	Bottle of Bulgarian beer	2000 lv.
		Glass of draft beer	1500 lv.

*Source: „24 chasa“ newspaper, 21.08.1997.*

Although these **departmental prices** refer entirely to the rest of the **parliamentary political elite**, they are extremely revealing because they further **deepen the trend of total reduction (of prices) of the offered assortment (only for the elite)**, and at times that above all increases the gaping gap of inequality between the MPs and the people.

This tendency to divide the privileged and the unprivileged is particularly evident throughout the post-totalitarian transition and in the subsequent democratic years of the new millennium, as evidenced by the prices of food and meals in the current **XLVII National Assembly (from 2021)**. We will therefore set out in a little more detail a few more indisputable facts about the preparation of food in parliamentary restaurants and canteens and the popular prices at which they are sold (only to certain political elites).

First of all, we would like to point out that the dishes are prepared according to special catering recipes. They are selected so that they are suitable for canteen rather than restaurant meals. This is because everything is cooked several hours in advance so that there is time for the food to be delivered to the chairs in the two buildings (the National Assembly and the Presidency) in special refrigerated vans. Of course, the kitchen is shared by the Parliament and the former Party House buildings, and it is located under the Presidency, and there is also a restaurant with free access for outside customers. About 15 people cook for the MPs there, headed by a head chef. This culinary team works in two shifts, all of whom are on the staff of the National Assembly.<sup>17</sup>

For example, here is what is included in the MP's menu for one day and at what prices (*Table No. 12*):

**Table No. 12. 2021**

Dish	Total weight	Weight of meat	Kcal	Price in BGN
<b>Soups</b>				
Fish soup	300	50	236	1.17
Cream-soup of potatoes	300		266	0.52
Tarator	300		176	0.60
<b>Local dishes</b>				

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.24chasa.bg/Article/990736>

Pork kebab with fried potatoes	300	100	750	2.19
Chicken in Chinese style	300	120	395	2.32
Hamburg-style beefsteak	120		414	0.98
Cheese in Panagyurishte style	200	50	585	1.62
Grilled meatballs „Stara Planina“	50		190	0.60
Grilled kebabs „Stara Planina“	50		121	0.80
<b>Meatless dishes</b>				
Eggs in Panagyurishte style	260		496	1.16
Stewed potatoes with dill and cheese	300		469	1.04
Cheese in Shopski style	200		535	1.71
Green bean stew	300		286	1.05
<b>Salads</b>				
Cabbage and carrots	150		143	0.22
Tomatoes and cucumbers	200		145	0.56
Tomatoes and cucumbers with cheese	250		185	1.11
<b>Desserts</b>				
Tiramisu	120		468	0.79
Casablanca cake	200		310	1.27
Lemon cream	150		445	0.76
Bread	1 slice			0.07

*Source: <https://www.24chasa.bg/Article/990736>.*

For comparison, we will just point out that in the restaurants for the common people, where we all eat, the meals have the following approximate value: soup – 2 – 4 lv., salad – 2 – 3 lv., meat dish – 3 – 6 lv., dessert – 3 – 5 lv., slice of bread – 20 – 50 stotinki, etc. That is, eating in normal public eateries (one lunch) actually costs us several times more than the high-calorie dishes and meals of Bulgarian MPs in Parliament today (these prices are as of the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 and do not take into account price inflation in the first half of this year).

The proposed sample menu is another proof that **the different dishes and meals are prepared according to a special food technology**, which to a very large extent guarantees the quality of the MP's food (including according to the weather season). In winter, for example, MPs eat more stuffed peppers, cabbage rolls and ripe beans, while in summer the most popular dishes are tarator, stuffed courgettes, grilled vegetables or aubergines with tomato sauce.

It is important to say that there is always chicken and pork on the menu, and fish is often available. Beef, however, is cooked less often, and most often in soup. This meat is not in great demand because it is not very tasty when it sits for even an hour in any room (after it has been cooked). And the MPs' favourite desserts turn out to be the creme caramel and the Garash cake, which are also made in the kitchen rather than bought ready-made.<sup>18</sup>

Three important rules are observed in the preparation of food: no semi-prepared or pre-made food is used – all the ingredients are fresh and everything is prepared on the spot; no cooking with old fats, because they have been the cause of complaints of heartburn with possible stomach problems; food is never left to be offered the next day, therefore it is not processed nor adjusted.

Usually the portions are 300 g, which is the standard for a cafeteria meal, and since it is normal for a person to consume 1500 – 2000 calories per meal, the menu for the day must indicate how much is in each dish. In this way, the Member can calculate and judge for himself how much to eat. As an example of a highly caloric meal, the chefs point out the moussaka, which is 600 calories, and yet many are ordering it at the canteen.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, the prices of the MP's food are low because they are calculated on the cost of the products, the food complex explains. This is because part of the money for it also comes from the Social and Cultural Services Fund, for which money is deducted from the salaries of parliamentary staff.<sup>20</sup> Lastly, all of the above explains quite logically why preferential food prices for MPs (and politicians) are one of the most liked and enjoyed political privileges in any democratic society.

#### **- Health service**

Drawing on the traditions of the former top nomenklatura, the country's new political elites create the best possible conditions for their medical treatment when necessary. This was done **by Decision No. 223 of 10.06.1992 of the government of Filip Dimitrov, by which the former clinical base „Lozenets“ was removed from the Military Medical Academy to serve a narrow privileged circle of managers,**

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<sup>18</sup> See id.

<sup>19</sup> See id.

<sup>20</sup> See id.

namely: the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairpersons of the National Assembly, the heads of the parliamentary committees, the president and vice-president, the head and secretary of the presidential office, the advisers to the head of state, the entire Council of Ministers, the deputy ministers and governors, the members of the Constitutional Court, the attorney general and the president of the Supreme Court, the patriarch of the Orthodox Church and the leaders of other faiths.<sup>21</sup> The decision clarifies that the above-mentioned nomenclatura of the government hospital during the treatment pays for the use of a private room, telephone, television, food above the specified wage, as well as other services not included in the scope of free medical care. And although the food of the eligible patients is exactly the same and just as much as for other patients, **nothing in the hospital is paid by the VIPs during their treatment.**<sup>22</sup> To these luxuries we must add the special presidential suite (in a separate wing of the hospital), whose quarters include: a small kitchenette, dining room, study, living room, bedroom, and several other boudoirs furnished with well-kept furniture of lime and light damask. And for a complete and finished look, on one side the windows of this apartment overlook the Vitosha Mountains, while on the other – the pine grove in the hospital park.

According to these documents, **137 people are state officials on the list and a total of about 4,000 are eligible for privileged treatment at the Lozenets Clinical Base**, including all former prime ministers, presidents, ministers and their deputies.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, without waiting for a turn, without having a referral and without paying anything for the rest of their lives! These privileges have been preserved to this day, only they have been transferred to the Military Medical Academy, since three years ago the Lozenets Hospital was no longer a government hospital, but a university hospital (transferred to the Medical Faculty of the Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“). Such are the extraordinary special conditions under which democratic Bulgarian politicians are treated, and it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that most of them have obviously studied very carefully the experience of the nomenclatura cadres regarding their treatment at state expense!

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<sup>21</sup> See „168 chasa“ newspaper, 15 – 21.08.1994.

<sup>22</sup> See id.

<sup>23</sup> See id.



### - Pension benefits

These privileges are some of the most secretive, because apart from a few generalities about individual government posts, it is hard to find anything more specific. And yet, according to the Social Insurance Code, **Bulgaria's pension cap (as of early 2022, it is BGN 1,500) does not apply at all to those who have been presidents, vice-presidents, prime ministers, presidents of the National Assembly and constitutional judges.** Moreover, it is also unclear what the exact amount per month is that the privileged politicians in question receive, although unofficial information suggests that these pensions amount to between BGN 1,500 and BGN 4,000.<sup>24</sup> This means that somewhere around 70 – 80% of the gross salary of the cited senior politicians is subsequently calculated as the final amount of the respective pension (given that almost 30,000 pensioners are disadvantaged as the cap has cut their pensions). There is no doubt that this is a supreme injustice to all pensioners who had high incomes when they worked, because only a handful of senior civil servants really enjoy the quoted benefit.

When we talk about pension privileges, however, we should also take into account another essential circumstance. Although the system of special people's pensions (and privileges) was destroyed after 10.11.1989 in Bulgaria, demands for **new privileges**, this time **for the victims of the communist regime**, were raised instead. Thus, according to the Law on Political and Civil Rehabilitation of Repressed Persons of 1991, the following are considered repressed persons: those who disappeared in September-October 1944; those convicted by the People's Court; those convicted under the Protection of People's Power Act; those convicted of acts against the People's Republic of Bulgaria (for attempting to escape or fleeing across the border); those taken to camps, interned, administratively deported; those expelled from educational institutions; those who suffered from the revival process; those with higher education who were forced for political reasons to perform hard physical labour; those deprived of the right to a pension, etc. And proof of repression is made by a court document or a certificate issued by the Ministry of Interior.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See **SG**, No. 110, 17.12.1999 and subsequent amendments; **SG**, No. 67, 2003; and „*Trud*“ *newspaper*, 28.09.2020.

<sup>25</sup> See **Kyoseva**, Tsv. Op. cit., p. 131.

According to the law, **repressed persons receive a lump-sum compensation and also monthly supplements to their pensions, representing from 5 to 50% of the amount of the average retirement pension.** Here, the percentage depends on the sentence served by the person during the period of imprisonment or in the camp or whether it is paid to the repressed person or to his or her heirs. Generally, the heirs of those killed after 1944 and those who disappeared receive a fixed sum of BGN 4,845. Until October 2008, there was a cap on the amount of compensation, with a personally repressed person able to receive BGN 64 per month, but no more than BGN 2018, which implies compensation for around 33 months of repression.<sup>26</sup> More importantly, however, is something else – the quest for privilege is periodically revived like a phoenix on other occasions. On 27.11.2008 a group of MPs from the „Ataka“ political party, BSP and independents – 11 MPs in total – made claims for high pension privileges – no seniority, age 55 and one term in parliament to retire with a pension of nearly BGN 1,400. The proposal has been submitted in the form of a Draft Amendment to the Social Insurance Code to „align with European legislation“. The draft is frozen due to its rejection by the parliamentary social committee.<sup>27</sup> And thank God!

Later, or on 24.04.2009, Bulgarian Socialist Party MP Zahari Zahariev is trying to push through amendments to the Law on War Veterans, which provides for about 2,500 people to be recognised as veterans of the anti-fascist resistance between 1939 and 1945 and accordingly receive the privileges they are entitled to, such as the right to medicines according to a list approved by the Ministry of Health, rest in the sanatoriums of the Ministry of Defence, a supplement to the pension in the amount of the social pension (BGN 92.53), etc. The other MPs welcomed aggressively the BSP proposal and voted against it. In the near future, perhaps some other party will try to push through new privileges for some new group of fighters.<sup>28</sup> And so on ad infinitum!...

However, the problem is extremely serious, and even alarming, because it actually threatens to become a political relapse, insofar as after almost every rejected political regime in Bulgaria, new and new

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<sup>26</sup> See id.

<sup>27</sup> See id.

<sup>28</sup> See id.

volunteers, fighters and repressed people will be privileged. And with all due respect to all those who have actually fought for various social ideas and ideals related to our freedom, democracy and independence, but it is **hardly necessary (and not at all accepted by the people) after the collapse of one or another social system to privilege a few people with privileges (including pension privileges) in the name of some social cause. For this important issue is not only social or political, but also to a considerable extent moral, as it has significant educational effects for the younger generations in our country.** That is why we must put an end once and for all to any privileges linked to Bulgaria's history if we are to successfully build its democratic future.

**- Representational expenses**

Finally, let us recall one more fractious fact of the uncontrolled waste of **representative money** by the native Bulgarian parliament as a form of political privilege. It is about the fact that **only in 2014 alone the MPs spent nearly BGN 300,000 on gifts and flowers** (BGN 220,000 of them – on gifts, and BGN 73,000 – on the delivery and arrangement of flowers, greenery, bouquets, wreaths, baskets and other protocol needs!), while in the same period the UK Parliament spent only BGN 5,200 on bouquets.<sup>29</sup> It is true that most of these representational sums are ordered by the leadership of the National Assembly, but that is far from justifying it for the excessive expenditure of people's money from the public purse...

Based on these data, the **question** legitimately arises **on what grounds the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria allows itself such an expensive and overpriced extravagance as spending on the privileges of its deputies**, given that we continue to be the poorest country in the European Union.

A partial answer to this question can be found in the data on the official budget of the Bulgarian Parliament for the period 2009 – 2021 (see *Table No. 13*).

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<sup>29</sup> See „168 chasa“ newspaper, 13 – 19.02.2015.

**Table No. 13. Budget of the National Assembly by functional areas for the period 2009 – 2021 (BGN million)\***

No.	Functional area	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2019	2020	2021	Total for the eleven years
1.	A representative and effective parliament (including a reserve)	34,3740	29,4444	29,5549	28,7638	29,4684	31,1634	33,0207	34,1670	37,577	40,459	53,650	381,642 600
2.	Insurance activities	25,8150	22,5537	22,4432	23,2343	22,5297	20,2077	18,9774	17,8311	0,500	0,500	–	2,500
3.	Accompanying activities (Economic and Social Council)	1,2710	1,0019	1,0019	1,0019	1,0019	1,0019	1,0019	1,0019	666	707	1173	10,830 000
4.	Monitoring of fiscal policy	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0,400	399	393	590	1,782 000
5.	<b>All</b>	<b>61,460</b>	<b>53,000</b>	<b>53,000</b>	<b>53,000</b>	<b>53,000</b>	<b>52,373</b>	<b>53,000</b>	<b>53,400</b>	<b>65,014</b>	<b>72,893</b>	<b>83,946</b>	<b>654,085 000</b>

\* The budget allocations for 2021 are for the full year, although the XLIV National Assembly's term ends early. The table does not take into account the budget expenditures for 2017 and 2018, as data for these are not displayed on the official parliament website.

**Source:** Official website of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria – <http://www.parliament.bg/>.

**The first answer**, which literally catches the eye, is that **for a total of eleven years and four parliaments (XLI, XLII, XLIII and XLIV National Assembly) there is an extremely bloated budget of BGN 381 million of state money spent in the first functional area on salaries, allowances, representation expenses, etc.**, or an average of about BGN 34 million per year, with the largest expenditures in 2020 and 2021 (BGN 40.459 and 53.650 million, respectively). In other words, even during the crisis years of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a clear and sustained trend of annual increases in Parliament's budget expenditure of almost BGN 25 m (from BGN 28.763 m in 2012 to BGN 53.650 m in 2021), which is fully catching up with and exceeding many times the large figures of such expenditure in previous years.

**The next answer** is no less shocking, because it concerns the functional area of „Support Activities“, for which **during the period under review some BGN 260 million were allocated and spent on various types of support activities, transport costs, fuel for MPs, etc., a significant part of which in the form of regulated parliamentary privileges.** And although in the years from 2013 to 2016 there has been a reduction in these budget expenditures, they continue to be high, to the extent that **the average annual figure for the entire eleven-year period is not small at all – almost BGN 24 million**, which is in contradiction to the new European requirements to minimize them (the costs of privileges).

**The other answer** to the question of excessive MPs' extravagance in the use of political privileges can be found in the following gigantic sum: **during the whole period analysed (2009 – 2021), the entire BGN 654 million of people's money was spent on the work, maintenance and privileges of 240 MPs in the Bulgarian Parliament and its administration (about 600 people), i.e. almost BGN 60 million per year on average**, even though there are small surpluses in individual years. Or it turns out that with these increased figures to cover expenses, **the National Assembly has spent over BGN 650 million on its activities** (including many privileges) in just **some 10 years**, which makes no social sense against the background of the low standard of living in Bulgaria. Moreover, the largest expenditures are made under the heading of a representative and effective parliament.

**The fourth answer** refers directly to the so-called „accompanying activities“ that are ensured by the work of the **Economic and Social Council**. This council, for which **more than BGN 1 million is allocated annually (except in 2019 and 2020), is an unnecessary sinecure**, as it completely duplicates the work of the eponymous committees in the legislature and government institutions. And so the allocations here are a kind of privilege for Council staff rather than subsidies for objective socio-economic analysis.

**And the last answer** to the question of MPs' expenses stems from the unprecedented monetary consumption of political privileges in parliament, because **for every one MP there are almost three service clerks, and for every two MPs – almost one official car (parliament has almost 100 cars)**. This is a rare parliamentary luxury even in totalitarian states and can be directly described as **a classic political waste of millions of state funds** without much social effect or benefit.

Broadly speaking, these are the results of our wandering around the parliamentary chambers in an attempt to ascertain the extent and application of privileges in the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, from which the following important conclusion follows: first, unlike under totalitarianism, **the extension of parliamentary privileges is regulated entirely legally** (in the Constitution, laws and regulations), covers almost all social areas and spheres of social and political life, and greatly facilitates the activities of the parliamentary corps; second, at the same time, however, **many of the privileges of parliamentarians are artificially inflated, „gobble up“ huge financial resources** (with no fruitful return in terms of qualitative activity), and therefore inevitably deepen inequality in society; and third, although slowly, **the salaries of MPs are approaching their European counterparts, which, however, is not adequate to the increase in the salaries of ordinary people** and that is why the gulf between the income of MPs and their employer – the people, is permanently growing over time (in favour of MPs).

Well, how not to paraphrase a popular line in the past:

My dad is a tractor driver,

I will be a tractor driver too!

in its modern version:

My dad is a deputy,

I will be a deputy too!

## 2. EXECUTIVE (GOVERNMENT)

As might be assumed, various types of privilege find a wide place in much of the executive (government) structures. They, like parliamentary privileges, have strict regulations and cover three main groups of civil servants: one is the so-called „**senior civil servants**“, who earn very high incomes but have little expenses; the other is the **various political advisors** (and consultants) guarding the interests of the bosses, participating in various boards of state-owned companies, and so on, who also receive hefty salaries; and the last circle consists of the **small civil servants** who, however, are involved in specific procedures, competitions, etc., and thus both receive extra remuneration and are the eyes and ears of their bosses. Naturally, these narrow circles of people in government jobs are categorised according to the Civil Servants Act (most of them), know their place in the management hierarchy well and never miss out on some or other perks depending on the position they hold, especially those perks that are **associated with high salaries, extra incentives, cheap holidays**, etc.

In order to get a more accurate picture of the use of executive privilege, we will draw on the data in the State of the Council of Ministers Administration Report 2019 and 2020.<sup>30</sup>

**Table No. 14. Structures of the state administration in 2019/2020**

No.	Administrative structures	2019	2020
<b>I.</b>	<b>Central Administration:</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>114</b>
1.	Administration of the Council of Ministers	1	1
2.	Ministries	17	17
3.	State agencies	9	9
4.	Administrations of State Commissions	4	4
5.	Executive agencies	29	29
6.	Administrative bodies established by statutory instrument which have functions in relation to the exercise of executive power	56	54
<b>II.</b>	<b>Territorial Administration:</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>469</b>
1.	Regional administrations	28	28

<sup>30</sup> See <https://www.gov.bg/files/common/OSA-2020.pdf>

2.	Municipal administrations	263	262
3.	Municipal administrations of districts	35	35
4.	Specialised territorial administrations	145	144
5.	Total	587	583

During the period under review and according to the aggregated data of the above-mentioned administrations, **the basic number of staff under the Council of Ministers' Rules of Procedure as of 31.12.2020 is 142,613, of which 106,191 in the central administration and 36,442 in the territorial administration.** The total number of staff in the municipal and district administrations in the territorial administration is 27,797, while the number of staff in the municipal administration activity financed from own revenue is 6105. The number of occupied posts in the administration is 131,463 and the number of vacant posts is 11,150, of which 5,729 have been vacant for more than 6 months.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the sweet talk about decentralisation and good governance, the number of civil servants has been steadily increasing over the years, for example, in 2016 there were 132,648 and in 2020 they are already increasing by almost 10,000, i.e. by about 8% more than the previous year. This – on the one hand. On the other hand, it is important to set out the resulting **annual assessments marks** of the performance of government structures in 2020, which they (and the government) give themselves, as follows (according to a system of specially developed criteria):

- „Outstanding performance“ – 9195 marks, or 13,37% of all marks awarded;
- „Performance exceeds requirements“ – 34 571 marks (50,28%);
- „Fully meets the requirements“ – 24 244 evaluations (35,26%);
- „Performance not fully compliant“ – 685 marks (1%);
- „Unacceptable performance“ – 62 marks (0,09%).<sup>32</sup>

In this case, these evaluations are an important indicator of the manifestation of managerial competence, the degree of professionalism and the quality of administrative work of civil servants. And one more thing is very important: the qualities listed in the evaluations

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<sup>31</sup> See id.

<sup>32</sup> See id.



shape to a considerable extent the remuneration of the employees, some of which represent real benefits for the employees.

From such a perspective, it can be safely said that the remuneration of a significant number of government civil servants represents a kind of political privilege, which is clearly evident from the table below.

**Table No. 15. Amount of the lowest and highest individual basic monthly salary in the central administration of the Republic of Bulgaria for the most frequently applied positions (as of 1.07.2020)<sup>33</sup>**

No.	Position	Salary figures by post as of 1.07.2020	
		Minimum basic monthly salary	Maximum basic monthly salary
1.	Secretary General	1390	5175
2.	Director General	1516	4537
3.	Head of Internal Audit	1719	4012
4.	Head of Inspectorate	1300	4044
5.	Deputy Director General	1700	3990
6.	Director of Directorate	991	5616
7.	Head of Department	950	4830
8.	Head of Sector	1003	3680
9.	State Expert	880	3795
10.	State Inspector	1040	3639
11.	State Internal Auditor	1371	3867
12.	Chief Expert	684	3360
13.	Chief Inspector	610	3190
14.	Chief Accountant	950	3270
15.	General Counsel	850	3442
16.	Chief Internal Auditor	1026	2855
17.	Financial Controller	610	2988
18.	Information Security Officer	1109	2875
19.	Senior Expert	610	2670
20.	Senior Inspector	630	3000
21.	Senior Legal Counsel	610	2613
22.	Senior Internal Auditor	627	2300
23.	Senior Accountant	620	2732
24.	Junior Expert	610	2218

<sup>33</sup> See id.

25.	Inspector	610	2916
26.	Legal Counsel	718	2000
27.	Internal Auditor	836	2178
28.	Chief Specialist	610	1955
29.	Senior Specialist	610	1615
30.	Specialist	610	1504
31.	Technical Assistant	610	1362
32.	Contractor	610	1337

*Source: Administration of the Council of Ministers, Directorate for Modernisation of the Administration. Minimum and maximum values of basic monthly salaries on average by post as of 1.07.2020.*

Taking into account the positive fact that these basic and most common posts are not evaluated equivalently (i.e. with equal salaries), but are in a specific range „from to“, as well as the fact that for the period 1.07.2019 – 1.07.2020 the increase in the average monthly salaries of **the central administration** increases by almost 10%, we note the following: **first, the remuneration of officials in the senior executive is at a very decent monetary level, especially if we average the value of money between the minimum and maximum basic monthly salary, provided that as of 1.03.2022, the gross prime ministerial salary in our country is BGN 8,704 per month and the ministerial salary – BGN 7,300;<sup>34</sup> second, let us not forget that the amount of the basic salary of the aforementioned posts does not include the seniority bonuses at all; and third, this salary also does not calculate the additional material incentives of the officials, which further increases their salaries.**

The inquisitive reader might ask: What are these additional material rewards that civil servants in Bulgaria receive on top of their salaries?

The answer to this question is also contained in **the Ordinance on Salaries of Civil Servants (1.07.2012)**, where Art. 19 explicitly mentions the types of additional remuneration: for night work, for overtime, for work on public holidays, for time on call, for results achieved and for the implementation and/or management of projects and programmes.<sup>35</sup> Most importantly, the amount of additional remuneration for performance that a staff member may receive in a year may not exceed 80 per

<sup>34</sup> See „*24 chasa*“ newspaper, 15.02.2022.

<sup>35</sup> See **SG**, No. 49, 29.06.2012.

cent of his basic salary accrued for that year (Art. 24(5)). Therefore, on the basis of this Ordinance of 2012, **a scheme for periodic payment of additional remuneration to employees** on the basis of specific performance has been implemented in the administration. In principle, this can amount to a maximum of 30% of the total staff expenditure, with the performance increments themselves being granted four times a year, i.e. every quarter, subject to a decision by the relevant management. In addition to the so-called „Supplementary Material Incentive“ (SMI), officials receive around BGN 200 each year for representative clothing, as well as money for spectacles once every three years.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, on the basis of the above-mentioned Ordinance, civil servants in state institutions and departments can receive (and do receive) thirteenth and fourteenth salaries, of course, when there is a financial possibility to do so. It is not at all difficult to summarise that **the quoted provisions of the SMI Ordinance and, consequently, the cash allowances paid actually legitimise a number of additional privileges of the large mass of civil servants in the country**, which are hardly fully justified mainly because of the low standard of living in the country.

The next important and lucrative privilege in the executive branch is **the participation of officials on the boards of various companies and enterprises of the state**. Here, under the motto that state control should be exercised in the companies, officials are appointed who, being members of their governing bodies, receive decent cash bonuses for this activity. Usually these are public enterprises – commercial companies with state participation in the capital, in which the relevant minister exercises the rights of the state (there is no information on their exact number). This primordial privilege for the Bulgarian civil servant has undergone an interesting metamorphosis over time, as since 2012 – 2019 the participants in the various boards do not receive cash remuneration. Subsequently, or as of 2020, this „privileged right“ has been restored again, because civil servants and employees on contract in the administration can again participate as representatives of the state in the management of companies (with state or municipal participation), in specially established by law state-owned enterprises, holdings, companies, etc. And, of

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<sup>36</sup> See „*Monitor*“ newspaper, 15.06.2020.

course, for a very decent financial remuneration, and most often only for a single monthly participation in a meeting of the governing bodies...

As we have repeatedly pointed out, one of the most enticing **perks of executive power is the low-cost use of residences, rest stations and hunting farms** by the political elite and government officials. We are talking about some 40 representative residences (and rest homes) and 15 hunting farms,<sup>37</sup> where high-ranking government officials, MPs, the President and the Vice President are entitled to relax at preferential rates. And inasmuch as we have previously examined this political privilege in more detail, we will only add here that the many representative state residences and rest stations include the former royal palaces of „Euxinograd“, „Vrana“, „Kritchim“, etc., which offer wonderful conditions for recreation, rest and hunting for the new democratic nomenklatura and its Bulgarian and foreign guests.

Incidentally, it should be pointed out here that one other privilege of Prime Ministers is exercised by the National Security Service (NSS). **According to Art. 21(2) of the NSS Act, all former Prime Ministers are entitled to security protection by this service for four years after their release from office.**<sup>38</sup> This privilege applies everywhere in civilized democratic countries, which is a perfectly normal and natural thing to do. However, in this case, we believe that this period is too long, it is very costly and, accordingly, it should be reduced to a maximum of one year so as not to unnecessarily inflate the already bloated privileges of the executive.

And as a conclusion to the issue of executive privileges in **Bulgaria**, it is right to point out that there are **about 3,000 official cars and over 100 drivers directly servicing the state officials**,<sup>39</sup> which shows the reference made in 17 ministries in the past 2021. However, there is something that is little known here, and it concerns **the privilege of all Bulgarian ministries to fill up with fuel at a discount from one year ago**. This new privilege is based on the presumption that the executive should continuously reduce its costs, which is why the current discount on fuel use for ministries was made (*see Table No. 16*).

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<sup>37</sup> See „**168 chasa**“ newspaper, 25.04.1994.

<sup>38</sup> See **SG**, No. 61, 11.08.2015.

<sup>39</sup> <https://news.bg/politics/3000-avtomobila-obsuzhvat-darzhavnata-administratsiya-koli-za-milioni-v-byuroto-za-zashtita.html>

**Table No. 16. Use of discounted fuel by Bulgarian ministries (by agreement) from 2021 (%)**

No.	Ministry	Society	Commercial discount per litre
1.	Ministry of Interior (Contract 1)	Lukoil-Bulgaria	11.15
2.	Ministry of Interior (Contract 3)	OMV Bulgaria	9.80
3.	Ministry of Defence	Shell Bulgaria	8.25
4.	Ministry of Environment and Water	Lukoil-Bulgaria	7.90
5.	Ministry of Agriculture	OMV Bulgaria	7.00
6.	Ministry of Culture	Petrol	6.91
7.	Ministry of eGovernment	OMV Bulgaria	6.70
8.	Ministry of Tourism	OMV Bulgaria	6.70
9.	Ministry of Energy	OMV Bulgaria	6.70
10.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	OMV Bulgaria	6.70
11.	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	OMV Bulgaria	6.20
12.	Ministry of Economy and Industry	OMV Bulgaria	6.20
13.	Ministry of Innovation and Growth	OMV Bulgaria	6.20
14.	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works	Petrol	6.10
15.	Ministry of Education and Science	Petrol	5.60
16.	Ministry of Justice	Petrol	5.60
17.	Ministry of Finance	Lukoil-Bulgaria	5.20
18.	Ministry of Youth and Sports	Petrol	5.10
19.	Ministry of Transport and Communications	Shell Bulgaria	5.10
20.	Ministry of Health	Shell Bulgaria	5.10
21.	Ministry of Interior (Contract 2)	Petrol	4.10

*Source: „24 chasa“ newspaper, 3.06.2022.*

Leaving aside the economic effect of the above arrangements, we will just point out that **regardless of pump prices, ministries enjoy between 4,1 and 11,15% reduction per litre of fuel** despite the price change, and that too long before they even thought of helping the citizens with the notorious 25% lower petrol and diesel tariffs (in the current crisis). Obviously, the reduction of executive privileges in Bulgaria should be looked at much more seriously, because such a privileged position of ministries is hardly normal in a stagnant economy.

### 3. JUDICIARY (COURT, PROSECUTION, ETC.)

There is usually very little talk about privilege in the judiciary in our country, as it often remains out of the public eye. This, however, is far from meaning that this system and its institutions do not benefit from some or other advantages of the state, which we will present in a synthesised way from here on in this presentation.

It would hardly be surprising to anyone that one of the most logical and natural privileges of those working in judicial institutions is a **suitably high monthly salary**. These salaries are regulated in several articles of the Judiciary System Act, as follows:

According to Art. 218 (1) The Presidents of the Supreme Court of Cassation and the Supreme Administrative Court, the Prosecutor General and the Director of the National Investigation Service shall receive a basic monthly remuneration equal to 90 per cent of the remuneration of the President of the Constitutional Court; (2) The basic monthly remuneration for the lowest judicial, prosecutorial and research post shall be set at twice the average monthly salary of employees in the budget sphere according to the data of the National Statistical Institute; (3) The remuneration for other posts in the judicial authorities shall be set by the plenum of the Supreme Judicial Council. Art. 219. Judges, prosecutors and investigators shall be paid an additional remuneration on top of their basic monthly remuneration for long service as judges, prosecutors and investigators at the rate of 2 per cent for each year of service, but not more than 40 per cent. Art. 221. Judges, prosecutors and investigating magistrates shall receive every year funds for robes and clothing at the amount of two average monthly salaries of the budget-funded employees. Art. 223. While in office, judges, prosecutors and investigating magistrates may use housing belonging to the internal housing fund of the judicial system bodies. Art. 224. (1) Mandatory social security and health insurance of judges, prosecutors and investigating magistrates shall be provided at the expense of the Judiciary budget. (2) Judges, prosecutors and investigating magistrates shall be mandatorily insured against accidents at the expense of the Judiciary budget. And according to Art. 225 (1) Upon relief from office, a judge, prosecutor or an investigating magistrate with more than 10 years in service at such position shall have the right to a one-off compensation at the number of gross

monthly remunerations equalling the number of years in service with judicial system bodies, not exceeding 20.<sup>40</sup>

Ensuring the privileged status of Bulgarian judges, prosecutors and investigators stems from the fact that the judiciary (and institutions) has an independent budget (Art. 361 of the Act), which it fully disposes of after its approval by the state within the national budget. Thus, for example, depending on Art. 218, the three big ones – the Presidents of the Supreme Court of Cassation (SCC) and the Supreme Administrative Court (SAC), as well as the Prosecutor General receive a monthly salary of almost BGN 9,000 (as of 1 March 2022), which is 90% of the salary of the President of the Constitutional Court (it is currently BGN 9,968 gross). Of course, there is nothing wrong with this, as long as the structures and personnel of the judiciary work qualitatively and efficiently, and in such a way that the real benefit is seen in the fight against crime, lawlessness and violations, because huge financial resources are allocated annually to this power (*see Table No. 17*).

**Table No. 17. Budget of the Judiciary 2016 – 2020 (in BGN million)**

Year	Supreme Judicial Council (SJC)	Supreme Court of Cassation (SCC)	Supreme Administrative Court (SAC)	Prosecutor's Office	Courts	National Institute of Justice (NIJ)	Inspectorate to the Supreme Judicial Council (ISJC)	Total + contingency reserve
2016	12,141.0	16,765.3	12,574.0	200,727.9	268,132.7	3,301.8	3,757.3	518,000
2017	21,001.4	18,168.9	14,482.1	216,780.9	284,223.4	3,617.7	6,125.6	565,000
2018	32,487.5	17,562.7	14,760.5	221,715.5	294,188.5	2,961.9	6,843.4	591,120
2019	51,032.9	19,811.6	17,521.8	260,000.0	343,842.4	3,538.1	7,970.2	704,317
2020	49,575.3	21,815.2	19,471.4	289,095.7	378,277.8	3,971.2	8,510.4	771,317

*Source: „Sega“ newspaper, 11 – 17.12.2020.*

What do the figures and data in the table show?

<sup>40</sup> See **SG**, No. 64, 7.08.2007 (and subsequent amendments and supplements).

Among the presented budget estimates, the visible trend of a continuous increase of the budget of the judiciary stands out, as it rises from BGN 518 million in 2016 to BGN 771 million in 2020. Plus, in 2021 the budget of the judiciary increases even more, becoming BGN 851 million, although there is not much positive activity in the work of the specialised judicial institutions.

The most significant increase is in the Prosecutor's Office, which has BGN 330 million for 2021, starting from BGN 200 million in 2016. The money for the Supreme Administrative Court more than doubled – from BGN 12 to 25 million. In contrast, the Supreme Court of Cassation starts 2016 with BGN 16 million and has BGN 22 million for 2021. And the courts receive BGN 434 million for 2021, BGN 166 million more than their 2016 budget.<sup>41</sup>

The monetary increase for the SJC and for the Inspectorate is noticeable. Because the personnel body has BGN 52 million for 2021, while in 2016 its budget was BGN 12 million. In the case of the ISJC, the ratio is BGN 9.8 million against BGN 3.7 million four years ago.<sup>42</sup>

It is undeniable, however, that the entire increase goes to salaries, as the Council's estimates predict that special judges in 2021 will take not 12 but 16 salaries.<sup>43</sup> Their fellow judges in the busier courts are getting three bonus salaries. And all those working in the judiciary – 14 352 in total – get a 10% increase.<sup>44</sup>

It is interesting to say that **the basic salary at the lowest level in the system is over BGN 2,000 and at the highest – over BGN 4,000. Money is taken for clothes, for seniority. There are always bonuses.** This is logical because the judiciary must offer good conditions in order to minimise the risk of corruption.

But the Bulgarian judiciary lives outside social reality. For example, on 19.11.2020, the Supreme Judicial Council voted **three salaries**

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<sup>41</sup> See **Dachkova, D.** Money for the judiciary is increasing, but its results are not. – In: „*Sega*“ *newspaper*, 11 – 17.12.2020.

<sup>42</sup> See *id.*

<sup>43</sup> As of 1.08.2022, the special courts and special prosecutor's offices in Bulgaria are closed by an act of the National Assembly. It also abolishes the current career and financial bonuses for the members of the Supreme Judicial Council and the Inspectorate of the SJC.

<sup>44</sup> See *id.*



**bonus for the specialized magistrates and officials. Other magistrates get one salary for Christmas. Or it turns out that special judges and prosecutors get at least another BGN 1,000 per month if their bonuses are divided by 12, as promised to medical staff who are on the front line in the pandemic.** That is why being a special judge means being much better paid than your colleagues who are ordinary magistrates, but it is far from being the busiest or the fastest. Because cases not written up for months are not the most accurate synonym for fair justice,<sup>45</sup> but rather a sign of bureaucratic clumsiness. In fact, we are witnessing a painfully familiar scheme whereby time and again colossal sums of money are poured into the upkeep of a public system (in this case the judiciary), from which not only is no rational action followed, but regression in its performance is also noticeable. That is, **the budget is growing (meaning salaries) at the expense of results that are not visible anyway (especially in the fight against corruption and crime).** This, however, does not prevent the „palette“ of privileges in the judiciary from continuously spreading wide, since the Act (Art. 303 and 305) explicitly regulates that **the relevant institutions of the judiciary have the right to reward morally** (with honours – diplomas, badges of honour, etc.) **and materially** (material reward and money, in the amount of one month's salary) **judges, prosecutors and investigators.** In addition, another very important privilege of those working in this system should be highlighted – **the judicial vacation of the courts of 45 days each year** (15 July – 1 September), which affects only judges and is much larger than the vacation of all other employees, i.e. twice as long, but on the other hand, it is legalized in the Act (Art. 329). One more thing – according to Art. 330, **judges, prosecutors, investigating magistrates, public enforcement agents and recording magistrates shall be entitled to regular paid annual leave of 30 working days and to additional leave of one working for every two years of the length of practice of law.**<sup>46</sup> It is true that the law limits the total amount of leave to no more than 60 calendar days, but it is an even more flagrant truth that there is no day off for the criminal world in our country, neither in winter nor in summer. Therefore, this enormous privilege for

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<sup>45</sup> See *id.*

<sup>46</sup> See **SG**, No. 64, 7.08.2007.

lawbreakers is simply welcome, as during the summer season the state's „legal senses“ are dulled to judicial justice because the entire judicial guild is on legal vacation. In this regard, it will be recalled that, according to official figures, **290 cars have been purchased for the service of the Prosecutor's Office, while the Witness Protection Bureau has 37 official cars, two of which cost over BGN 1 million.**<sup>47</sup>

Finally, without entering into unnecessary polemics, we will bring to the attention of the tempted public **the principle of the changeability of magistrates (judges, prosecutors and investigators), which in our opinion is feudalised and parcelled out in the different judicial institutions depending on the will of the superior.** It is this that makes it **one of the most tempting privileges**, since after five years' service in the system and the relevant attestation, every judge, prosecutor and investigator automatically becomes irremovable until retirement at the age of 65. This democratic principle, besides having become a lucrative hierarchical privilege, is too often used to brutalise the careers of lawyers who happen to be in the judiciary under the guise of attestation or the patronage of higher-ups in the system.

In the institutional system of privileges of the judiciary we will include those of the Constitutional Court in the Republic of Bulgaria, although it does not belong to any of the three powers by its legal authority. We are doing this because this new institution is extremely important for the preservation of the rule of law and for the effective functioning of the rule of law.

The first thing that needs to be pointed out is the fact that **the Constitutional Court (CC)** is one of the most important institutions in the system of state power because it ensures the supremacy of the Constitution, it is independent of the three types of power (legislative, executive and judicial) and it is governed only by the basic law and the one regulating its activities (the Constitutional Court Act). Depending on this key function, the Regulations on the Organization and Operation of the Constitutional Court state that judges of the Constitutional Court enjoy two main privileges: the first, the immunity of members of the National Assembly; and the second, the status of President of the

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<sup>47</sup> See <https://news.bg>

National Assembly.<sup>48</sup> Along with this, but already in the Constitutional Court Act, are regulated in detail in Art. 10 **the privileged remuneration of the 12 judges**, as follows: **(1) the President of the Constitutional Court receives a monthly remuneration equal to the arithmetic average of the monthly remuneration of the President of the Republic and the Chairperson of the National Assembly; (2) the judges of the Constitutional Court receive 90 per cent of the monthly remuneration of the President of the Court; (3) the judges of the Constitutional Court enjoy the status of the President of the Parliament; (4) Constitutional Court judges are entitled to retirement upon expiration of their term of office, regardless of whether they have reached retirement age and without ceasing to be insured elsewhere, as well as to an indemnity of up to 20 months' salary** (in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Rules of Organisation and Procedure of the CC).<sup>49</sup> And to this we must add that, according to Art. 14 (4) of the Rules, the Constitutional Court shall adopt internal rules to further regulate the issues of **pay, leave, clothing allowance, compensation and secondment** of judges and officials. This broadly closes the „normative circle“ of rules and privileges on the basis of which the Constitutional Court's highly responsible legal and policy work on compliance with the Constitution and the laws of the land is carried out.

However, in order to get a more comprehensive and complete picture of the spending and privileges of the CC, we will quote the audit report of the National Audit Office on the management of public funds and activities of this court for the period 1.01.2018 – 31.12.2019.<sup>50</sup>

As it can be seen, the total amount of the reported expenditures under the budget of the Constitutional Court as of 31.12.2018 is BGN 3,686,383 and as of 31.12.2019 BGN 3 236 248 respectively. Here, the largest relative share in the total expenditure is that for salaries and remuneration of staff employed under employment and service relationships, as follows: for 2018, such expenditure amounted to BGN 2,349,521, or 63.74 of the expenditure incurred during the year, and for 2019, expenditure for salaries and remuneration of staff employed under employment and service relationships amounted to BGN 2,532,518,

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<sup>48</sup> See **SG**, No. 106, 20.12.1991 (and subsequent amendments).

<sup>49</sup> See **SG**, No. 67, 16.08.1991 (and subsequent amendments and modifications).

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.bulnao.government.bg/media/documents/od-ks-0321inet.pdf>

or 78.25 of the expenditure incurred. Maintenance expenditure was BGN 271,277 as at 31.12.2018, or 7.35 of expenditure during the year. As at 31.12.2019 maintenance expenditure amounted to BGN 278,382 and represented 8.60 of expenditure incurred. The expenses for external services, food, materials and short-term trips abroad have the largest value and relative share of the total reported maintenance money in the Constitutional Court's budget for 2018 and 2019 (the value of the above expenses and their relative share of the total reported maintenance expenses in 2018 and 2019 are presented in *Table No. 18*).

**Table No. 18. Maintenance costs, value and relative share<sup>51</sup>**

By type of expenditure	Expenditure incurred from 1.01.2018 to 31.12.2018		Expenditure incurred from 1.01.2019 to 31.12.2019	
	In BGN	%	In BGN	%
<b>1. All living expenses, incl.:</b>	<b>271,277</b>		<b>278 382</b>	
1. Material costs	33,970	12.52	42,572	15.29
2. External service costs	133,517	49.22	137,957	49.56
3. Short-term assignments abroad	44,822	16.52	18,268	6.56
4. Food	34,415	12.69	50,198	18.03

*Source: Unified Budget Classification reporting data on the implementation of the budget of the Constitutional Court as at 31.12.2018 and 31.12.2019; Audit report of the National Audit Office for the period 1.01.2018 – 31.12.2019.*

It is curious to point out that according to Art. 7 of the Internal Rules on Pay, Leave and Compensation of Judges and Employees of the Constitutional Court, the receipt of additional remuneration for high performance is regulated within the approved staff budget for the CC. In the present case, **the amount of the salary, remuneration and compulsory social security contributions for judges and employees may not exceed 30 per cent of the expenditure on salaries, remuneration and compulsory social security contributions** under the budget of the Constitutional Court **for a calendar year.**<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, all additional remuneration is

<sup>51</sup> See id.

<sup>52</sup> See id.

determined and paid periodically on the basis of the last monthly salary and the actual time worked, which is strictly observed.

The question legitimately arises: is the Constitutional Court so important in the country that its members should receive such great privileges?

Of course, we are not going to comment at all on the essential role of the CC for the respect of the law in the country as a powerful mouthpiece of the democratic rule of law. But it is not right to skip over **the unjustifiably high privileges of the 12 judges and 23 staff members**, which is absolutely immoral from both a legal and political point of view. This can be seen from the figures set out above, according to which **more than two thirds of the CC budget is spent only on salaries and additional remuneration** due to the high rates regulated by law. And something else related to the selection of the staff of the constitutional judges: where, for example, would a distinguished law professor (without denying his competence), who has written only two or three books in his 35-40 years of service and has been behind the desk all his life without even entering a courtroom, be eligible to become a constitutional judge?

How come and why?

It's very simple: because they do the party's bidding and political orders of various mentors and politicians or because they lack a basic human and civil conscience. Perhaps here lies the crux of the problem, insofar as any careerist conscience is cleverly concealed behind the job description, greedily consuming the accumulated political privileges in the non-political institution called the „Constitutional Court“. Obviously, reforms in this regard are yet to come at the institutional state level.

#### 4. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL PRIVILEGES

The privileges of some other important institutions have not escaped our analysis, of which we will consider those of only two – the presidential institution and the political parties.

##### A) Privileges in the presidential institution

We have pointed out earlier that according to the 1990 Resolution No. 240 of the Grand National Assembly, the remuneration of the President (and the Vice President) is similar to that fixed for deputies.

That is, **the principle of three average monthly salaries for the country**, which are automatically updated every quarter, **applies** here. Thus, as of 1.03.2022, the presidential salary is BGN 11,232, and this is without taking into account any allowances for seniority, scientific degree, etc. In addition, the Head of State enjoys all other privileges of the MPs, such as: official transport, special security, medical care, state residences, etc., including the entitlement to an office, secretary, driver and car after his term of office. Of course, the president has the other basic privileges that are his by right: reduced meals (in terms of prices) in departmental restaurants, presidential apartments in state residences, and so on and so forth. Similar privileges are enjoyed by the Vice President of the Republic, as well as by all employees in the presidential institution (such as political and service staff), depending on their rank and the positions they hold in the hierarchy. In other words, the President enjoys all the more important privileges enjoyed by deputies (including those upon retirement).

#### **B) Privileges in political parties**

It is a well-known fact that parties are the incubator of political privileges in social life, because since their very beginning the conditions have been created for the use of various benefits and advantages at the top (and structures) of the party hierarchy. With the development of democracy in the XX century, the role and place of parties grew, which is why their institutionalization on a legal basis in the United States, Europe and other continents of the world became established and enforced. This institutionalization finally developed in Bulgaria after the fall of the totalitarian regime, when the first laws on political parties were adopted after the beginning of democratic changes (1990, 2001, 2005). They (the party laws) regulated the rights and obligations of these political entities – the parties, including some of their privileges, which are mainly enjoyed by the respective party elite, and especially by the leading party oligarchy.

The Political Parties Act of 2001 contains **several significant points**, which, in a synthesized form, are: 1) regulating (and expanding) the own revenues of political parties, such as membership fees, real estate revenues, revenues from publishing, copyrights and use of intellectual property, and donations from legal entities; 2) allocating an annual state subsidy from the national budget to finance parliamentary

parties and coalitions (in proportion to the votes received), including those parties that received between 1 and 3,9% of the vote in the last parliamentary elections; 3) provision by the state and the municipalities to the political parties that received more than 1% of the actual votes (in the last parliamentary elections) of premises for their activities; 4) limiting the amounts for different types of donations, namely: anonymous donations whose total amount is greater than 25 per cent of the annual state subsidy of the respective party, donations from the same person (natural or legal) for an amount of BGN 30,000, funds from enterprises with more than 50 per cent state and municipal participation (or from enterprises and organisations performing under contract a state or municipal contract), as well as donations of funds from foreign governments or foreign state companies and organisations; 5) prohibiting the carrying out of any economic activity; and 6) entrusting the overall control of the financial revenues and expenditures of political parties to the National Audit Office.<sup>53</sup>

Undoubtedly, these important legal clauses introduce additional order in the functioning of political parties, insofar as they regulate some new clauses concerning the status of parties in the country, the legitimacy of their funding, the fight against „vote trading“, etc. And in general they aim at a faster and more effective adaptation of this type of legislation to the norms and rules of the European criteria (and requirements) in this respect.

However, it would be a manifestation of one-sidedness if we were to be satisfied with interpretations of the PPA alone, because, as with many other pieces of legislation, we are confronted with a number of **legal (political and partisan) misunderstandings** that constitute a significant obstacle to the positive development of the democratic political process.

**The first legal misunderstanding** in the current Political Parties Act (PPA) is related to the state subsidy for parties that receive it when they have more than 1% in the last parliamentary elections, although they are not represented in the National Assembly. In essence,

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<sup>53</sup> These issues are elaborated in detail in: **Manolov**, G. The Price of Elections, or How Parties Buy Power. Plovdiv: Paisii Hilendarski, 2009, pp. 260; 273 ff; **SG**, No. 30, 28.08.2001.

this is pure legal feeding of a few Bulgarian parties from the state budget, without any justification for it.

The following question arises: **where from and on what reasonable legal basis will the Bulgarian state turn the native parties into feeders? And how on earth can any unknown party, whose membership is gathered together, if not in an old-fashioned phaeton, legally receive state support for its activities, if it manages to get some meagre percentage in the elections, i.e. a few thousand votes?**

So it is absolutely unacceptable in a country like Bulgaria, where the smell of the totalitarian political mentality still poisons us, where the democratic roots have been trampled for decades and where only for thirty years there has been a fragile constitutional pluralist regime and a fluttering market economy, to give such a big legislative freedom to political parties to „siphon“ money from the state budget without anyone holding them accountable.

It is more than clear that in its current unfinished form **the Political Parties Act in a certain sense puts the parties in a privileged position vis-à-vis the state and even above it, which is absurd and paradoxical.**

**The second legal deficiency** of the Act is the possibility of „slipping“ big money into electoral campaigns, among which the most striking are: first, **the clause on anonymous donations** (Art. 22(1) and (2)), which regulates the de facto secrecy of a significant part of the financial resources for elections when in advanced Europe donations are almost everywhere public, **is absolutely unacceptable;**<sup>54</sup> second, **the situation in the Act is completely untenable, where as much as 25% of the annual donations are completely anonymous** and on top of that the „right“ is given to the parties themselves to determine which donors are public and which are not (for example, in 2001 alone ten parties received anonymous donations for BGN 1,130,160);<sup>55</sup> third, **the fact that state-owned companies are allowed to finance political parties** (under certain conditions) **cannot be accepted** at all, because in the Bulgarian reality state managers are usually servants of the ruling parties and therefore the ruling party (whichever one it is) is the most fa-

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<sup>54</sup> This clause was repealed in the subsequent amendments to the PPA in 2005, making the donations public.

<sup>55</sup> See „*Dnevnik*“ newspaper, 10.10.2002.



voured, both throughout its mandate and on the eve of each subsequent popular vote; fourth, it is probably no coincidence that **the „oversight“ in the Act, which in Art. 23 prohibits the parties from carrying out business activities (which is great), and shortly before that, in the previous Art. 21, these same parties are allowed to sublet to other legal entities („but only for party business“) the premises provided for party business, which is pure legalization of party-clientelist business; and lastly, everything that is not fully clarified in the Act is tactfully referred to be „further clarified“ by the Law on Non-Profit Legal Entities, from which the issues of electoral financing are thrown into God knows where.**

**The third legal inconsistency** stems from the fact that it regulates **the privileged status of the dozens of party and other foundations** that annually raise all kinds of financial resources for the parties. The problem in this case even borders on the absurd, since **these foundations can carry out „dual“ activities – one is permitted by law, i.e. business activity, and the other is prohibited, i.e. raising money for the parties (according to the PPA).** This situation is absolutely abnormal because it practically legitimizes political corruption and directly serves the party elites, which is why it should be abolished immediately.

**The fourth legal ambiguity** is a continuation of the second one, because it deals with **the privileged conditions under which political parties can rent different premises from the state and municipalities for party activities** (Art. 20, 21). Or, we are talking about the notorious negligible rents for party clubs, which are set administratively and not at market prices. In this way, the parties commit massive violations of the law as they continuously sublet their own clubs to different parts of companies with which they then share the rents and profits. **In the Sofia region alone, for example, according to official data, more than BGN 600,000 is lost annually in rent because the premises are used by the parties, which sublet them to various companies.**<sup>56</sup> Thus, almost half of the political parties actually function as commercial entities on the economic market, insofar as they are constantly involved in various business relations.

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<sup>56</sup> See „*Politics*“ newspaper, 6 – 12.11.2004.

**And the fifth legal misunderstanding** in the Political Parties Act concerns **the endlessly anaemic and impersonal state control over the financial revenues and expenditures of the parties**. Again, there are many paradoxes, but one of them is „remarkable“, since the only one with the right to control party finances is the National Audit Office (and a formal one at that), which only audits state institutions (by law), while political parties are not at all. Therefore, not only is the control „toothless“ and ineffective, but the political parties themselves do not respect the National Audit Office at all, as they constantly „fail“ to report within the established deadlines, as evidenced by the following data: in 2001 a total of 165 parties did not submit financial reports; in 2002 – 157 parties; in 2003 – 294 parties, etc., and of all the parties registered under the Law, as many as 139 of them,<sup>57</sup> never and under no circumstances submit financial reports to the state institutions.

In the third Political Parties Act (2005)<sup>58</sup> another attempt was made to bring this matter closer to European and global standards. It introduces **new requirements to expand transparency and control of party financing in several key areas: 1) permissive**, which directly addresses the increase of sources of party finance, such as interest on cash deposits in banks and additional own revenues from fundraising events; **2) prohibitory**, which explicitly mandates the prohibition of anonymous donations, funds from gambling promoters, as well as money from religious institutions or non-profit legal entities operating for public benefit; and **3) „innovative“**, i.e. one that introduces new provisions into the Act, such as the „administrative penalty provisions“ (fixing different types of fines for non-compliance) and the „additional provisions“ (clarifying some important concepts in the Act). In this sense, financial control over political parties has been sharply increased through a number of other restrictions: limiting the ceiling on donations (up to BGN 10,000 for individuals, and up to BGN 30,000 for legal entities), including the application of a list of donors with donation amounts attached; preventing the so-called „secondary financing“ of

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<sup>57</sup> See respectively: „*Standard*“ newspaper, 10.10.2002; „*Sega*“ newspaper, 17.03.2004; and „*Capital*“ newspaper, 10 – 16.12.2005.

<sup>58</sup> It was promulgated in *SG*, No. 28 of 1.04.2005 and has been amended and supplemented twice since then (20.12.2005, *SG*, No. 102 of 24.02.2006, *SG*, No. 17).

parties by the state (banning parties from taking money from companies with more than 5% state or municipal participation or from their subsidiaries); use of loans from banks up to 2/3 of the revenues reported to the National Audit Office (for the previous calendar year); specification of the amount of the state subsidy for political parties (1% of the minimum wage for the current calendar year), etc. In other words, **the new texts of the Act, at least in theory, attempt to take away the main levers of influence on the behaviour of political parties from private structures, individuals and businessmen, as well as from those who, by „pouring“ excessive money into future state managers, aim at „legitimate“ purchase of the upcoming elections. Or, to summarise, the Act attempts to bring a certain (and in some respects new) order to party financing: it tightens the regime for the establishment and registration of parties; it eliminates the possibility of fake political formations parading as duplicates of actually existing parties; and it introduces an order of magnitude for the participation of political parties in electoral campaigns.**<sup>59</sup>

And so, despite the good intentions and some good decisions in the Act itself, which pursue the radical suppression of the invasion of money into party coffers, this process has never been fully sustained, as the facts and data on the financing of political entities show. For example, if we look even more closely at all the expenditure incurred by the political parties, we will immediately find several important points: **first, instead of being curbed, state subsidies to the parties have increased significantly, receiving almost BGN 11 million for their activities in 2007 alone; second, the expenditure on the parties' election campaigns and on their overall media coverage continues to increase dramatically; and finally, most parties continue to violate the PPA with absolute impunity, especially in the various donations from state-owned companies (i.e. more than 5% state participation, the champion here being the BSP, followed by NDSV, and so on, and so forth).**<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> According to some data, in Bulgaria more than 70% of all companies sponsor domestic parties, which is indeed a very high percentage (See „*Standart*“ newspaper, 6.01.2006).

<sup>60</sup> See, respectively: „*24 chasa*“ newspaper, 1.12.2006; „*Dneven Trud*“ newspaper, 7.11.2006; „*Sega*“ newspaper, 7.11.2006.

Despite some quality hits of the new law on party financing, it again fails to solve the fundamental question of how political parties in Bulgaria can become normal political entities and use all financial resources in a way that they do not abuse them and do not participate in corrupt electoral scandals.

Perhaps the most serious drawback of this **PPA** is that it also **fails to strike a balance between state and private subsidies as the main sources of funding for Bulgarian parties**, because the logic of prioritizing corporate (private) funding of the overall political activity through the notorious private donations is maintained. Another important drawback is the **almost non-existent sanction in the Act on the use of anonymous donations by parties (symbolic fine from 1000 to BGN 5,000)**, which, if officially prohibiting these donations through the „front door“, quietly returns them through the backyard of the political system. Next – a significant drawback is also the fact that **there are still no perfectly clear rules and mechanisms for the management of party properties to regulate in the law greater publicity and publicity for the movement of money flows to political parties**, especially during election campaigns. Fourth – a recurring flaw is the permission for **parties to rent state and municipal premises for low rents (ostensibly for party work) and then sublet them to various private companies, which in essence is outright „legitimation“ of business activity, even though it is prohibited by law**. Fifth – **the systematic financial irregularities in political activity** are also a very worrying flaw, **which predetermine pro-corruption attitudes in the parties themselves**, forming a widespread public distrust of leaders, politicians and parties on the part of citizens. Lastly, an extremely negative drawback of the Political Parties Act is the fact that **the above half-hearted and legally unsound provisions create dozens of legal conditions for the use of the „shadow“ economy as a fundamental source (and channel) for financing Bulgarian political parties**.

Although the shortcomings identified are extremely serious, as they obscure the transparency of party financing, they have not been removed in the successive **amendments to the PPA of January 2009**.<sup>61</sup> Because instead of adopting a new law to remove the old shortcomings

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<sup>61</sup> See **SG**, No. 6, 23.01.2009.

**Table No. 19.**  
**State maintenance of**  
**the Bulgarian parties by**  
**year (according to the**  
**PPA)**

<b>1 lv per vote</b>	
2002	BGN 4 500 000
2003	BGN 4 500 000
2004	BGN 4 479 984
<b>1% of the minimum wage</b>	
2005	BGN 5 356 798
2006	BGN 5 744 674
<b>2% of the minimum wage</b>	
2007	BGN 12 853 634
2008	BGN 16 051 995
<b>5% of the minimum wage</b>	
2009	BGN 46 695 545
2010	BGN 42 944 333
2011	BGN 50 494 036
<b>12 lv per vote</b>	
2012	BGN 50 494 036
2013	BGN 45 402 977
<b>11 lv per vote</b>	
2014	BGN 38 282 853
2015	BGN 36 115 104
2016	BGN 36 115 104
2017	BGN 38 057 288
2018	BGN 9 662 096
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>BGN 447 750 457</b>

Source: „Trud“ newspaper,  
 9.05.2018.

the financing that stem from the political practice of the parties in the country have been removed. However, this is a deceptive notion, because **despite some radical changes, such as the ban on donations from private companies, illegitimate party funding remains largely intact in Bulgaria anyway.** The main evidence for this are a number of legal „loopholes“ in the amendments, namely: **1) the total state subsi-**

and obstacles, some partial amendments are again made without achieving any decisive change in the current approaches to party financing.

In a more synthesized order, the innovations in the PPA (since 2009) can be grouped as follows: **a) ban on donations to the parties from legal entities** (companies, sole traders) and religious organizations, as donations can only be made by individuals up to BGN 10,000 (for 1 year); **b) increasing the state subsidy for the parties more than twice**, or those parties that have more than 1% influence will receive 5% of the minimum wage per vote (until 2009 it was 2%, or BGN 4.40), i.e. BGN 12 per vote; **c) the introduction of a public register of parties**, in which they will keep track of their sponsors, their own properties and the sociological and PR agencies with which they work; and **d) an increase in the control functions of the National Audit Office** in auditing political parties, including the right of the Audit Office to notify the National Revenue Agency and the Prosecutor's Office to carry out audits and inspections, if necessary, etc.

At first glance, the new amendments and additions to the PPA give the good impression that most of the weaknesses in

**dization of parties for the period 2002 – 2021 cost the Bulgarian taxpayer over half a billion leva (see Table No. 19); 2) the ban on the financing of the parties by various private companies will only push it to another „illegal plane“ (financing of private persons by companies, which in turn donate this money to the parties); 3) the clause on the subletting of party offices (and properties) for commercial purposes remains in full force, although the text of the Act formally prohibits this (Art. 32, § 2); 4) ridiculously low fines are regulated for a party that hides a sponsor (BGN 10,000), for failure to submit a financial report on time (BGN 1,000 – 2,000), for a person from a political party obstructing an audit by the Audit Office (BGN 1,000 – 2,000), etc.**

The brief momentary conclusion that could be drawn about the legal regulation of party financing in Bulgaria (after 10.11.1989) is the following: **without ignoring all the efforts made to regulate this issue (party financing) and without forgetting the fact that we have no experience in the absorption of such a legal matter (i.e. the old law on party financing), we should emphatically stress that the current legislation on the financing of Bulgarian political parties is ineffective, substandard and outdated because it is unable to solve key problems of social development, does not allow for the deployment of widespread public control, accountability and publicity in party financing and essentially „clogs“ fatally the alveoli of the democratic political process in the country.** That is to say, these **unreviewed legal clauses** (outlined above) do not eliminate at all, but on the contrary, **in every way stimulate the privileged position of the parties themselves, their leaders, their governing oligarchy and the party-political circles surrounding them,** which we will prove with a few more facts, figures and examples (from Bulgarian political life).

It is particularly unpleasant to point out that **in practice the Bulgarian state permanently finances its parties because, on the one hand, it gives them a subsidy, on the other hand, it gives them the right to receive money from state-owned companies, and a third time, it reassigns state property (in which they are housed) to various private business companies, from which they accumulate additional (in most cases illegal) income. And if this is not an extremely lucrative financial privilege for our parties, bordering on legal siphoning of state subsidy, what is it then?!**

Another solid source for loading the party coffers in Bulgaria with „notes“ is **the management of state properties for party purposes**. We are talking about the thousands of party properties which are public property and which the maligned Bulgarian state rents out for pennies to the native party mastodons (the parties that received more than 1% of the votes in the parliamentary elections). Here is what the inexorable figures from the audit of the Audit Office in 2007 show: **in total, the 22 Bulgarian political parties have been given more than 1400 properties (1000 of them in the countryside, and 400 in the capital) to manage and for party activities, and for a negligible rent (in the range of BGN 10 – 20 per sq. m.) the politicians actually manage more than 70 000 sq. m., or an average of 3500 sq. m. of useful space<sup>62</sup> for each of them.** The audit report points out that a significant part of these rented properties are sublet by the political parties to various companies, which turn the clubs into pubs, casinos, kebab shops, etc. That is to say, in almost all party properties a rich business activity is carried out, from which a lot and a lot of money is earned on the back of the Bulgarian state (and taxpayer), amounting only in 2006 to about BGN 160,283.

Here, the „leader“ in the ranking of the reassigned properties for non-partisan purposes is the SDS – 159 pcs.; followed by the BSP – 62; ZNS – 19; BZNS and NDSV – 18 pcs. each; DP – 15; VMRO-BND – 14 pcs., etc., although Art. 32 (2) of the PPA explicitly prohibits such non-political activities!!!

But this is not all, because we can hypothetically arrive at another gross violation from which money can be diverted to party headquarters (see *Table No. 20*).

**Table No. 20. Income from properties and unpaid rents of some of the Bulgarian political parties in 2006 (in BGN)**

No.	Batches	Property (premises)	Revenue	Unpaid rents
1.	SDS	258	1 020 000	14 000
2.	BSP	245	4 598 000	38 000
3.	DPS	140	1 392 000	7 000
4.	NDSV	137	1 581 000	14 000

<sup>62</sup> **Report** of the National Audit Office on the revenue and expenditure of the parties in 2006 [online]. [www.bulnao.government.bg](http://www.bulnao.government.bg).

5.	DSB	71	516 000	2 867
6.	Ataka	69	301 000	1 000
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>9 409 436</b>	<b>77 448</b>

*Source: Report of the National Audit Office on the revenue and expenditure of the parties in 2006. Op. cit.*

In this context, the big screw-up with the state is expressed in the fact that there is a **double party profit**: on the one hand, it (the profit) comes from the low rents for the parties (given by the state), from which they in this case earn the „small“ amount of almost BGN 9.5 million in just one year(!!!!); while, on the other hand, from **the remainder of these BGN 9,331,988 (excluding the BGN 77,448 mentioned above), in any case, concealed money is set aside, inasmuch as, according to the contract, an official price (for the rented property) is always paid, and the „surplus“ thereon is always given to be paid in by hand (i.e., unaccountably) with the corresponding warrant.** In fact, this is an invisible „side effect“ – profit and income, which is well disguised on the surface and from which the parties in our country accumulate extraordinary wealth, as the money goes into the „black coffers“. In other words, most of the Bulgarian political parties (and especially the most influential of them) have long since become rentier parties at state expense, into whose headquarters „flow“ dozens of „full streams“ of illegitimate funds.

One of the most sought-after and obvious political perks of **the party elites is the permanent participation of their members in the dozens of state and municipal boards, management bodies, control councils, etc.,** in which they receive high salaries without doing much effective work. As proof of this, we will cite the following data: a total of 76% of the MPs, 75% of the ministers and chairpersons of state (and executive) agencies and over 90% of the mayors of municipalities in Bulgaria participate in the boards of various NGOs (as of 1.01.2009).<sup>63</sup> These figures unambiguously show that the entry into power and participation of party figures in various boards of state and non-state organizations is a classic form of democratic privilege, which, besides being legal, brings decently high incomes to the political-party oligarchy.

<sup>63</sup> See „Tema“ magazine, issue 4, 2009, p. 29.



There is no way to miss the notorious „**vote trading**“ of voters, which in Bulgaria has centuries-old traditions and in this case can be defined as a **specific privilege of our party oligarchy**.<sup>64</sup> Or, to put it more specifically, „vote trading“ is an unregulated (direct or indirect) „buying and selling“ of electoral votes and as such – an outright corrupt exchange, whereby by giving money in hand (or in kind) the aim is to secure the people’s vote for a certain party, organization, movement, leader or person. In this sense, „vote trading“ can also be defined as a lucrative party privilege, insofar as through it more than one or two functionaries at different (party) levels gain serious monetary benefits.

**Therefore, the key unifying basis of all party elites (and layers) in Bulgaria is not the proclaimed democratic values, not the defense of national ideals, not the aspirations for the creation of a new democratic society, but first and foremost the aspiration to seize power and use it for political, economic, personal and any other privileges, benefits and advantages. So, what some today call „friendship and royal circles“ in politics (close to one prime minister or another) have never been and could never be anything but one thing: a hidden or open manifestation of the activities of the various oligarchic layers which, depending on the ruling colour, directly serve any new power oligarchy in the country.** That is precisely why the dimensions of political corruption in our country have never been so large, i.e., so large as to hold back the entire social evolution, hinder the development of the state, and even become a way of life for hundreds of thousands of ordinary people and, of course, for almost the entire so-called „political elite“! These are the realities in our country at the moment, regardless of whether we like it or not, whether we acknowledge it or reject it, whether we support or not the actually existing political privileges of the party oligarchies (and elites) in our country.

**So, are the privileges enjoyed by the Bulgarian political elite after the beginning of the democratic changes of 10.11.1989 deserved?**

The trivial answer to this question for many people is completely unambiguous: they are deserved, because they are legalized and regulated by the relevant legal documents.

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<sup>64</sup> The „vote trading“ of the electorate is analysed in detail in my book „The Price of Elections, or How Parties Buy Power“, so we will only briefly discuss it here as a specific political privilege.

Yes, this is indeed the case, but we will respond in another way, namely by revealing the results of the activities of our political elite in the institutions of power in Bulgaria.

If we take a closer look at the work of **the National Assembly**, we will inevitably come across the fact that **the high salaries of MPs are many times above the normal salaries of people according to the standard of living in the country and are not a right, but above all a classic political privilege, because they are in most cases not actually earned, and therefore cannot be said to be deserved** (at least in this large amount). This is evidenced by the ineffective and low-quality work of **the parliament** and the legislative process (regardless of whose majority it is), which is clearly evident from the following facts: 1) according to the monitoring report of **the Institute for Modern Policy** for the period July-November 2010, the adoption of laws by the XLI National Assembly is dominated by two extremely negative tendencies, which are the excessive centralization of power and the concentration of managerial functions in a narrow circle of individuals (in contradiction with the European policies of decentralization and subsidiarity) and the unjustified state repression at the expense of basic civil rights;<sup>65</sup> 2) from the review of the four-year mandate of the XLIV National Assembly (2017 – 2021), the parliamentarians sat for a total of 16 full months, had 487 sittings (463 regular and 24 extraordinary) and passed 520 laws,<sup>66</sup> while the last year of their work was accompanied by public protests; 3) it is a massively ineffective practice to change various important laws for whatever reason, as is the case, for example, with the Social Insurance Code, which since 1.01.2000 until now has been amended 138 times (!!!), or 7 times a year (for comparison, the German Civil Code is 125 years old and has 5 times fewer amendments; the French Code of 1804 had only one major change in 2000, etc.);<sup>67</sup> 4) experts have calculated that in our country in 5 years there are about 4,000 amendments to the legal framework, in 10 years they swell to 8,000, and in 20 years they become 16,000;<sup>68</sup> and 5) even the current

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<sup>65</sup> See **Modern Policy Institute**. Monitoring Report on the Activities of the XLI National Assembly, July-November 2010. Sofia, 2010, pp. 8; 10.

<sup>66</sup> See „*Monitor*“ *newspaper*, 30.03.2021.

<sup>67</sup> See „*24 chasa*“ *newspaper*, 1.01.2021.

<sup>68</sup> See „*Sega*“ *newspaper*, 24.04.2018.

XLVII National Assembly, only in its first 100 days, continues and deepens the above-mentioned negative tendencies, insofar as the vicious practice (from previous parliaments) of making amendments to other laws (not related to the matter under consideration) by means of transitional and final provisions, as well as proposing and adopting amendments between the first and second readings outside the scope of the bill adopted at the first reading and those that undoubtedly carry some hidden corruption risk, is again in operation<sup>69</sup> (according to the latest monitoring report of the Modern Policy Institute).

The situation is similar for the work of the parliament according to the authoritative **Center for Legal Initiatives**, which has been measuring the quality of Bulgarian legislation for the second decade. Here, the data on laws and regulations adopted in the period 2010 – 2019 have the following dimensions (*see Table No. 21, 22*).

**Table No. 21. Adopted laws**

Period	Total	New	Laws amending and supplementing	Ratifications
January-June 2010	71	6	43	22
July-December 2010	103	7	68	28
January-June 2011	88	9	55	24
July-December 2011	68	5	47	16
January-June 2012	50	9	25	16
July-December 2012	84	5	59	20
January-June 2013	36	3	19	14
July-December 2013	63	3	44	16
January-June 2014	48	5	34	9
July-December 2014	41	4	17	20
January-June 2015	52	4	37	11
July-December 2015	86	15	48	23
January-June 2016	75	6	41	28
July-December 2016	84	9	53	22
January-June 2017	20	0	17	3
July-December 2017	64	5	46	13
January-June 2018	77	7	54	16
July-December 2018	69	9	48	12

<sup>69</sup> See „*Trud*“ newspaper, 21.03.2022.

January-June 2019	64	5	43	16
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**Source:** „Legal Barometer“ magazine, issue 19, January-June 2019, p. 33. – In: SG. [online]. www.parliament.bg.

**Table No. 22. By-laws**

Period	Total number of by-laws	Average number of by-laws	Number of new by-laws	Number of laws with increased number of by-laws	Number of laws simultaneously with implementing regulations and other acts
January-June 2010	429	9.5	23	11	2
July-December 2010	808+	11.2	50+	15	13
January-June 2011	652+	10.9	68	16	16
July-December 2011	535+	10.7	77	12	8
January-June 2012	337+	9.9	57	7	8
July-December 2012	773+	13.1	45+	18	13
January-June 2013	274+	12.5	53+	6	5
July-December 2013	589+	14.7	64+	5	7
January-June 2014	668+	17	101+	12	10
July-December 2014	180+	9	29+	3	5
January-June 2015	468+	13	38	5	8
July-December 2015	738+	12.1	176+	15	10
January-June 2016	578+	13.4	47+	19	13
July-December 2016	609+	10.5	67+	24	12
January-June 2017	226+	18.8	2	2	7

July-December 2017	659+	14.3	55+	14	8
January-June 2018	742+	17.1	120+	11	11
July-December 2018	790+	14.1	36	15	14
January-June 2019	643+	15	27+	9	10

**Notes:** *The total number of by-laws does not include the regulations of the statutory bodies.*

*In some cases, the grounds for issuing by-laws are stated too generally, so the total number of acts may be higher (this is indicated by a „+“ sign).*

**Source:** *Ciela; „Legal Barometer“ magazine, issue 19, January-June, p. 48.*

From the overall analysis and the attached tables, the authors of the Center for Legal Initiatives draw several clear conclusions and recommendations: first, in addition to the large number of laws adopted, the legislator frequently changes fundamental normative acts, which causes the citizens to lose the sense of stability and predictability of the legal order (for example, the Social Insurance Code, the Criminal Code, the Spatial Planning Act are constantly amended and supplemented); second, over the last few periods surveyed (including January-June 2019) there has been a decrease in the number of bills introduced by MPs. However, all the laws – the subject of this issue – have been amended more than once a year, while 63% of the laws were amended in the previous period and as many as 5 laws were amended by 2 Laws amending and supplementing in the six months; third, legislation in the country is developed and improved through amendments and supplements, through legislative intervention, rather than contributing to the improvement of the legal framework, which leads to chaos and ambiguity, while a large number of grounds for issuing subordinate legislation continue to be provided; and fourth, the practice of making substantial and numerous amendments to other laws through clauses in the transitional and final provisions of laws continues to be vigorously applied.<sup>70</sup> That is to say, for decades, Parliament has exhibited the same

<sup>70</sup> See „Legal Barometer“ magazine, No. 18, July-December 2018, p. 43; No. 19, January-June 2019, p. 54.

painfully familiar weaknesses, bureaucratising and formalising its activities rather than forging quality laws and making quality policy decisions.

Almost the same negative results were found in a study by **the National Center for Parliamentary Studies**, which issued a devastating critique of the legislative activity of the XLIV National Assembly (2017 – 2021). The study covers 438 bills in the public record of the parliament for the period 19.04.2017 – 17.12.2019. Through it, significant gaps have been found, confirming the notion that legislative changes are written „without a second thought“, without using competent specialists and experts in various fields. In fact, the researchers found extremely serious shortcomings, such as: in 100% of the bills, no mechanisms for cost (and outcome) assessment are provided; in 93,4% of the bills, no information is given on any public consultations (or discussions) held to discuss the problems and reasons requiring urgent changes; in 94,7% of the bills tabled, no information is also given on any necessary (and conducted) public comments, recommendations and consultations; in 92% of the cases, the reasoning lacks different points of view of representatives of stakeholder groups; and 87,9% of the bills tabled made no reference at all to relevant research or scientific expertise as justification. Or, to summarise, for the period 2017 – 2019, the cases in which no financial or other means necessary for the implementation of the new arrangements are indicated range from 67 to 89% over the eight parliamentary sessions, and in 95,2% no measures are provided to inform citizens about the results obtained as a consequence of the changes made. Furthermore, 97% of the laws under consideration lack requirements for periodic publication of the results of new legislative changes, 67,6% of the bills do not include deadlines for achieving the objectives and intentions set out in the bills.<sup>71</sup> These data hardly need comment, so we will only point out that the capacity of the corps of deputies during the period under study was too low and unprofessional, which is why the results of this study have a negative sign.

This unflattering picture of the work of the Bulgarian parliament could be continued with a number of new examples and evidence of the negative results of the highest legislative institution in the country. However, this is hardly necessary, because the sober-minded educated

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<sup>71</sup> [www.parliament.bg/pub/ncpi/NCPI\\_Research\\_44\\_NS\\_8th\\_Session.pdf](http://www.parliament.bg/pub/ncpi/NCPI_Research_44_NS_8th_Session.pdf)

and intelligent reader can judge for himself or herself what the MPs have done and to what extent they have earned their salaries and the many privileges to which they are entitled... Or, it appears that there is **an absolute incompatibility between the quality of the work of the parliament and the regulated parliamentary privileges, which are literally given away for free (before the adoption of laws has begun), because there is no modern and fair mechanism for regulating and measuring parliamentary activity and for obtaining privileges.**

**The government – privileges** comparison yields no less interesting results, which, however, also have a pronounced negative connotation. The most credible evidence here is the data from **the study „The Successes and Failures of Bulgarian Governments 1998 – 2020“** by the Institute for Market Economics, which analysed the performance of the central administration through the audit reports of the National Audit Office. This study covers all published audit reports on the activities of the (central) administration in the period until 30.06.2021. This brings **the total number of reports examined to 1,035, covering the entire 23 years of the administration’s work and involving expenditure of nearly BGN 156 billion in public spending.**<sup>72</sup>

On the basis of the ratings given in the audit reports and the pre-selected criteria, the overall picture of the performance of the central administration from all reports (1035) looks like this:

- **438 cases of „failure“ amounting to BGN 82.6 billion;**
- **257 cases of „success“, amounting to BGN 35.3 billion;**
- **340 unqualified cases amounting to BGN 37.8 billion.**<sup>73</sup>

That is, **nearly half of the audited expenditure incurred by the central administration during the period under review can be classified as „failure“,**<sup>74</sup> 1/4 was spent „successfully“ and the other 1/4 cannot be classified in either of the two previous categories at all. Not only that, it is something extremely disturbing, as huge sums in billions have literally been „burnt“ in the dark compartments of the administration and its bottomless pockets without anyone being held accountable.

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<sup>72</sup> See **Institute** for Market Economics. The Successes and Failures of Bulgarian Governments 1998 – 2020. A review of the audit reports of the National Audit Office. Seventh edition [online]. [www.ime.bg](http://www.ime.bg).

<sup>73</sup> See id.

<sup>74</sup> See id.

The conclusions that emerge from these important audits of the Audit Office are more than clear: **there is a serious neglect of taxpayers' money by the governments; in almost half of the audited programmes and projects the state is a very bad steward when spending the funds; the institutions and the administration spend inefficiently, although they seize and redistribute huge financial resources, etc.**<sup>75</sup> In other words, the failures are obvious, the billions have been spent, the money has sunk somewhere, but the privileges of the executive have never been reduced or curtailed, let alone anyone held accountable.

The situation is no different with **the activities of the judicial institutions**, where **privileges have always been preserved and increased** during the past period, **while the fight against crime, corruption and abuse of power is almost at the social bottom**. This is because, along with the lax regulation of privileges, Bulgarian magistrates are not waging an effective professional fight against the dozens of corruption-client and political-economic networks in the country. Leading in this case is the fact that **only in some 21 years (1993 – 2004) out of 5,280 privatization procedures worth 186.16 billion dollars (the total cost of all restituted, privatized, concessioned or plundered public resources)**<sup>76</sup> **the proceeds to the state treasury are 23 times less than the real cost of the privatized enterprises, or almost 6 billion of the offered assets.**<sup>77</sup> And no convicts, of course. Such a colossal plunder, besides having no equal in our recent history, is also extremely revealing, because it can explain the strong bond between the political oligarchy and the economic subjects and their collaboration with the senior magistrates in the „sharing“ of power, money and privileges in the post-totalitarian Bulgarian state. Therefore, it is not surprising at all that thanks to this **collaboration of immunities and privileges, our magistrates today call them „black aristocracy“** – a term coming from the wearing of black togas (immunities and privileges) during feudalism, to which only aristocrats are entitled. And insofar as we have already given a sufficient number of examples in this respect, we will only sum up here that the increase in crime is manifold, that the security of citizens and their property is absolutely formally guaranteed, that the

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<sup>75</sup> See id.

<sup>76</sup> See „*Standard*“ newspaper, 9 – 15.11.2018.

<sup>77</sup> See „*Monitor*“ newspaper, 12.06.2020.



mafia's influence on power through illegitimate lobbying is an open secret, that in a number of public spheres (not to say in all) the oligarchy has installed itself as the sole master „in its own domain“, that human rights are systematically violated without even the most basic judicial accountability, etc. In this way, the elite of the Bulgarian judiciary (senior judges, prosecutors and investigators) are completely secure in their existence, because the principle of irremovability anchors their power, while the legal privileges they are entitled to by right, no matter which magistrate does their job – professionally or unprofessionally.

It is usually thought that the privileges of the elite in the three types of power in our country (legislative, executive, judiciary) appear and develop as something quite natural and logical, i.e. as a legitimate attribute of political power. What is forgotten, however, is the important fact that these privileges always find their full realisation and scope where there is a well-established, structured and reproducing political oligarchy. From year to year this minority is proving more and more clearly to the Bulgarian public that in the place of a modern political class (and elite) responsible to the people, a classical party-political oligarchy of the comprador-servative type is emerging, well disguised around the party headquarters. It is so for a number of important reasons, one of which is the acute absence of an aristocratic political elite and a political intelligentsia associated with it, whose roots have long since been liquidated due to the civilizational (socio-historical) continuum broken by totalitarian socialism.

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Today it is fashionable to deny, denounce and revile every political oligarchy as if it were the main culprit for all the ills in the modern world. However, this is mostly done on a journalistic level, without serious in-depth analyses of its nature, structure and characteristics in different countries. In this sense, we will try to briefly outline its political face, of course, in the context of the current issue of privilege and as a counterpoint to some ignorant writings about the fact that, you see, there was no political oligarchy in Bulgaria.

What are the most distinctive qualities of the Bulgarian political oligarchy?<sup>78</sup>

An essential quality for getting to know the new oligarchy in the country is **the different and peculiar way of its integral formation**. It, the fledgling Bulgarian oligarchy, is a far cry from Aristotle's definition of this phenomenon from 2000 years ago (still valid today), according to which the oligarchic polity is the rule of a select few but very rich people. That is, such a state system where the minority is linked to wealth as the personal (and real) possession of large property, on the basis of which the top leadership positions in society are also rightfully held.<sup>79</sup> On the contrary, **our oligarchy was bred by the old nomenklatura and was born in the vicissitudes of the post-totalitarian transition, but mainly in the heights of political power**, to which oligarchy the dignities of political aristocracy are neither inherent nor possible as qualities. Therefore, the most characteristic distinction (and quality) of the **dominant minority in our country is that it is conceived, bred and born in, from and through the pinnacles of power, without the other intrinsic components common to any such minority – the possession of property, the presence of wealth, authority in society, etc.** On the contrary, if we are now talking about newly rich rulers in their capacity as oligarchic persons, it is only due to their presence in the higher echelons of politics.

In fact, the native political minority is essentially **an oligarchy of a particular plutocratic type**, whose roots are in the unalterably entrenched top party elite, or in the top party oligarchy of nomenklatura origin. For it, in R. Aron's apt phrase, what is most defining is that it „...prefers the means of cunning...“ because „...minorities, often in the shadows, make the most important decisions“, whereby „...in the end democracy is quite illusory“.<sup>80</sup> This „democratic“ appearance is commonplace and legitimate for the entire post-totalitarian period, insofar as it is conditioned by a particular feature that manifests itself as another formative sign of oligarchy: **both in its nature and in its composition, the new governing minority is „by rule“ created „from the top**

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<sup>78</sup> This issue is elaborated in detail in my book: **Manolov, G.** The Price of Elections... Op. cit., pp. 340-349 ff., so here we will present in a synthesized way only the more essential of these qualities (of course, enriched with some new ones of recent years).

<sup>79</sup> See **Aristotle**. Politics. Sofia: Open Society, 1995, p. 76.

<sup>80</sup> **Aron, R.** Democracy and Totalitarianism. Sofia: Arges, 1993, p. 75.

down“, that is, completely artificially and manipulatively, without the obligatory (for such a process) procedures and mechanisms that necessarily take place in all self-respecting political parties, movements and organizations. Or, to put it directly, the „inversely proportional“ way of creating the new political oligarchy in the country – from the top down – decisively contributes both to its ascending enrichment (not by increasing production, but at the expense of plundering the created wealth) and to its close intertwining with the most diverse structures and persons of dubious character.

One of the most pronounced qualities of the dominant governing minority in the country is without any doubt **the post-totalitarian synthesis between power and property**, on the basis of which the contours of a new political-economic oligarchy are taking shape, tightly twisted around the thinning state body and its fragile institutional organisms. The growth of such an oligarchy in such a short time is hardly a precedent for societies undergoing a transformational transition, but in our, Bulgarian, conditions this specific layer (the oligarchy) finds its objective foundations in its entire historical existence, and in particular in the old-established notions of the relationship between political and economic power.

**The roots of the new politico-economic oligarchy in Bulgaria can be sought in the depths of Bulgarian history, from which an archaic political tradition shines like a bright ruby ray: the strong domination of politics and of the empowered senior figures over the overall socio-economic and cultural development of the nation.** The basic tenet of this uncivilized tradition about the meaning and utility of power in general can be figuratively defined by the simple „**loot when in power until you are pushed out of power**“.

The next quality of at least part of the current ruling elite can be defined as **corruption of the political oligarchy**. This infinitely malignant managerial quality, such as corruption in general, has long assumed unprecedented proportions, permeating both the length and breadth of all the important pillars of power and the „front“ of state administration. On this occasion, the Democracy Research Centre Association’s 2016 annual study very accurately points out that **corruption in central government is profiled in several main areas: trading**

**in influence, trading in posts, trading in tenders, trading in votes, ballot papers and election protocols, trading in national interests, manufacturing of legislative earmarks, etc.**<sup>81</sup> Accordingly, the association estimates that in the past 5 years (2011 – 2016), as a result of the growing amount of corruption at the center of power, the income and wealth of monopolists in the state increased by 43%.<sup>82</sup> And yet the measures taken by the institutions of power are palliative and „benign“, from which it does not follow at all that the privileges of power are also reduced (nothing of the sort – they increase permanently).

The total domination of the political oligarchy in the country from day to day and from year to year more and more clearly proves to us one of its disgusting as well as tragic managerial qualities – **massive professional incompetence and total managerial unfitness**. This quality of Bulgarian politicians is an absolute truth of life and a clear indicator of something very significant: in the face of the dominant political oligarchy and through the „managerial“ criteria it imposes for recruiting different types of personnel, most of those involved in politics in our country are far from being the best specialists in their field (i.e. able to „do“ politics). And how can they do modern politics when the majority of them faithfully and unquestioningly served the leading party under „socialism“ and immediately after the democratic changes became „servants“ of democracy. This „regularity“ is brilliantly revealed by the great Bulgarian poet and writer Nedyalko Yordanov, who in his 1991 poem „Secretary“ ironically writes:

I met a comrade yesterday,  
A fellow party secretary.  
He says he was repressed,  
Now I'm shocked and stressed.  
He says that I'm his main suspect –  
I myself repressed him, in effect.  
I was once a saboteur and wrecker,  
Now I am the oppressor.  
Lets arrest these aggressors –

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<sup>81</sup> See „*Sega*“ newspaper, 12.07.2016.

<sup>82</sup> See id.

all former oppressors.  
 And the new SDS members  
 Will be the former secretaries.<sup>83</sup>

As a consequence of the rampant incompetence in the state, another distinctive quality of the ruling class logically emerges – **the political immorality of the dominant oligarchy**, which in varying degrees „strikes“ the entire political class, as well as all social spheres of society. This quality of the oligarchy is very often reflected in one of its manifestations, which is undoubtedly the **so-called „political parvenu“**, which in the stench of the amoral social and moral atmosphere in the country arrogantly begins to dictate the fashion in contemporary politics.

On this occasion, the distinguished expert on Bulgarian life and spirituality, Iv. Hadzhiyski with enviable insight analyses and brings out all the most essential features (and aspects) of **the moral and ethical character** of the parvenu behaviour. According to him, „**the parvenu**, is a person stripped of all morality (amoral)...“, because he is formed as an economic swindler with the help of its only possession – the power of money, thus approaching „...the most unconditional kinds of piracy: economic and spiritual (demagogy)“; „...**the parvenu** (...) adores himself, considers himself something exceptional, and (...) treats others as a herd of incompetents...“ because he is intoxicated by his own powers insofar as he has lost „...the boundaries between the possible and the impossible“; **the parvenu**, wakes up early in the morning with the feeling that „...he enters the fairy dream of unexpected success...“, because in his soul clangs an irrepressible „...joy and pride in his own person...“, with which his disgusting boasting immediately begins and does not end: „...„Me“, „Myself“, and „I“; and, finally, **this same parvenu**, especially when in power, uses a whole arsenal of ostentatious means for his own self-aggrandisement – „...costly clothing, jewellery, in general all the objects of luxury...“, pouncing upon them with such insurrectionary bait „...as he throws himself into the battle of his creation“.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup> **Yordanov**, N. Works in 12 volumes. Vol. IV. Satire. Songs 1958 – 2001. Sofia: Zaharii Stoyanov, 2009, p. 195.

<sup>84</sup> **Hadzhiyski**, Ivan. An optimistic theory about our nation. Sofia: Otechestvo, 1997, pp. 321-322.

It would be difficult to add anything else of value to this amazing national psychological characterization of the phenomenon of parvenu, except what the author himself claims, that the „parvenu jumps“ of personality are far from being the priority of individuals alone, but are observed in entire parties, even in entire nations, as is the case with the Bulgarian people.

What else, if not a primitive demonstration of parvenu on the part of today's political oligarchy are, for example, the pompous contentless appearances of only the same dignitaries, and on all possible media; the megalomaniacal arrogance of a part of the „political elite“, living with the self-consciousness of personal irreplaceability; the demagogic obsession of party leaders and their cronies about their irreplaceable „reformist“ role; the self-aggrandizing and weak-willed pseudo-peddlers from the parliamentary pulpit about the plight of the country's people; and all other such lustroously false „charitable“ actions of the oligarchic power, throwing dust in the eyes of the public as a cover for the parvenu-style thinking and lifestyle of the dominant minority (and its oligarchic circles)...

It must be stressed that the political amorality of the dominant minority is motivated by **the spreading untouchability of senior political functionaries by the laws and the case-law in the Bulgarian state**. This fact in itself implies the formation of a particular type of psychological and political thinking (and behaviour) in the new dominant oligarchy, which finds expression in its profligate consumption of power and in its brazen behaviour during the practical realisation of its political responsibilities. This, in turn, automatically demoralizes politics by replacing what is valuable in political morality (however little it is in our country) with what is cynical, demagogic and cultureless in real political life.

On the basis of the possession of power and the ownership of property in the Bulgarian state, **the political oligarchy became a new privileged caste, which determined for itself by law the amount of the state „privileges“ it enjoyed**. The scale of these privileges, however, exceeds all reasonable limits, because we are talking about the state's budgetary resources, which are allocated annually by the so-called „political elite“, and this in a very sick and impoverished society (which we have already justified).

The aggregate manifestation of the just mentioned qualities of our political oligarchy and the many examples of its insatiable consumption of goods, benefits, finances, money, etc. inevitably lead to **the total mining of equality before the law through overt or covert privileges, to the digging of a deep social gap between those in power (and big business) and wage labor, and to the „suspension“ of the „social contract“ for some minimal justice in the state. In other words, to the implicit removal of the principles of the rule of law and its main lever for fighting political and any other corruption – the law, or practically to the reign of lawlessness, powerlessness and impunity in the whole society.** That is to say, to total omnipotence of amorality in politics, economy and life in the country, a peculiar expression of which are the privileges of the powerful ruling elites, carefully regulated in laws and regulations.

In the context of these reflections and generalizations about the legitimacy and nature of political privileges in Bulgaria, we will acutely raise for consideration another extremely substantive issue that is contrary to some fundamental clauses of our democratic Constitution. For example, Art. 6 (2) explicitly states: **„All citizens shall be equal before the law. There shall be no privileges or restriction of rights on the grounds of race, national or social origin, ethnic self-identity, sex, religion, education, opinion, political affiliation, personal or social status or property status“**<sup>85</sup> (*emphasis mine – G. M.*). Moreover, **since privileges of any nature, including political, are not allowed, is this not a gross violation, trampling and disregard of the Bulgarian Constitution? This – on the one hand. Second, why and on what legal basis (given the existence of a prohibitive article in the Constitution) did the Parliament, the Government and the judicial institutions adopt a number of normative documents (rules, regulations, ordinances), which practically legalize some or other privileges of the top political oligarchy and elite in the country? Third, who, when and where has authorized the oligarchic ruling superiors of the various types of power to take whatever decisions they want (taken by and for themselves) related to their privileged political presence in power? Finally, for what good reason are all the privileges of the ruling oligarchy accepted by**

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<sup>85</sup> See **Constitution** of the Republic of Bulgaria. Op. cit., pp. 6-7.

the relevant state institutions without ever probing the public opinion in the country on this issue, much less taking it into account? In this sense, we will conclude that **notwithstanding the widespread public dissatisfaction with the extent of privileges of the political class in this country, the Constitution is continuously being violated by each successive Parliament, as no one takes into account the fact that privileges on political grounds are not allowed, even though they significantly undermine the equality of people in society.**

Obviously, **a decisive change is needed – a deep, absolute, radical one, so that political privileges in Bulgaria can acquire a reasonable human and civilisational legal form**, without so brazenly undermining equality and justice in our democratic state.

How can the dilemma of privilege – equality be resolved in favour of the majority of Bulgarian citizens and not, as is currently the case, in favour of the political oligarchy?

In our opinion, the solution to this difficult and complicated dilemma can be achieved through **the implementation of a series of political and legal measures through several successive (and important) steps for society**, implemented in the following chronological order: **the first** of them is of a more global nature, because it is related to **the overall democratization of the political system**, and above all of its key institutions (parliament, government, courts, etc.); **the second** directly refers to the change of the current electoral system (proportional) and the possible **introduction of a mixed type of electoral system** to improve the quality of the parliamentary corps; **the third** is of particular importance, as it is to adopt a special **law on the privileges of the political elite**; **the fourth** is no less significant, because it **directly refers to the drastic reduction of the party subsidy from the state** (not to 1 lv., as advocated, but to about 5 – 6 lv.), in order to cut the umbilical cord between party privileges and state funding; and **the fifth** step is even more essential, insofar as it is necessary to develop **a new model of the use of political privileges** in Bulgaria, the main principle of which will be the quality of the work done as a counterpoint to the current equalization, giving (privileges) to all, and many – different types of monetary, financial and material state benefits.

These concrete steps in the field of democratisation and the minimisation of the current (albeit legitimate) privileges of the authorities in



Bulgaria are not at all a magic wand to automatically solve the problems in this direction. Nothing of the sort! But they can still make a good start at „cutting out“ this cancerous entity called „privileges of power“, the battle against which will be extremely long, painful and laborious. Due to the public’s well-known fact that politicians themselves have to prune to the root the tree they have been sitting on for decades (and centuries)...

There is no doubt that a serious „battle“ is about to be fought to defend the democratic foundations of power in our country, in Europe and on the whole planet!

\* \* \*

From the preceding analysis in this chapter, the conclusion inevitably follows that regardless of the political regime in the Bulgarian state (monarchical, totalitarian, democratic), various types of privilege are always a faithful companion of power and a solid material „assistant“ to politicians. These privileges, regardless of their regulation in the democratic world, continue to emit negative social signals today because they are still numerous and bloated, „fed“ gratuitously from the state budget. This has been the case throughout the political history of the world from the earliest ancient times, and it is also the case in the present social realities of our modern times. This „political procession“ of power privilege continues into the XXI century despite legitimate attempts by all manner of laws and regulations to reduce it to some reasonable minimum. It would be difficult to prescribe any panacea here, since the increase or limitation of political benefits (privileges) depends on a whole range of factors – historical and contemporary, political and economic, social and spiritual, objective and subjective, etc. Therefore, drawing on the fundamental conclusions about privilege in our analysis, we can confidently conclude that in contemporary „electronic“ democracy and continuously renewing political systems (in some developed Western countries), most benefits of power are increasingly becoming an irritant of public opinion and a veritable anachronism of politics. And this in itself dictates a determined rethinking of the current system of privileges of power and the finding of new constraining mechanisms through which some relative equality between the ruling elites and the multi-million masses of people of the world can finally be achieved.

## **General conclusion**

### **THE FUTURE OF PRIVILEGE**

It is clear from the extensive content of all the preceding exposition that privilege has always been an extremely significant issue in the development of the political history of the world for many centuries and to this day. It is a problem that is fundamental in that it derives from and directly affects the foundations of political power in the state, since it continuously allocates budgetary resources to regulated or unregulated benefits and advantages for ruling elites. However, the problem also has global dimensions, because with each passing year, social discontent with privilege grows in the various countries, because by maintaining it, political inequality, and hence inequality in societies in general, is constantly increasing. Moreover, the age-old privileges of power inevitably affect the moral chests of any society, insofar as the systems of benefits (and privileges) formed for the political elite enable many of its representatives to live almost for free on the back of the state (while in power). And while in class and totalitarian societies the existence of a multitude of diverse privileges is quite normal, the regulation of privileges in modern democracies is increasingly resisted and resented by the people due to the systematic violation of human rights and the generally accepted principles of the rule of law. Thus, the same interested political elites are permanently built up, which, despite the importance of universal suffrage, actually become privileged layers, subscribed to the power structures, using (and transforming) this right for state benefits and advantages. Thus, the problem of „privilege' „as long since passed the limit of what is permissible, because both its scale and its permanent spread have become a deep socio-political plague of our times.

We have already given sufficiently thorough answers to these essential problems and questions, so we do not need to repeat the conclusions, generalizations and recommendations we have made about the phenomenon of „power and political privilege“. Therefore, before

expressing our opinion on the place of political privilege in the contemporary world and the need to reform the normative framework related to it, we will briefly criticize a few basic dogmas that are used to motivate and justify the rich arsenal of privileges of power.

One of the most popular and deep-rooted **dogmas** in the mass public consciousness is that **power (institutions) cannot do without privileges**, otherwise it would not be able to fully perform its institutional duties and powers in the state. And it must be admitted that this imposing dogma has blurred people's perception of state governance too well, inasmuch as it is believed that without privileges there is no quality management in the higher institutions of power. That is, it inculcates the flawed view that the privileges of the elite seem to be a prerequisite for solving society's problems, which, of course, is not the case at all.

The next even more insistent dogma finds expression in the commonly accepted postulate that **privilege is a mandatory attribute of power**. In justifying this age-old dogma, it is argued that privilege itself is organically contained in the nature of political power (i.e., part of it), or in its genetic fabric. That is to say, they are not brought in from outside in a legitimate or illegitimate way, but are intrinsic to political activity, and therefore politicians themselves can determine the kinds of privileges for the respective elites (and persons) according to the established power hierarchy. However, this is nothing but an attempt to justify to the people all the perks used by the political elite in the exercise of state power. For, if from the dawn of human history, up to the advent of the new era (and even later) power itself was considered a privilege of the ruling class, because it was a gift from God, then with the all-round evolution of human civilization, the opposite process is observed: under the dictates of political leaders, oligarchies and layers, power gradually becomes the main source of privilege, and power itself becomes the key generator of new privileges for the elite in different societies.

The last and perhaps most demagogic dogma, widespread among a significant part of the different social strata, is that **the privileges of power stimulate the work of the political class in every way**. In this context, we would point out that the current dogma is deeply populist, since it unquestioningly inscribes in the public mind the thesis that all the privileges – well, literally all (high salaries, low prices, official transport, solid security, cash allowances, and so on and so forth) – and

benefits of any ruling elite have the sole humane purpose of easing to the maximum the responsible work of the state. Naturally, this is one of the goals of any government, in which there is nothing bad or wrong. The point, however, is that privileges are constantly increasing, but no one is accountable for their use until the end of the term, especially when it has failed or turned out to be unsuccessful (because there is no mechanism for regulating and accounting for the privileges enjoyed).

The three untenable dogmas just presented concerning the nature and character of power privileges in democratic societies manifest themselves differently in different political systems of states. In those of them that have strong democratic traditions and institutions, they (the dogmas) find a more tentative application, while in other countries, such as Bulgaria, for example, the dogmas about political privilege have become permanently „embedded“ in the mass public consciousness (due to our dysfunctional political democracy). But both democratic societies face a complex question: **how to change things so as to avoid the transformation of legitimacy into a mask of privilege, behind which often hide many impure interests, dozens of incompetent politicians, a mass of greedy statesmen, many corrupt leaders, hundreds of guilty consciences, etc.** In other words, how and by what means to overcome, as far as possible, the corruption of the power elites, which results from the unchecked enjoyment of all possible privileges, generously distributed by the state.

Resolving this substantive issue by modern democratic societies is not an easy job due to the fact that the string of legitimate privileges has long become part of political inequality despite its strict regulation in the constitutions and laws of different countries. One way to do this is to consider the creation of **a new concept of power** that responds to the contemporary challenges of the global political and economic transformation of the world in the context of the evolving high-tech and innovation processes of our planet. Therefore, a new power paradigm is also needed, which, based on large-scale democratisation, will set the stage for solving the problem of „privilege – inequality“ in the political sphere of society. This power paradigm could be realized through the eventual **implementation of a comprehensive system of concepts, laws and rules for reforming state institutions, i.e., through the application of a comprehensive approach that would cut off (and curb) the „impure“**

**aspirations of political subjects to power, the „parcelling out“ (and feudalization) of important state organs for partisan purposes, and the sharp reduction of all kinds of privileges of the political elite.**

In greater specificity, this profound reform of power and the political system can be based on the following **main components**:

1) A creative (innovative) **rethinking of the well-known theory of power as a value** and its use as an index of power based on the linear relationship of value position – power – value potential (H. Simon). That is, privileges should be determined and enjoyed by politicians according to the degree of their participation or non-participation in power in certain situations, and not, as it is now, by applying an equalizing approach to all for one term (without „measuring“ or evaluating the qualities of politicians).

2) **Large-scale democratisation of political institutions** in two main senses:

- **in a broad sense** – a full, rational and comprehensive **deployment of the three elements of democracy – representative, non-representative and deliberative** (according to D. Van Reybrouck). In this case, the emphasis falls on deliberative democracy, where citizens not only vote for politicians but also talk to them as well as to experts. That is to say, it is a form of democracy in which collective deliberation is central, and participants formulate concrete solutions to societal challenges based on their awareness and reasoning.<sup>1</sup> In fact, deliberative democracy dates back to ancient Athens, but it has long fallen into social obscurity...;

- **in a narrow sense** – large-scale application of three key management principles:<sup>2</sup> **minority rule** as a counterpoint to political oligarchies (in power), the point of which is to expose differences rather than white-wash them with an imposed or false majority, with the aim of strengthening the role of different minorities and modernizing the entire political system; **semi-direct democracy** – a mixture of representative and self-representative democracy (or semi-direct), which uses the possibility to change many decisions of representative institutions by a new vote of the voters themselves (and to pass new laws) when the elected MPs

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<sup>1</sup> See **Reybrouck**, D. Van. Against Elections. Sofia: Ciela, 2020, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> See this issue in more detail in **Toffler**, Alvin and Heidi. The New Civilization. The politics of the third wave. Sofia: Obsidian, 1995, pp. 105-117.

have passed poor decisions (laws, regulations, etc.); and **decision splitting** – regulating the „logjam“ in the decision-making process by redistributing them judiciously, and sharing them with a wider range of people and changing the venue (for decision-making) according to the requirements of the issues themselves. In other words, „unblocking“ the process of decentralisation of power by redistributing functions of central power downwards, or to lower structures and people in society.

3) **Powerful democratic control (and self-control)** – strengthening the control functions of state institutions to realize all objectives that are involved in the sphere of public activity „...whether large or small – and to use the services of a well-trained bureaucracy that has established traditions, a strong sense of duty and no less strong corporate spirit“<sup>3</sup>. It is about a type of democratic control of power that will be lawful, qualitative and effective and that will not be influenced by political conjuncture and the powerful of the day, but only by established principles, norms and rules. Of utmost importance here is also public self-control, or the control of various civil society groups, pressure groups, NGOs and others that can assist state institutions in their fight against corruption and abuse of power (including the reduction of political privileges).

4) **Power without privileges** – drastic limitation and „contraction“ of regulated political privileges in all three types of power – legislative, executive and judicial. Establishment of specialized state-public oversight bodies to analyze and evaluate current government privileges, then propose a reasonable model for preserving the most pressing ones (after public debate). This would begin a „cleansing“ political process to gradually reduce, and in the foreseeable future limit and eliminate, all unnecessary privileges of the elite (which from election to election they define for themselves).

5) **A culture of privilege** – this is a component that must be established in democratic political systems because through it **a new type of subculture of anti-privilege** will be formed as part of a modern political culture. This culture of privilege should be built on the values of power, on the view of a minimum of privilege and on the deployment

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<sup>3</sup> **Schumpeter**, J. Capitalism, Socialism, Democracy. – In: *Political Studies*, No. 1, 1996, pp. 69-70.

of deliberative democracy as fundamental tools for a more perfect democratisation of societies. And one more thing: this type of culture would be extremely difficult to form in the various democratic societies if the opinions and proposals of the dozens of social strata and groups were not taken into account, inasmuch as they are in many cases the truest and most accurate barometer of whether or not the elite should have political privileges. And on such a basis, deliberate models for the use of political privileges could be developed on the way to their limitation and eradication.

The effective implementation of the above-mentioned reform of political power and existing privileges is possible through various options for changing the current systems of privileges in democratic countries (including Bulgaria), among which we will highlight two fundamental ones:

**First option. Radical („revolutionary“) variant**

**Abolish all privileges and immunities as unconstitutional** by replacing the current principles of appointability, irremovability and immunity with new principles of tenure (for leaders), election (for leaders) and competition (for judges). The guiding presumption here is that a representative of a public body needs clear powers, good pay and control to function properly, not privileges, immunity and other medieval antiquities.<sup>4</sup> This option does imply a profound radical change in the use of privileges (and immunities) by the elite and requires a determined political will, which is not impossible, but will be accompanied by many boycotts, resistance and reluctance from the political class.

**Second option. Moderate (evolutionary) option**

**Limiting privileges to a reasonable and balanced minimum** for executives in the three branches of government of a democratic state. This requires the development and implementation of a comprehensive **model for politicians to limit their own privileges**. In this sense, it is possible to implement several basic (essential) measures of this model as follows:

1) Adoption of **new prohibitive clauses in the Constitution**, explicitly regulating only those privileges that have the support of society (this is especially true for Bulgaria).

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<sup>4</sup> See **Babuchev**, N. *The Vices of Power*. Sofia: Iztok – Zapad, 2010, pp. 101-102.

2) Conduct a **national referendum on the scope of political privileges** and their application in government business. And why not a referendum on MPs' salaries in different countries, as in Switzerland, for example.

3) Voting for a special **law on political privileges** to regulate their long-term reasonable use in politics.

4) Establishing a **register of public offices** to identify those entitled to privileges.

5) Development of a **specialised mechanism for MPs' privileges**, for example, whereby, on the one hand, the various parliamentary benefits would be granted for the quality of the work done (bills tabled, participation in debates, attendance time, etc.) and, on the other hand, the corresponding amounts and perks (monetary and material) would be charged according to a deliberately drawn up percentage scale (25% for the first year, 50% for the second, 75% for the third and 100% for the fourth) by the leadership of the parliamentary groups in parliament.

6) Formation of the **so-called „basic privileged minimum“** (through the law on privileges) – company cars, professional security, medical care and a decent salary, with all other privileges according to the position being calculated in the salaries received (depending on the quality of the work), if, of course, this is necessary and there is agreement in society.

7) A „major overhaul“ of the laws on political parties and a **significant reduction (and abolition) of party privileges**, such as low rents, lucrative deals, reduced VAT (including party subsidies to parties that did not enter parliament but got over 1% in the last elections, as is the case here).

8) Regulation of a **law on lobbying** (where there is none), which, in addition to reducing the relevant privileges (as a type of option), should clarify the meaning of a number of concepts such as „political influence“, „political racketeering“, „vote trading“, etc. This law should also include articles to further „unleash“ the fight against corruption and the unbridled pursuit of state favours and benefits by politicians.

9) Development of a **unified institutional code of ethics for civil servants**, which will set out both the rules of political conduct and the penalties for non-compliance, including for the violation of the use of



legitimate privileges. This would bring order to the unification and requirements for politicians and civil servants in the state, as each ministry, department and institution is now governed by its own ethical rules, which causes some chaos (in certain circumstances).

10) Consideration and establishment of a state-public **committee for control of parliamentary privileges**, which should include, in addition to MPs, prominent public figures (scientists, writers, poets, artists, experts, etc.), which at the end of each calendar year should prepare a comprehensive report on the use of money and the use of privileges by MPs. And depending on the recommendations of this committee, the respective leaderships of the parliaments should take equitable decisions on the salaries and privileges of the MPs while enjoying the basic privileged minimum as well.

These are two of the main options that could achieve some more substantial results when we clarify the future of political privilege. They are not the „magic panacea“ that will permanently solve the problem of limiting these privileges, since privileges have for centuries always been the carriers of the „virus of inequality“ between one or another class, caste or stratum. This is confirmed by today’s democratic times, when, despite the principle of universal suffrage, the privileges of politicians continue to „dig“ a huge abyss of injustice, because the rulers, without thinking about the future, do not stop consuming the benefits of state power. This is precisely why whatever option is approbated in the political reality to „shrink“ the privileges would not have any serious success unless a broad consensus is reached on this issue between the rulers and the ruled, the majority and the minority, the elite and the people. Only in this way would the deep yawning holes in the equality-privilege ratio be remedied, if only partially, since the ruling elites are unlikely to voluntarily cede their privileged gains. And for the future redress of these drastic inequalities in society, it is necessary to devise such value-laden governance mechanisms that would actually stem the unbridled aspirations of the elite to grant new favours from the government as if the state were their fatherland.

One thing, however, can be predicted with certainty: there is going to be a painful, long and protracted battle against the accumulated privileges of power and their holders in the name of equality and democracy in the modern world. This struggle will „trace“ the future of

privilege in the modern XXI century, finding expression in the slogan „for a democracy without privilege“. Perhaps this is the way to limit them in the coming decades in the unequal „struggle“ with political equality, in which new democratic paradigms in defense of social justice should crystallize.

Obviously, we are still too far from a future society without privilege, which has yet and is yet to be won.

Privilege or equality? The struggle continues in the XXI century.

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# **APPLICATIONS**

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National Assembly before laying the yellow paving stones



King Ferdinand enters the National Assembly, 1908



Prince Alexander I of Battenberg privatises parliamentarism



Ferdinand remakes the Constitution in his own imagee



Stefan Stambolov



Aleksandar Stamboliyski



Candidate deputies at an election meeting in Suhindol



A keepsake photo of the bride and groom. The tented camp for 4000 wedding guests (at the wedding of Al. Stamboliyski's daughter) is visible from the back



Parliamentary war committee attacks meatballs, 4.06.1940



Alexander Stamboliyski and Grigor Boyadzhiev becoming close in the Central Prison



Golden widow Polixena Stambolova receives BGN 7200 annual pension



Hristo Gendovich is the author of the first „skyscraper“ in Bulgaria



The first deputy palace of Ivan Ev. Geshov was raised in 1901



Georgi Dimitrov and Vasil Kolarov at the signing of the Treaty of Cooperation and Friendship with the USSR, 18.03.1948



Georgi Dimitrov and Vasil Kolarov congratulate the troops



Valko Chervenkov at the April Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, 1956



Valko Chervenkov and Todor Zhivkov in Moscow



Todor Zhivkov and Mara Maleeva with their children, son-in-law and grandchildren, 1971





Sitting in the years of „mature“ socialism



Todor Zhivkov with his son, daughter-in-law, adopted granddaughter and grandchildren, 1986



Lyudmila Zhivkova (1942 – 1981)



Zheni Zhivkova (1965) – granddaughter and adopted daughter of Todor Zhivkov



Todor Zhivkov in hunting outfit and with rifle, 1978



Photo with trophies in hunting farm „Kormisosh“, 1982

Todor Zhivkov and the Prime Minister of Bavaria Franz Josef Strauß as prominent hunters in the Bulgarian Balkans



Krichim Residence.  
After the rich nomenclature hunt follows a neverending comradeship...



Special meal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party during Chernobyl, 1985



Todor Zhivkov and Leonid Brezhnev photographed after a trophy hunt at the hunting farm "Kormisosh", 1976



Todor Zhivkov and Nicolae Ceaușescu after a bear hunt in the Carpathian Mountains, 1967



The temptation called „controlling party finances“



Georgi Parvanov hunting



A prominent „politician“ as a kebab chef



Let's eat Turkish baklava (Yordan Tsonev – MP from MRF)



Delyan Peevski debuts election campaign in two villages





Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) at the table



Parliamentary feast



Blowing up the backstage power



A tough fighter  
*Bistrita Tiger is never short of fans*



Work without accord  
*Which crawling, which leaping  
above their own height*



In line! Stay still! Continue the change!  
*And did you get your footcloth on?  
For politics is a wet, muddy business*

**GEORGI LYUBENOV MANOLOV**  
*Professor, Doctor of Political Science*

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