

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
PRIVILEGES

IN POLITICAL HISTORY
(XXX CENTURY BC – XXI CENTURY AD)

VOLUME ONE
THEORETICAL
AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

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Until people start being governed by saints,
those who participate in governance will reap
the benefits.

Raymond Aron
(„*Democracy and Totalitarianism*“,
Sofia, Arges, 1993, p. 78)

TO THE FOREIGN READER

*The book that the esteemed foreign reader is about to read was conceived in the mid-1990s, or in the „passionate“ times of the Bulgarian post-totalitarian transition. It was then that the dozens of facts about the lavish privileged life of the socialist nomenklatura became known, which deeply outraged the ordinary people of Bulgaria. It was this that aroused my scholarly interest in the privileges of power, in the reasons for their generation and use by political elites around the world. Thus was born the idea of writing the three-volume *Power and Privilege in Political History*, which includes an analysis of the nature and manifestations of privilege over a period of 5,000 years – from the deepest antiquity (XXX century BC) to our modern times (XXI century).*

In this context, the monograph interprets in a historiological order the theoretical and methodological aspects of privileges (Volume I), their evolution over the centuries (Volume II), as well as their concrete evolution in Bulgarian political life (Volume III) from the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule (1878) to the present day.

Some of the most pressing questions of the phenomenon of privilege have not escaped the author’s creative eye, such as: why did privilege appear and why has it existed for so long in different societies?; Why are privileges an inalienable attribute of power and who has the right to regulate them or not - institutions, politicians, dictators, etc.; Why, despite their contemporary legitimacy, power privileges irritate people enormously and deepen social injustice in modern states, etc.? And so on and so forth. In this sense, the author has provided answers to these questions and has also put forward some of his own views on the future of privilege in democratic societies.

I look forward to His Majesty the Reader’s unbiased opinion!

April 2023

Prof. Georgi Lyubenov Manolov
Doctor of Political Science

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Thank you from my heart and soul!

*Prof. Georgi Lyubenov Manolov
Doctor of Political Science*

**THREE-VOLUME BOOK
POWER AND PRIVILEGES IN POLITICAL HISTORY
(XXX CENTURY BC – XXI CENTURY AD)**

Author: Prof. GEORGI L. MANOLOV
Doctor of Political Science

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Foreword

PRIVILEGES OF POWER – THE ETERNAL PROBLEM OF CIVILIZATION

The analysis of contemporary topics of the current political process is among the most important tasks that representatives of political science have to deal with today. Especially in countries like Bulgaria, whose people have borne (and still bear) on their shoulders all possible adversities related to the struggle for democracy. Because this great transition in our case was vitiated by a „primary dream“ of the newly emerged elite – looting of the national wealth! Life has proven that in such an environment, scientists cannot always specify in time and clearly enough precisely which problems in reality are to all intents and purposes relevant to the nation's agenda, which are „more relevant“, and ultimately which are „most relevant“. And as a result, they become an unchanging commitment to political analysis. This is due to the fact that the troubadours of the New Age are constantly covering up the ugly truths of modern times through their appearances on the television screen and in the pages of printed publications. Regardless of whether the data of sociology is used, or the facts related to a specific management activity are summarized. In this way, the purposeful interpretations of the facts do not allow the truths that affect the majority of the Bulgarian people to be presented in the public space in time, which is why an „information blackout“ occurs. However, it also does not allow political analysis to always and in time react with reasonable proposals to remove what is contrary to civilized social development. As a result, in reality „two types of political science“ arose and existed in Bulgaria for more than three decades. One – in its two main sub-variants – „left“ and „right“, plays the role of a servant in relation to power. This academic stratum welcomes all governments willingly, from which it earns solid financial dividends, insofar as it also „owns“ reserved media time.

However, there is also a significant second category of Bulgarian scientists working in this field of humanities, who not only continue, but

also essentially enrich the best traditions of social science in our country. These are people with nationally responsible political thinking, who analyze the democratic social reality objectively despite the difficulties of an informational nature. They have a clear awareness of their responsibility: to always tell the truth about society and the state in time, so as not to be allowed to get stuck forever in one place with our notorious „insoluble problems“! These Bulgarian scientists fulfill their duty with dignity, because they believe that the objective and useful analysis of the most pressing topics in a democratic society is one of the most straight-forward ways to remove its obstacles on the path of constructive evolution. But in order to carry out this highly humane and public-beneficial mission, considerable personal courage is required of them. Only with the presence of this quality in a person's character can the professional analyst stand tall before his/her people and bring to light what can and should with every reason be considered the „unworthy secrets“ of the vaunted „representative democracy“ in its Bulgarian version.

Professor Georgi Manolov, Doctor of Political Science, is among the leading representatives of the second main group in the personnel structure of modern Bulgarian political science! With his academic career, he created and permanently imposed in the public space the image of a determined and consistent advocate for the disclosure and explanation of what is truly new and relevant as knowledge for the citizens of the young and painfully emerging democratic social order in Bulgaria. Yet not with empty words, but with deeds realized consistently in a dozen fundamental scientific studies published during the last quarter of the century. About twenty years ago, he most unexpectedly proposed a major doctoral dissertation project on topic of „The Political Market“. Word of his unconventional initiative then stirred pseudo-critics in the political science community. What is this new knowledge that appears on the horizon? Can we really talk about the existence of „market relations“ in politics? Is such a thesis provable? Such were the questions that were heard in the public space at that time? However, when in 2008 the author published his work as a monograph in two volumes, it became extremely clear (already based on the rich facts and convincing argumentation of the text) that in politics we can indeed speak of a special kind of market-type bidding (though not for the exchange of material goods, but of important political values) and that in

this process there is competition (however, not between commodity producers, but between parties that develop their different political programs). With these, they protect the basic values of those citizens who follow them in the current political process. And, of course, the logical thing happened: the critics fell silent, and the doctrine of the „political market“, formulated by Georgi Manolov, became established as a fundamental scientific achievement, without which today it is impossible to analyze what is happening on the public scene.

Subsequently, colleague Manolov published a series of new monographic works dedicated to the complex subject related to the essence and specifics of the political elite, investigating the phenomenon of political image, election campaigns, the transition to democracy, totalitarian political models, etc. With these new initiatives implemented by him, it became clear that his bold approach to the most current scientific research topic was not a random accident. In this case, it was about the belief of a scientist who understands his mission as a critical thinker, called to tell the important truths to his people on time and in maximum detail. And especially for what is most closely related to the national present and future. As a result of the implemented large-scale research program, Georgi Manolov gained both invaluable experience and his own information resource, he also formed his own specific depth of view in understanding important political problems. All this provided him with knowledge, convictions, and self-confidence to tackle the extremely topical topic of **political privileges**. And that in view of the fact that until now it was visibly shunned by the collegial political science community in Bulgaria.

In fact, this topic was avoided for a number of objective reasons until recently! First of all, if one focuses their efforts on it, it is very important to decide which period of the development of the world (and of Bulgarian society) is good to research. Is there any point in bothering with the privileges of bygone eras at all. Will one's labor be well received if they turn their attention to the privileges of their own time. The thought of whether one can explain the national specifics surrounding this topic, if one does not take into consideration its global manifestations, also raises concern. However, in order to explore the privileges outside of Bulgaria, which social reality is best to get to know

in its entirety? For the simple reason that it has had the strongest influence on the picture that has settled on the national political terrain? Furthermore, are there or are there no connections between privileges in two different socio-economic formations existing in parallel or following closely one another. What are the consequences of privileges in antiquity, the Middle Ages and the New Age for the fate of peoples and states in general? All of this is a fundamental scientific problem, the answer to which only allows them to make a prediction in relation to what will happen to society, still enslaved today by the syndrome of the inevitability of privileges for those in power.

These and a number of other additional questions have so far distanced Bulgarian scientists from the field of political science from the great and extremely important topic of political privileges. Its complexity, its laboriousness, as well as the uncertainty of the expected result instilled respect in the researchers. And somewhat logically, it was Professor Georgi Manolov, who had already gained crucial experience in overcoming the „difficult obstacles“ of the political terrain, who tackled it. At the same time, he decided to study and explain the private scientific issues not „piece by piece“ – only for Bulgaria or for a certain socio-economic formation. **In the style of his determined enterprise in science, he proceeded to explore the privileges associated with politics and power in general! From ancient times to the present day both on a global scale and in the „Bulgarian case“ in particular! A commitment that has no close analogue as a creative endeavor of a Bulgarian political scientist in the previous few decades.**

However, the author's approach, precisely because it is a creative precedent, created the only opportunity to build a thorough and complete picture of the role, place and consequences of the creation and use of privileges in the political culture of Mankind. So today we already have in our hands a scientific result that sheds as much light as possible on this complex political matter. By virtue, its intricacy is by no means accidental. It derives from the complexity of the dilemma that, on the one hand, in order to have effective governance of the state, the people who hold the power in their hands must in truth be sufficiently financially and materially secured. That is because they are expected to voluntarily surrender „their own business“ to be „servants of their people“. This requirement is an axiom in statesmanship! However, the

other side of the dilemma is also crucial: in what dimensions, i.e. how far the exceptional rights of people in power should extend. That is so that political parasitism does not arise among them, in which management positions are already used quite consciously as an easy way for personal enrichment. On that note avoiding such danger is also a fundamental rule of statesmanship. These two dilemmas – firstly, how to provide the ruling elite materially to a sufficient extent for its management activity to be effective, and secondly, how to avoid the possibility of abusing the rights obtained from having the power – turn out to be the eternal and insoluble problem in the evolution of human civilization. Its consistent realization in political history has been studied and presented to us today as systematized scientific knowledge by Professor Georgi Manolov in his latest monograph **„Power and privileges in political history (XX century BC – XXI century AD)“**.

The overarching subject of the large-scale scientific research undertaken has necessitated long and difficult work on the part of the author, in order for him to collect enough empirical material, without which his work would not be complete. Therefore, Professor Manolov has worked long and hard to secure the essential worldwide primary documentary and information resource. Based on it, we have before us today the unfolding picture of privilege in world political history. It goes without saying, however, that the accumulation of the immense factuality in a single volume would create some excessively voluminous book. In practice, it will be difficult for readers to grasp it as an information array for perception and meaning. Therefore, the author has rightly divided his exposition into three relatively stand-alone but logically inter-connected volumes.

The first volume clarifies the main theoretical-methodological issues, without which it is difficult to understand and explain the emergence, existence and evolution of privileges. Quite reasonably, politics, power and political elites have been identified as the main drivers for the emergence and imposition of this reality in human civilization. Politics is that variety of human thinking through which the need is realized, the benefits are defined and the directions for the application of privileges are indicated with a view to the organization and functioning of the human collective. Power is the direct instrument through which privileges are realized as concrete material gains and non-material

products in their vast diversity around those in power. To the extent that it covers the luxurious daily life of the empowered, it guarantees their endless economic opportunities and their significant advantages in the field of non-material life. Hence the political elites are viewed by the author of the work as „the eternal winner“. Regardless of the nature of the social system, it is this layer that is the real factor that regulates the volumes of specific privileges; provides the necessary material resources for their existence; also exercises control over the institutions guaranteeing the inviolability of the privileged consumption of material and non-material goods.

On this basis, Professor Manolov makes the first and only so far complete scientific classification of political privileges. They are grouped into eleven leading directions. The features of the historical era, the form of state government, the level of legitimacy and the place in the power hierarchy of the respective users of privileges are considered the main distinguishing features. In addition, the method of acquisition and use, as well as the degree of publicity and the level of legitimacy of the privileges are also taken into account. At the end of the first volume, the main theoretical question that democratic societies are interested in in relation to privileges is objectively presented: Universal suffrage, which is considered the „sanctum“ of modern representative democratic social systems, will it finally liquidate (i.e. can it combat) the undesirable dimensions of many privileges in society? As alarming as it may sound, the theoretical answer to this question is that, for now, no definite positive answer can be given! This is based on the fact that after the election comes the empowerment of the elected. Hence, they receive „immunity“ that allows them to immediately resort to the privileges protected by all sorts of constitutional or legal texts. Thus privileges to this day prove to be the eternal indestructible deity accompanying civilization. It only permanently changes its forms, but invariably resurrects and reproduces itself in even newer forms. Thus, thanks to the skillful application of the theoretical-problem analysis, Professor Manolov has laid a solid scientific foundation in order to move on to the detailed clarification of the specifics related to privileges in human political civilization in the second volume of his research.

The second volume mainly concerns the combination of the historical-chronological sequence in the presentation of the facts, accompanied by their analytical summary. In such manner, the specifics of the conditions and forms in which both „eternal“ and „concrete“ privileges are manifested during the various epochs of the development of human civilization stand out. Since the author has undertaken to fully explore the history of this political phenomenon, he rightly starts from the realities of ancient **tribal societies**. The founders of the individual tribal societies and their elders are naturally indicated there, as the originators and users of exceptional rights. They step on customs and traditions, with the help of which they organize and lead the assembly of people who are still equal in their material means. Here the universal benefit of the son's right to inherit the family property is realized; the need for the oldest and most experienced men to have a decisive voice in the creation of reliable weapons and tools of labor, as well as to guide the course of various rituals with a non-material and emphasized educational purpose. On this basis emerge those more particular rights, which I think can be broadly defined as the „authorities“ of the aforementioned patrilineal elite. Thanks to them, early human societies built an organizational immunity that allowed them to survive. Inside them, on the basis of accumulating experience and skills, an upward development of the means of production and non-material values is ensured. As a result, even a surplus of material goods, necessary for the survival of families, gradually began to appear. The powers of the leaders in the tribal society are, however, still exercised by people who live among those who they lead; their personal standard is not drastically different from that of the average person; the activity of the rights holders is objectively useful for everyone, because it guarantees the economic and non-material evolution of the human race.

At the same time, however, the logic by which human development proceeds is gradually being complicated (this is the main paradox of history), during which the second historical era begins, during which „authorities“ begin to turn into „privileges“. Already with a radically different essence and role in the development of society. In the course of generative evolution, the opportunity arises for the top people in the hierarchy to begin to appropriate the emerging economic surplus. On this basis, social differentiation gradually started in human

society. The intra-societal conflict and the politics related to the striving for supremacy on the part of one social reality over the neighboring ones arise. In the end, in the wars that have been fought, one is defeated and another is victorious. Slavery was also born as a way of life and existence for most people. All this complicated reality necessitates the creation of qualitatively new tools to guarantee the emerging social reality that did not exist until then and is incomparably more complex and difficult to manage.

This is how the ancient state organization appeared. A permanent power elite emerges within it. It possesses another type of power that is no longer used entirely only for the benefit of society as a whole. At the top of the most ancient states are those individuals who managed to impose their authority over the new processes in society and some of whom became almighty kings. They surround themselves with people in power, who are being given special political privileges in return for their obedience and surrendered control to the figure in power – the monarch. This is the main food chain environment thanks to which the most ancient professions, paid for by the state budget, were launched. Firstly to those who analyze, understand and explain the essence of the new social realities. They will lay the foundations of politics. And then to those who deal with the transformation of political ideas into management reality – all possible representatives of the state administration.

To illustrate the historical picture, Professor Manolov has studied and systematized the new type of privileges that arose in the ancient states of Mesopotamia, Sumerian and Akkadian empire, Babylon, Egypt, Ancient Persia, China and India. The variety of all the privileges we find there is set forth in the text of the work, which the reader will have the pleasure of perusing. Therefore, we will not list here everything that is related to the new way of life for the political elite in the ancient absolute monarchies. We will note only that which is truly new, because it did not exist in earlier tribal societies. First of all, the author rightly points to the fact that the privileges in ancient states are already associated with the emergence of a radically different standard of living and activity opportunities for those who are at the head of the state, opposite to the people. Their power allows them to deploy for the first time a new activity which, in our opinion, can tentatively be defined as „**privileged political**

creativity". In its course, the conditions were created for the use of material goods by the empowered on a scale that was neither conceivable nor possible for ordinary people within the state to achieve. In order to ensure the durability of this new type of privilege, the first legal regulation of the new benefits available to the people of the supreme state power was launched. The Laws of Hammurabi are cited here as a classic example. After their launch, encroachment on the positions of the privileged is already interpreted as an attempt to illegally usurp power by those who oppose those who have the privilege to dispose of everything within the state. **Privileges are therefore now treated as an „exclusive right“ – a non-negotiable monopoly that belongs only to the authorized ruler.** Its goal is one – to guarantee the eternal supremacy of politicians in the state. Privilege is therefore already a benefit that is not useful to the entire population – as is the case with what is created by the „powers“ in tribal society. Privileges are solely an advantage for the emerging new political elite. Therefore, he lives in different conditions (in palaces) as opposed to the primitive material conditions in which the life path of the common man passes in the ancient absolute monarchies. The food, clothing, and entertainment of the privileged in power and the common people are no longer the same. As a result, what will later be called the „political class“ is objectively born. It already has different and markedly vested interests. Based on them, the indomitable thirst for power started as an easy way to riches.

It is a known fact that for a number of objective reasons, even in ancient times, Eastern societies were distinguished by a high birth rate, and the countries there were settled by excessively populous nationalities. In order to exercise control over them, the first political studies appeared in China, whose authors tried to explain the possible effectiveness of the relationship between the government and the people. There is already an attempt to clarify the particular qualities that are necessary in order for the power of the ruler to survive under the new conditions, and in such a way that it is effectively applied. On this occasion, however, Shang Yang also points out the forceful methods by which the privileges of the empowered can and should be protected. For example, in Ancient India, the numerous human mass was divided into 4 separate castes. Two of them have a monopoly over the right to possess power, including the privileges that result from it. While the

rest in the two remaining castes are called upon to serve only as creator of economic goods in the state. In the Egypt, the king was even declared a deity that could not be judged by anyone in the state. Because of the limitlessness of his power, the economic and non-material privileges there reach such proportions that they cover even the afterlife of the ruler. He was supposed to „carry-on“ to infinity from within the unprecedented in their scale stone pyramids built by slave labor, erected around the course of the Nile River. The conclusion of the analysis of the entirety of this immense factuality is one: as a result of the new processes that have already taken place within the borders of the ancient states of the Middle and Far East region, privileges create two diametrically opposed political realities in human society: one is personified by the eternal privileged ruler elite, and the second is invariably represented by the disenfranchised vast masses of people who are placed in uncontrolled dependence (and in all ancient states). This is also the main objective result of the emergence, imposition and evolution of „privileged political creativity“ within the ever evolving but class antagonistic human society.

The picture related to privileges in the ancient Greek world is outlined by Professor Manolov as, conditionally speaking, **the third phase** in the overall evolution of political privileges. Quite conditionally, it can be said that for the first time there was a certain „correction“ associated with the dominance of the ancient Eastern type, completely uncontrolled political privileges of the elites. The main reason for this change is related to the fact that the life of the people in Hellas differs significantly from the realities that exist in the eastern despotisms. First of all, the human contingent that needs to be organized and managed in the southern areas of the Balkan Peninsula is significantly smaller than the ethnic realities of the East – for example in India and China. Because of this, the state of the Greeks – the city-state, the polis – was significantly smaller. Defending the walls of Athens or Sparta, for example, in a situation of external threat is a much „easier“ task to solve than if one had to defend the borders of a huge, sprawling empire like Ancient China, say. On the Balkans, the seasons are also different, as well as the conditions for the production of material goods, compared to societies in Egypt or the Delta of Asia Minor, for example. These features already allow several different state-political systems to emerge

and be successfully implemented by ancient Greek society. Accordingly, Professor Manolov has clarified and specified the volumes of privileges that were possible and were used under aristocratic, oligarchic and tyrannical regimes. In Ancient Hellas, however, another very important feature is already present: **due to the presence of the mentioned specifics, the Greeks discovered and succeeded for the first time in implementing political democracy as a functioning reality.** As a result of this multiplicity of regimes, political privilege cannot help but mark a visible diversity expressed in a new „privileged creativity“.

In order to outline its real dimensions and the guidelines related to the particular application of privileges, the author of the present monograph trusts the best informed people of antiquity – the founders of political science, Plato and Aristotle. Besides being the first classical theorists of politics, statehood and democracy, they are also direct witnesses of the privileged reality in Ancient Hellas. Tyranny is described by them as the power of an unchecked dictator who gained his power by demagoguery, but then imposed on it unlimited rights in terms of privileges. The aristocracy is characterized by the fact that only representatives of the wealthy strata are elected for life as members of the supreme governing body of Athens – the Council., while democracy is defined as the power of the people. As a result, senior officials in the Greek polis also receive high royalties from the treasury for their activities; they not only use cash supplements for food but are also released from military service, and it is even their right to sit in the front rows in the National Assembly, including in the theater, etc. Based on this information, Professor Manolov justifiably concludes that even within the ancient Greek political systems, the privileges of those in power do not lose their importance. Apparently, however, they take on a different form of application. There is also an electoral authority with opportunities to periodically change its member composition. So, as the author of the present monograph states, in Ancient Greece, in general, there was „less latitude in the arrangement of privileges“ around power due to the presence of the democratic political regime. Material aid is also a novelty, given to poor citizens, even „money for spectacles“ is given out, so that ordinary Greeks can regularly attend theater performances. At the time of Solon, lavish private wedding celebrations of

the elite were even prohibited. But in general, changes in privileges towards the common people are neither a constant trend, nor are they applied simultaneously under all regimes and in all Greek poleis. Put in a general sense, due to the specifics of Hellenic society, the privileges undergo some changes, but in general they do not disappear, because the power in the state needs them – regardless of its peculiarities.

As the fourth conditional phase in the overall evolution of what we have defined as „privileged political creativity“, Professor Georgi Manolov has outlined the situation in Ancient Rome. **One can state something even more concrete: there the author finds the first indisputable climax, in which privilege marks its unprecedented evolution, to the possible maximum of absurdities.** This tendency was particularly visible during the era of the Roman Empire – from the I to the V century AD. For the first time during this period, a country permanently spread over three continents – Europe, Africa and Asia. It is the epitome of the „civilized world“ of the era! Outside its borders there is no similar political creation to threaten the future of Roman world domination. At the same time, however, the empire was a country inhabited by many forcibly conquered peoples, such as Greeks, Arabs, Thracians, Dacians, Illyrians, Gauls, Saxons, etc. Therefore, external enemies are not a problem, but internal instability is a constant source of fear for the central figure in power, the emperor. That's why the mighty Imperial Army exists. It is there that the roots of both the reasons and the arguments with which the uncontrolled mightiness of the Roman emperors are built. During their rule (almost without exception) the privileges marked solely a tendency to grow, complicate and increase the negative effect – both for the authority of the power and for the future of the state itself.

The conditions under which the Roman emperor operates allow him to appear as the sole master of power, not subject to sanctions by the laws (they do not apply to him!); he is in control of the treasury, but for greater security of his actions he creates and disposes of his own separate treasury, the revenues for which are allocated from the state treasury, of course; for the first time the imperial cult arose, which was materialized by countless statues glorifying him, erected in the squares of Rome and in the provinces; the emperor is the largest slave trader in the state; he is the source and author of corruption, because he personally appoints greedy individuals to important government positions,

so that, after their obvious compromise, he can remove them and appropriate the wealth accumulated by speculators; the emperor is constantly thinking of what new taxes to create to secure new revenues; the head of state's family receives food from the state; the emperor himself organized the most extravagant feasts, the likes of which the history of mankind had not known before and since (it is not by chance that Nero even exclaimed: „**Only when I am extravagant do I feel that I am an emperor!**“); during feasts in the palace, the guests first consume to excess, lying on special beds, and then drink famous wines to their heart's content. The menu is unprecedented in its content to the point of extravagance: „**fish liver, pheasant brains, flamingo tongues, male moron milk!**“? Often, however, the emperor and his guests also had to vomit what they had ingested, which is why special balms were created to relieve this disgusting „relieving procedure“; unprecedented opulence reigns in the imperial palace, including orgies accompanied by public sex are often organized there – even with the participation of underage children?!, etc., etc.

There is no way that such a reality, described in great detail by Professor Manolov, cannot be appreciated as a visible culmination in the overall evolution of the privileges for the people at the top of power in the ancient states. **Here the privileges are growing into the most disgusting political picture that has ever been observed around people in power.** It cannot be defined in any other way than as „political debauchery“. The absurdity of what the Roman oligarchy was doing in the realm of privilege was the basis for the emergence of that political „pseudo-culture“ that would begin to drain the resources of the once all-powerful empire. In order to reach the situation where it became possible for a „barbarian people“ without their own state – the Visigoths, in the middle of the V century to deal a crushing blow to the power of Rome. Thus, the history of political privileges enables the author of the present monograph to make another fundamental conclusion about the objective consequences of their uncontrolled use. **There is no other, more formidable internal enemy for the present and future of any state, even the strongest at any given time, than the unchecked privileges of those in power. They certainly spell doom for the people who have allowed the privileges to suck out the vital**

forces of the respective ethnic group so that it becomes a victim of the external enemies of the state.

The collapse of the Roman Empire, of course, is also connected with the deep and unavoidable crisis in the slave-owning socio-economic and political system. Against the background of the reigning lawlessness and arbitrariness in the domain of power, slave labor became unproductive over the centuries. Both in the center of the empire and in its provinces. The appearance of a series of „new peoples“ in Southern Europe, which occupied dominant positions in the former Roman possessions – the Visigoths, the Slavs, and later the Bulgarians, is connected with the emergence of the new type of statehood. The main thing about it is the absence of slaves and slave exploitation, which have been replaced by the predominance of free political but economically entrenched peasants. They become the new main productive factor in the economy. Based on the overall colossal transformation experienced, European societies passed into the phase of feudalism. This historical era is connected with the formation of the permanent nationalities of the continent, which already have their own common language, unified religion and cultural traditions. And here, quite naturally, the logical question also arises: What happens to the privileges of the people around the power during this obviously „renewed“ but no less complex social reality that exists and undergoes its own autonomous self-development between the VI and XVIII centuries?

Professor Georgi Manolov seeks the answer to this question in the stand-alone chapter three of the second volume of his research. For the basis of his exposition, he adopted the reality that existed in Byzantium, in the feudal monarchies of Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire. And a peculiar new peak in the evolution of the feudal type of political privileges, the author rightly seeks in the realities that existed in absolutist feudal France, during the reign of the Sun King – Louis XIV. The facts prove that the reality associated with the privileges in Byzantium was not identical to that political debauchery and uncontrolled revelry that existed in the Roman Empire. The reasons for this are both objective and subjective. Byzantium is not identical to the Roman Empire either in area, nor in economic opportunities, nor as a monopolistic state in the field of world domination. It is forced to „shrink“ within the borders of the Southern Balkans, Asia Minor and small parts

of North Africa. South of it, however, arose the powerful Arab caliphate, and on the northern border rose the mighty Bulgarian state, later Serbia and the Russian Empire. These are all new realities that have an impact on the performance opportunities of those who reside in the zones of central political power in the new capital of the state – Constantinople. **Derived by subjective reasons, the role and importance of the newly emerging Christian church organization must be taken into account. It preached a significantly more humane doctrine of ideas related to the brotherhood between people, promoting the need for them to help each other, while also giving forgiveness to the sinners.** Thus crystallized that new political and cultural reality which became the source of grounds and arguments for the continued existence of the system of privileges, albeit partially reduced, at least as far as the senseless revelry of the Roman emperors was concerned.

On the basis of a huge volume of factual evidence, Professor Georgi Manolov has proven that as far as Byzantium is still one of the main „Great Powers“ of the feudal era, its head of state – the emperor – retains the exclusive privileges of being commander-in-chief of the army, as well as the right to be supreme judge in the state. In order to ensure a reliable political environment, the emperor preserved the ancient right to bestow estates on the highest representatives of the administration; lives in a glittering palace, served by a vast army of courtiers and servants; introduces and distributes 18 titles to senior administrators; each of these privileges is redeemed by the awardee and brings corresponding new goods for him; as a result, senior administrators – especially senators, are exempt from military service and some other obligations; after reaching a certain age, the representatives of the close imperial entourage received high lifetime pensions. However, the representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Church began to receive privileges for the first time. In Byzantium, the famous principle of „Caesaropapism“ prevailed. According to him, the supreme representative and holder of power in the state is the emperor, and the patriarch is the spiritual head of the people, who is subordinate to the ruler. To the extent that the church in Byzantium became the main ideological support of secular power, its prelates were also exempted from military service and other state burdens; church properties are exempt from taxes; the revenues from the villages in the immediate

vicinity of the monasteries were provided for the use of the clergy there, etc. Over the centuries, these privileges also began to exhaust the state, which is why in the XIV century the emperors were forced for the first time to resort to the liquidation of part of the ecclesiastical privileges. Too late, however, because at that time a new conqueror was heading towards the Balkans – the Ottomans, who would liquidate not only Byzantium, but also the other feudal states around it.

The reality in Western Europe during the Middle Ages in terms of privileges is characterized by Professor Manolov as analogous compared to the picture existing in Byzantium, but also as a reality with its own visible distinction. The general thing is that in both directions those in power retain their privileges. A new and very significant moment in the development of politics and growth of power in the West, however, is the appearance and imposition of the principle of „**Papocaesarism**“. According to his dogmas, not the kings, but the Roman high priest, was the supreme representative of both spiritual and secular authority, which had been delegated to him by almighty God. Because of this, the popes began to „dominate“ in the full sense of the word. Accordingly, their uncontrolled power provides them with those privileges, without which the central figure in the supreme institution in the Middle Ages is unthinkable as a real master in the political system. Popes live in luxury; they became large landowners, which provided them with extremely high incomes; they distributed lands and other properties to monasteries, and even to some of the rulers in Western Europe; the high clergy in places is not controlled by the respective ruler, but by the Pope in Rome; the norms by which the activity of the church clergy is evaluated or judged are not the secular laws, but the dogmas laid down in the canonical rules of the Bible; the Catholic Church has the ability to constantly increase the wealth of the main religious orders, including by confiscating the properties of „heretical communities“, etc. So, despite the presence of the formally philanthropic preaching of the Christian Church, political privileges are also adopted and imposed by the Popes. Because they are a tool for maintaining their political power in the more specific feudal state-political system that existed in Western Europe during the Middle Ages.

The realities linked to the privileges of those in power in the Ottoman Empire during the era of late feudalism, Professor Manolov

rightly considers as the next extremely indicative example of the new evolution of what is important for power: the presence of a permanent opportunity to rule unchecked! For the sultans, this task is of particular importance, since they are building their new great state by forcibly subjugating a number of old and well-developed Balkan nationalities, such as Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Albanians, Vlachs, part of the Hungarians, etc. The vital political leadership of the first figure in the new state was ensured by enforcing the principle that the sultan is the sole holder of supreme power. Therefore, only he by „firmans“ can promulgate any and all laws to settle all sorts of complicated matters in the empire. Accordingly, the padishah lives in a special, heavily guarded sarai; he has the right to fetch minor children from the „Christian rayah“ for the recruitment of the main striking force of the army – the janissary corps; after war and the capture of prisoners 1/5 of them rightfully vested in the Sultan, these „new slaves“ being used as oarsmen in the galleys and as all kinds of servants around the palace. The dominant religion in the state is Islam, and the holy book for Muslims, the Koran, is the main source of values on which the Sultan's law-making is based. Because of this, the representatives and the Muslim church organization also receive privileges similar to those granted to Catholics in Western Europe.

However, what is truly an „innovation“ in the history of European political privilege realized by the sultans during the age of feudalism is the creation and functioning of the sultan's „harem“. Beautiful young women, brought by way of captivity or as a „donation“ by a high Ottoman dignitary in the provincial areas of the state, were forcibly brought there. Depending on this new type of parasitism, fallen for life in the debauchery of harem pleasures, the representatives of the supreme power will notice a permanent tendency of gradual spiritual degradation. It will ultimately have a fatal effect on the effectiveness of government in the country. This is the main reason why, if at the head of the empire at the beginning there were really notable military leaders, such as Mehmed II the Conqueror and Suleiman the Magnificent, then by the end of the XVIII century characterless and depraved sultans were already sitting on the thrones, unable to reform their dominions model of European countries. The Ottoman Empire will decline in order to give a start to the national liberation movements of the enslaved peoples in

Southeast Europe. In the XIX century, they will gradually rise for a new political life within the borders of their already free national states. The history of the Ottoman Empire also proves Professor Manolov's emphatical conclusion that states in which privileges reach absurd dimensions do not and cannot have a secure future. In the specific case, of course, for the best from the point of view of the interests of those whose state independence was done away with at the end of the XIV century, among whom are the Bulgarians.

Undoubtedly, one of the most interesting examples of the scale of privileges in feudal society was discovered and studied by Professor Manolov in the situation that arose in France from the second half of the XVII century to the 80s of the XVIII century. This was the era of French absolutism, epitomized by the reign of the Sun King – Louis XIV. Here, as the author emphasizes, lies one of the most interesting paradoxes of the New Age. Europe has already played a decisive role in the discovery of America, Australia and New Zealand. The great countries in this part of the planet are embarking on a furious race to conquer new lands. The peoples inhabiting them have been turned into colonies for the plunder of their natural resources. As a result, a qualitatively new type of economic processes, which are already based on stock-money relations, was launched. Their bearer is the newly appeared „third caste“ – the people of money, the prototype of the modern bourgeoisie. Thus, in France, the monopoly of the feudal-clerical supremacy in power is gradually facing a new alternative: the possibility of taking away the primacy of the state from the new, sufficiently serious public forces. And in order to bring some „equilibrium“ into the relations between the opposite social poles thus formed – the feudal aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, the role of the king as a political balancer grew sharply. Louis XIV realized the new opportunities before him and naturally took advantage of the situation to the maximum extent. Thus he gives scope to his fantasy of a new, true „pseudo-renaissance“ of monarchical privileges. **„The king cannot do wrong“** – reads the main power maxim of the ruler, proclaimed to be no more, no less than **the Sun King?! Therefore, he began to hand out new posts without control to obedient aristocrats; the Palace of Versailles became the center of an extremely noisy and lavish elite life; the lunches in the royal chambers, paid for from the state budget, are often attended by more than**

5,000 people; the favorites of the monarch also get apartments within the outlines of Versailles; this tendency became something of a fashion, to which even famous representatives of the French intellectual elite began to strive; and putting on the royal shirt in the morning, as well as taking it off in the evening, before the dignitary retires to their chambers to sleep, becomes an official state ceremony, realized in public, in the presence of dozens of the highest-ranking aristocrats of the power elite!?!

On this basis, Professor Manolov has outlined the next inevitable perspective. Aware of the insanity of the existing political situation based on privilege, the first prominent minds of the New Age, such as S. Montesquieu, D. Diderot and J.-J. Rousseau, qualitatively developed the new doctrine of the division of powers within the state. So to enable the realization and functioning of the contract theory. According to its creators, the people, not the king, is the supreme sovereign (owner) of power in the state. And through regular elections, the nation can elect the representatives of the supreme legislative and executive power. They in turn, in partnership with the independent judiciary to put an end to royal and aristocratic privileges. This is the way to guarantee the possibility of turning the freedom of the people into a democratic political reality. The ultimate result of the impact of the new theoretical political thinking, as the author of the present monograph rightly notes, is the accumulation of that spiritual potential which makes possible the outbreak and victory of the Great French Revolution. On July 14, 1789, the people rose up, took over the Bastille and appointed the representatives of their new revolutionary power. The picture related to the consequences of the presence of excessively inflated privileges is once again repeated, already as a logical regularity. A government that turns its privileges into an end in itself, sooner or later confronts the state and the people with new tests. They are most often overcome with decisive changes in the field of management. The ideal case in overcoming them is the presence among the respective people of a sufficiently prepared new public elite, which is able to create such a state-political system in which privileges will not play such a fatal role in the people's destiny.

If we adhere to the conventional numbering adopted in our exposition, related to the changes of privileges in the course of history, in

the three-volume work of Professor Manolov, the contours of that pseudo-political culture can be found, which is placed within the framework of the next, seventh in a row, phase of the overall evolution of the privileges accompanying humanity. Professor Manolov has studied them in the stand-alone fourth chapter of the second volume – „Modern Political Privileges“. There, the author included the privileges representative of people from the sphere of power in the political systems that existed from the beginning of the XIX century to the 50s of the XX century. Formally speaking, this period of time – a century and a half, is incomparably more a short period in human history compared with the half-millennium of the Roman Empire or the thousand-year reign of feudal privilege. However, what is associated with privileges here turns out to be a reality distinguished by a new evolution both in the breadth of their application and in terms of the forms under which privileges are used. **Even in political systems whose representatives, in the sunset of feudal society, plead for a new state order, in which there will be no people with uncontrolled opportunities to enjoy goods at the expense of the state budget.**

However, the reality turns out to be quite different. It is true that immediately after the victory of the Great French Revolution there was a short period in which the first organized, and at the same time crushing blows were inflicted based on feudal privileges. Professor Manolov has convincingly demonstrated that this was done with the adoption of the „Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen“, the „Decree of Abolition of Privileges“ of 1879, as well as with the new legal matter related to power and government, which proclaimed the famous „Napoleonic Code“ of 1804. These previously non-existent normative acts marked the „beginning of the end“ of the differences among Western European society based on feudal rights and privileges. The bourgeois class essentially stands at the top of state government. **In practice, however, it turns out that in this case it is only a „temporary privilege break“. Or, more precisely, for something new that can be defined as „political mimicry“ in terms of privilege!** Because the socio-economic and political realities in the new bourgeois states of the West already about the end of the first quarter of the XIX century are facing another type of tests that did not exist in the past. They are related to the results of the ongoing industrial revolution, creating a new type of class

division. The empowered bourgeoisie, in its turn, for the first time faces the acute problems to which the people of wage labor – the working class – are looking for a solution. Consequently, and in order to guarantee once again the „stability“ of the central power in the bourgeois state, the panacea has again and again been sought in the privileges of the people in power.

The notorious „electoral qualification“ was introduced. According to it, the right to vote and be elected is given only to citizens who possess a certain material status and a high level of cultural development. Thus, for example, in new, „democratic“ France, only about 240,000 people, out of a population of nearly 30 million in the country, actually receive the right to vote. Poor men, women, and uneducated citizens have no voting rights; in England the royal person retains the exclusive right of „civil list“ to support the crown and its surroundings with funds supplied, of course, from the state budget; the English monarch even retains the right to bestow aristocratic titles (eg. „Sir“) under the formal pretext of maintaining the „equilibrium“ between the lower and upper houses of the British Parliament.

The census system introduced in the US after the American Revolution favored the religious affiliation of citizens; as a rule, voting rights after the revolution there were primarily given to Protestants; Jews, Indians, and some other communities remained outside the reach of these new political privileges; **and the biggest paradox of the New Age – women in Western Europe throughout the XIX and the first half of the XX century did not have voting rights.** They were only given to them around the eve and after WWII!? The conclusion here is self-evident: it is more than obvious that in the situation in which the bourgeoisie is forced to „defend“ its own power, it simply finds new forms of securing privileges for the people in power. They only guarantee its interests in the representative democratic political system. Here is hidden the main glob of those fundamental contradictions in the supposedly democratizing European social reality that led to the outbreak and victory of the Paris Commune of 1871. Professor Manolov proves with convincing examples that its actors are making efforts to liquidate the newly imposed privileges on the part of the bourgeoisie, but their experiment fails. The author of the present monograph looks for the main reasons in the fact that unprepared cadres from the social lowlands

were appointed to head the self-government of the Commune. Also relevant is the fact that French society as a whole has not yet matured enough to part with the privileges born of the political mimicry carried out by the nouveau riche.

The Paris Commune fails, but European society does not accept the privileges imposed by the empowered bourgeois class. Especially in countries like Russia, where the old feudal and the new bourgeois privileges at the end of the XIX and the beginning of the XX centuries are intertwined in an extremely complex sphere. And as an exponent of the broad popular aspirations for changes on the Russian political scene at the beginning of the new century, the Bolshevik Party, led by V. I. Lenin, emerged as a decisive factor. It ensured the victory of the October Revolution in 1917. It marked the beginning of the Soviet socialist social order. In a parallel plan, Germany's loss of the First World War and the severe sanctions imposed on its people by the victors created those objective conditions among the German nation that allowed the National Socialists to take power there in 1933, through a peaceful, purely electoral process. Adolf Hitler's party. **Thus, the two most striking examples of the totalitarian state system arose in Europe, where political privileges experienced their new „pseudo-renaissance“.** We can tentatively place this reality related to political pseudo-culture within the eighth phase of the overall evolution of privilege in human history. Professor Manolov has researched the specifics of the new reality in parallel, in order to reveal both the ordinary and the extraordinary in the use of privileges in the two political regimes, which are different in design, but identical in the consequences they led to.

A characteristic feature of totalitarian privileges in both cases is the presence of a monopoly party at the top of state power, whose elite is the sole holder and user of the privileges. As early as 1922, the adoption of the first decrees „For the improvement of the life of party workers“ began in Moscow, to reach 1932, when under the auspices of Y. V. Stalin a slender and wide-ranging system of privileges was already built. Its main users are already the nomenclature cadres of the ruling communist party. Thus, it becomes possible for an apparatus of about 18,000 people to own many times larger dwellings compared to the square footage that the average Soviet worker is officially allowed to live in; the special „canteens“ were built, where the nomenklatura dines

at a much higher quality and variety in relation to what the workers consume; the nomenclatura gets the right to open bank accounts from which it can withdraw additional funds, despite the large salaries given to it by the state budget; the first party and state leaders live in huge villas with all kinds of improvements, guaranteeing the domestic and official luxury of their inhabitants; since the income of the nomenclature is huge, the saving of huge sums in Swiss banks commences. (Lenin, for example, managed to „hide“ there for „rainy days“ some 75 million dollars, Leo Trotsky – 90 million, F. Dzerzhinsky – 80 million, etc.) A huge army of bodyguards revolves around this top of party power, drivers and all kinds of servants, who also use many and the most diverse privileges to which the average Soviet person has no access at all.

With the far-right fascist totalitarian system in Germany, things are repeated as an image in an opposing political mirror: there, too, the National Socialist elite enjoys the right to preferential treatment in state institutions; it is easier to go to universities; also has the opportunity to save his „money for rainy days“. Adolf Hitler, for example, received 4 million dollars only for the orchestrated distribution in Germany of his infamous book „Mein Kampf“, Goebbels deposited „savings“ in Swiss banks in the amount of 4.6 million dollars, Himmler – 6 million, etc. In the course of this in-depth and richly illustrated analysis related to the newly imposed privileges of the totalitarian political elites, Professor Manolov basically clarifies to the reader what are the inevitable objective reasons for the ultimate collapse of both totalitarian social models. In the German case, the unchecked privileged power of the National Socialists allowed them to provoke the greatest military adventure of the XX century – the Second World War. In its course, the German nation was brought a second time to utter disaster. And in the Soviet case, the truth is reaffirmed for the umpteenth time that the exaggeration of privileges for people from the sphere of power compromises that power in the eyes of its own people. Regardless of the initial expectation that the socialist transformations would finally bring to the broad masses of people in the Soviet Union a social reality of truly equal people. At the same time, without exceptional opportunities for anyone in the state to enjoy privileges.

The last major topic that Professor Manolov has duly analyzed in the second volume of his study is related to the privileges observed in

the political system of our everyday life. Both within the national democratic states and also at the level of the European Union. Because in Brussels, for the first time in the history of mankind, a huge administrative body was created and has been functioning for half a century. Its purpose is to coordinate pan-European efforts to establish lasting democracy on our continent. For this purpose, the author has collected, systematized and summarized the facts related to the realities of privileges in the USA, Japan, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Finland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, etc. Despite the existence of certain differences in the volumes, and in the manner in which privileges are granted there, Professor Manolov has rightly established that even today this is an important (conflictual) issue for democratic societies. Because the salaries of people in power are incomparably greater than what even the most important representatives of the scientific, technical and humanitarian intelligentsia receive, on whose shoulders the economic progress and spiritual life of the modern world rest. There are privileges for the free distribution of documents by mail, but they are also often used for purely promotional purposes, especially in election situations. Members of the legislature and the executive bodies enjoy state insurance in large amounts. Their expenses are paid extra for activities carried out „on duty“, without being completely clear neither the reasons nor the real benefits of such initiatives of those in power. Not to mention that the empowered use free travel by all possible means of transport, while they are provided with excessive sums for financially assisting the support staff, and are provided with new information technology every 3 – 4 years without any real reasons for this, etc.

It should be noted that what Professor Manolov defines as an absurdity, surpassing all arguments of normal human logic, are precisely the privileges granted to those working in the institutions of the European Union. Salaries of 18,000 euros per person; 1.5 billion euros for the maintenance of 755 deputies in the European Parliament; costs of around 9 billion euros for the maintenance of 33 thousand additional support staff; a total of over 10 billion per year to cover all the costs that accompany the existence and functioning of the bureaucracy in the EU within one year!? **In this case, there is also the unique privilege where no one but the European Parliament can check and assess the legitimacy of this unprecedented extravagance.** Thus, all the privileges

– both at the national level and in the EU, in recent decades have become „legitimate“ as a result of pushing texts for them both in the constitutions of individual countries and in the special supplementary laws voted afterwards. The fact that today there are no more „secret privileges“ as in totalitarian societies, however, loses its civilizational value to a considerable extent, according to Professor Manolov, in the presence of the indisputable truth that excessively large volumes of the national budget are still wasted on the functioning of the management elites today and the means provided for the functioning of the Euro-bureaucracy. The world saw, the scientist stated, that until now a regime that was completely freed from the oligarchic privileges of its political elite was not possible. This circumstance also makes today's democracy „not democratic enough“. In some of its dimensions, it even becomes „apparent“. However, such a reality does not bode well for the future. Because if the representative democracy of the modern type is allowed to degenerate further, the unknowns before societies and states will increase with new force and in new dimensions.

Logically, against this background, Professor Manolov has made an effort at the end of the second volume of his work to formulate some basic political ideas that have the potential to limit the extent and consequences of existing political privileges. First of all, he proposes to continue the efforts of the civilized world to improve the representative democratic political model. Serious reservations are contained in the increase in the forms of control over the funds from the state budget, which accompany the activities of deputies and ministers. There is logic in reducing the number of people's representatives in parliaments and ministries, in the executive power, in order to reduce the total volume of unproductive expenses; by strengthening the role of direct democracy and civil society, the autonomy and omnipotence of the ruling elite can be reduced; to sharply limit the use of lobbying, giving more space to the application of „deliberative democracy“, in which those in power periodically consult the people, and they give their assessment of what they intend to undertake in their daily lives; there is every reason to introduce the principle that „politicians should be paid only for what is actually useful for society, which they have actually done during their mandates“; all laws that grant one or other

privileges must also be repaired, etc. Political creativity could grow further and further in order to achieve the main goal of a democratic society, Professor Manolov states at the end of the second volume, „to remove the present tyranny of privilege surrounding men in power“.

The third volume of the present study is subtitled „**The privileges of power in Bulgaria (from 1878 to the present)**“. The isolation of this issue in a separate body of work is a rational decision of the author for a number of objective reasons. First of all, to examine independently what interests the Bulgarian reader the most, namely: how things stand in the „Bulgarian case“ in terms of power privileges. In the second place, in order not to „drown“ the Bulgarian subject in the boundless ocean of privileges in world history. And last but not least, to make an effort to outline both the commonality between the privileges in Bulgaria and what is characteristic of them in the New Age around the world, and also to measure and explain the indisputable specifics of the facts. This is important because the post-liberation Bulgarian society lacks its own feudal class, so it is necessary to limit its privileges first. After the Liberation, the Bulgarian nation, figuratively speaking, is a relatively „uniform and slightly undulating“ social sea of approximately equal human beings in terms of their political rights and economic status. Unlike the classic transition between feudal and bourgeois society, in Bulgaria privileges must be created from the beginning. It starts from a political „zero“ in order to subsequently reach a level which, for the conditions of our country, becomes a serious challenge both for the possibilities of the budget and for the moral values embedded in the democratic worldview of the citizens.

Structurally, the third volume of the work is divided into three main chapters. Each subject has a strictly defined research period. The first, of course, is related to the emergence and development of privileges in the conditions of bourgeois society in our country, from the Liberation to 1946. In order to outline the main initiators, the main trends and the specific results in this area of Bulgarian „pseudo-political creativity“, the author has picked three spheres of public life, where the topic has the most active presence, and the achievements are the most tangible. The first sphere is related to the privileges and efforts made by the newly created monarchical institute in the Third Bulgarian State for their protection and expansion. Professor Georgi Manolov has

clearly clarified the truth that even the Tarnovo Constitution guarantees the status of the prince, which has provided him with both opportunities and the need for both the use and growth of the privileges. The Bulgarian monarch alone holds the aristocratic title „Highness“ (since 1908 „Majesty“); only he has a „civil list“ provided to him by the state budget. With Bulgaria's progress, it shows a tendency towards constant and permanent growth. Huge funds have been spent on the construction of the representative residence of the head of state in the capital – Sofia, as well as on the maintenance of that large staff, without which no palace of a ruler in the world can function. Residences are being built (again with state money) both by the Black Sea and on the banks of the Danube River, and in some of the most beautiful corners of the Bulgarian mountains. As a result of all this, by the beginning of the XX century, the monarch in Bulgaria became the largest and most versatile consumer of privileges in the entire country.

It was Alexander Battenberg who realized the benefits, while Prince Ferdinand of Coburg Gotthard managed to impose the introduction of the awarding of medals and distinctions in the country. This procedure quickly established itself as a new (perhaps one of the most important) tool for creating a palace camarilla of privileged representatives of the political elite. Therefore the possession of a medals and distinctions presented by the monarch began to be valued not only as an advantage, but also as „excellence“. Hardly, and as proof of the „higher social status“ of the one who holds the distinction compared to those who have not had the honor of receiving it. This maxim is proven by the fact that medal and distinction bearers are necessarily invited to the celebrations in the palace on the occasion of the person's personal holidays (birthdays, visits of relatives of the prince from Europe, etc.), as well as to the main state celebrations. The palace ceremonial in such cases foresees a sumptuous reception by the ruler, a richly arranged table with dishes and drinks for the invited, and in the course of conversations with the monarch, gossip is inevitably exchanged, a new promotion or honor is promised. Thus, with the help of the privileges, the palace managed to create a circle of loyal politicians who became obedient executors of the ruler's will. Therefore, if at the end of the XIX century, Bulgaria was headed by statesmen of the rank of Petko Karavelov, Stefan Stambolov and Konstantin Stoilov, who would do honor

to any civilized country, from the beginning of the XX century onwards, governments consisting of obedient courtiers. It was they who failed to stop Ferdinand in 1913 and 1915, from taking the fateful steps at that time in the field of foreign policy, the Bulgarian people experienced two irreparable national catastrophes.

The second track on which Professor Manolov traced the emergence and growth of privileges in the now free Bulgarian society is the work of the parliament, the government and the state administration. To trace the historical events in this direction, the author has collected, systematized and evaluated a huge amount of facts. It is clear from it that if in the 90s of the XIX century the army of clerics and agents in Bulgaria numbered 20,743 people, and about BGN 32,099,515 was spent on its maintenance, then just one decade later – by 1904, there are already 28,940 people in this privileged group, for whose support 40,777,582 BGN are already allocated annually from the state budget. The Bulgarian people's representatives, of course, also have per diem, accommodation and travel money; in the parliamentary canteen, the food is high-quality, cheap and plentiful, and from one point on, „outsiders“ are not allowed there, so as not to comment on what is happening inside; business trips abroad are often used because they are associated with high travel allowances; prime ministers withdraw money uncontrollably from banks; millions in foreign currency and BGN are stored even in the villas; ministers enjoy the highest salaries in the country, and after the end of their active political career, many of them also receive unreasonably high pensions compared to the general standard of consumption among Bulgarian society.

A very interesting section in the presentation of the first chapter is also the problem related to the creation of the first truly „privileged class“ in post-liberation Bulgaria. In this case, we are talking about the outcomes of the Law passed in 1880 for the improvement of the situation of poor insurgents and militiamen. With this normative act, Bulgarians who took an active part in the national liberation movement during the Bulgarian Revival were given large pieces of rich land for cultivation and were granted monthly pensions. Objectively, this measure was justified from the point of view of the need for this category of deserving citizens to the motherland to support themselves materially

due to their advancing age, deterioration of their health and increased costs for supporting families.

Over the years, however, the category of „activists“ has steadily grown. So from 438 people at the beginning of the 80s of the XIX century, by 1900 they grew to 1600 people. A trend proving the existence of unfounded claims for receiving the distinction, the arguments for which were deliberately created far after the announcement of the actual „activists“ who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of the motherland. The most important thing in this case, however, is the political approach in determining the amount of support aid. Very often, truly deserving activists for national liberation either receive small monetary rewards or are sanctioned. Christo Botev's wife, Veneta, for example, receives only BGN 30 monthly pension; the brother of V. Levki – Petar, died young as a pauper; for political reasons, the pensions of P. Hitov and F. Totyu were reduced from BGN 200 to BGN 100, etc. At the same time, the wife of the dethroned Prince Alexander Battenberg – Johanna Leuzinger, is endowed with a pension of 40 thousand francs annuity! Regardless of the fact that the former first Bulgarian prince married her long after he was removed from the Bulgarian throne.

Thus, in Bulgaria, the foundations of a tradition that lasted more than a century were laid: to give privileges to certain citizens for „political merits“. They are constitutionally justified and legally detailed as a specific practice. However, an important feature of the Bulgarian case is the fact that, despite the appearance of unfavorable consequences of the imposition of these privileges, Bulgarian practice still does not perceive and exploit the qualification restrictions in order to regulate the participation of citizens in the electoral procedures. Regardless of everything, the Bulgarian case also proves that privileges (although relatively more limited compared to what is seen in Europe) also give rise to corrupt practices and stimulate the construction of a clientelistic political model. Its apogee was the imposition of the „personal regimes“ of the kings Ferdinand and Boris III. With them, the obedient political leadership allowed the Bulgarian people to experience almost three national catastrophes. In this sense, I see the first fundamental conclusion of Professor Georgi Manolov's research, related to the consequences of privileges in the bourgeois society of post-liberation Bulgaria: thanks to them, both the state and the nation have been brought to severe

crises, such as are observed in almost all of the studied civilizations, „based on the defects of political privilege“.

The second chapter of the third volume leads us to the biggest paradox in the recent history of the Bulgarian people. And as it is logical to assume in the context of what has been said so far, it is related to the privileges of the second half of the XX century!?! Why? Because if on the Italian peninsula the culmination of the greatest arbitrariness of the rulers was 2000 years ago (when the emperors were at the head of the state), and in France it was three centuries ago – during the reign of the Sun King – Louis XIV, in Bulgaria the apogee of the power „privileged scandal“ was achieved during the period of „socialist development“ of the nation and the state. Then the „nomenclature privileges“ that were given to the top functionaries of the ruling monopoly party in power – BCP (Bulgarian Communist Party) – were introduced and marked their culmination. Although after the coup on September 9, 1944, the beginning of the national effort to build a „free“ society „of equal people“ was formally announced!?! The main promise of the propaganda is that man will be freed from exploitation and misery and all men will enjoy equally the achievements of civilization. A political reality that does not see the light of day in our motherland.

The reasons for the appearance of the fundamental defect of any power – its transformation into a slave of privileges, literally from the first steps taken by the new ruling coalition dominated by the communists, are not accidental. First, the existing practice in the state until September 9, 1944 in relation to the privileges had already given a certain „experience“ with the benefits of this domestic reality and in terms of the future behavior of the new leaders. Secondly, the leader of the BCP – Georgi Dimitrov, returns from the Soviet Union. He lived there for nearly a quarter of a century and had the opportunity to personally not only get acquainted with the benefits of the existence of privileges in the socialist political system, but also to use them himself as a senior nomenclature cadre of the CPSU in his capacity as General Secretary of the Comintern. (About 2,000 Bulgarian political emigrants who returned from the Soviet Union also have gained „experience“ in this direction.) The third reason is rooted in the limited social base of the Communist Party at the beginning of its active involvement in power. Data on the

numerical composition of the BLP(c) (Bulgarian Labor Party (c – communist)) after the coup of September 9, 1944 are contradictory, but, in general, it is assumed that they did not exceed 9,000 people. This is a contingent of people who could not in any way hold and exercise power for nearly half a century without using the privileges. The way out of the situation was found in the policy of granting privileges to engage a significantly wider contingent of people to stabilize power. **That is why one of the first actions of the new government is related to the imposition of privileges for a certain group of people, so as to expand the social base of power created by the FF (Fatherland Front) under the auspices of the BLP(c).** And literally one month after the seizure of power in Sofia (on October 12, 1944), when the Bulgarian soldier was preparing for his sacrificial participation in the final phase of the Second World War, in order to avoid the heavy sanctions of the future victors, in Sofia, an Ordinance-law was passed to support the victims in the fight against fascism and capitalism. Moreover, within only half a year – until May 1945, it was supplemented and improved four times!?! In this way, privileges are also provided for relatives of anti-fascists „up to the third degree of kinship“! This happens at a time when more than 33 thousand Bulgarians died on the fronts of Europe to save Bulgaria from a third national catastrophe! And the nation carries all the burdens of the post-war political and economic crisis on its back.

Professor Georgi Manolov has made great efforts to shed light on this markedly shady side of FF politics. Because subsequently it became a permanent topic of the new Bulgarian legislation, while political and historical science did not pay the necessary attention to it until recently. As a result of the efforts made by the author, today we have the complete picture of the discussed here unprecedented nonsense regarding the principles of freedom, equality and people's rights in Bulgarian conditions. Because in the following decades, the „legislation“ related to the continuous refinement of the privileges of those in power has been constantly expanding. So it gradually covered the nomenclature of the BCP from all levels, without its representatives taking an active part in the resistance against the right-wing totalitarian regime that ruled until the middle of 1944.

The foreword of the present work will significantly reduce the pleasure of reading the author's text if everything related to the privileges in Bulgaria during the socialist era is told at the very beginning. Even though this is not our task, it is something that the reader must see for himself in the texts of this valuable three-volume work. Its purpose is to enable those who to this day think of the time after September 9, 1944 as being associated with the „better years“ in which the nation lived, to see the truth as it really was. The picture related to privileges reveals in fact one of the „darkest sides“ of that time. It is precisely this problematic that plays a decisive role in undermining the foundations of one-party political power and its replacement after 1989. Therefore, we will quite deliberately avoid detailing our exposition, so as not to deprive the reader of the pleasure of his/her personal encounter with the real ugly dimensions of the truth, related to those memorable years.

And yet, at least to provoke the initial interest of anyone who will touch the pages of the present work, we will mark a tiny part of that wealth of truths with which the reader is about to meet: in just 20 years – from 1970 to 1989, 749 million BGN were spent from the state budget to pay „people's pensions“ to activists against fascism and capitalism. Although these people also receive pensions acquired through labor insurance (unfortunately, the data for the previous quarter of a century is missing as of now!?). For the same period, BGN 17,804,850 was distributed from the coffers of the notorious UBO (Security and Bodyguard Service) for „representational expenses“ to the „top leaders“; From 1963 to 1989 alone, Todor Zhivkov received BGN 345,100 for food alone, apart from his other income, received as salary, royalties for his published „works“ and representative money; the daughter of the top leader – Lyudmila Zhivkova, shopped for about „250 – 300 thousand BGN per year from an „open account“; Zhivkov's son – Vladimir, „per year made bills of BGN 100,000 just for treats“ – sums that are also covered by UBO funds; for the use of villas, the supreme rulers of the state pay only BGN 12 monthly rent; Ognyan Doinov's villa in Dragalevtsi, built by a state-owned company (and with state funds), costs BGN 345,233, and the „proud owner“ paid for it only BGN 70,000 from his modest savings; an additional BGN 49,582,380 was invested in the annexes and the improvements to the ambience and surroundings in the

„Euxinograd“ palace to provide more luxury to the top representatives of the nomenclature vacationing there during the summer months; in the Mazalat hunting farm near Sevlievo, Carpathian bears are bred for to be hunted by Todor Zhivkov and his entourage, which are fed by the reserve guards with bread, rice, sugar, marmalade and other products favorable to the growth of the game; in the government restaurant of the „Rila“ hotel in Sofia, the nomenclature eats and drinks at a ridiculously low cost; the food produced there is being delivered to homes to be used by families as well; the children of the people's leaders are admitted to higher education institutions „according to a list“ personally signed by the Minister of Education – in reality without a competition, if they did not pass the entrance exam; cars, security, servants, doctors and what not are available.

This is only a tiny sample of that picture which the reader of the present work is about to encounter. In its totality, it is not only unsightly – it is shockingly outrageous, because all this unprecedented domestic debauchery is also realized in Bulgaria. In the situation that the majority of the people live with about 130 to 171 BGN monthly income, one has to go through great efforts in order to obtain a tiny apartment (which is paid for by the citizens down to a penny), and for a car – most often a „Moskvich“ and less so „Zhiguli“, waiting in line for no less than 15 – 20 years! On this basis, Professor Georgi Manolov has drawn a series of logical conclusions. With full reason, he states that the one-party political system in Bulgaria created in the second half of the XX century the most strongly developed scheme for applying privileges to people in the sphere of power. And it is no accident that a nomenclature oligarchy of communists was artificially created in the state, which became the core of the new ruling „political class“. The great paradox of this reality lies in the fact that if similar privileges existed in class-antagonistic societies in ancient times and in the Middle Ages, then in Bulgaria this happens in the presence of „people's power“ that guides the construction of a „socialist classless society“! So, the socialist nomenclature privileges are rightly assessed by Professor Manolov as a gross encroachment and ignoring of political and socio-economic equality in the state. Privileges in Bulgaria during the era of our socialism, more or less, are a form of legalized corruption and a deeply immoral act of power, applied for nearly half a century. While the most

disgusting side of the picture here is that the privileges are very often enhanced and enriched not by publicly accepted legislation, but by by-laws, decrees and decisions of the government. Their text, as a rule, is classified from the moment of its appearance. So the transformation of the nomenclature into a parasitic-wasteful social group is a natural result of the overall development of the socialist political system in Bulgaria. There are the roots of one of the most important reasons that contributed in no small measure to the undermining of the foundations of this society and its collapse at the end of the 1980s.

In the natural logic of the sequential exposition, the last chapter of the present monographic study is devoted to the „democratic privileges of the political elite“ from 1989 to the present day. Without being a prophet, I will say that even upon touching the text, the leading impression that the reader will get there can be summed up with the short phrase „nothing new“! Observing both the national tradition and what is considered „just and necessary“ in the modern democratic political systems around the world (mentioned above), even with the development of the new Constitution of Bulgaria from 1991, the foundation was laid down but not for the cancellation or at least for the serious limitation, on the contrary – for another „rollover“ in the area of native privileges. So even today they continue to fight in the sphere of the supreme power completely legally, as its structural subdivisions and in the new century they enjoy an abundance of benefits. For their multiplication, the necessary new by-laws are created, which detail the matter down to specific benefits, provided with priority solely to the people's leaders.

In the field of legislative power, this role is fulfilled by the Rules for the Organization and Activities of the National Assembly. It is clear from it that the people's representative in the democratic Bulgarian parliament receives a basic monthly remuneration equal to three average monthly salaries of those employed under an employment contract according to the data of the national statistics; for work in the committees of a deputy, a 5 percent supplement to the remuneration is applied; in addition, 1 percent is paid in addition for each year of service until entering the parliament; 10 percent are also given for the possession of „Doctor“ degree and 15 percent of the salary – for „Doctor of Sciences“ (PhD); the state obligatorily insures every elected official;

money is needed for companions and assistants of the people's representative; annually 40 plane tickets are also used free of charge by lawmakers; MPs are entitled to accommodation and daily allowances when visiting their elected representatives by district; in Sofia, non-Sofia MPs are provided with free accommodation and furnished work space; additional „representational money“ is paid to the Speaker of the National Assembly and his deputies, to the heads of parliamentary groups and to the chairmen of parliamentary committees; and in addition to all this, vacations during the summer months are also available at extremely low prices in „Evksinograd“, on „Sunny Beach“, on the base in Velingrad, etc., etc. As a result of the existing legally regulated system for the use of privileges by Bulgarian lawmakers, the basic monthly remuneration of the people's representatives in the XLVII National Assembly amounts to BGN 5,616. But if the supplements that were mentioned are taken into account, then the salary of a Bulgarian MP today amounts to about BGN 10,000!? Given that the minimum pension in the state is only BGN 370 per month, and the maximum is about BGN 1,500! With the existence of realized work experience of the citizens for the benefit of the society for 40 – 45 years!?

For everything else – the low prices at which the people's representatives vacation in the government villas in the most beautiful corners of the homeland; for the ridiculous pennies they pay for meatballs and drinks at the office canteen; for the preferential medical care and for the ill-spent money in connection with the purchase of gifts and flowers; for the use of the 100 cars of the National Assembly, which are available to the deputies – we will not dwell on the details. This is once again, so as not to deprive the readers of the great pleasure of „discovering“ for themselves the real dimensions of the truth, which is related to our modern law-makers „democrats“! This truth, has been revealed in detail, in great detail, with the help of specific figures discovered by Professor Manolov – however, collected after quite a lot of effort on his part. Certainly a part of them, according to ancient tradition, are either not in the public domain, or are very difficult to find. The author of the present monograph has managed to get hold of them in order to open the eyes of his contemporaries to what the democratic legislature has also done in its favor. Despite the contradiction that exists between today's reality in which the ordinary citizen lives and what is observed

in the field of privileges, and despite the loud denial of privileges from the era of „bad socialism“ by the most active promoters of the advantages associated with the „transition to democracy“!

My prediction that the reader of the present monograph will further enrich his knowledge about the conditions under which the representatives of the other authorities – the executive, the judiciary and the partocracy – live is definite. It is so, because on the pages where this issue is analyzed, Professor Georgi Manolov has made enormous efforts to bring us face to face with the real truth. Under the conditions of the new democratic state structure, 142,613 Bulgarian citizens work in the structures of the central and local administration. Naturally, they are also very well provided for in material terms: monthly salaries vary from BGN 1,955 for a chief specialist to BGN 5,616 for a director of a directorate; the president's salary amounts to BGN 11,232, the prime minister's – to BGN 8,704, and that of the ordinary minister – BGN 7,300; the state administration uses over 3,000 official cars, served by 100 drivers; the people in the executive and judicial branches, as well as our legislators, vacation in luxury villas at low prices; they are allowed to buy fuel from special gas stations – again at lower prices; the privileges of the judiciary and the presidential institution are also detailed. However, what will make perhaps the strongest impression in this part of the work are the privileges enjoyed by the party elite – the leaders of the main political parties and their inner circle. However, we will deliberately keep this information under wraps in the preface of the monograph, so as not to reduce the interest with which the readers will touch this side of modern privileges in Bulgarian political life. We will only note that especially in this area, Professor Manolov has established and substantiated the presence of five „main misconceptions“, which are in blatant contradiction with the elementary procedures in a truly democratic political process.

The last pages of the work are most unexpectedly devoted to the topic of „the future of privilege“. If it is taken into account that the previous history of the world political process proves the impossibility of power without privileges, then in this part of the work we meet a really interesting approach of the author – to try to offer an alternative political reality „without privileges“!? In the style of his creative provocation, Professor Georgi Manolov has made serious efforts to prove to his

readers that in this area of politics and power, things should not be perceived as completely „without perspective“. In order to inaugurate a new era of power without (or at least with substantial limitation of) privilege, he believes that it is necessary to first rethink the theory of power as a value. In this case, the author makes a suggestion that the politicians are only compensated for what their real contribution is towards the reasonable solution of public problems, in contrast to „as it is now, by applying an equalizing approach“ – i.e. equal compensation for all, regardless of contributions; according to the author, the expansion of the role of direct democracy and public control over power can contribute a lot; it will be useful to create specialized control bodies, which, based on a thorough analysis, will prove which of the current privileges should be preserved and which can and should be removed for good; Referendums can contribute quite a bit, so that through them the citizens of Bulgaria can express their opinion on the amount and type of government privileges; the establishment of a reasonable basic privileged minimum, and especially the abolition of party privileges, is also a field from which benefits to society may arise.

The author's last statement is of particular importance, and it must be emphasized very strongly. Because one of the most important privileges of the parties, related to the state subsidy (according to the number of votes cast for the party during elections), led to the big crisis in the multi-party political system in our country. Materially provided by the state through the subsidy, party leaders and their entourage operate freely in the political space, without being vitally dependent on the membership fees of their sympathizers and followers. As a result, the efforts of the party leaders to win over the citizens also decrease, and hence the role of the membership to maintain the parties in an active working condition becomes meaningless. A reality that only increases the dependence of political forces on their state-guaranteed privileges. And a democratic society that does not have a well-structured and actively functioning multi-party political system is doomed to vegetation and degeneration of the democratic political process.

* * *

Assessed as a whole, the present monograph aims to fill a huge gap in the knowledge of the Bulgarian reader, related to the history,

features and scale of privileges in the world political process in general and their specific manifestations in the Bulgarian case. As of today, we now have a comprehensive „**History and Theory of Political Pseudo-Culture**“ of humanity! In its millennia of evolution, privileged ersatz creativity has generated far more negatives than benefits for the people. That is, regardless of the nature of the political system in which the specific privileges were manifested. **In our opinion, this is the main and most important scientific result achieved by the author. In reality, Professor Georgi Manolov has discovered and explained the truth related to a fundamental political regularity, which so far has somehow escaped our permanent attention.** As briefly as possible, its definition, in our opinion, can be formulated as follows: „**In a society where the empowered abuse the privileges, a lasting future for the people and the state cannot be guaranteed!**“. Discovering and explaining an important political law is always an event of lasting value in the development of science. Thus it is accordingly a fundamental contribution to its annals by the one who did it.

In order to substantiate his scientific statements leading to this general conclusion, Professor Georgi Manolov has collected immense empirical material from various documentary collections, summarized the achievements recorded in the works of 441 Bulgarian and foreign authors – political analysts and historians. He obtained specific data from 29 periodicals of the „State Gazette“ and some of the most authoritative daily newspapers at home and abroad. 13 information sources from the Internet have also provided him with considerable statistical information. Since the exposition is related to the processing of a huge volume of statistical data, the systematized tables created by the author are also very useful. Thanks to them, both the specific volumes of material benefits used by those in power, as well as their continuous evolution, become visible. In addition, the author himself has created a series of graphics, which he has turned into convincing creative tools for delineating the contours of truth, especially in revealing the internal structure and hierarchy of power privileges.

The style of the author's text is thoroughly analytical, the arguments are logically connected to the course of the presentation, and the conclusions are presented as a natural consequence of the preceding specifics in the issue. Professor Manolov, however, knows how to

„play with words“ very masterfully. A technique that is a rare exception in strictly scientific texts. However, he applies it aptly most often when he has to illustrate the ridiculous extent of certain privileges, and especially when delineating their contradiction with the principles of democracy and equality among people. Derived from the fact that the slight irony in the expression there, as well as the unequivocally provocative questions, also give artistry to the phrase, which enhances the emotional charge of the perceived scientific information. So, in addition to the knowledge, the presented three-volume monograph is also an extremely light, even to some extent, an entertaining read. A quality that is also extremely rare for strictly scientific works in the field of political theory, such as the present study. And all these features of the author's text are an additional reason for the present monograph to be met with interest by a wide range of specialists. Including lay readers who are interested in the secrets related to the power and survival of states. Thus here they will be able to touch most directly one of the most important „shady sides of politics“ thanks to the scientific information collected by the author. Professor Georgi Manolov has put it on display with all the foulness of what interests politicians, and especially those who have the power. Because according to the logic of the „law of oligarchy“, after winning the trust of the people, they always and immediately begin to steal benefits from the budget. At the expense, of course, of the destitution and non-material poverty of the masses of their fellow citizens. Hopefully, the author's optimistic forecast, given at the end, about the possibility of creating a tolerable in its dimensions privileged political reality in the future will become a reality. If not for us, modern parents, then at least for our children. Such is the original political philosophy embedded in the idea of democracy, developed in ancient times – that it is power by the people and for the people, equally useful for all citizens in the state.

*Plovdiv
July 6th, 2022*

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INTRODUCTION

In the history of social development there are various phenomena that can be attributed to one or more radically opposed epochs. Sooner or later, even the most enduring social phenomena peacefully or violently „descend“ from the historical scene due to revolutions, coups, elections, etc. However, there is one interesting phenomenon that, since the existence of power and politics, has never „left“ the political arena, proudly bearing the name „privileges of the state (and elites)“. This phenomenon seems to possess a magnetic power, since, despite profound historical vicissitudes, it successfully passes from one historical epoch to another, incarnating itself in each new political regime, regardless of its ideological colouring. Here we are faced with a social paradox, insofar as a significant number of people permanently „anathematize“ the privileges of politicians despite their legitimization in public life (of contemporary societies), on the one hand. On the other, against all this, both vivid public protests and in-depth scholarly research on privilege are absent. Moreover, in all historical eras, political privileges of power have always provoked unceasing polemics, controversies and discussions. This is because, whether legitimate or illegitimate, privileges constantly create some inequalities among people, as they constitute an important part of the advantages of power. These inequalities have different social dimensions, but are usually perceived by the public either as something „beyond legal“ justification or as some ultimate injustice. Moreover, the norms of political representation and those of law are conflated, and negative social attitudes towards governing elites and privilege are formed among citizens. However, this is only the first aspect of the issue, while the other and, in our view, more significant aspect is related to the fact that the phenomenon of political privilege has still received little or no scholarly attention or has hardly been studied from a theoretical perspective. And it is straightforward to say that there is not a single specialised fundamental study of the privileges of power and politicians in the literature on

these issues. In this sense, we will point out in passing that while there have been a number of monographs and works written on the various types of citizens' rights (political, economic, social, etc.), they are extremely bibliographically rare with regard to the many types of political privilege. For example, among the few scattered and fragmentary publications on privilege in this country, there are only two monographs (by K. Lalov and V. Veleva and by G. Manolov), four studies (by Iva Pushkarova, P. Vodenicharov and two by P. Boyadzhieva)¹ and about a dozen scholarly articles, which in most cases focus on the privileges of the Bulgarian nomenklatura and which are very valuable but extremely deficient from a theoretical point of view. Such a state of affairs is quite understandable, since the overwhelming majority of expert researchers almost always organically associate power with privilege and therefore consider political privilege to be an immanent and natural attribute of the power phenomenon. Moreover, in social practice the term „privilege“ has acquired a legitimate and civic sense of some advantage and exclusive right of a particular subject (person, persona, group, stratum) to the possession of certain material assets and objects, as well as to the use of various spiritual goods and values provided by the state. Yet there are hardly any generally accepted conceptions of the nature of privilege in society (there are hardly any, at least in Bulgaria), which is why a number of primitive, unsubstantiated and unscientific views about it continue to dominate both political theory and public consciousness. These views also dominate for another important reason, which stems from the ignorance of the concepts of „power“ and „politics“, insofar as in everyday life they are too often confused without being given any reasoned scientific explanation. In this context, politics is such an activity that creates all the necessary social conditions and preconditions for the existence of privileges, while power is that powerful instrument (constitutions, institutions, laws) through which privileges materialize, i.e. are actually used and applied in political life by the various subjects. Moreover, privileges are usually presented as an organic part of the institutions of power, whereby they invariably belong to it, but even in this capacity they still remain political insofar as they express one's interests (without severing their connection to

¹ These works will be cited later in our study, so we list only their authors here.

power). And although the thesis of privilege as an attribute of power has literally become a dogma (this point is studied in the work), we still consider them in relation to the axiom that politics is born in the process of the creation of public power. That is, that in both power and politics as public activity, privilege always finds its alluring place, and so it is proper to interpret it together (with power and politics). In fact, we are talking about a centuries-old socio-political competition and confrontation between the fundamental notions of „privilege“ and „equality“, both in science and in life, which inevitably accompany the whole of human and political history, confronting each other, including to this day, in our dynamic modernity. It is from such theoretical positions that we have examined the phenomenon of privilege, since it would hardly be possible to analyze its manifestations as objectively as possible in power alone or in politics alone, in isolation, if we did not address the problem of equality. In this paper, therefore, we use the two key concepts of „power privilege“ and „political privilege“ as synonyms, without placing any equivalence between them (despite their apparent similarity and proximity).

In the present study we have been strictly guided by an important theoretical-historical line of development that „permeates“ the millennia-long course of historical processes from the deepest Antiquity. This lineage permeates the deep-rooted relationship between three fundamental concepts – „politics“, „power“ and „privilege“. On this basis the work is structured in three separate volumes, the first consisting of 2 chapters, the second of 5 and the third of 3. These examine in detail both the theoretical roots of privilege (in the first volume) and its genesis and evolution throughout political history over 50 centuries (30 BC and 20 AD) through the prism of power and politics (in the second volume). Alongside this, a special place in the study is devoted to the „implementation“ of different types of privilege in Bulgaria and its political life from the Liberation to the present day (in the third volume).

It is an absolute truth in science that before one can begin to investigate a problem, the fundamental concepts must first be clarified. This is an unwritten law in theory which we follow, and we have even extended its perimeter. Therefore, the focus of our research has

been on basic categories and concepts such as „political power“, „political class“ and „political elite (and oligarchy)“, depending on which (and on which) we have analysed the particular dialectic between power and privilege.

The evolution and manifestations of the concept of „political privilege“ in its historical aspect are subjected to an in-depth theoretical analysis, while the author’s own definition of it is derived and a classification scheme of privilege in general is developed in detail. Or, synthesized, we define privileges as exclusive rights and advantages of a small group of people (oligarchy, overlordship, stratum) in relation to other groups of people (social groups, communities, classes) deprived of such rights and advantages due to its political power in the state. These rights and advantages are enforced by custom or law in class and democratic societies because privilege separates a group of people from the social whole, demarcating them into a small and extremely closed community called the „political elite“.

The issue of universal suffrage as both an equality and a privilege is also polemically addressed. In general, the question of equality and privilege in politics is the red thread around which much of the views and work on this issue in this study are intertwined (and divided).

Unlike law, where privileges are shaped and motivated by the established legal and statutory order to which all legal subjects, including the state (through its institutions), are committed, this is not at all the case with political privileges, despite the established legal regulation in most democratic states. In this case, the deepest source (generator, driver, motivator) of different kinds of privilege is political power itself, exercised (legitimately or illegitimately) by various personal or collective subjects. For in the political sphere, privileges are always fed from the „reservoir of power“, regardless of the nature of the political regime (democratic, totalitarian, authoritarian). Even, according to some authors, political privileges are too often motivated by the sole will of dictators as a kind of power, without the latter necessarily considering the established privileged rights that it, or the power itself, grants them. That is, power and power resources in general, and sole power (and prerogatives) in particular, have always been the main driver of political privilege in the state. Moreover, it, power, is a veritable

„opium“ for a host of politicians seeking various benefits and advantages, and a veritable „social breeding ground“ of these privileges in society. However, there is a third, essential factor, which also concerns political power, from which the so-called „social privileges“ (of cultural figures, artists, eminent scientists, military commanders, meritorious soldiers, etc.) are regulated. These privileges are granted for services to the state and for great contributions to the development of art, science, culture, education, etc., which, although they derive from power and are unconditionally political in nature, cannot be fully attributed to it because they are indirect (and secondary), since they do not bring direct benefits from holding senior state positions. In this case, we are not concerned with their interpretation, insofar as these types of privileges are not directly related to the inevitable power-political prerogatives and selfish appetites of various subjects for power.

The aim of this study is to reveal in a more analytical, meaningful and comprehensive way the nature and the main distinctive features of privileges in politics in general and on this basis to clarify the right of politicians to enjoy multiple power privileges in particular. Their examination is not confined to the Procrustean bed of one historical epoch or another, but draws on their overall development as a congenital genesis from the patrimonial privileges in the earliest Antiquity (XXX century BC), through the medieval benefits, to the modern XXI century AD with its contemporary privileges. Moreover, among the „rosary of principles“ used in the work, one is basic: the legitimacy or illegitimacy of privilege.

Along with this, a whole series of fundamental questions arose in the course of the research, such as: when privilege emerged; what is the relationship between power and privilege; is power possible without privilege; what is people’s attitude towards privilege; why do political elites zealously defend privilege; can there be political regimes without the privileges of power; and so on and so forth. Of course, we have attempted to provide a reasoned answer to these questions through the lens of particular historical eras and the political systems (and regimes) established within them.

Based on the expressed notion of privilege (and the questions raised), we have analyzed its distant roots and primary forms since the earliest times through the study of various historical documents,

sources and monographs on antiquity. For the problem of privilege in general, and political privilege in particular, is almost impossible to explain and explore in depth without tracing its genesis, conceived in the womb of antiquity. And one more important thing: this problem dates back to the earliest primordial period of human civilization, when there were almost no state structures and institutions. This makes it necessary to consider privilege in a deep historical context, the manifestations of which are to be sought as far back as the Old World, in the functioning of tribal societies, several thousand years ago. In this sense, the pre-classical generic manifestations of privilege in Mesopotamia, Sumer and Akkad, Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, Persia, China and India, as well as the much more distinct development of this phenomenon (privilege) in classical antiquity in Athens and Rome, have been extensively analysed. Corresponding comparisons are also made between privileges in different states, with particular attention to the role of power (kings, emperors, etc.) in the process of imposing various benefits and advantages on elites.

From a strictly historical point of view, privileges received a strong impetus in their development in the Middle Ages (V – XVII centuries), since their existence in feudal Europe continued until the very end of absolutist regimes. The nature and extent of political privilege in the Byzantine and Ottoman empires, in Spain, England, Italy, etc., are here subjected to extensive analysis, but the emphasis falls on the overall state of feudal privilege in absolutist France (genesis, nature, development, forms). These feudal privileges in French society are a vivid manifestation of the dictatorship of Louis XIV, and although some of them are regulated by the state, they remain among the most widespread in the whole social organism. Their indiscriminate application violates all legal norms, since the Sun King personally controls the sale of posts (within the state), the lavish daily meals (at state expense), the hunting and fishing of the royal retinues (at the expense of the budget), the business of the table oligarchies (with tax remissions from the state), and so on. Appropriate conclusions are drawn as to the reasons which led to such a massive deployment of these privileges, to the point that a special decree was issued to abolish them alongside the victory of the Great French Revolution. In fact,

privileges in feudal France were a kind of role model in Europe, because they were used in all spheres of society, which was all too much to the liking of all the power-mongers of the time.

Following the purpose and logical course of the study, we have given due attention to the evolution of privilege in Europe after the collapse of the absolutist monarchies. We are concerned with the state and scope of privilege in the XIX and early XX centuries, when, after its brief „respite“, a recent process of revival was evident in most European countries. This is reflected in the imposition of so-called „censorial privileges“ (property and education) which, hiding behind universal suffrage, practically legitimised a new kind of privilege in the emerging democratic societies. It has been argued that the establishment of a legal electoral franchise is nothing but a modified form of political privilege that effectively excludes millions of people from the democratic process in favour of emerging political and business oligarchies. And as a counterpoint to the censorship electoral system, the experience of the Parisian Communards, who as early as 1871, albeit briefly, abolished political privilege altogether, has been interpreted in synthesis.

An important theoretical focus of the study is totalitarian political privilege in the XX century in the bastions of left and right totalitarianism – the former communist USSR and National Socialist Germany. The origins, nature and scope of privilege in one-party states are traced in detail. In this case, based on a comprehensive comparative analysis, the current benefits and advantages (privileges) for the new political classes in the two totalitarian societies are highlighted. It is explicitly stressed that these types of privileges are entirely the work of totalitarian dictators, are defined absolutely arbitrarily, apply to a narrow circle of party oligarchies (and their satellite layers), and run counter to any state legitimacy (although some are regulated for camouflage). Moreover, totalitarian privileges in the former USSR and Nazi Germany literally permeate all pores of social systems and in many ways exceed in scope the privileges in feudal states. In this sense, they are rightly defined as neo-feudal political privileges that „crept“ „illegally“ into the civilized XX century.

Against the backdrop of totalitarian privileges, but in a much broader legal and political palette, the current privileges in some highly

developed countries in the second half of the last century are punctually examined. Their „illumination“ is refracted through the prism of contemporary political democracy as a system of state governance. Substantial attention is paid to the process of regulating privilege in politics in democratic states through special constitutional clauses and dedicated laws (e.g. in the US, UK, France, Italy, Japan, Portugal, etc.). Some pretentious theses about the role of political oligarchies in the modern world are also critically reconsidered, as is the acute need for a special set of privileges in the interests of their activities. This also applies to the workings of the institutions of the European Union, which, despite their sluggishness, notorious bureaucratism and political ineptitude, continue to receive (i.e. to determine for themselves) enormous privileges, most of them taken on an equitable basis. Several substantive measures of the overall regulation of privilege in democratic states are also highlighted, which rest on three main foundations – representative, non-representative and deliberative democracy. The question of public debate on the current political privileges imposed in the structures of the European Union and the need to reduce them in today's times of crisis is also raised.

Reflecting critically on the phenomenon of privilege in the political history of the world, particularly in the third volume, we inevitably came to its manifestations in our own reality from the Liberation (1878) to the present day. And immediately we should point out that the Bulgarian political elites very often assimilated the Western experience, because the first privileges of the prince (the tsar) were already regulated in the just adopted Tarnovo Constitution (1879). These privileges quickly shrunk a „nest“ in the institutional ramifications of the new political system and constantly reproduced various benefits and advantages for the political class in the Western model (high salaries, special service, lavish rendezvous in sumptuous state residences, etc.). A number of examples, facts and figures are cited about the fabulous privileged life of the political nomenklatura of the time, from which more than one and two royal lackeys and noblemen around the lavish state table „benefited“ for decades.

But these royal benefits, however tempting, can hardly be compared with the nomenklatura „socialist“ privileges, legitimately pushed through in 1945 by the leader and teacher of the Bulgarian

people G. Dimitrov (on the Soviet model). Subsequently, they (the privileges) literally permeated the most secluded pores of public life (for the rank-and-file members of the Communist Party), and, of course, the lion's share of these fabulous benefits went to the personages of the top nomenklatura (the members of the Politburo and the secretaries of the Communist Party Central Committee). With very few exceptions, this is absolutely illegal, since it is only by decisions of the Politburo that millions of state funds are granted on the basis of these decisions: additional salaries, food for the nomenklatura families, payment of part of the salary in foreign currency, purchase of Western cars, free medical treatment abroad, and so on and so forth. Moreover, throughout the „socialist“ period (1944 – 1989), the nomenklatura spread out in about 100 residences, villas and holiday homes, used off-budget accounts without being accounted for, spent leva and dollars indiscriminately (and unaccountably) on personal needs, etc. And, of course, a parasitic nomenklatura stratum called „active fighters against fascism and capitalism“ is tolerated, who until the collapse of the totalitarian regime never ceased to enjoy the special privileges generously granted to them (including for their grandchildren). That is to say, in place of the rejected royal privileges in Bulgaria, new privileges were quickly created and imposed, the size, scale and scope of which are unparalleled in our contemporary history, because they greatly exceed all previous models (of privileges), and are therefore defined as neo-feudal „socialist“ privileges.

Not escaped from the panoramic view of our study are those privileges that are making their way in the conditions of the post-totalitarian transition and which (although borrowed from a Western model) have been a thorn in the side of the Bulgarian public for more than 30 years. Or, we are talking about today's privileges of the highest state institutions (parliament, government, courts), whose members, on the basis of various rules and regulations, legitimise unnaturally high ceilings of privileges in comparison with the low living standards of the people in the country. For example, the financial rules of the Rules of the National Assembly regulate deputies' salaries equal to a minimum of three average salaries, and a decree of the Council of Ministers defines the provisions of the so-called „additional material stimulation“ of civil servants with specific cash bonuses for work done, etc. Because

of all this, we have also outlined some measures to be taken by the relevant institutions to balance the current disparities in the privileges of the government and wage workers in Bulgaria.

In this context, drawing on the work's comprehensive analysis of the nature, character, and practical application of power privileges across historical eras, we have developed our own model of privilege limitation, which includes several nodal components: the need to create a new theory of power, the basis of which is an understanding of power as a universal human value; large-scale democratization of political institutions; the assertion of democratic power control (and self-control); the formation of modern notions of power as power without privileges; adoption of a law on political privileges – elaboration of a „basic privileged minimum“; updating the existing rules on privileges and adopting a single Code of Ethics for civil servants, etc. Through the implementation of this model, the aim should be to achieve a modern culture of privilege in government that is appropriate to both the high responsibilities (and positions) of politicians and the respective living standards (and quality of life) of people in different countries.

In writing the present work, we have used a variety of different scientific approaches (and methods), such as historical, political science, interdisciplinary, comparative, institutional, structural, functional, etc., through which we have tried to penetrate into the depths of this phenomenon, which is so popular and used by politicians (even today), which is undoubtedly the privileges of power. Naturally, we have also drawn the substantive conclusions and generalizations resulting from the analysis about the role and place of privileges in history; about their gradual and zigzag development; about the legitimacy and illegitimacy of benefits in power; about the privileged position of the wealthy oligarchic overlords, drawing generous benefits at the expense of the state treasury; about the unjustified and bloated size of all the privileges of the ruling elites, which like a raging river flood the political institutions, and so on.

Such a fundamental research as a theoretical direction in the social sciences in our country is inevitably connected with overcoming a number of difficulties and obstacles in the realization of its goals. From here most likely come some problems in the work that are not developed fully, others that are not analyzed more thoroughly, others that

are only posed and interpreted critically, others that are interpreted partially, while others that present a glaring provocation to the political elite (and class). This shows that this work also contains weaknesses and gaps, insofar as the subject matter is new, unexplored to its fullest and, naturally, more difficult to make sense of. We would therefore accept any well-meaning criticisms and recommendations aimed at improving the content of the work.

There is a lot of critique in this monograph – critique of scientists, of politicians, of policies, of statesmen, of institutions, of states and in general of everything that in one form or another offers us the preservation of the privileges of power, and in unnaturally large proportions. But this critique is above all ruthlessly objective, and sometimes devastating, but only in relation to „theoretical scientism“, i.e. only in relation to the absolutely unimaginative and infinitely worthless writings of various titled men claiming to be „scientific“. This, however, did not prevent us at all from making a lengthy „journey“ through the recesses of history in various parts of the world in order to reject with our own arguments the unsubstantiated views on the issues at hand.

Incidentally, so it was with our book, which ended up being a long „journey“ through the political history of power and privilege over the centuries, where we encountered all sorts of theses, postulates, theories and concepts, each more pretentious and dignified than the last. All of these are presented objectively in the work, whether we have criticized and rejected them or accepted and cited them. For such is the inexorable logic of an unprejudiced and dogmatically free scientific study of the political processes of world history.

The reflections presented so far should not confuse the dear reader, because the author of this book pursues another important goal: to „awaken“ the whole of public opinion from its deep lethargic sleep, so that people can more quickly and easily sort out the wheat from the chaff and the benefits from the harms of political privileges of power.

Hopefully we have intrigued the kind reader!

Chapter One

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

In all historical eras, the privileges of politicians have always provoked strong discontent, resentment and indignation. This is so because, whether legitimised or not, privilege legitimately causes inequality between people because it arises from the bowels of political power. This inequality has different societal dimensions, but very often it is understood by people as something perfectly natural that causes drastic injustice. All of this usually conflates the norms of political representation, law and morality, which inevitably reflects in the creation of negative social attitudes of citizens towards political elites and their privileges. What is more significant, however, is the fact that the phenomenon of political privilege (especially in Bulgaria) has not been given the theoretical attention it deserves, since very little research has been devoted to its nature. We will therefore draw on the rich possibilities of political science and its fundamental arsenal of diverse approaches and methods to uncover the nature of political privilege in historical and contemporary terms. In this context, we will motivate the priority use of the political science approach by several essential features of a theoretical and methodological nature: one is that, first of all, we will clarify some basic political science concepts directly related to the problem under study („political power“, „class“, etc.), which, however, continue to be used in a completely arbitrary and unargued way in political life; the other concerns the nature of the concepts of „equality“, „rights“ and „privileges“ and their interdependence in politics; and the last feature arises from the need to bring concrete clarity to the main bearer of privilege – the political oligarchy, and their interrelation, dependence and interconnectedness as the key object of the present study. Following this laconic methodological justification, we proceed to a synthesized exposition of our arguments and views in terms of the proposed problematic.

1. THE CONCEPTS OF „POLITICAL POWER“, „POLITICAL CLASS“, „POLITICAL ELITE“

The problem of political privilege cannot be fully and thoroughly understood if it is considered in isolation from such important concepts as „politics“, „power“, „political class“ and „political elite“. Plus, these concepts also constitute a kind of methodological reference point and a basic theoretical foundation for interpreting the historical development of privilege in politics (past and present).

As is well known, **the term „politics“** („τα πολιτικά“)¹ has Greek origins and its literal semantics means „that which concerns the state“. The term „politics“ became popular and spread under the influence of Aristotle’s Treatise on the State and Government entitled „Politics“. This authentic nature of politics is not accidental, both because it is linked to the emergence of ancient statehood, i.e. the Greek polis (city-states), and because it is in the polis that political activity as a social phenomenon is born. What is special about the Greek polis is that it brings **new social characteristics and signs**, such as a higher division of labour, changing economic relations, new social organisation, etc., through which the contours of statehood in general begin to emerge. In this sense, the link between the „birth pangs“ of politics as a phenomenon and the „nascent“ ancient statehood in the person of the polis appears as the first and most characteristic mark of the emergence of politics.

While the question of the emergence of politics has almost become axiomatic (politics is born in the process of the creation of public authority), there is still no unanimous opinion on its nature. This is evidenced by the theses of a number of eminent thinkers and scholars in the past and present who define politics as: participation in the affairs of state (Plato); the manifestation of power relations (Aristotle); the state’s own activity (J.-J. Rousseau); the exercise of class leadership by the state (K. Marx); the authoritative distribution of values (H. Lasswell, D. Easton), and so on and so forth.

¹ This and the other concepts mentioned above are discussed in detail in my monograph: **Manolov, G.** The political elite – theory, history, leadership. Plovdiv: Paisii Hilendarski, 2012, pp. 18-40; 151-183 (**Манолов, Г.** Политическият елит – теория, история, лидерство. Пловдив: Паисий Хилендарски, 2012, с. 18 – 40; 151 – 183), which we will use from now on in the relevant exposition.

In recent decades, the notion of the nature of politics as a kind of value, like power, also understood as a value, has gained great popularity in Western political science. Some well-known scholars, such as **H. Lasswell**, for example, consider power to be a political phenomenon and **politics itself to be power**, since it represents a subjective distribution of values among large social groups. Moreover, as early as 1936, in his book „Politics: Who Gets What, When, How“, Lasswell stated categorically that the main theme of political theory is the distribution of values and as such it takes precedence over all other themes – power, legitimacy, sovereignty, etc. And something else – in the study of politics, the main values are respect, income and safety, and those who get most of them (the values) are the elites as opposed to the masses.² Based on this, the author later justifies his thesis on the relationship between value position and value potential as an integral part of the nature of power. This value-based approach is contrasted with the understanding of **politics as an expression of interests** (C. Schmitt, et al.) and as a type of social sphere in which the struggle between different social, group, party and personal interests is realized. The two approaches are not, however, absolutely opposed, as is usually argued, because both the value and the conflict approach (i.e., interest) have as their ultimate goal the solution of social problems (rather than their creation), which is the ultimate meaning of politics. To this it should be added that we can hardly accept the theses of some authors about the primacy of value as a phenomenon in relation to interest. On the contrary, **interest has always been primary with respect to something (if it is not already a value), and only then can one or other subject or object become a value.** For it is an age-old truth that without having an interest in something, it is not at all possible for it subsequently to become a value. The exception is probably the so-called „common human values“ (freedom, equality, justice, democracy, etc.), which have a timeless value for civilization, since their actual application in society, as far as this is possible, solves the various problems of the people. Therefore, the basic understanding of the nature of politics is much more logically related to interest, and then to value as a phenomenon,

² See **Lasswell**, H. Politics: Who Gets What, When, How. New York: Meridian Books, 1958, p. 5.

without in this case vulgarizing interest in the sense of crude, brazen material interest (i.e. as a way of personal gain, of political corruption, etc.). Many other classical and contemporary writers share comparable or similar views to the above. For example, the brilliant French philosopher, writer and publicist **Jean-Paul Sartre** unambiguously defined politics as a collective action of some people vis-à-vis other people, which is based on both coincidence and non-coincidence of interests, as well as on solidarity and opposition between these people³, the basis of which are different interests. Yet, according to **Prof. D. Radev**, the phenomenon of politics can be defined as a set of methods, means and procedures for achieving predetermined global goals⁴ of social development, i.e. as the realization of specific political actions.

In our modernity, the multiplicity of the **term „politics“** from an etymological point of view is associated with three main substantive distinctions: first, politics understood as a **political sphere** of its own (from the English *politics*); second, politics conceived as a **political system** or political system (*polity*); and third, politics defined as a political course or **political behaviour** (*policy*).

To these views it would not be superfluous to add the original conceptions of politics set out in one of the most authoritative **contemporary encyclopaedias of political thought**⁵.

It motivated the notion of „politics“ as a set of several constituent elements: politics as a way of implementing collective decisions; politics as already implemented managerial decisions; politics as a variety of views to achieve certain goals; and politics as an integral part of power.

In general, as **Prof. Georgi Yankov**, politics can be equally legitimately defined as the distribution of power and values, and as the sphere of state governance, and as the management of the public sphere, and as an activity relating to public affairs and the achievement of the „common good“, and as the management of inequalities in society, and as a relationship of solidarity and opposition of social groups, and as conflict relations and their resolution, and as the transformation

³ See **Sartre**, J.-P. *The Ghost of Stalin*. Sofia, 1992, p. 74.

⁴ See **Radev**, D. *Legal Foundations of Democracy*. Sofia: Ciela, 2009, p. 13.

⁵ See **Blackwell**. *Encyclopedia of political thought*. Sofia: Center for the Study of Democracy, 1997, pp. 375-376.

of private interest into a universal one...⁶, i.e. as everything that is related to the protection of interests, decision-making and the implementation of common affairs in the public sector.

As a summary of the above, several main points could be made: a) politics is the realization of a certain set of actions through decision-making, including purpose, strategy, tactics, forms, methods, etc.; b) it (politics) is a relationship between social groups (large and small) in which they (the groups) express, promote and defend their interests; and c) politics has always been and will always be an outcome variable insofar as the decisions taken must be implemented and accounted for by the political actors concerned.

On the basis of the revealed basic aspects and understandings of the phenomenon of politics in human history it becomes possible to define this concept.

Politics is a specific sphere of human activity (a set of theoretical views and practical actions) that expresses the interests of different social communities (strata, groups, classes, nations), is related to the exercise of power (making, organization, structure) and aims through decision-making to achieve optimal harmony between different groups in the state and society.

In turn, **power** has also interested people and a number of prominent thinkers throughout human history. Even the great **Aristotle** stressed that power is a natural condition of society, which is predetermined by nature itself: „Rule and obedience are not only necessary but also useful...“ because „...by birth some are called to rule and others to obey. (...) And where there are rulers and subjects, there is also some work...“⁷, that is, some joint action is taking place in society. Aristotle's view of the biological nature of man and his inseparable relationship with nature is evident from these thoughts. Later, throughout the Middle Ages, power was understood as a divine gift, both in its origin and in its authentic nature, which until then remained the only unambiguous interpretation of power.

It was only in the modern period that interpretations of the nature of power acquired a second creative breath (after Aristotle), as

⁶ See **Yankov**, G. Towards a theory of politics (on the concept, meaning and metamorphoses of politics) – In: *Yearbook of the UNWE*. Sofia: UNWE, 2011, p. 74.

⁷ **Aristotle**. *Politics*. Sofia: Open Society, 1995, p. 8.

more in-depth scientific answers to this fundamental question of political science began to be sought. The credit for this goes to the great English philosopher **T. Hobbes**, who in the XVII century formulated the first definition of power, according to which a man's power in general is the means at his disposal to acquire some manifest good in the future.⁸ True to his mechanistic doctrine of explaining the world, Hobbes conceived of power as the possession of something or as a property of man that belongs to him by right, but not as some kind of social relation. In this context, the great thinker Hobbes does not betray his own philosophical system, since he believes that the authorities of power and law in the state are justified insofar as they guarantee the security of individuals in the whole society.

As is probably implied, different variations on the theme of „power“ can be found in the work of a number of other well-known researchers, philosophers and scholars right up to the turn of the XX century, who, depending on the range of their scholarly interests, pushed forward conceptual views on the nature of power to varying degrees. In this context and broadly speaking, the approaches used to define power in general from antiquity to the present could be grouped and reduced to two main ones. In the first, the nature of power is derived from coercion on the basis of the contradictions between the interests of different social groups, bearing the name of **„conflict theories of power“** (Plato, Machiavelli, G. Mosca, V. Pareto, etc.). And in the latter, power rests on consent (consensus) and contractualism as the basis of all power, and the concepts derived from it are called **„consensus theories of power“** (T. Hobbes, J.-J. Rousseau, H. Arendt, etc.)⁹, because they start from legitimate (legal) authority.

On the basis of these approaches, the theoretical aspects of power received a strong development in the second half of the nineteenth, and especially in the past XX century. Depending on the research approaches, power studies have successively evolved into the following major directions: biological theory of power (M. Marcel, A. Poz); power as a psychological phenomenon (B. Russell); behaviorist conception of power (H. Simon, J. Nagel); Marxist theory of power (K. Marx, F. Engels);

⁸ See **Hobbes**, T. *Leviathan*. Sofia: Science and Art, 1970, p. 93.

⁹ See **Ivanov**, D. *Power. A Philosophical and Sociological Analysis*. Sofia: Science and Art, 1985, p. 117.

functional conception of power (T. Parsons); communicative theory of power (H. Arendt); classical elitism and neo-elitism (V. Pareto, G. Mosca, R. Michels, C. W. Mills, etc.); pluralistic conception of power (M. Duverger, R. Aron, R. Dahl), etc. In general, the rich variety of research on power can be distinguished in five more significant directions: in one, power is conceived as a personal characteristic and is an attribute of the individual, and also includes an analysis of its relationship in the process of communication with the environment; in the other, power is seen as an interpersonal relationship, or as a component of existing social relations; in the next, power is treated as a specific kind of resource through which a value relation is realized, allowing to determine the level of power influence, i.e. power understood as a value; in the fourth, power is likened to a primordial relation according to which power itself is an asymmetric dependence; in the latter, too, there is a class understanding of power that is dominated in both genetic and substantive senses by the interest of the dominant class at each particular stage of a particular socio-historical time and epoch.

Among the many conceptual ideas about power, however, we should single out those of the famous German scholar **Max Weber**, whose original judgments about it have had the greatest substantive impact on the contemporary political science conception of the power phenomenon.

First of all it is necessary to say that according to M. Weber, **power is a social relation** in which different, but also interdependent parties interact, based on the clash between each other. Without the correlation of the two sides of a relation, it is simply impossible to analyze and consider power, which relation in turn expresses the first and broadest conceptual meaning of the concept of power.¹⁰

Starting from this basic scientific postulate, M. Weber defines **power as the possibility for one of the „actors“ in a given relationship – a person or a group of people – to be in such a position from which to exercise his will despite the resistance and regardless of the willingness or unwillingness of the other participants in the social action.** The German sociologist and political scientist further differentiates

¹⁰ Here and in the next few paragraphs of M. Weber's views on power are based as follows: See **Weber, M.** A sociology of domination. A sociology of religion. Sofia: St. Kl. Ohridski, 1992, pp. 21-22; 63; 109-115.

power into two basic types: one reflects a command relationship based on certain group interests; the second, personal command power. The volitional relationship between the social actors in the political theatre gives Weber grounds to argue that politics means striving for participation in power or exerting influence in the distribution of power itself. Hence the thinker's conclusion that those who engage in politics necessarily aspire to power.

Defining power as a command relation, Weber also introduces the **notion of „domination“, coming from the bilaterality (but not symmetry) of the power relation itself. Dominance is always present when the subjugated subject makes the command an axiom of his or her own behavior and obeys it unquestioningly, no matter what the motives for this obedience are, whether one's own belief in its rightness, fear, habit, or some self-interest.** Furthermore, any true attitude of domination involves a certain minimum of desire to obey and therefore pursues a certain internal or external interest in that obedience. Therefore, the realization of dominion of one kind or another over a multitude of people needs a headquarters for government, the imposition of general regulations and orders, and in general everything that is necessary for the functioning of a modern bureaucratic system such as the state.

But what is particularly valuable in Weber's conception of power is that **domination itself is not treated in an arbitrary way or only in its absolutized command version.** On the contrary, Weber considers domination from two perspectives: domination related to legitimacy; and domination understood as organization, i.e. as a kind of institutional structure. Weber distances himself from a conception of the power phenomenon that absolutizes domination as a crude command form in which the subordinates are puppets, devoid of their own will, used only for the manipulative purposes of the various political regimes.

We will also point out another important feature of Weber's conception of power, which for inexplicable reasons is not highlighted at all when considering his conceptions of the phenomenon of power. In particular, we are talking about the interpretations of M. Weber on „democratic legitimacy“ as a counterpoint to authoritarian charisma, where he **stresses the huge role of political elites** (without using this

term) in the process of peaceful power structuring, as well as the resulting social responsibilities of political parties in the selection of future „elected officials“.

Unlike ordinary bureaucrats, „elected **officials** – Weber writes – are legitimate by virtue of the trust of the subjects and are therefore recallable by declaring no confidence in them. (...) They are not bureaucratic figures, (...) since (...) they are independently legitimated and stand in their places (...) with promotion opportunities independent of the „superiors“...“¹¹. In the author’s view, such rule by „elected officials“ is far inferior to bureaucratic rule, i.e. rule by appointed officials, -an interesting and controversial thesis that does not in the least detract from the importance of the claims made about the nature of democratic government, not least because the experience of America at the time (in the late XIX and early XX centuries) is used. In this case, it is that Weber very perceptively observes that specific and indivisible **interdependence between political power and ruling elites**, which for some reason is hardly mentioned as a valuable contribution of this great German thinker to political sociology.

Therefore, **in the model of „plebiscite democracy“¹², the so-called „elected officials“ – the MPs (nominated by the personal vote of the people), the ministers (elected by parliament as sitting MPs) and the judges (where they are popularly elected) – cannot qualify in any other way than as an essential component of any ruling elite, or as part of the higher political oligarchy in a democratic society. It is in this, in our opinion, that the great scholarly merit of M. Weber in this point of the study of power, because it is a legitimate conclusion in his overall theory of power, insofar as nowhere does domination and rule exist without the presence of political elites**, regardless of the different approaches to their recruitment, formation and structuring.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 105-106.

¹² According to Weber, „plebiscite democracy“ is one of the models of democratic structure he analyses, drawing on the American political experience of a directly elected president with strong powers. And even though this model is more cursorily examined by Weber because his political ideal is „leadership democracy“, the author manages to capture some very essential features of contemporary political democracy without analysing them in particular and in depth (See *ibid.*).

Without absolutizing the views of M. Weber on power in general, and without putting an equal sign between the concepts of „power“ and „domination“, which he himself distinguishes, using the term „power“ in the broadest sense of influence,¹³ we will nevertheless briefly summarize the above as follows: with his fundamental theory of power, the eminent German scholar does indeed advance a profound scientific primacy in the elaboration of this problematic, since in the „distribution of power in the social community“ he brings to the fore both the priority role of domination as an independent form of power and its profound nature as a particular kind of social relation.

American cyberneticist **Herbert Simon's** concept is also original¹⁴, who attempts to define the concept of „power“ using the operational approach. The use of this approach has one great advantage – an accurate definition of the degree of presence (or absence) of power in a particular situation, in which quantitative methods are used to „measure“ power. This is done through a corresponding empirical verification of key judgements in political science such as „A's power is greater than B's power“, „diffuse distribution of political power“, „B's power is decreasing“, etc. Simon believes that when society is in a relatively stable equilibrium, then there is also a close relationship between the optimal distribution of values and power. In this sense, the possession of one value or another represents a kind of „value position“ and can therefore be used as an index of power. As a result, the American scholar derives the following linear relationship: **value position – power – value potential**.¹⁵

Making an observation on two individuals (A and B), Simon concludes that **power is an asymmetrical relationship between the influencer and the influenced**. Since this is the case, it is possible to observe (and ascertain) in detail the changing behaviour of both persons under consideration, or how the influencer (the first person) gradually

¹³ See *ibid.*, p. 120.

¹⁴ Simon's views on power are elaborated in his article „Notes on the Observation and Measurement of Power“ (1953).

¹⁵ See more in: **Manolov**, G. Introduction to Political Science. Second supplemented and revised edition. Plovdiv: HSSE, 2020, p. 257.

changes the behaviour of the influenced (the second person) depending on the nature and particularities of the social situation. The validity of this conclusion is supported by a comprehensive system of mathematical equations.¹⁶

To summarize, by defining power as both an asymmetric relation and a value *H*. Simon makes a highly significant contribution to the development of power theory, without which political science today would lose much. And although the essentially behaviorist methods used (to develop the concept) narrow the parameters of research analysis somewhat, they do not in the least invalidate the core of this theory, as some authors have argued.

We are also tempted to highlight the thesis of a contemporary author such as **M. Walzer**, who believes that **political power** always manifests itself in two proper existences: once, as unconditional **dominating power**, and secondly, as a **regulator of social goods**.¹⁷ The author refracts this understanding of power through the prism of social equality and, of course, in the context of the distribution of public goods.

Another, no less popular, contemporary author, such as **Michel Foucault**, develops the thesis that **power** (incl. political) should be taken as a **phenomenon of mass homogeneous domination, or the domination of one individual over others**, and in this aspect he brings out four important components of it: 1) that power is to be understood as something that continuously circulates and unfolds only in a chain; 2) that power functions only in a network, and it is in this network that individuals not only circulate but are in a position to both bear and exercise power; 3) that in power, individuals are always its „conduits“ of something, rather than being merely an inert and consenting mass of people; and 4) that in power, the individual is one of its primordial consequences as the counterpart of that power, rather than some stagnant mass of people.¹⁸ In this sense, the French scholar very faithfully recognizes the inextricable connection of power with the individual as one of its leading essences (of power).

¹⁶ See *ibid.*

¹⁷ See **Walzer**, M. *Spheres of Justice*. Sofia: KH, 2009, p. 40.

¹⁸ See **Foucault**, M. *We must protect society*. Sofia: LIK, 2003, p. 44.

And so, taking M. Weber's profound conceptual notions of power as among the most theoretically valid (of all those presented so far), it is our turn to pay some attention to the concept of political power, which is of paramount importance for political science.

In the most laconic and synthesized degree of concreteness, **„political power“ can be defined as a value relation of domination and subordination between the institutions of state power, on the one hand, and all citizens in society, on the other, in which one of the „actors“ exercises its will (despite the resistance of the other „actors“) by making decisions for the realization of common interests.** „These are public relations and activities – points out prof. M. Semov, – because they are in front of everybody's eyes, because they are **announced publicly**, and they are political, because the **common, public, national interests** are at stake in them“¹⁹. Or, political power is such an institutionalized form of domination, through which the authorized holders of power – legitimate or illegitimate, in the person of various governmental subjects directly exercise power on the basis of established traditions, rules and legal norms in accordance with the popular interests in society.

In the process of this institutionalized domination, the ruling subject, personal or group, can impose its will over the behavior of other people through certain specific mechanisms of influence; it can exercise direct and indirect leadership over pre-set goals through political decisions already taken; it can manage and control the administration and officials responsible for the implementation of regulations and relevant decisions, etc. All of this depends to a considerably high degree on: first, what is the nature of the dominant political institutions – democratic or non-democratic; second, what is the form of coercion – legal or illegal – that these institutions apply in the exercise of power; and last but not least, what is the composition of the political class (and elite) and how it fulfils its functional commitments in the overall governance process.

After the theoretical review of some more substantial views of power, we have come to the next important question, which will be of

¹⁹ Semov, M. Political Science. Sofia: St. Kl. Ohridski, 1993, p. 158.

lively interest to us from here on, – **the concept of „class“²⁰**, its definition, specific features and relations to the phenomenon of power.

„Class“ as a concept was first used in the practice of ancient Roman society. It derives from the Latin word „*classis*“ („order“, „class“, „troop“) and means the formation of a certain social group of citizens according to their property censuses and the amount of taxes they pay to the state. In traditional hierarchical societies, the term „class“ is not widely used because it came into use much later, with the development of industrialization from the late XVIII and early XIX centuries in Europe, where profound social, economic, political and cultural changes took place. So class is primarily an offspring of industrial civilization and represents one or another social group of people with a certain economic status and position in society. On the basis of such initial views and realities, we arrive at the two key theories of class, whose poles are respectively represented by K. Marx and M. Weber.

As is well known, already in *The Communist Manifesto* **Karl Marx**²¹ sought the genesis of classes in the economic structure of society, drawing on the evolution of the production process and the existing property relations in capitalist societies in the XIX century. Hence Marx absolutizes the role of relations of production, and especially the question of property, and as a consequence uniquely divides the structure of society into two main classes: the bourgeoisie – the owners of the means of production – the capitalist class, and the proletariat – the people who own only their own labour power – the working class. However, despite the correctness of this definition of the two classes at the time, Marx did not give a precise definition of them, as his differentiation of social groups was refracted through his theory of the socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, which significantly narrowed the research horizons of the classes. Moreover, all other characteristics of social groups – ideology, culture, income, etc. – are either permeated by the ideological struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat or not included at all as criteria for defining classes

²⁰ In the social sciences, the concept of „class“ is identified with „social group“, which is why the two terms are used here (in this paper) as synonyms, without implying that no distinction can be made between them (the two concepts).

²¹ See **Marx**, K., Fr. Engels. *Writings*. Vol. 4. Sofia: BCP, 1968, pp. 423-436.

in society. Later, V. I. Lenin summarized Marx's formulations on classes in his widely known and painfully familiar to us definition of classes²².

All in all, Marxist class theory bears the historical burden of its own methodological failings, which, expressed in a generalized form, are two more fundamental ones – economic determinism and excessive ideologization, in the development of the concept of social groups as the principle postulates for defining the various classes in society.

In contrast to the views of K. Marx, who identified classes with subjective reality, turning them into subjects, the approach of **M. Weber's** approach is radically opposed: he develops the idea that classes should be studied as an objective given in which the real position of a social group determines its status in society, regardless of how individuals define themselves on the scale of social hierarchy. This – first. Secondly, as the Bulgarian scholar R. Daskalov points out in his analyses on classes, M. Weber „...proceeds from a **dualistic** model of social stratification, which associates classes with the economic sphere of society, and classes – with (...) other characteristics of the social position of the individual (power, ethnic, religious, professional, etc.)“²³ In this way, the German scholar distinguishes between the concepts of „class“ and „stratum“, which allows him to expand the range of the terms under study not only within the boundaries of one or another class, but also in a more global, social, context.

M. Weber's „dualism“ becomes clear from his definition of classes, which reads: „We wish to speak of a class where (1) a plurality of people share a specific causal component of their opportunities in life, insofar as (2) this component is represented only by economic interests

²² „Classes are large groups of people who differ in their place in the historically determined system of social production, in their relation (usually fixed and shaped in laws) to the means of production, in their role in the social organization of labor, and therefore in the ways of obtaining that part of the social wealth which they possess. Classes are such groups of people, one of which can appropriate the labour of another thanks to the difference in the place they occupy in a certain system of social economy“ (See **Lenin**, V. I. *Collected Works*, Vol. 39. Sofia: Partizdat, p. 15).

²³ **Daskalov**, R. Max Weber's concept of „social stratification“. – In: *Proceedings* of the Institute of History. Vol. 63. Sofia: Partizdat, 1989, pp. 245-246.

in the possession and acquisition of goods, and (3) in terms of a commodity or labour market"²⁴. This different economic position of individuals naturally gives rise to a corresponding differentiation of social groups, which Weber classifies into two types: the „property classes“ – those who own property and take care of its management; and the „market classes“ – that group of people who have a real opportunity to implement their professional knowledge and skills in the market.

But Weber's major contribution to the development of class theory is reflected in the further application of the dualist approach, with the help of which he broadened and deepened the study of the question of the essential determinacy of social classes. The main characteristic of these classes the author reduces to three substantive elements – the way of life, the way of upbringing and the prestige of people's origin or occupation in society.²⁵ It is particularly important to emphasize here that Weber's definition of the social classes goes beyond the narrow limits of property-class limitation as an economic criterion, since the definition encompasses in varying degrees all other social spheres and the actual position of people in them, including the sphere of politics and power relations. We will only note here that the German scholar does not fail to point to **power as a criterion for categorizing the ruling class, because participation in politics, in his view, has become a specific professional activity in which the contours of the „political dominant layer“ in the structural differentiation of society inevitably emerge.** Or, to put it another way, the great merit of **M. Weber** in the evolution of class theories as a whole consists, first of all, in the **derivation of the basic principles for defining social groups – ownership (property and wealth), prestige (from the professional activity performed) and power (participation in politics),** which in our modernity become the fundamental basis of the social stratification of society.

In spite of the permanent polemic on the nature of classes (almost two centuries), and in spite of the theoretical modifications and variations of this polemic,²⁶ the Marx-Weber continuum continues to

²⁴ Ibid., p. 247.

²⁵ See id.

²⁶ On the question of the definiteness of classes there are many other scientific conceptions: the „structuralist theory“ of P. Bourdieu, the „dynamic conception“ of

dominate progressive social thought, which is why we will briefly highlight the main differences in the two prominent thinkers' understanding of the concept of class. The first difference has to do with the different philosophical and methodological doctrines that are used – monism in Marx and pluralism in Weber. The other difference is the class-restrictedness of economic determinism in Marx as opposed to Weber's wide-ranging approach to the determinism of social groups. The third difference is derivative of the previous two and concerns Marx's absolutization of class interest without fully accounting for intra- and inter-class changes: he speaks of middle strata only within class boundaries; whereas Weber considers in the aggregate the transformative modifications of classes according to the various criteria leading to social stratification and stratification – wealth, prestige, etc. And the last difference is that in Marx the exploitation of wage labour and the seizure of surplus value by itself predetermines power as the future possession of only one social group – the working class, while in Weber the factor of „power“ is seen as the realization of the institutional will of the ruling stratum (group), composed of subjects heterogeneous in origin, whose political fate depends on how rationally the potential of power resources will be used. And one more very important thing, but this time common to both class theories (Marx's and Weber's): the basic foundation for the formation of social groups in different societies has always been and will remain the contradictions in class relations and the conflicts of interests contained between classes.

However, in order to avoid any possible methodological stumbling blocks in the interpretation of classes in the following exposition, it is indeed worth highlighting here another opinion on this matter expressed in the authoritative Encyclopedia of Political Thought. For, according to its authors, „class“ is a concept that reveals the divisions in society and, depending on this, it can be interpreted within the framework of the respective spheres or „levels“ of social life: 1) at the level of the economic structure, which consists of the sphere of production and exchange of goods and services (relations independent of the will of individuals); 2) at the „meaning level“ of social consciousness, i.e. the so-called „inner

Al. Touraine, etc., which, however, go no further in theoretical terms than the view of the Marx-Weber continuum (without ignoring their merits and virtues) (See **Manolov**, G. *The Political Elite...* Op. cit., p. 33).

world“ of people, or the world of experience, which in turn determines how they (people) see themselves and others; 3) and at the level of action, individual and collective, in the various spheres of life, comprising several nodal components – the behaviour of individuals in their private lives, their life style, and their organisation in production and politics.²⁷ That is to say, **classes can be said to exist in any society to the extent that there are indeed more significant and intricately interwoven connections between the three levels of social life mentioned.**

To the complex character of this defining approach we should add the enormous driving force of the various kinds of interests (conscious and unconscious) whose motivational role is well known from the historical emergence and development of classes, and whose interests repeatedly constitute an essential factor in differentiation and self-definition, in the structuring and restructuring, and in the consolidation and stratification of the motley pluralistic swarm of social groups and strata in society.

These few theoretical remarks on classes can hardly exhaust all the meaningful features of the concept of class, which is why we do not pretend to have analysed this fundamental issue in a comprehensive way. Their examination, however, gives us the necessary primary reasons to turn to clarifying the notion of „elite“ not only because it is in close correlation with social classes and with power, but especially because this notion has recently become quite fashionable, and yet it is shrouded in a „theoretical fog“, being used for all sorts of things.

The term „elite“²⁸ (introduced and justified in political science as the ruling elite by **V. Pareto**) has gained currency in the lexicon of various languages since French, where it was originally used to refer to a variety of luxury consumption items. The word „elite“ first appears in an archaic XVI-century French dictionary and literally means „choice“ of something, and a full century later in another, also French, dictionary it is now specifically used to refer to all goods that are of high-quality manufacture.²⁹ Hence, the original, economic, etymology of the term

²⁷ See **Blackwell**. Op. cit., p. 201.

²⁸ *elite* (French, from Latin *eligo*) – to select, choose

²⁹ According to some authors, the term „elite“ and its original version date back to the twelfth century (*eslite*), and only in the fifteenth century it acquired the meaning in which it is used today. Its use in its modern form was first recorded in 1360. For

„elite“ was consistently transferred to other social spheres, as the highest strata of contemporary French society – the aristocracy, the clergy and the military – began to be identified with it. A more comprehensive idea of the nature of the term „elite“ is given by the interpretations of its basic meanings in some reputable world dictionaries: 1) according to Princeton University’s (USA) Woodnet Internet Dictionary, an elite is a privileged minority and small group of people within a larger community who have more power, higher social status, wealth, or talent than other members of that community; 2) according to the Oxford Dictionary, an elite is the select or best of a set or of such a group (class) of persons of the highest class, as well as a group of persons possessing the major share of power or influence in the larger social community; 3) according to Merriam-Webster, another Internet dictionary, the elite is defined as a select few, the „cream of the crop“ or best of a category, who occupy superior social positions, or as a group of persons who by virtue of their social position and education exercise greater power or influence in society; and 4) according to the Douglas-Harper Etymological Dictionary, the word „elite“ first appeared in a dictionary in 1923. It is derived from the Latin verb *eligere* (to choose), and hence transferred into Old French from the verb *eslire* (to choose).³⁰

example, in medieval English from the XV century the term penetrated from Old French and existed as a verb meaning „select“, „elect to office“, as well as a participle „chosen“ or „selected“. A few centuries later, in the XIX century, the term was already considered obsolete and archaic, with its modern connotation recorded in dictionaries dating from 1823. And in German the term appeared in the late XVIII and early XIX centuries. This is confirmed by the bestseller „Elites and Society“ by the eminent English sociologist Thomas Bottomore, who notes that according to the Oxford English Dictionary the first use of the term was in 1823 and was associated with the designation of goods of high quality, and only later – already in the XIX century – with the designation of individuals and groups at the top of the social hierarchy. While in Europe it was not used in political and sociological literature until almost the end of the XIX century, and in England and the USA – until the 1930s, when it entered thanks to the great popularity of the works of Vilfredo Pareto (See **Mizov**, M. Vilfredo Pareto on Politics. Vol. I. Sofia: Avangard Prima, 2020, p. 48; **Duka**, A. Prospects for sociological analysis of power elites. – In: *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2000, p. 64 (**Дука**, А. Перспективы социологического анализа властных элит. – В: *Журнал социологии и социальной антропологии*, Том 3, № 1, 2000, с. 64).

³⁰ For a more detailed clarification of the term „elite“ see **Marinov**, AI. The administrative elite of the XXI century. Sofia: Sibi, 2010, p. 8.

An important contribution to the clarification of the essential characteristic of the concept of „elite“ was made by the American sociologist **Charles Wright Mills**, who completed the „portrait“ of the concept in his book „The Power Elite“. In this connection, Mills writes that the power elite consists of people occupying such positions that enable them to rise above the ordinary people and to make decisions that have very serious consequences. But whether or not they take such decisions is less important than the very fact that it is **they who hold and wield key positions**; their deviation from the implementation of the required decisions and actions is itself another action, which often entails much more important consequences than the decisions they take, because **they command the most important hierarchical institutes and organizations of modern society**.³¹ That is, this minority wields the basic power resources and mechanisms for governing the state and society.

Generally speaking, **the term „elite“ is almost always understood and used by the public as a synonym for the best, the pre-eminent and the most valuable in the whole of social life – economic, political and spiritual, as well as in its individual public and private spheres – science, art, literature, etc.** In this sense, the essence of the concept of „elite“ acquired its own and particular meaning especially in the early XX century, when the above views on the elite crystallized into a certain theoretical system that found very wide application in the social sciences, and especially in modern sociology and political science.

Building on the interpretations of the concepts just presented („politics“, „power“, „class“, „elite“), let us now focus our attention on the essential characteristics of their derivatives, beginning first with what constitutes **the political class**.

In the scientific literature on the question of the criteria and definition of the political class there are many opinions, the more famous of which we will group in the following order. For the classicist **G. Mosca** the ruling class is always small in number, monopolizes power and thus completely captures the command desks of political power,

³¹ **Mills**, Ch. W. The Power elite. Moscow: Foreign Literature, 1959, p. 24 (**Миллс**, Ч. Р. Властвующая элита. Москва: Иностранная литература, 1959, с. 24).

becoming an organized ruling force;³² according to some modern authors of the XX century, the political elite (and class) are the people who have the highest positions of power, which is the thesis of **Ch. W. Mills** and most neo-elitists; other scholars are of the opinion that the term „class“ can refer to the people who have power and influence due to the control of power resources, as **Etzioni-Halevy**, for example, believes; others, such as **Christopher Lasch**, believe that this class, i.e. the political class, represents the upper layer of the middle class because it includes public administrators and policy makers who push liberal reform agendas, while their income is not based so much on their possession of property as on their extensive professional experience; while others define the nature of the elite in terms of the degree of formal power they possess, their direct participation in decision making, and, respectively, their social prestige in society.³³ Or, albeit with some theoretical nuances, in all five of these conceptions, the main criterion for the definition of the political elite is formal participation in power, decision-making and the possession of power resources, while there is no mention of a ruling class at all, as the term „elite“ is used.

Further and more substantive clarity on the criteria for the removal of the political elite is brought by the aforementioned **G. Sartori**, who specifically points out two of them of particular importance: The first is the **vertical criterion**, according to which a group of people is controlling when it is located at the heights of the vertical social structure, and therefore it can be argued that power is in the hands of the class standing at the top, that is, in the so-called „de facto elite“; and the second criterion is **the criterion of merit**, which is determined by the fact that a person and a group of people are not at the top because they have power and therefore represent a political elite, but are at the top of power because they deserve it insofar as they possess the relevant qualities. At the same time, G. Sartori also makes another substantive theoretical clarification of the term „controlling (minority) group“,

³² See **Mosca**, G. *The Ruling Class*. New York: McGraw Hill Book, 1939, p. 50.

³³ See consistently cited works: **Mills**, Ch. W., *Op. cit.*, p. 24; **Etzioni-Halevy**, E. *The elite connection*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993, p. 9; **Lasch**, Cr. *The rebellion of elites and the betrayal of democracy*. Sofia: Obsidian, 1997, p. 37; and **Social Stratification and Inequality**. Collection. Sofia: M-&-M, 1998, p. 182.

stressing that all controlling power is political as long as its source is some position of power, and that power is in all circumstances controlling when it acts through the channels of politics, and as such decisively influences political decision-making.³⁴ By formulating the above two criteria for the elite, the Italian political scientist is one of the few scholars to consider the ruling class (and elite) not only in formal research terms, but also in terms of its content, which – it must be admitted – represents a profound attempt to penetrate the nature of the phenomenon of political class.

While giving due credit to all the above definitions of the category of „political class“ in this monograph, we are obliged to note that, although essential, **these definitions to some extent narrow the research horizons of the category mainly for two reasons: not clarifying the issue of the criterion(s) for the definability of the ruling class, and singling out and absolutizing one or another criterion as central (defining) by ignoring other, no less essential and important ones.** However, the use of such an approach does not allow to take into account the complexity of the phenomenon under consideration, and especially the complicated nature of this category („political class“), whose defining features are almost impossible to determine in a one-sided and fragmentary way, i.e. according to some universal or universally valid indicator.

We advocate that overcoming these methodological shortcomings can be done by taking a **more complex and holistic approach** to the definitional nature of political class. Or, to put it differently, from the positions of several social sciences, which, despite the differences between the approaches and methods of analysis they apply to the ruling class, do not anyway leave it out of their subject-research horizon. Such an interdisciplinary approach will govern our analysis from here on and in the following pages.

It is theoretically known that „power“ is a central category in **political science**. Therefore, first and foremost, and right here, we will take the liberty of setting out, in the form of brief **theoretical remarks**, a few thoughts on the **significance of the category „power“**, within the limits

³⁴ See **Sartori**, G. A Theory of Democracy. Vol. 1. The contemporary debate. Sofia: Center for the Study of Democracy, 1992, pp. 217-219.

of which we will motivate our conception of the criteria for defining political class. **Firstly, the question boils down to such a conception of power, with the help of which not only and not so much the formal aspects and facets of the category „political class“ would be revealed, but first and foremost and especially its substantive characteristics, qualitative dimensions, structural features, genetic roots and in general the whole dynamics and evolution of governing elites** in a civilized (and not only in such) democratic social system; **secondly, it is in and through the substantive scope of power that the functional-qualitative values and characteristics of governing elites (classes, oligarchies) and their behaviour in political life could be relatively more precisely defined and differentiated** at least in several essential aspects: as the immediate exercise of power; and as the results (partial and final) of the power decisions taken for the overall development of society; **and thirdly, it is the exclusive place of privileges** (emanating from power) and their genesis, structure and distribution, as well as the normative basis on which they are defined in the system of power, to be used so massively by the entire population in all countries of the world. This is without necessarily considering political privileges as some impersonal formal attribute of power, in the sense that they are absolutely unavoidable (as they are often superficially interpreted) even when they are far from any reasonable limits, from the democratic control of society and are in dissonance with the norms of social justice.

Starting from the above expressed universal meaning of the power phenomenon and giving due credit to all the above definitions of the ruling class (and the criteria for them), let us also state our own view on the criteria and definiteness of this scientific category.

It can be argued that after the classical definition of **G. Mosca's** definition of the ruling class, there are not many definitions of this concept.³⁵ This observation is quite valid for our political science thought,

³⁵ „**In all societies** – writes G. Mosca – from societies quite underdeveloped and barely reaching the dawn of civilization to the most advanced and powerful societies, **there are two classes of people – the class that rules and the class that is ruled. The first class, always the less numerous, performs all the political functions, monopolizes the power and enjoys the benefits of it, while the second, the more numerous, is directed and controlled by the first** in a manner more or less legal, more or less arbitrary and violent“ (*emphasis mine – G. M.*) (See **Mosca**, G. Op. cit., p. 50).

where, with the exception of three or four monographs, it is very difficult to find even more precise and clear definitions of the political class.

From such a perspective, we believe that in contemporary democratic societies there exists a **relatively more self-contained, compactly constructed, internally structured and specific group of people, which is called the „political class“ insofar as it is directly or indirectly involved in the structures of power, takes a direct part in the adoption of political decisions and is fully responsible for their overall implementation.** This, however, is the more general side of the matter, because in this case it should not be thought that we are just leaning on and supporting the thesis of G. Mosca showing „political class“ and „ruling minority“ as completely identical concepts. A thesis that is supported by many foreign and Bulgarian authors, such as the Bulgarian sociologists **D. Minev** and **P. Kabakchieva**, who in their work „The Transition. Elites. Strategies“ argue that the new political class created in our country can be called a „ruling oligarchy“ because it (the oligarchy) has concentrated all power in its own hands.³⁶ But leaving aside the undoubtedly true statement of these authors about the distinction of a post-totalitarian oligarchy in Bulgaria, we are again faced with the usual conceptual conflation of „class“ and „oligarchy“, which is not wrong, but it is not scientifically accurate either. In this sense, a number of other similar formulations can be listed, which need not be dwelt upon here.

In our opinion, the conceptual essence of the category of „power class“ should first of all take into account the changes in the development of modern democratic societies, including the profound changes in the nature of the institutions of power, as well as the increased functional responsibilities of all empowered persons. Accordingly, the political class itself can by no means be defined any more as a handful of dominant minorities who have concentrated all the power and vast resources of power in themselves. For, moreover, especially in the second half of the technological XX century, the role of politics in global social life is growing decisively, which further distinguishes it as a specialised activity, requiring both a wealth of specific knowledge and a range of professional skills and habits. In other words, politics „has now

³⁶ See **Minev, D.**, **P. Kabakchieva**. *The Transition. Elites. Strategies*. Sofia: St. Kl. Ohridski, 1996, pp. 21-22.

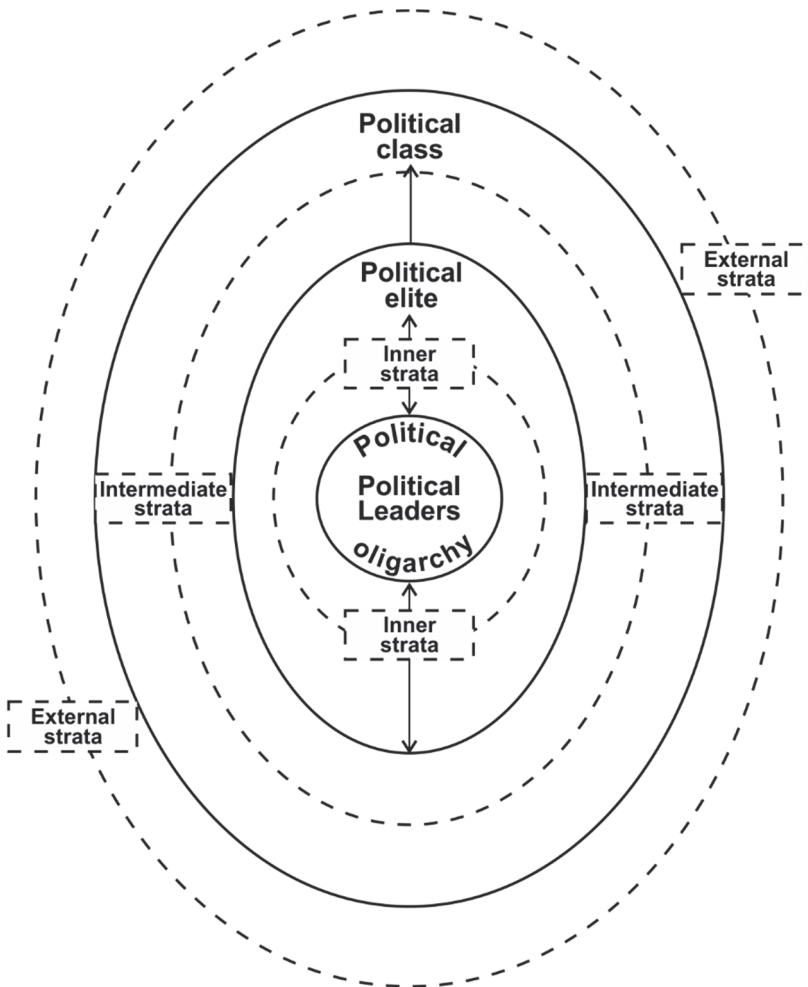
become a basic profession for some people in society“ (M. Weber), which is further evidence of the serious and significant presence of a political class in society alongside the business class, the middle class and other social groups.

Understood as a broader concept, **the political class can be defined as such a group of people who are directly (when in power) or indirectly (when in opposition) involved in power, in political decision-making and in the governance of the state, possess certain privileges and professional qualities, high personal income and good material status. This class, moreover, has a definite structure, a specialized composition and includes within itself different layers.** The main essence of this class is participation in power through „making“ rational policy and taking political decisions that are in line with the national-state interests and social needs of the people in society. Hence the stronger social positions of the members of the ruling class, their elevation above other social groups and their high social prestige (due to their participation in power), which at the same time predetermine the many functional, controlling, national, etc. responsibilities of the ruling class. This definition of the political class is derived in a **narrower definitional sense**, corresponding to the criterion of „participation in power“, which is of course correct, but by no means sufficient for a more comprehensive clarification of the composition and structure of the ruling class.

However, seen in **another, broader, meaningful sense**, the political class can be conceived as a unified subordinated whole, which has its own structure and certain parts, constituents and elements. For, like any class, the political class contains a number of structural and internally distinct layers, which share not a few common features, but also a number of specific features – some of them quite significant insofar as they define the global shape of the power class itself (*see Diagram No. 1*).

Moreover, the separation of the concept of „political class“ is also necessary because of another, purely practical aspect: minimizing all unscientific notions in society about who rules, and especially how they rule. At least because the answer to these questions in any case rests on the political accountability of those in power to the electorate, on the part of the various subjects in power. In this sense, and on the basis of this brief argument, we proceed to reveal the nature of political elites as another leading political science concept.

Diagram No. 1. Structure of the category „political class“



Source: Manolov, G. The political elite... Op. cit., p. 165.

Undoubtedly, the first key component of the ruling class is the **political elite**, which by presumption and mechanically is almost always associated with those at the top of the power hierarchy. Thus, for example, after the pioneer **V. Pareto**, **Etzioni-Halevy** thesis defines the elite as a group of people who hold power and influence society because they control the resources of power; **H. Lasswell** believes that the political elite is primarily the class at the top; **T. Guy** believes that this elite

includes the individuals who occupy the top positions in the institutional structure of the state,³⁷ etc. In spite of the undoubted merits of this definition, it is nevertheless too general, because: first, it speaks of the elite in general, with only a subtextual allusion to the political elite; and second, because there is again the now familiar conflation between the two hierarchical structures, of power and of the elite, in politics. Close to this view is the thesis of **Anna Krasteva**, published in the specialized collection „The New Political Elite“. In it, the author argues that „the political elite is that part of the political class that actually exercises power in a given society at a given time“³⁸. Thus making a crucial distinction between class and elite, A. Krustevea actually defines the essence of the political elite, which cannot but be noted with merit, especially given the acute deficit of such developments in Bulgaria.

On his part, the Bulgarian sociologist **Al. Marinov** also provides a meaningful definition of elites (based on the functional approach), which he defines as follows: specific minorities that are purposely selected to exercise collective leadership, proposing strategies and policies; serving (elites) as models of success and role models; emanating leaders in certain sectors of society; and having mechanisms for exercising power and influence in the state and society.³⁹ Here, although we are talking about elites in general, the author accurately perceives and expresses one part of the functional nature of political elites as a real governance given.

In the context of these definitions, let us make some conceptual clarifications, which concern the arbitrary use of several elitist terms („power elite“, „managerial elite“, „strategic elite“ and „political elite“), which are used quite imprecisely and usually as synonyms. In our opinion, their scientific differentiation, generally speaking, can be as follows: **power elite** – is a broader concept because it includes different types of minorities – political, economic, cultural, military, etc.,

³⁷ See successively: **Etzioni-Halevy**, E. The elite connection... Op. cit., p. 9; **Agenda** for the study of political elites. – In: *Marvich*, D. (Ed.). Political decision-makers. Glencoe: Free Press, 1961, p. 66; **Dye**, T. Who's running America. New York: New York Press, 1976, pp. 11-12.

³⁸ **Krasteva**, Anna. Power and Elite in a Society without Civil Society. – In: *The New Political Elite*. Sofia: Perun-BM, 1995, p. 14.

³⁹ See **Marinov**, Al. Op. cit, p. 54.

i.e., wherever there is power in general and the development of power processes in society; **managerial elite** – another concept integrating all minorities involved in managerial decision-making in different sectors of society (political, economic, cultural, educational, etc.); **strategic elite** – „the top managerial layer in strategically important sectors of society“ (Al. Marinov).

Among the motley swarm of definitions of the elite in a synthesized order we will note a few more significant ones: people who have a high position in society and thanks to it influence the social process (Dupré); the „upper ruling class“; persons who enjoy the greatest prestige, wealth and high status in society; persons with the greatest power (H. Lasswell); persons who have intellectual or moral superiority over the masses regardless of their status (L. Bodin), the highest sense of responsibility (Ortega y Gasset); persons with positions of power (A. Etzioni), with formal authority in organizations and institutions that determine social life (T. Dai); a minority who perform the most important functions in society and have the greatest weight and influence (S. Keller); „God-inspired“ individuals who have responded to the „higher call“, have heard the „call“ and have felt able to lead (L. Freund), charismatic personalities (Weber), the creative minority in society, opposed to the uncreative majority (A. Toynbee); relatively small groups of persons occupying leading positions in the political, economic, cultural life of society (respectively, political, economic, cultural elite) – V. Gatsman and other theorists of elitist pluralism; the ruling stratum in any social group – professional, ethnic, local (for example, the elite of a provincial town); the best, most qualified representatives of a particular social group (the elite of aviators, chess players or even of thieves and prostitutes – L. Bodin).⁴⁰

Notwithstanding what has been said so far, however, we believe that the substantive characterization of the category of „political elite“ remains in any case an understudied theoretical problem due to at least two essential circumstances: the failure to take into account all those privileges, advantages and prerogatives (legal or illegal) that distinguish

⁴⁰ See **Ashin**, G. K., A. V. Ponedelkov, N. M. Starostin, S. A. Kislitsyn. *Fundamentals of Political Elitology*. Third edition, supplemented. Moscow: URSS, 2015, pp. 133-134.

people invested with supreme power from other citizens; and the necessary set of diverse managerial qualities, as required by political management, that every representative of the political elite should possess. Let us not forget that we are not dealing here with any ordinary duties, but with a very great political and power responsibility, which all statesmen and all members of the entire governing elite are bound by the constitution and the laws to bear before their own peoples.

In this context, **the political elite can be defined as a small social group and the most important part of the composition of the political class, which at a given moment possesses, deploys and controls the means and resources of power, is responsible for the decisions taken, has various kinds of privileges and has enormous political influence in society.**

On such a defining basis, the most essential **qualitative aspects of the political elite could also be identified**, which we will briefly systematize in the following order: legitimacy of the elite, possession of real and potential power, relative autonomy of individual groups within the elite, managerial and professional skills, democratic rotation of personnel, high moral qualities, etc.

Meanwhile, if we look even more deeply into the essential aspects of the ruling class, and especially its constituent parts, we cannot help but highlight the role and place of **the political oligarchy**⁴¹ as the most important element of the global structure of the political class. We will devote special attention to it in the following pages of the exposition, which is why we will only sketch here two essential features of this oligarchy.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the political oligarchy is that it differs significantly in the amount of political and power responsibilities it has in the state. In this respect, **the few members of the political oligarchy have the greatest power functions, rights and responsibilities**, because they make crucial (political) decisions on a wide variety of state issues, with the result that an enormous amount of power is concentrated in their hands, sometimes concentrated in just

⁴¹ *oligarchy* (from Str. ez. *ὀλιγος* – little; *αρχή* – power) – 1. Political and economic domination by a small group of exploiters (slaveholders, capitalists). 2. A state with oligarchic rule. 3. Power of large financial capital (See **Dictionary** of Foreign Words in the Bulgarian Language. Sofia: Science and Art, 2007, p. 31).

a few people. This usually happens when one political force wields both legislative and executive power, which in turn is an objective prerequisite for total domination of the oligarchy, as party leaders are automatically „relocated“ to key positions in the higher state power. Thus, not only concentration, but also centralization of power in the most limited circle of people, who, thanks to the democratic vote of the people, grow into a **super-oligarchic stratum** with the sole right to take all important political decisions. This is probably the reason why some authors argue that the most important decisions in politics are always taken by the oligarchic minority of this or that party in power. But this is the formal side of the question, because, as practice shows, more than one and two „democratically“ elected party oligarchies have led their countries and peoples to cruel national catastrophes. But the big question here is different and has a much deeper substantive dimension, because it concerns how to increase those democratic checks and balances that prevent the political oligarchy from legitimately wielding almost absolute and in most cases unchecked power.

And the other pronounced specific feature that **distinguishes the political oligarchy (e.g. from part of the political elite and the surrounding layers of the ruling class) are the various types of privileges** enjoyed by the rulers depending on the different ranks and positions in the higher hierarchy of power. This is so because the privileges of the political oligarchy and of a section of the political elite are an extremely important quality and trait according to which we can always clearly differentiate each of the main constituents of the ruling class.

These are some of the meaningful characteristics of the concepts of „political power“, „political class“ and „political elite“, which, along with their objectively inherent diversity, actually exist and manifest themselves in the historical evolution of human societies. However, a whole series of important socio-political questions arise here that directly relate to the realization of power and citizens' rights, to equality and inequality in politics, to political privilege and social equality, to the scale and size of political privilege, to the regulation (or non-regulation) of oligarchic privilege through political power, etc., etc. In this sense, we will try to answer the more essential ones, and above all what manifestations equality, rights and privileges find in a democratic society.

2. EQUALITY, RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES IN POLITICS

In the contemporary political science literature (or at least in some of it), the view has taken hold that there is no need for a strict definition of a number of popular terms („equality“ – „inequality“, „justice“ – „injustice“, „rights“ – „responsibilities“, etc.), as they were largely comprehensible to the modern educated person. However, we think the opposite: yes, they (the terms) are indeed understandable to many people, it's just that this understanding exists mainly on an everyday-emotional level, and in the form of a kind of equalitarian thinking („let us all be equal in everything“). We will therefore try to dispel this unrealistic notion in the public consciousness, starting with the consideration of equality as an inherent socio-political phenomenon permeating the entire historical evolution of societies.

In a political sense, **equality** is usually conceived in two main aspects: the first rests on the ground that all people are equal beings, while the second is based on the thesis of a fairer distribution of economic goods, social opportunities and political power among people.⁴² This is historically confirmed in the work of a number of prominent thinkers, such as Plato, Aristotle, J. Locke, J.-J. Rousseau, T. Jefferson, Al. de Tocqueville, K. Marx and many others, who from different positions illuminate the problems of equality in human history.⁴³ For this reason, we will not dwell in detail on the individual views of equality, but will instead synthesize a part of the more famous contemporary views of political equality. Still, let us make a brief theoretical digression, which concerns the views of **J.-J. Rousseau** on equality, which, according to him, cannot be properly determined if it is not linked to freedom and does not exclude privilege as the bearer of inequality. For him, universal equality translates into equality before the law, which does not always mean that this equality is maintained by the law. The justification for this is the existing privileges of government, which grow out

⁴² See **Blackwell**. Op. cit., p. 421.

⁴³ See in detail: **Manolov**, G. Introduction... Op. cit.; **Russell**, B. History of Western Philosophy. Sofia: Hr. Botev, 1998; **Semov**, M. Theory of Politics. Sofia: Sofi-R, 2000; **Schatle**, Fr., O. Duhamel, E. Pizier. History of political ideas. Sofia: LIK, 1998; **Yankov**, G. Political Thought from Antiquity to the Present. Third edition. Sofia: Stopanstvo, 2006; etc.

of private property and are the main legitimate precondition for maintaining inequality between people. Here is what J.-J. Rousseau: „The great, the rich, and that brilliant part of society, which they call the „good environment“, have a great need to behave differently in everything from other people. They have to dress differently from the people, to walk, to drink, to eat differently from the people, to talk, to think, to act, to live differently from the people. And yet one very disgusting thing remains: the use of those four elements (*water, earth, air, fire – my note, G. M.*) which are necessarily common. Couldn't we find some polite way to get rid of these 9/10ths of the people whose foul breath spoils the air we breathe?“⁴⁴. And more – in the operation of any government „...honors are added to inspire respect for the laws and their officers, and, purposely for the latter, privileges which compensate them for the heavy duties incident to all good administrative government“⁴⁵. To put it differently, Rousseau does not mean by „equality“ some equal distribution of power and wealth among people, since there is not (and cannot be) absolute equality, but through rules (laws, acts) its application (of equality) must be maintained within limits that ensure freedom in society. It is in this sense that, according to the author, there is no true equality (relative) without freedom, in which equality all are obliged to obey the law and, respectively, to totally restrict various forms of privilege as an expression of social inequality (including political inequality).

In this context, as early as the time of the French Revolution, Article 6 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) stated, „All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents“. Later, in Art. 2 of the Declaration of 25.05.1793, the thesis was developed with the postulate: „Equality consists in the law being equal for all, whether it protects or punishes. Equality recognizes no separation of descent or transmission of power by heredity“⁴⁶. These texts make it clear that a major goal of the revolution was not only

⁴⁴ Rousseau, J.-J. Selected writings. Vol. I. Sofia: Science and Art, 1988, p. 432.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 644.

⁴⁶ Cited: Sartori, G. The Theory of Democracy. Vol. 2. The classical problems. Sofia: Center for the Study of Democracy, 1992, p. 129.

equal rights and equality before the law, but also the formation of a new understanding of the nature of democratic political power and the meaning of equality in politics.

Contemporary theoretical thought since the second half of the XX century has left us with numerous scholarly works by well-known scholars on equality and political equality that have the reputation of being in-depth studies. Such are, for example, the theses of: **D. Bell**, considering equality as a complex concept, not only in the public sphere, but also in a number of other social dimensions – equality before the law, equal civil rights, equality of opportunity (even equality of outcomes); **G. Sartori**, for whom equality includes three specific requirements – universal equal suffrage, social equality and equality of opportunity; **Fr. Fukuyama**, who argues that equality is „equality of liberty“, or the possibility of simultaneous „equal negative liberty“ (from excessive government interference) and „equal positive liberty“ (to participation in self-government and the economy) in the life of the state; **Alain Touraine**, who links political equality to the state, noting first that the state must recognize the right of its most disadvantaged citizens to act within the law against an order of inequality of which the state itself is a part, and second that the state itself limits its power and does so because it recognizes that a function of the political order is to redress social inequalities; **R. Dworkin**, who conceives of political equality as implying that the weakest members of a political community are entitled to consideration and respect from their governments equal to that which its most powerful members secure for themselves, so that if some individuals have the freedom to make decisions, whatever their effect on the common good, then all individuals should have equal freedom; **Al. Morlino**, who believes that equality is a key value that is differentiated into two main types – formal equality, or equality before the law, prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, language, religion, etc.; and real equality, i.e. the removal of obstacles that limit social, political and economic equality; **J. Fishkin** postulates that political equality contains three essential elements: one, that formal equality must be established in giving equal weight to people’s preferences, or this is the so-called „equality“; the second is that there must be real guarantees that the political process itself cannot be interfered with by extraneous factors, i.e. that there must be some kind

of insulated conditions; and the next is that voters must have adequate opportunities to determine their preferences in accordance with the policy alternatives presented; **G. Fotev**, for whom equality in qualitative terms represents sameness, because in the public sphere there is a need for „equality of unequals“ in certain social relations (not in all).⁴⁷

At this point in the exposition, we will particularly note the original judgments of the popular Western researcher **John Rawls**, who considers the basis of equality as a characteristic of human societies, and therefore treats them according to the principles of justice. He distinguishes and differentiates three levels of application of the concept of equality. The first is the governance of institutions as universally known systems of rules, where equality essentially represents justice in the form of order. This form implies the impartial application and consistent interpretation of the rules according to the relevant prescriptions. The second and much more difficult application of equality is the actual structure of institutions, because the meaning of equality is specified by principles of justice that require that fundamental rights be granted to all individuals. This logically leads us to the third level, where the question of the nature of equality arises, the answer to which here comes down to ethical individuals who are entitled to equal (equal) justice because they have both the ability and the desire to apply the principles of justice in social and political life⁴⁸ – the author concludes.

We can summarize that **contemporary views of the concept of equality contain at least three characteristic features: first, it is a civilization-wide democratic value** that has developed over the centuries

⁴⁷ See consistently **Bell**, D. *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. Sofia: Narodna kultura, 1994, p. 52; **Sartori**, G. *Op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 130; **Fukuyama**, Fr. *Identity. The struggle for recognition and the politics of anger*. Sofia: Iztok – Zapad, 2019, p. 58; **Touraine**, Alain. *What is democracy?* Sofia: Collins-5, 1994, p. 28; **Dworkin**, R. Cited: **Smilov**, D. *Constitutionalism and democracy: between the rule of law and the rise of populism in Bulgaria (2001 – 2010)*. Sofia: St. Kl. Ohridski, 2019, pp. 33-34; **Morlino**, Al. *An analysis of the qualities of democracy. Quality of democracy in Bulgaria*. Compiled and scientifically edited by Dobrin Kanev and Antony Todorov. Sofia: Iztok – Zapad, 2014, p. 50; **Fishkin**, J. *Democracy and Deliberalization. New Perspectives on Democratic Reform*. Sofia: Center for the Study of Democracy, 1993, pp. 43-44; **Fotev**, G. *Boundaries of politics*. Sofia: LIK, 2001, p. 241.

⁴⁸ See **Rawls**, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Sofia: C. A., 1998, pp. 599-600.

independently of different socio-political systems; second, **there is a close „kinship“ between equality and freedom**, without which it is almost impossible to interpret the features of political democracy today; third, **equality itself is seen as a complex social concept** (in politics, economics, etc.), or as one in which separate elements of social life interact; lastly, **the phenomenon of equality is invariably embodied by the different rights of people in each individual society** (no matter how they are applied and respected in life).

Incidentally, we will only note that the achievement of any equality in society is closely related to **law** (rights) and its manifestations in socio-political life. In the scientific literature there are enough solid elaborations⁴⁹ on the nature of law, among which we will present those of **Prof. Dimitar Radev**, developed in his book „General Theory of Law“. According to the author, law should be understood in a broader theoretical context, namely: first, law is a hierarchical structure of norms that regulate two large spheres of social life – the private (individual, personal) and the public (state, political); second, law is a way of binding the state to certain rules of conduct, which the public authority is obliged to observe; third, law is an ability to impose certain values in the social environment (freedom, order, equality, humanism, property, honour, dignity, peace, etc.); fourthly, law is a means of resolving disputes between individuals in a civilized and cultural manner; and fifthly, law is a compromise that is reached between different social groups in the governance of society.⁵⁰ That is to say, law is a synthesis of material and spiritual elements in which the objective and the subjective and the private and the common are interwoven, and in which synthesis several important qualities, such as **institutionality**, are mixed.⁵¹ This institutionality means that the law is arranged in a certain way in an orderly system in which each of its elements (legal norm, branch, institute) has its place as an attribute of the system of law.⁵² Such a treatment of law is of particular relevance to the problem we are studying,

⁴⁹ See for example: **Radev**, D. General Theory of Law. Sofia: LIK, 2008; **Valchev**, D. Lectures on General Theory of Law. First part. Sofia: Ciela, 2016; **Tashev**, R. General Theory of Law. Basic legal concepts. Fourth edition. Sofia: Sibi, 2010; etc.

⁵⁰ See **Radev**, D. General Theory... Op. cit., pp. 51-55.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, p. 55.

⁵² See *id.*

since it is the quality of institutionality that is the essential theoretical ground on which privileges are analysed and, of course, the practical basis on which they are continuously disseminated in politics.

The next point in our exposition concerns the **rights of citizenship**,⁵³ which have long been established and entrenched in democratic political systems after centuries of struggle with many monarchs – emperors, kings, princes, etc. Among them, **the leading place is occupied** by political rights, which in our country have been analyzed and developed by **Assoc. Prof. N. Kiselova**, on whose exposition we base from here on.

In her monograph „Political Rights of Bulgarian Citizens“ the author postulates that the rights inherent in the human being as a natural person and individual have an important and determining significance for his or her perception as a bearer of specific rights and obligations in society. The content of his/her rights is determined and established by the state, starting also from the generally accepted international standards in the field of guarantees and mechanisms for the protection of human rights and freedoms.⁵⁴

In this aspect, it is concluded that fundamental human rights are a comprehensive system of principles and norms, explicitly defining the obligation of the state to respect and guarantee them, to provide for their realization and to be responsible for their violation or threat. In other words, fundamental human rights are social and legal opportunities granted to the individual for the realization of his/her personality and for the satisfaction of his/her fundamental interests. These rights can be asserted against the State as well as against third parties, whether natural or legal, because such opportunities are conditioned by the socio-economic and cultural conditions of life of both the individual and individual societies.⁵⁵

⁵³ These rights, according to Ant. Giddens are of three types: **civil** – refer to the rights of citizens under the law (the right to life, to property, to freedom of speech and religion, to equality before the law); **political** – the right of people to vote and to run for elective office; and **social** – minimum wage, unemployment benefits, sick leave, social welfare, etc. (See **Giddens**, Anthony. *Sociology*. Sofia: St. Kl. Ohridski, 2004, pp. 363-364).

⁵⁴ See **Kiselova**, N. *Political Rights of Bulgarian Citizens*. Sofia: Ciela, 2017, pp. 151-152.

⁵⁵ See *id.*

From such positions Assoc. Prof. N. Kiselova defines the political rights of citizens as a set of specific values, principles and norms. Furthermore, they define the due conduct of other citizens and the obligations of the state to respect and secure them without any discrimination in peacetime, as well as to provide for the corresponding responsibility for violating or endangering these rights.⁵⁶

In this definition, **five features** can be identified that are important for understanding the nature of a **citizen's political rights**. First, citizens' rights are a legal institution, which is a set of values, norms and principles that establish legal responsibility for violating or threatening rights. Second, citizens' rights are relations between the state and its citizen in which the state undertakes (binds itself to) certain obligations. Third, citizens' rights are a dynamic national value and are respected, secured and promoted by state authorities. Fourth, citizens' rights imply equality between individuals and the absence of discrimination (distinction on grounds of sex, political affiliation, social or personal status, education, property status, etc.) in legal relations. Fifthly, citizens' rights presuppose their guarantee, observance and respect in peaceful social conditions.⁵⁷ And to these important features we would add another, extremely significant one: **that unjustified political privileges should not be allowed as a kind of „civil rights“, since they (privileges) are in sharp dissonance with Art. 1, 2 and 7 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).**

It is worth noting that the political rights of citizens, in addition to being fundamental constitutional rights, also provide real opportunities for (individual or collective) participation of the people in both the immediate political process and in the multifaceted socio-political life of the state. Depending on this, citizens become direct or indirect participants in the realisation of power, in the political decision-making process, in the holding of various referenda, etc., through which the respective political representation in state governance is achieved.⁵⁸ In fact, in this way the alienation between citizens and the state is actually overcome, because political rights contribute to strengthening the ties between them, insofar as they are the realisation of all other types of

⁵⁶ See id.

⁵⁷ See id.

⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 157-158.

rights. This – on one hand. Another thing is that political rights are the principled basis of the democratic system and such basic values in respect of which the authorities are really obliged to limit themselves, since they are conditioned by the natural equality and inherent freedom of man (as a guarantee of the democratic organization of the political system of society). And third, they (rights) involve citizens in active political activity, since their right to participate in state and public affairs is a fundamental principle in the relationship between the state and its citizens.⁵⁹

As an important criterion for the democratic character of the state, political rights should actually protect and enable the participation of the individual in the political process. Among these rights, the following are most often mentioned:⁶⁰ the right to an opinion (expressed by speech, sound, image or otherwise) and the prohibition of censorship; the constitutional ability to seek, receive and impart information; the active and passive right to vote; the right to participate in popular consultations; the right to political association; the right to assemble, rally and demonstrate; the right to petition; the right to hold public office; the right to hold the state accountable for its illegal acts and actions, etc.

In synthesis, political rights are the foundation of all other types of rights in a democratic state governed by the rule of law and the alpha and omega of **political equality** in society, without which we cannot speak of enforcing and respecting any legal, statutory and constitutional order at all.

In contrast to economic equality, in clarifying political equality it is very difficult to measure with precise criteria its basic nature, because there are no material indicators (income, property, distribution) with which to adequately determine political equality (although constitutions contain criteria for this). And despite this indisputable fact, some worthwhile definitions of political equality can be found here and

⁵⁹ See *id.*

⁶⁰ See for example: **Kiselova**, N. *Op. cit.*, pp. 158-159; **Stoychev**, St. *Constitutional Law*. Fifth supplemented edition. Sofia: Ciela, 2022, pp. 253-260; **Tanchev**, E. *Introduction to constitutional law*. Part 1. Sofia: Sibi, 2003, p. 392; **Political Rights under Stress in XXI Century Europe**. Ed. In the field of Political Rights in the XXI century. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 2-3; etc.

there in the specialized literature. In this sense, we will dwell on one of them before expressing our opinion on this concept. For example, according to **Assoc. Prof. D. Gribachev, political equality** is an equal social position of human individuals and social groups (classes, communities, collectives) in the socio-political life of society, which finds its most definite expression in the equal political rights and obligations of all people and social groups in the governance of the state and society (through the implementation of various forms of democracy).⁶¹ What is valuable in this case is that it is about the equal social status of human individuals and the equal political rights and duties of all people and social groups in the state and in society.

Starting from this meaningful formulation of the concept under consideration, let us deepen and broaden the definitional interpretation of political equality from a political science perspective.

In our view, **political equality is the equal (same) position of people in the socio-political life of society, which is manifested in equal political rights, duties and responsibilities of human individuals and social groups to achieve political equality (and representation) in the exercise of state power and governance in democratic political systems.**

The brief scientific definition of political equality put forward in this form, however true and precise it may be in scientific terms, inevitably needs several theoretical interpretations. In this context, and without any claim to strict scientific precision, this definition of the nature of political equality can be characterized by three distinctive points: 1) the concept thus presented has a distinctly civilizational characteristic, because political equality represents a long-standing universal human value, realized gradually after the Great French Revolution; 2) the concept contains a complex of political rights that determine its content, such as: the right to opinion (political); the right to choose (to elect and be elected); the right to participate in the political process (directly in government and indirectly in referenda); the right to information (media, print, electronic); the right to association (political); the right to public manifestations (assemblies, rallies, demonstrations); the

⁶¹ See **Gribachev, D.** Problems of Social Equality. Theory, methodology, history. Habilitation thesis for acquiring the title „Professor“. Plovdiv, 1988, p. 63.

right to hold the state accountable (for corruption, violations, crimes); the right to petition (demands for socio-political change); the right to civil disobedience (in case of non-fulfilment of political promises); and 3) the given definition has another essential component – political equality, which, however, is interpreted as a set of rights and obligations (of course, also responsibilities) for the realization of state power and democratic governance in society.

Incidentally, this characterization of the concept of „political equality“ gives us strong methodological grounds to distinguish broadly between two types of equality in politics – formal and substantive.

Above all, **formal political equality** highlights fundamental rights and freedoms, universal suffrage, every citizen’s right to vote, etc. It is about the regulated civil rights in the constitution and laws of the state, which are valid for every person in the rule of law. It is in this sense that they (rights) in practice realise equality (and enjoying equal rights) between people everywhere in a democratic world.

In contrast to the preceding, **substantive political equality** can be defined in terms of the actual results of the application of the elements of formal equality – quality politicians, MPs, professionals, a prepared administration, effective policies, etc., i.e. good outcomes from the practical implementation of democratic rules, principles and norms in socio-political life. However, these rules are too often not respected and in some cases literally violated, which naturally leads to a neglect of equality in politics, to the manifestation of acute political inequalities and to the disregard of any political justice.

When we interpret political equality, we inevitably encounter the notion of „political justice“, which in many cases is aligned (equated, identified) with the essence of equality in politics. Therefore, here we will examine in a synthesized order some basic dimensions of **political justice**, trying to avoid broad discussions on this topic.⁶²

In his theoretical masterpiece, *A Theory of Justice*, the scholar John Rawls formulated two key principles for the justice of institutions, synthesizing his own definitions, namely:

⁶² The topic of political justice is circumstantially revealed in the specialized literature as follows: **Rawls**, John. Op. cit.; **Dahl**, R. *Democracy and its critics*. Sofia: KH, 2006; **Fotev**, G. Op. cit.; **Blackwell**. Op. cit.; **Basic** terms used in the learning process. Vol. III. Political Science. First edition. Sofia: UNWE, 2011; etc.

First principle. Everyone should have equal rights on the broadest value basis, which includes **equal fundamental freedoms** and which is at the same time compatible with a system of freedom for absolutely all people.

Second principle. Social and economic inequalities should be so arranged that they (a) benefit the least advantaged most in accordance with the principle of equitable savings; and (b) are secured by offices and positions open to all on terms of fair equal opportunity.

In this context, John Rawls also brings out the following priority floats:

First rule. Priority of freedom

Here the principles of liberty must be ranked in a lexical order, and therefore liberty can only be limited in the name of liberty itself. In addition, there are two other cases: a) of a narrower liberty, which should strengthen the overall system of liberty shared by all; and b) of a less than equal liberty, which should be acceptable to those with less liberty.

Second rule. Priority of equity over productivity and welfare

In the second principle of fairness, there is a lexical advantage over the principle of productivity and that of maximizing the relevant amount of benefits; while fair chance takes precedence over the principle of difference. Here, too, there are two distinguishing cases: a) inequality of opportunity, which must be such as to increase the chances of those with less opportunity; and b) an increased amount of saving which, in a balanced way, mitigates the burden of all those who bear the existing hardships.⁶³

Characterizing justice as a kind of equality, John Rawls further argues that the impartial and principled administration of laws and institutions by the authorities gives us every reason to call it „formal justice“. And „if we assume that **justice always expresses some equality** (*emphasis mine – G. M.*), then formal justice requires that in the administration of laws and institutions they should be applied equally (i.e. in the same way) to those belonging to their designated classes“⁶⁴. Or, to put it differently, in his substantive conceptions of justice (including in

⁶³ See **Rawls**, John. Op. cit., pp. 365-366.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

politics) the author foregrounds two fundamental principles – that of liberty and that of equal chances (opportunities) for people to develop their capacities.

Following a similar line of reasoning about justice, we will also highlight the position of **Prof. V. Dramalieva**, who, considering political justice (as a part of social justice), determines its essence as a certain social order related to the establishment, distribution and guarantee of specific civil rights.⁶⁵ Yet, all political justice pursues the achievement of a certain social balance, the protection of human rights, and the opportunities for free choice for citizens.

In this meaningful context, **the concept of „political justice“ can be defined as a form of equality in politics (political equality), which aims at the realization of both civil rights and freedoms and equal (identical) opportunities for individual development of people according to the established social and legal order in a democratic society.** In other words, political justice is both a yardstick, a criterion and a barometer for measuring the quality of political equality in socio-political and moral terms. Moreover, political justice can also be interpreted as one of the essential societal litmus tests for ascertaining the extent of political (and other) inequalities in contemporary states (and societies).

The distinctions and clarifications made so far of important concepts and categories related to the nature of equality in general and of political equality in particular lead quite logically to a fundamental question that has been on people’s minds since the depths of human civilization: **is it right, since we are all equal by nature (natural human rights) and have equal civil and political rights, that one part of people (the empowered) should enjoy privileges at the expense of everyone else in society?**

The answer to this question is too complicated, and we will therefore look for its dimensions in the overall further exposition of this work, and so here we will begin by raising the problem of political oligarchy as the main bearer of a number of privileges in politics over the course of human history.

⁶⁵ See **Basic** terms... Op. cit., p. 412.

3. POLITICAL OLIGARCHY AND PRIVILEGES

It is theoretically known that the basic ideological postulates, definitional essence and structural organization of political oligarchy were developed by the great German scholar **R. Michels** already in the beginning of the XX century. In his remarkable work „Political Parties – A Sociological Study of Oligarchic Tendencies in Modern Democracy“ (1911) he developed his basic thesis that as the need for a higher degree of social organization increases, the forms of organization become more complex, which inexorably leads to the strengthening of oligarchy in general. In this way, organization gradually destroys democracy and degenerates it into oligarchy. Herein lies the essence of the notorious „**iron law of oligarchy**“, which, according to Michels, states, „It is the organization that gives birth to the domination of the elected over the voters, of the recipients over the mandate-givers, of the delegates over the delegates. Whoever says „organization“ says „oligarchy“⁶⁶. The logic of this law is dictated both by the canons of political struggle and by the party-organizational structure, where certain situations call for quick decisions by leaders (and party elites) without consulting the masses. This sharply reinforces the role of party leadership (and elitism) and organizational-technical leadership, which, in addition to narrowing the horizon of democratic mechanisms, also increases the influence of the hierarchical pyramidal structure. For Michels, this logical fact is inevitable because every party seeks to increase its membership and political influence, which is impossible without the help of the hierarchical structure. The „iron law of oligarchy“ is therefore a permanent personnel process that can neither be stopped nor interrupted. Moreover, in contemporary conditions, on the one hand, the influence of party leaders and their power is objectively growing, which feeds the tendency towards hierarchy; on the other hand, the dynamic complexity of the governance process constantly requires the expansion of party elites. Therefore, at different structural levels there is a proliferation of expert party teams, which, through situational and other analyses, serve the ruling (party) minorities. Along with the party elite, Mi-

⁶⁶ **Michels**, R. *Political Parties*. New York: Power Publications, 1959, p. 401.

chels identifies other categories of elite strata associated with it – financial, industrial, cultural, ecclesiastical, trade union, etc. Relying on the „iron hierarchy and organization“ that has been inferred, Michels concludes that a highly centralized apparatus and a hierarchically organized bureaucracy have been established within the parties and their governing bodies. Thus, in practice, the party itself is divided into a **ruling minority and a ruled majority**, which is the deepest essence of the „iron law of oligarchy“.

Michels' reflections on the relationship between **party leaders and the membership** are also of major interest. According to Michels, the rank-and-file of the party are unable to govern on their own and therefore rely on their leaders, elected through a representative democratic function. But in most cases these interests are degenerated by the leaders themselves as they are squeezed in the vise of the iron oligarchy. This is because policy decisions are made only by party leaders (and organs), and the membership is not interested in participating directly in this process. And another thing, even if the so-called „indivisible“ goods provided by the parties to the members and supporters are partially satisfied, the leaders always highlight this fact as their own private affair. On this basis, every achievement of the parties and organisations is attributed to the party leaders, which gradually detaches them from the masses, pushing them towards an unbridled aspiration for high office, and which is almost always linked to the use of some or other privileges. Explaining political leadership in terms of psychological factors and causes, Michels argues that it is due to certain important qualities – the ability to govern, the power of suggestion, the mastery of apparatus gossip, the flexibility in party coteries, etc. Such qualities of leadership are countered by the incompetence of the great mass of the people, who awe their leaders in anxious anticipation of their „magic“ words. Michels's magnificent analysis of the cult of party leaders is illustrated by a host of facts from the European socialist movement at the end of the last and the beginning of the present century.

Exploring the correlation between political leaders and party masses, Michels identifies two very important and mutually reinforcing phenomena that still exist today: One is expressed in the natural psychological need of the masses to be led, to be enchanted by that leadership, and especially to express their immense gratitude to it; and the

second is the granite basis of the cult of the leader, of his cronies, and of the party elite as a whole, which is another variety of the „iron law of oligarchy“. All in all, Michels believes that even the most democratic chieftains become „deproletarianised“ and „anti-democratised“ over time, because the operation of the law is inexorable and the functioning of the parties is concentrated in the hands of a select party elite. And extrapolating his theory to parliamentarism and democratic principles in general, Michels not only harshly criticizes the whole mechanism of popular power and its flaws, but also predicts the end of democracy as a logical consequence of the emergence of professional politicians.⁶⁷

In spite of the many criticisms of the concept of the oligarchic elite, Michels's „iron law“ continues to be a legitimate attribute of current modern political life, despite the different degrees of its manifestation in different countries and political regimes (democratic and non-democratic).

The Russian philosopher **N. Berdyaev** has similar views on oligarchy, arguing the following with his inherent sharp critical thinking: **„From the creation of the world until today, the minority has always ruled, and will rule, and not the majority. This applies to all forms and types of government, to monarchies and democracies, to reactionary and revolutionary epochs. There is no way out of minority rule. Your democratic attempts to create a kingdom of the majority are actually a pathetic self-deception. The only question is whether the better or worse minority rules. One minority is replaced by another. And that's it. The worse bring down the better or the better bring down the worse. There can be no immediate rule and domination of the human mass, it is only possible as a moment of spontaneous mass influx in revolutions and revolts. But very quickly differentiation is established and a new minority forms and seizes power. In revolutionary epochs, a group of demagogues usually rules, deftly exploiting the instincts of the masses. Revolutionary governments that consider themselves popular and democratic are always tyrannies of the minority. And all too rarely is that minority a selection of the best. The revolutionary bureaucracy usually stands even lower than the old bureaucracy**

⁶⁷ See the detailed elaboration of this theory in **Manolov, G.** *The Political Elite...* Op. cit., pp. 120-124.

which the revolution overthrows. And the revolutionary mass is always only an atmosphere for carrying out the tyranny of the minority⁶⁸ (*emphasis mine* – G. M.). In this sense, although extreme in some respects, the Russian scholar's reflections are very accurate and true, because, as he puts it, in democracy, aristocracy, ochlocracy, etc., politics is always dominated by the few, i.e., by the oligarchy, because such is the irrefutable law of nature (on account of the domination of all).

At the risk of briefly departing from the logic of this presentation, we will point out that there are still „theoretical“ writings about oligarchy (including political oligarchy), which with their pompous titles completely mislead the uninformed reader. Such is the work „The Oligarchization of Politics“⁶⁹, which contains a whole host of false premises, definitions and weaknesses, such as: 1) the inaccurate assertion that Plato was the first to justify oligarchy as a form of government, because Socrates did so before him; 2) the unspecific statement that „liberalism is the basic ideology of capitalism“, as if conservatism, Christian Democracy, etc. are not „capitalist ideologies“. 3) the false thesis that the class Marxist approach treats the oligarchy as a separate class, because even Lenin in *Imperialism as the Highest and Final Stage of Capitalism* speaks of a finance-capitalist oligarchy, but only as a part, constituent and element of the capitalist class; 4) the incorrect view that all political decisions are undemocratic in their entirety because, you see, they reflect the business interests of big business because they served the interests of big business (as if governments were business corporations and not political institutions); 5) the vulgar view that in the US today the „enemies of the people“ are no longer the rich, but judges, professors and other professionals(!!!), without pointing out since when intellectuals became the terrible „enemies of the people“, only noting that ordinary people wanted to get rich and therefore hated people of intellectual labor; 6) the absurd misconception that corruption was the offspring of capitalism as a system – something that hardly needs to be refuted, because history gives us tens of thousands of examples of corruption schemes before the advent of capitalism, regardless of the na-

⁶⁸ **Berdyayev**, N. *Philosophy of Inequality*. First edition. Sofia: Prozorets, pp. 95-96.

⁶⁹ See **Tsakova**, Ivka. *The Oligarchization of Politics*. Dissertation for the degree of PhD in Political Science. Sofia: UNWE, 2019, p. 488.

ture of political regimes; 7) the unsubstantiated view that the oligarchization of politics has manifested itself as an expertocracy (the power of experts), in which they (the experts) „make“ the decisions under the dictates of the oligarchs rather than the institutions and organs of state power; and a mass of other scholarly balderdash.

Among the many glaring inaccuracies and incorrect views, we should single out another strikingly unsuccessful attempt to characterize oligarchic power in deriving the definition of this power, namely: oligarchic power is „concentrated personal material monopoly complex, structured in different networks and hierarchies, anonymous and shadow power, viewed through the prism of the „three faces of power“ and by analytically distinguishing its three main dimensions – economic, political and ideological“ (p. 280). It is more than evident that this definition is an incongruous compilation of others' opinions (of which only three are the author's own), which can very hardly be likened to any definition of the term „oligarchic power“ of its own, despite undisguised claim to „the author's innovation“.

Moreover, the author claims that its main contribution is the creation of the so-called „conceptual model of oligarchization of politics“ in three parts: a) terminological clarifications; b) the process of oligarchization in three spheres – economic, political and socio-cultural (ideological); c) the conditional result of the process – oligarchic takeover of the state and its three powers – the legislative, executive and judicial. However, this claim is groundless, because the model is incomplete and irrational, because no real or new terminological clarifications have been made in it, and because the proposed interpretations of the terms „oligarchy“, „plutocracy“, etc. go no further than what Socrates, Plato and Aristotle determined, i.e. „There is and can be absolutely no theoretical contribution here in terms of clarifying, refining and determining concepts. This – on one hand. Next, the model as a process of oligarchization in three spheres (economic, political, socio-cultural, or ideological) has been examined palliatively, fragmentarily and sporadically due to the fact that entire historical epochs (feudalism, for example) and large historical stretches of time (the years of totalitarianism in the XX century) have not been analyzed, which means only one thing: a broken socio-historical continuum and superficiality of the problem under study. Plus, the presentation of the oligarchy in the economic sphere

does not capture the new trends in the development of this sector (innovation, IT technologies, robotization, artificial intelligence, modern management, etc.) which, although to varying degrees, are decisively changing the behavior of the oligarchy in general. Finally, the so-called „oligarchization of politics“ hardly defines, analyzes and explores the role and place of the political oligarchy as a social phenomenon on which qualitative political decisions and their translation into life depend to a significant extent. Therefore, the „new“ conceptual model of oligarchization of politics in the contemporary world proposed and loudly proclaimed in the work does not have the necessary scientific merits and can even less claim to be some kind of general theory of oligarchy, which are the absolutely unfounded claims of the author.

This blatant mediocrity is strongly opposed by Professor Maxim Mizov, who, relying on solid arguments, writes the following: „I cannot agree with Ivka Tsakova’s thesis that „Pareto’s concept of „circulation of elites“ implies a certain renewal of the elite with elements of an unorganized majority, but this does not call into question the elite’s monopoly over power. No matter how significant the new elements are in quantitative and qualitative terms, they cannot replace the old core of the elite. (...) The renewed elite retains its monopoly over political power, and the new elements in it cannot be seen as political representatives of the unorganized mass“⁷⁰. If it were so, there would be no new eras and new societies in history equipped with new elites. Neither the quantitative nor, even more, the qualitative „*transfers*“ of new elements are irrelevant, which – contrary to Tsakova’s thesis – with a certain *transfer of measure* are able to question, but also radically change the subject, the holder and the user of the monopoly of political power. To avoid looking for other examples, let us content ourselves with the classic rotation at the pinnacles of power after the French Revolution of 1789, in which the representatives of the *third estate* who entered parliament not only did not lose their identity and become mutants of the class identity of the aristocrats who had hitherto held the monopoly of power, but, on the contrary, forced the aristocrats to renounce their origins, their names and their status and to ascribe to themselves entirely new names and surnames, and to change from royalists to republicans,

⁷⁰ Tsakova, I. Oligarchization of Politics. Sofia: UNWE, 2020, p. 150.

and so on. The fact that in all epochs and types of societies there are always subjects who try to acquire *a monopoly* over the resources of power is indisputable, but it does not mean that the change of these subjects does not have serious consequences in its wake, some of which are closely linked to the identity of those who lose or gain power, by which is meant not only personal, but above all class, ideological and other identity. Bourgeois who enter parliament do not become aristocrats, but aristocrats *masquerade as bourgeois* in order to survive, albeit formally, by publicly losing their former aristocratic *identity* and status. And furthermore, Tsakova's thesis contradicts that of Pareto, who, on the one hand, perpetuates the power of elites and, on the other hand, grimly describes or interprets the historical tragedy of aristocracies that not only change their identity during their historical ups, apogee and downs, but also completely, and irrevocably, disappear into nothingness, which is tantamount to their former identity"⁷¹.

In fact, perhaps the most accurate assessment of such shallow but pretentious „writings“ comes from researcher Michel Maffesoli, who notes with alarm, „There are more and more those who have nothing to say, but who say it out loud. This is precisely what it seeks to impose. A repulsive ideology in which mediocrity and domination (...) are entangled in an incestuous spasm“⁷².

Forgive them, Lord, for they can only do so much! – we will conclude.

After this brief digression, returning to the point, we will point out again that one of the most significant structural components of the global composition of the ruling class is the **political oligarchy**. **It represents a limited and narrow circle of the leading elite in society (elected by the top party elite), or such a limited minority in which virtually all political power is concentrated. In other words, the political oligarchy is the nucleus of any system of government and the class on which the correctness or incorrectness of decisions depends most, because in the hands of the oligarchy are concentrated a significant part of the basic resources of power. That is to say, there is an over-concentration of power in the hands of a small group of people who come from the omnipresent party oligarchy.**

⁷¹ See Mizov, M. Op. cit., pp. 326-327.

⁷² Maffesoli, M. The rhythm of life. Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2011, p. 12.

The position of the dominant oligarchic circle of people in power in relation to the governed stems from a principle that **M. Weber** calls the „advantage of small numbers“⁷³, or the real possibility for the dominant minority to more quickly agree and take one or another important political decision. It is mainly on this basis that the oligarchic groups in politics organise themselves into superelites almost uncontrolled by anyone, insofar as they are absolutely always united around their respective **political leaders**. As a rule, these micro-elites are composed primarily of the highest party functionaries occupying responsible leadership positions in the various political parties, or the so-called „**senior party oligarchy**“. Thus, in the face of the leading party vanguard and the personnel proposals drawn up by it after elections, the dominant part of the senior political minority in all institutions of power is generally formed (and this mainly by the party oligarchy) the dominant part of the senior political minority in all institutions of power. This – on one hand. Another – in modern democratic societies there is a relative openness of political oligarchies, which is expressed in attracting new members to the narrow circle of the ruling minority – party leaders, elected functionaries, prominent intellectuals, trade union leaders, etc. Usually, these representatives of the various elite minorities in society (academics, experts, specialists) are close to the ruling oligarchy or the party in power, and are therefore included in the entire corps of senior rulers without fundamentally changing the functional nature of the political oligarchy.

If, however, we were to specify **the composition of the ruling political oligarchy** at the first, structural, level, we would distinguish it according to the wielding of power into four distinct parts: **1) partyocracy** – consisting of senior party leaders and executives, or the so-called „party oligarchy“ (one of the most essential and close to the political oligarchy supports), which almost merges with the actual political oligarchy, because there is usually a spillover and interchangeability in power according to the electoral cyclicity, and which party oligarchy, according to M. Duverger usually takes three oligarchic forms – a ruling elite, a closed caste and an inner circle;⁷⁴ **2) a proper oligarchy**, which

⁷³ **Weber**, M. Op. cit., p. 118.

⁷⁴ See **Duverger**, M. Political Parties. Moscow: Academic Project, 2000, p. 205.

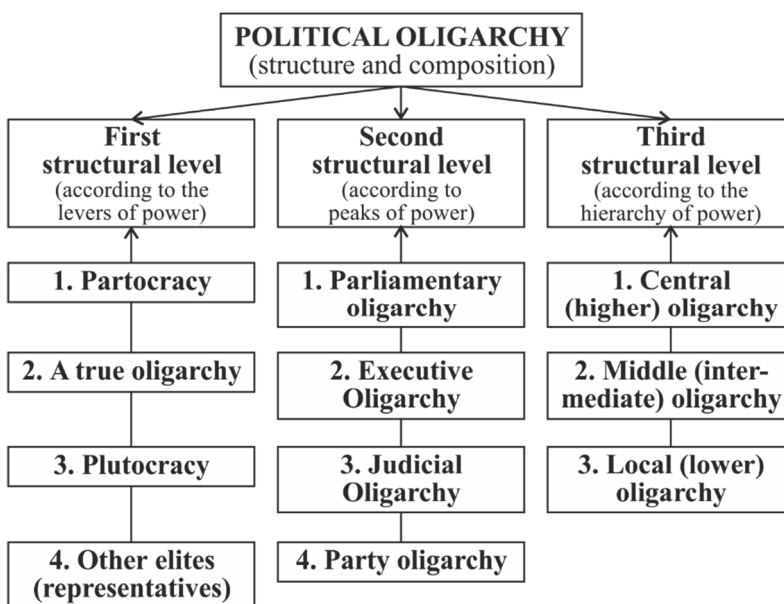
is characterized by the fact that for it politics is a particular kind of professional activity, where key state power resources and positions are wielded – a very lucrative craft and an inexhaustible source of privileges of various kinds; **3) the plutocracy** – that is, the constituents of the political oligarchy who enrich themselves by their continued (or not) presence in power; and **4) representatives of other social elites** – economic, financial, intellectual, etc., included in the tides of power depending on their loyalty to the oligarchy proper. **Taken together, the four parts of the authentic political oligarchy represent its qualitative and quantitative composition (about several thousand people) in the first and highest degree (level) of manifestation of this oligarchy in the political system of society.**

To be even more precise, we should also distinguish **another structural-institutional level**, which is determined only by the top of the power vertical in both political parties and state institutions. At this second, functional, level, several types of oligarchic constituents develop – **parliamentary oligarchy, executive oligarchy, judicial oligarchy, party oligarchy, etc.**, which both qualitatively and functionally can be counted among the entire composition of the political minority, despite the fact that a part of them **permanently figures** in the high echelons of power (the non-removable senior magistrates). As for the other part – **the replaceable oligarchy** (in accordance with the mandate principle), when it is not in power, it still remains in the composition of the higher oligarchy – the party oligarchy, but only until the next election, although some personal (oligarchic) changes are not excluded. However, whether or not personnel changes are made within the party oligarchy, they do not fundamentally change the nature and meaning of this structural distinction.

There is also a **third degree of differentiation of the political oligarchy**, resulting from the pyramidal structure of power, which includes **three new oligarchic units: the central one** – encompassing all other oligarchic strata, such as the administrative (deputy ministers, heads of state departments, etc.), managerial (managers of large state firms), military (senior generals), etc., who, albeit indirectly, are nevertheless linked to the oligarchy proper, because they implement its political decisions, and it is in this capacity that they are a specific oligarchic component; **the middle (intermediate) unit** – comprising a small

number of regional governors, district chairmen, judges, prosecutors, etc.; and **a local unit** – at the level of the municipality, where a thin oligarchic layer is formed, which includes mostly heads of local state power, mayors, chairmen of municipal councils, as well as some other „small“ grandees. Here too, like at the second higher level, all sorts of personnel changes are possible (and are taking place), but they do not play a significant role in changing the status of the derived structure of the oligarchy (the third tier) anyway, since both structural units are an important personnel reserve for recruiting new persons into the composition of the actual political minority (see *Diagram No. 2*).

Diagram No. 2. Composition and structure of the political oligarchy



Source: *Manolov, The political elite... Op. cit., p. 171.*

As it is understood, there are complex correlations between the proper political oligarchy and its three differentiated degrees – direct and indirect, vertical and horizontal, partisan and non-partisan, etc. Despite their complexity and complication, however, the „functional“ dominance of the political oligarchy is not at all hampered because it is marked by the characteristics already mentioned – power resources,

political privileges and accumulated wealth. A hardly controversial and unchangeable argument from the point of view of the nature of the dominant (political) minority, which not coincidentally led the brilliant Aristotle in antiquity to define oligarchy not so much as a form, but as a bad form of government, in which the rule of a handful of rich people degenerates the existence of the whole society.

From the above scheme it is evident that **the top political oligarchy at all three structural levels is the key holder and possessor of various kinds of privileges**, since they (the privileges) not only rightfully belong to this oligarchy, but the oligarchy alone can define, distribute and consume them in the state.

How is political oligarchy maintained, developed and renewed? This is done with the help of different **political layers** that permanently feed the formed minority elite. Specifically in the Bulgarian language, the significance of the term „layer“ points us primarily to the so-called „hierarchical aspect“. Moreover, „not only and not only on the grouping into something common, into some individual whole, but especially on the fact of hierarchical, with different rank on the social vertical inequality in relation to other entities of the same type and kind“⁷⁵. In this case, the derivation of hierarchy as the basic essence of the term „layer“ is also very important for the definition of the political layer as a whole.

From such positions, **the political stratum is a small or large group of people, which includes both a narrow circle of highly qualified specialists and experts from the respective hierarchy, and a significant number of party political activists from different social spheres (and elites), directly serving to one degree or another all constituents of the ruling class.**

A significant weakness of most studies of political strata is that they are hardly interpreted from a genetic-historical perspective. This weakness, however, has been overcome since **Max Weber**, who, in his justification of his thesis on professional politicians, meticulously elaborated the question of political strata. He points out that even in the formation of professional politicians, the rulers of the time drew on **five types of political strata** in their struggle with the masses: the first of

⁷⁵ **Tilkidzhiev**, A. Introduction to the Problematics. Social stratification and inequality. Sofia: M-&-M, 1998, p. 18.

these was **the clergy in the Middle Ages**, who were very knowledgeable and literate people – priests, bishops, Buddhists, etc., and continuously engage in political activity; the second layer are the so-called „**humanities-educated scribes**“, or those who trained themselves to deliver speeches in Latin and write verses in Greek in order to become political advisers or compilers of memoranda for some ruler; the third layer comprises the ubiquitous **court aristocracy**, who were used for political and diplomatic service, some of them later becoming professional politicians; the fourth layer is a specifically English creature called the „**patriciate**“, comprising petty nobles and town rentiers, who are „cast“ by the ruler to fight against the barons, and to participate in the offices of local self-government against the bureaucracy; and the last, fifth, layer consists of the **university-educated jurists** of Western Europe, who, as professional experts, absolutely everywhere revolutionized political life in the direction of the rational state.⁷⁶

The conclusion here is unequivocal: the value of Weber's work is immense because his analysis of the origins and character of political strata concerns the whole of human civilization from ancient India, China and Japan to capitalist England in the XVIII century, and in the context of the initial process of the formation of modern political parties on the European continent at that time.

Unlike the political oligarchy and the ruling elite, the various political layers are not homogeneous and much less often participate in the power hierarchy because they usually have a different, nuanced, purpose. Their main duty is to serve the political elite and the oligarchy with various kinds of expert and other activities (development of documents, programmes and platforms, drafting of decisions, carrying out analyses, etc.), while their secondary function is to be the personnel reserve of this or that party-political elite.

„Within the political layer – writes the famous political scientist **R. Dahl** – there is a considerable degree of specialization...“, because the members of this layer are by no means a homogeneous group „...and there are huge differences between them not only in the volume but also in the form of participation in political life“. Moreover,

⁷⁶ See in detail **Weber**, M. The scientist and the politician. Introduction by Raymond Aron. Sofia: Eon-2000, 2000, pp. 69-72.

„within the political stratum, some individuals seek to influence the governance of the state much more vigorously than others...“ which practically forms two types of people within the stratum: one of „...aspirants to influence, and the other of influential leaders“⁷⁷.

The laconic substantive characterization of the political strata carried out by R. Dahl directly points us to the core of the problem of the **different types of layers** (political) and their essential purpose in modern democratic society. This problem also has another important dimension, because through its clarification it is possible to gain even deeper insight into the specific relations characteristic of one or another layer, and into the internal dynamics of the processes taking place within the ruling class, as well as into the continuous restructuring of the political layers and the renewal of their own structures in accordance with the demands of political life.

In a more substantive scientific sense, the various categories and layers of the political class can be differentiated according to three main typological criteria – structural-functional characteristics, degree of participation in political life, and number of participants in the respective layers.

In terms of **the structural-functional criterion**, the political layers of the ruling class are of **three types: inner layers** – consisting of the innermost circle of (and around) the party oligarchy and elite in the face of the party apparatus, experts and specialists, including senior party officials, who have a dual nature, insofar as some of them are representatives of the oligarchy and at the same time perform expert-advisory functions; **outer layers** – composed exclusively of representatives of other social elites (economic, financial, intellectual, scientific, cultural, etc.), performing under certain conditions various service activities, assisting on an expert basis the politico-oligarchic elite, some of whom at certain moments can and do become representatives of the political elite itself; **and intermediate (or boundary) layers**, the composition of which is difficult to define with precision, because these layers include members of both the inner and outer layers, depending on the specific political conjuncture and the flexibility of the political elite to use them as rationally as possible for the sake of its cause. The most

⁷⁷ Dahl, R. Contemporary political analysis. Sofia: Kl. Ohridski, 1996, pp. 139-141.

important feature of the intermediate layers is that they are continuously spilling over, now to the outer layers, now to the inner layers (less frequently), which is a clear indicator of the internal restructuring of the layers according to the dynamics of political life.

According to the criterion of „**degree of participation in political life**“, the layers should be subdivided into two types: **permanent (active) layers**, or those who, in one form or another, are actively involved (almost without interruption) and support the political elite through their specialized units – sociological agencies, research institutes, consulting houses, express analysis groups, etc.; **and temporary (passive) layers**, which sporadically serve the political elite, activating their activities only on specific occasions, for example by participating in the preparation of election campaigns of political parties. The activity of these layers is very important as it reinforces the expert-professional basis in politics through the scientific service of ruling elites.

And depending on the **quantitative criterion**, the various political strata included in the ruling class's boundary range could also be differentiated into **two other peculiar types: the few (narrow)**, i.e. layers built mostly and only on an expert basis, starting from experts working elsewhere but close to the respective political force and ending with the attraction of elite intellectuals for individual participation in the elaboration of important issues needed by the political elite; **and numerous (extended) layers**, which, in addition to leading specialists in various fields, also include en masse a multitude of supporters, activists and other associates of the political elite (and the political force), helping one or another political party either in the organization of large rallies and demonstrations, or during election campaigns, or at any similar public and non-public events. Interesting data on the scope of these political layers, the few and the many, are put forward by the American scholars Verba and Nye, who argue that in the USA, for example, about 3/4 of the adult population can be counted among them⁷⁸ (the layers) because they are actively involved in various political activities.

In conclusion, we will point out that **there is no Chinese wall erected between the different political layers despite their strict specialization and concrete activities, mainly determined by the**

⁷⁸ Citation: Ibid., p. 140.

specificity and self-construction of the diverse types of layers. They (the layers) bear all the internally contradictory features (positive and negative) of the ruling class, are influenced by the political situation in a given country, and therefore often spill over into each other – from the outside in and from the inside out – without this radically changing their nature and meaning that processes of disintegration or consolidation around other politico-oligarchic circles and elites are impossible.

Such is, in our view, the relatively more comprehensive „structural-functional philosophy“ of the political class and its main constituent elements, presented in a more general methodological perspective that draws on the dynamic political processes and emerging regularities in politics in contemporary democratic societies.

But if we want to look even deeper into the essential aspects of the ruling class, and especially its constituent parts – the political elite, the oligarchy and the strata, we should also highlight some **more specific features inherent in the different elements (of the class)** in the global content of this class. Or, the „center of gravity“ here will fall on the most essential distinctions of each element individually, insofar as they are all linked to a single and common basis – power.

One significant feature is of utmost importance because it is about the **great role and place of political leaders (and leadership)** in the implementation of the whole governance process, in the implementation of various policies and strategies, in the circulation of political elites, etc. In essence, political leaders represent not only an organic element of the ruling class, but also the most important and fundamental engine of the „ship of state“, which is why special attention should always be paid to them.

And the other distinctive feature of the political class can be reduced to the following: **while the dominant political minority is extremely conservative and not susceptible to significant changes in personnel, the political elite (and especially its layers) is considerably more open in terms of its changeability and renewal** due to the fact that different power resources are wielded in terms of their strength and importance – in the case of the oligarchy the largest, and in the case of the elite and layers smaller. This explains the excessive

„closedness“ of the political oligarchy in contrast to the relatively more „open“ character of the political elite and the layers circling around it.

From the above-mentioned peculiarity arises another, which refers to the different types of **political strata, in which we can observe the development of a peculiar process of „contraction and dissolution“ of their social (and quantitative) composition depending on the goals set by the party headquarters and oligarchies, the changed political conjuncture, the new political tasks, etc.** That is to say, in the case of the layers, a significantly more dynamic „staff streamlining“ emerges, which has at least two purposes: one allows the oligarchy and the elite to select and surround themselves with an appropriate (from their point of view) composition of heterogeneous specialists in the various spheres of life; and the other enables the same oligarchy to flexibly juggle and always get rid of such experts (and other representatives of the layers) that it no longer needs. This is also how a **specific, we could call it, manipulated internal restructuring and movement of the cadres (and some of the elite) within the political class is practically carried out, according to the following scheme: from the distant expert layers, through the ruling elite, to the ruling oligarchy and vice versa** (when inconvenient or compromised politicians are released). **That is to say, a specific rotational system of several concentric circles emerges, in which, despite the democratic character of its relative openness, access to the heights of power by representatives of the layers, by some of the political elite and, in general, by new, highly qualified people almost always takes place only with the blessing of the political oligarchy proper.**

So, having thus far synthesized some fundamental concepts, terms and categories directly relevant to the problem at hand, let us now turn and focus our attention to the next chapter of the present study – on the nature, differentiation and classification of political privilege.

Chapter Two

POLITICAL PRIVILEGES AS A PHENOMENON

The history of human civilization is littered with numerous facts, evidences and examples of how different societies function, through what vicissitudes the development of state institutions passes, how original human rights and freedoms evolve, etc. Yet, especially in science, the question of the origin and status of political privilege as a social phenomenon has not been studied in more detail and depth. For this reason, we will here concentrate our attention in a more comprehensive interpretation of the phenomenon of political privilege (definition, classification, characterization, peculiarities) in an attempt to reveal as fully as possible its real historical, political and social manifestations.

1. NATURE OF POLITICAL PRIVILEGES

Before embarking on our „theoretical journey“, it would be useful to recall that while there are dozens of studies, monographs, and publications on the various types of civil rights (political, economic, social, etc.), there is a paucity of bibliography on the various political privileges. This state of affairs is somewhat explicable, because a not insignificant number of researchers, for example, organically link power to privilege and vice versa, and thus political privileges are assumed to be an immanent, intrinsic, and natural attribute (and product) of power, and hence conclusions are drawn about their genetic origins. This – first. Second, not a few specialists believe that privilege itself has always been a function of power, and that it is therefore „rightly“ due to politicians as somehow theirs. Third, there are those experts who unequivocally argue that privilege in politics is nothing but an important structural element of power. Fourthly, it is also a popular view among some scholars that, as perquisites of power, political privileges are a mechanism for extracting all sorts of personal benefits from senior state politicians. Fifth, particularly popular and generally accepted in a

number of social circles is the notion that privileges are some sort of regulated right, i.e. that „rights“ and „privileges“ are identical concepts (and as such are due to politicians). And sixth, extremely widespread in the mass public consciousness is the notion that the struggle for power, and power itself, is a „battle“ for as many privileges, benefits and advantages as possible in politics. That is, understood as a sign, mark, symbol and emblem of power, political privilege is most often conceived as either a salient component of power, or a personal benefit of power, or both combined. This generalized expert and civic expression of the nature of privilege is as true as it is incomplete, insofar as it one-sidedly interprets the deeper nature of political privilege. We will therefore take a much more circumstantial look at the very notion of privilege in etymological and theoretical terms, and then derive its nature and characterization.

The term „**privilege**“ (*privilegium* – from *privus* – outside, and *les, leges* – law) has Latin origin and its literal semantics means „something that is outside the law“. In different dictionaries, reference books and materials the interpretation of privilege is not unambiguous, so we will cite only some of the more important sources here: 1) for example, in the Glossary of Basic Terms of Roman Law, privilege has a legal character and applies only to a certain category of persons or group of persons; 2) in another legal source we find the following more circumstantial interpretation of privilege as a concept: a law that applies only to one person; a special right (privilege) in favour of certain categories of persons (mainly the more educated); special rights of inheritance¹ Along with this, in social practice this term has acquired a civil meaning and legitimacy as some exclusive right and advantage of a particular subject (person, persona, group, class) over certain material possessions (things and objects) and spiritual goods (values and benefits). This

¹ See successively **Dunand**, Jean-Philippe, Pascal Pichon. Roman Law. A glossary of basic terms. Second revised and supplemented edition. Sofia: Ciela, 2010, p. 214; **Bartoszek**, M. Roman Law. Concepts, Terms, Definitions. Moscow: Yuridicheskaya literatura, 1989, pp. 259-260; **Modern** Western Sociology. Dictionary. Compiled by: Davidov, Yu. N., M. S. Kovaleva, A. F. Filipov. Moscow: Political Literature, 1990, p. 275; *Politics* – In: *Dictionary/Толковый словарь*. Originally published by Oxford University Press. Edited by Iain Maclean. Moscow: Infra-M; All the World/ Весь мир, 2001, pp. 500-501; and **Attali**, Jacques. A Dictionary for the Twentieth Century. Sofia: LIK, 2000, p. 190.

civic sense, however, is far and away not to imply that this is the generally accepted and correct conception of the nature of privilege in society. On the contrary, from a theoretical point of view, there are a number of ambiguities, disputes and uncertainties about the definition of privilege (in social, legal, political, etc. terms), and we will therefore briefly set out some of the more substantive views on this issue.

It is a remarkable fact that the great **Aristotle**, in his unrivalled „Politics“, when discussing oligarchy, unequivocally stresses that it is characterised by two main types of property censuses – a lower and a higher one. Citizens with lower censuses must run for ordinary offices, and those with higher censuses for the more important ones. „He who possesses the necessary census“, he writes, „should be able to have civil rights, and through the census such a number of people of the people should be admitted into the number of citizens (*i.e., the political elite – my note, G. M.*) that the citizens should be stronger than those who have no civil rights. But these citizens must always be accepted by the better part of the people“². Or, according to the ancient thinker, the property census represented a concrete expression of the political privileges of the time, despite the well-known fact that Aristotle was not a supporter of the oligarchic form of government.

In the medieval era, one of the most radical political thinkers, such as the Frenchman **Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès**, in his pamphlets „An Essay on Privilege“ (1788) and „What is this Third Estate?“ (1789) categorically rejected the privileges of the nobility as totally unjust and completely contrary to the generally stated social goals. At the same time, abbot Sieyès defines the notion of privileges, those who are privileged, and privileged strata as follows: by „privileged“ is meant anyone who goes beyond the common law, either because he claims not to be subject to the common law at all, or because he claims exclusive rights, since any privilege is by its nature unjust, hateful, and contrary to the social contract. Besides, a privileged class is to the nation what private benefits are to the citizen, and like them it cannot be represented at all. But even this is not enough, for a privileged class is to the nation what private benefits are to the citizen,

² Aristotle. Op. cit., pp. 186-187.

and when it abolishes them the legislature does its duty. This juxtaposition constitutes the last distinction, namely, that a private benefit harmful to others is at least beneficial to him who possesses it, while a privileged class is a scourge to the nation which endures it. Put another way, to arrive at a more accurate comparison, it is necessary to view the privileged class in the nation as the terrible disease eating away at the living flesh on the body of the unfortunate.³ It is therefore by the nature of privilege that the privileged have become the real enemies of the common interest, and cannot naturally be entrusted with its preservation, the author concludes. That is to say, as early as the XVIII century, abbot Sieyès defined privilege as something corrupting society because it was harmful and immoral.

In his popular reflections on the Old Regime and the French Revolution, the famous liberal theorist **Alexis de Tocqueville** strongly believed that the privileges of the nobility were their exclusive rights, which distinguished and elevated them above other citizens, and which could be easily discovered because they were inherited from their fathers⁴ or received from the king. These rights are of various natures, political, economic, etc., and are perpetually increasing, such as tax reductions, military privileges, etc.

The great German philosopher **Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel** was also not indifferent to privilege, paying special attention to the privileges of the peasantry and their modifications in the bourgeois society of the time. He categorically rejected (criticizing the idea of noble privileges) the state order that should allow them in the realization of the so-called „common good“ in the state. From these positions G. Hegel lays out his thesis about the nature of privileges in contemporary debates (about them) as follows:

1) Privileges are to be understood as the rights of a branch of civil society grouped in a corporation, entirely distinct from privileges typically understood according to their etymology, due to the fact that the latter are exceptions to the general law (conceived according to contingency, while the former are legal definitions found in the particulars of an essential branch of society).

³ See **Sieyès**, Emmanuel-Joseph. What is the Third Estate? Sofia: Ciela, 2004, pp. 112; 120.

⁴ See **Tocqueville**, Al. de. The former regime and the revolution. Sofia: Izbor, 1992, p. 40.

2) **Privilege**, conceived as the organized specialization of the labor branch of civil society, without **damage to the state order because it constitutes a virtue for it**.

3) **Privilege, understood as an exception to the law** (e.g. tax exemptions or prerogatives to trade), is a pre-modern anachronism that, in the form of a tool for the common good and paternalistic governance of society, „conspires“ against modern political organization where equality before the law can truly crystallize.

4) **Privileges do not ultimately constitute private laws that oppose universal legislation, but rather they are particularizations of it that specify a labor branch of society and at the same time, through corporations, project the particular instances** through which the inorganic elements of society are channeled into the state, and particularly into parliament.⁵ This is why Hegel's conception of privilege, according to D. H. Rosanovich, interpreted as an organic unfolding of the various branches (varieties) of labor, is not only fully compatible with the established order, but is also the ideal instrument for creating the bond between the estates and the corporations, since the criteria by virtue of which it (the bond) functions guarantee the existence of a sense of statehood in their members.⁶ It is evident that G. Hegel succeeded in redefining the notion of privilege from those of the XVIII century by decisively distancing himself from the monarchical legal tradition (concerning privilege) in the context of his views on constitutional monarchy and limited peerage at the time. In doing so, the German philosopher explicitly rejected peerage privileges as anti-state, as incompatible with the idea of organic statehood, and as special rights that interfered with the unity of the state.

In the meantime, we will note that in the turbulent XIX century of social collisions, another categorical interpretation of the problem of privilege was found in the emerging Marxist doctrine. This is evident from the analysis of **K. Marx** of the results of the Paris Commune (1871), who wrote in his essay „The Civil War in France“ that „...the acquired privileges and representative money of the highest dignitaries

⁵ Citation: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/RPUB.54995>.

⁶ See id.

of the state disappeared along with these dignitaries themselves. Public offices ceased to be the private property of the protégés of the central government“⁷. Subsequently, the Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin expressed his unqualified support for this Marxist position, stressing that „the working class is opposed to all privileges“⁸ in socialist society. Or, the theorists of Marxism, without giving any more precise definition of privileges, also have a negative attitude towards them (this does not apply to the two-faced position of V. I. Lenin, which we will clarify later in the exposition).

Much later on the nature of privilege, **Ludwig von Mises** in his famous essay „Foundations of Liberal Politics“ in the XX century argued, „Privilege is an institutional arrangement that benefits individuals or certain groups at the expense of others“ and as such „...exists even though it is to the detriment (...) of the majority (...) and benefits no one except the one for whose benefit it was created...“. That is to say, such a privilege has never „...been anything more than a source of good revenue“⁹. And one more important point: Mises explicitly elaborates that the institutionalization of the privileges of the political elite should not be decided on the basis of whether they are beneficial to a class, group, or individual, but primarily on the basis of the benefit they bring to the whole of society.¹⁰ In other words, there are privileges and **privileges: the former are those which the elite acquire by inheritance in politics, characteristic of the feudal lords in the Middle Ages; while the latter, i.e. the modern ones, should be obtained only if they contribute to the development of the common good in the state or only if the political elite has pushed forward the social evolution of the society concerned.** This is an essential point in today’s conceptions of the nature and meaning of political privilege, for it has always been considered a natural appendage to power, which is ultimately how the so-called „political elite“ is distinguished from all other kinds of elites.

⁷ **Marx**, K., Fr. Engels. Writings. Vol. XVII. Sofia: BCP, 1965, pp. 340-341.

⁸ Citation: **Maltsev**, G. V. Illusions of Equality: Legal Inequality in the World of Capital. Moscow: Мысль/Мысль, 1982, p. 80.

⁹ **Mises**, L. von. Foundations of liberal politics. – In: *Philosophies of Capitalism*. Sofia: Pero, 1996, p. 142.

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 143.

As a sophisticated scholar of the history of the French Revolution, the famous scholar **François Furet** also defined the phenomenon of privilege in the following way: privilege is the inalienable right of a group to central authority, to the privileged status of a city, to the rules of cooptation in a corporation, and to the tax exemption of a community.¹¹ Here, the sources of privilege are numerous, dating back centuries, established by tradition, and the king does not always revoke privileges, but only revises them (along with their holders), usually for a hefty sum, the author concludes. That is to say, privileges are interpreted as some exclusive right belonging to a minority elite group limited in composition and quantity.

Interesting reflections on the definition of privileges in the XXI century are also expressed by **Jacques Attali**, who answers the rhetorical question „What should be meant by this term?‟: privileges mean benefits without legitimate grounds for those who receive them, or benefits that have no legal basis. Moreover, Attali elaborates on his thoughts by saying that privileges are not available to all; constitute an obstacle to the good functioning of society; hinder social mobility; do not encourage any effort and creativity; and generally confine everyone only to the cage of his birth.¹² In other words, privilege for this modern thinker represents something harmful, illegitimate and unjust in modern democratic societies.

The problem of the nature and meaning of privilege has been partly addressed by some Bulgarian scholars, whose opinions we will briefly present here. For example, according to the jurist **Prof. P. Venedikov** privilege is a quality which the law gives to certain claims and because of which they are preferred to other claims,¹³ i.e. privilege is interpreted as a quality and advantage of some people over other people; according to the economist **Assoc. Prof. D. Gribachev** privileges in general are some exclusive rights and advantages of one group of people in relation to other groups of people, separating it (the group)

¹¹ See **Furet**, Fr. *Thinking the French Revolution*. Sofia: Critique and Humanism, 1994, pp. 127-128.

¹² See <http://www.attali.com>.

¹³ See **Venedikov**, Petko. *Mortgages, Pledge, Privileges*. Third edition. Sofia: Sibi, 1994, pp. 253-254.

from the social whole,¹⁴ or from all other social groups; and according to the historian **Prof. B. Gavrilov**, privileges are a system of special rights that a group possesses with respect to its property or with respect to other groups and institutions.¹⁵

It should be specially noted that in Bulgaria there is only one work on this issue, which has a high theoretical value. This is the study of **Iva Pushkarova, PhD**, „Privileges in the totalitarian state“, in which a thorough analysis of privilege as a social phenomenon is made from a legal and political science point of view. This analysis is not palliative or limited, because it goes far beyond the theoretical paucity of ideological dogmatics, which is why we will give it due attention.

According to the author, **a privilege is a distinct right or favourable legal position conferred by the State or an authorized entity on a person or a highly restricted group of people, constructed according to a characteristic that does not naturally imply such a legal position.**¹⁶

In turn, privileges create a much more favourable legal position of the holder compared to other members of society, including the group to which he belongs by certain other characteristics (other than privilege). This situation is most often expressed in several **key features of privilege: immunity from the realisation of types of legal liability; exemption from certain obligations or the establishment of a relaxed procedure for their fulfilment** (e.g. exemption from military service, non-payment of school fees or payment of reduced fees); **facilitated access to certain public goods** (e.g. education, medical care, drug supply); **access to goods that are not generally available** (e.g. brand of vehicles, type of educational institution, particular type of pensions and cash benefits); **power to arbitrarily affect someone else's legal sphere** (e.g. deciding whether or not a person will benefit from pension rights)¹⁷ In

¹⁴ See **Gribachev, Dimitar**. *The Drama of Socialism in the XX Century*. Plovdiv: Paisii Hilendarski, 1997, p. 176.

¹⁵ See **Gavrilov, B.** „The State, That's Me“. *France in the Age of the Sun King 1638 – 1715*. Sofia: St. Kl. Ohridski, 2002, p. 121.

¹⁶ See **Pushkarova, Iva**. *Privilege in the totalitarian state* [online]. www.justicedevelopment.bg, pp. 2-3.

¹⁷ See *ibid.* (These qualities of privilege apply to the totalitarian state, according to the author, but we apply them to democratic states as well, since most of them apply there as well.)

this sense, Dr. Pushkarova explicitly stresses that the qualities in question are not the priority of the majority, but of a minority circle of subjects defined by the authorities, who only enjoy various privileges.

The obvious **conclusion** so far, which follows from the brief theoretical overview of the views on privilege, can be summarized in **three thesis points: first, almost all the views on privilege expressed – philosophical, legal, historical, economic, etc. are true but incomplete, partial and ambiguous; second, legal theses, definitions and interpretations dominate in most cases to the exclusion of all others; and third, there are very few well argued political science definitions of the nature, content and meaning of privilege in politics, especially as regards its role and place in contemporary societies and states.**

From such positions, and as we have already noted, privilege in society can be defined in at least two broader respects: **socially**, as some exclusive rights of one group of people over another group of people deprived of such rights; and **legally**, as a specific right or favorable legal status granted by the state to an entitled subject (or a highly restricted group of people) and distinguished by a characteristic that does not naturally imply such a legal status.

In terms of **their political science nature, privileges** could be defined as **exclusive rights and advantages of a small group of people (oligarchy, estate, stratum) in relation to other groups of people (social groups, communities, classes) deprived of such rights and advantages, which are possessed by some minority social community (distinguishing it from all other groups) due to its political power in the state.**

Historically speaking, these rights and advantages are imposed by the customs or laws of class societies, because privileges separate a group of people from the social whole, separating them into a small and extremely closed community (called the „political elite“).

Unlike law, where privileges are shaped and motivated by an established legitimate (and legal) order to which all legal subjects, including the state (through its institutions), are committed, this is not at all the case with political privileges, despite the established legal regulation in most democratic states. Here, **the deepest source (generator, motivator) of different kinds of privilege is political power itself, exercised (legitimately or illegitimately) by various personal or collective subjects.** Or, in the political sphere, privileges are always fed by

the sources of power, regardless of the nature of the political regime (democratic, totalitarian, authoritarian). Moreover, political privileges are all too often motivated by the „**sole will of the power that grants it**“ (Iva Pushkarova), without the latter necessarily considering the privileged rights it itself grants. That is, power and power resources in general, and sole power (and prerogatives) in particular, are the main drivers of political privilege in the state. This is the key dividing line between political privileges and those in other spheres of society, since without the functioning of political power there would be no privileges in politics. And here is the place to recall that for the longevity of privilege in politics, two crucial factors can be pointed to as a generalization: one is objective in nature and, as we have repeatedly pointed out, derives from the nature of political power, conferring a range of benefits, advantages and perks (in the form of privileges); and the other is subjective in nature, as it relates to the personal selfish quest for power of each person who wants to be involved in the structures of political power (through elections, appointments, parties, etc.).

We have already stressed that with the help of **privileges** one or another minority group in politics (oligarchy) secures and guarantees a number of its own **advantages**, the most important of which are:

- 1) **the highest social status** (oligarchic overlords, class, layer);
- 2) **the most favorable use of material and spiritual goods** (benefits, advantages, advantages);
- 3) **the most vivid social autonomy (independence)** from other social groups and layers (oligarchy, elite, community);
- 4) **most prominent political domination over all other social communities** (groups, strata, collectives);¹⁸
- 5) **the most favourable legal treatment of a specific group of persons**, distinguished according to a criterion specified in the laws (senior state positions, posts, ranks);
- 6) **the easiest access to certain public goods** (education, medical services, etc.) and to those that are not generally available (luxury cars, high pensions, etc.);

¹⁸ These four advantages are discussed in: **Manolov**, G. Stalinism as a model of totalitarian society. Plovdiv: Simpleks Dizain, 1995, p. 65; **Gribachev**, D. Drama... Op. cit., pp. 176-177.

7) **best settled immunity** (functional and complete) as a guarantor against the types of legal liabilities of privileged minority groups;

8) **the most favored legal status in the official state hierarchy** for a narrow oligarchic elite relative to other social groups and strata;

9) **all sorts of privileges and high remunerations for the so-called „political elite“ (and oligarchy)** in the highest state institutions – parliament, government, courts, etc.;

10) **the most striking material, property, material, spiritual, cultural, values and other inequalities** between different social groups in the country.

In fact, an impeccably oiled and perfectly **working „system of benefits“** (M. Walsler) has been created, which is constantly self-reproducing, self-preserving and self-developing thanks to the stash of power.

Of course, such an authentic characterization of **political privileges** could (and should) be further enriched and elaborated with a few more **distinguishing features** that would further expand our notions of the true face of this „fabulous“ socio-political phenomenon.

As the main generator of political privileges in any social system, power feeds their permanent existence in several important aspects: first of all, it is power that immanently contains the need for the existence of privileges and the enjoyment of benefits, and that has an extremely pleasurable, alluring and tempting aspect – to reproduce the self-esteem, to increase the self-confidence and to maintain the power-being of politicians; then, power is again the one through which such chronic „diseases“ as grandomania, arrogance, high-command, omniscience, gobbledygook, untouchability, etc., which objectively form the striving for all kinds of political benefits and advantages, are caught; and yet, it is indeed power that is used to build the self-confidence of the elite as a sense of self-sufficiency, to violate social norms and rules, to form political untouchability, and ultimately to enjoy „by right“ all privileges in politics by its high-ranking subjects. Or, then, when – writes **Michael Walsler** – the expansion of the struggle for the realization of the public good becomes immensely diverse, then power, through its collective and personal vehicles, acquires a number of intrinsic qualities: **„reverence, respect, esteem, praise, prestige, so-**

cial standing, reputation, dignity, rank, admiration, value, distinctiveness, respect, appreciation, fame, notoriety¹⁹ and **privileges** – we would add.

It can hardly be argued that the main driver of the creation and development of privilege in politics is motivated **self-interest**. This interest (including political interest) is primary to values and therefore there is no value-based understanding of power and politics before any interest in them arises. That is, interest is always primary and values secondary as a mode of manifestation. This is precisely why political interest lies at the root of all possible privileges as a drive to acquire them, through political power of course.

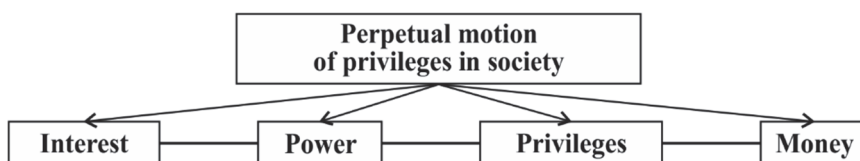
In clarifying the political interest, it is necessary to note the serious theses of **Assoc. Prof. Bl. Blagoeva** in her article „The problem of political interests: some theoretical aspects“. In it, the author defines the notion of „**political interest**“ as an active, selective and purposeful attitude of the subjects of the political process (individual, collective, institutional) to affirm, consolidate or change the political configuration valued by them through the use and/or control of political power resources.²⁰ Along with this, a thorough theoretical review of writings on this subject by domestic and foreign scholars is conducted, based on which a qualitative characterization of different aspects of political interest is made. In this sense, the author summarizes that political interest is a selective attitude of institutional and social subjects of politics towards political processes and phenomena. It is an intrinsically conscious motive of political behavior related to the achievement of certain goals. In other words, political interest is a subjective expression of objectively existing political relations for the realization of the social goals of the relevant political subjects, **the object** of this interest being power and power relations, mechanisms for the exercise of power, political activity of parties, etc.; **the subject** is the set of political processes that are evaluated by political subjects as useful for the achievement of certain goals; and **the content** of political interest is determined by the concrete

¹⁹ See **Walser**, M. Op. cit., p. 391.

²⁰ See **Blagoeva**, Bl. The problem of political interests: some theoretical aspects. Lessons from history and the effectiveness of politics. – In: *Anniversary* collection, dedicated to Prof. Trandaphil Mitev, Doctor of Economic Science. Sofia: UNWE, 2020, pp. 487-488.

objects and goals of political activity itself.²¹ Plus, Assoc. Prof. Bl. Blagoeva also highlights one of the most essential features of political interest as a complicated relationship of the general – private interest in society. Hence another, very **important relationship (correlation) – between the political, private and personal interest, in the overall scope of which (behind the veil of publicity) the selfish interest of politicians manifests itself. This essence of political interest is the perpetual motion of absolutely all privileges in politics**, without which no political elite and its oligarchy could exist (*see Diagram No. 3*).

Diagram No. 3.



This is the „eternal engine“ of privilege in political history, which is perpetually driven by the mechanisms of power (especially political power), endlessly feeding with fresh „political energy“ the different kinds of privilege, of course with the helpful assistance of money – „that universal courtesan of the world“ (K. Marx).

As should be inferred from the analysis so far, political privileges largely constitute a kind of **inequality**, insofar as these advantages of minority elites in government (regulated or unregulated) are entirely at the expense of all other groups in society. Hence – Iva Pushkarova points out – privilege is distinguished as a political and legal situation granted to certain individuals in order to give them an undeserved and unjustified advantage over other citizens and thus forming **inequality in society**. There is no doubt that in different countries (and especially in totalitarian ones) this effect has been deliberately pursued by state policy, despite officially proclaimed equality. For, in spite of everything, inequality is the more pronounced the greater the intensity with which the legislator uses privilege as an instrument for regulating social relations. This intensity depends entirely on the number of privileges introduced

²¹ See id.

and the scope of their application, depending on the number of privileged subjects and the types of social spheres in which the privileges operate. In this case, the intensive legislative policy of establishing and multiplying privileges directly gives rise to a process of fragmentation of society into estates or classes distinguishable by their legal status.²²

It is not difficult to understand that inequality is one of the most defining features of political privilege, however much such a thesis may not be accepted. For here we are confronted with an apparent contradiction about the nature of equality in general, which emerges from **G. Sartori's** rational formulation, namely: „When we say that certain equalities are formal, we mean (...) that they are primarily **equal treatments (relations)**, and that what makes a relation equal is precisely the form in which it is expressed. It follows that we have no right to eliminate juridico-political equality by declaring it **unreal**. (...) If it is true that political and juridical equalities support (as necessary conditions) all other equalities, then they are as real as what follows from them“²³. Formal equality is therefore an expression of an actual reality, and therefore we cannot help but assume that political privilege is its radical opposite, as is evident from the table developed below (*see Table No. 1*).

Table No. 1. Difference between equality and privileges of citizens in democratic society (in political aspect)

No.	EQUALITY (citizens)	No.	PRIVILEGES (politicians)
1.	Equal political rights (under the constitution)	1.	Unequal political rights (power prerogatives)
2.	Equality before the law (legal)	2.	Inequality before the law („legal“, through privileges)
3.	Electoral process (one voter – one vote)	3.	Electoral process (many votes – more privileges)
4.	Participation in the political process (legitimate, according to the law)	4.	Influence on the political process (illegitimate, through the levers of power)
5.	Non-manipulation of the electoral process (participation only)	5.	Manipulation of the electoral process („vote trading“, controlled voting, etc.)

²² See **Pushkarova**, Iva. Op. cit., p. 5.

²³ See **Sartori**, G. Op. cit. Book 2, pp. 144-145.

6.	Normal earnings (high, low, according to education and position)	6.	High income (allowances, benefits, according to position in power)
7.	Non-privileged medical services (public and private medical institutions)	7.	Privileged medical services (in specialised medical institutions)
8.	Various holiday facilities at market prices (hotels, sanatoriums, etc.)	8.	Special holiday bases at low prices (residences, villas, stations, etc.)
9.	Food and food products at market prices	9.	Food and food products at low departmental prices, according to the post
10.	No other political rights (e.g. free transport for MPs)	10.	Other benefits (e.g. free transport, etc.)

From the attached table, it can be conclusively and unambiguously concluded that **privileges in a democratic society are, first, the total antithesis of equality; second, they are a kind of „rights over equality“, since they are fed by power; and third, they (privileges) in a sense manifest themselves as some kind of „rights over rights“ for a particular minority group (oligarchy), whether regulated, „semi-regulated“ or unregulated.**

As a permanent feature of power, invariably accompanying the daily existence of any ruling class, **political privileges have a specific and dual manifestation** that goes beyond their formal existence and contrasts with the common perceptions imposed in the mass social consciousness. In essence, this heterogeneous manifestation (of privilege) finds concrete expression in two distinctive points: **First**, as is known from history, there is no ruling class or elite that does not to some extent consume power privileges, regardless of their regulation or not (we are talking about the formal-legal basis of the elite to enjoy the privileges of power); **and secondly**, the formal right to enjoy power privileges in certain other circumstances, as for example occurs in authoritarian, totalitarian and „semi-democratic“ regimes, may modify the external character of the privileges themselves, making them both a formal and a substantive component for distinguishing the political class from all other social groups. Even in countries with well-estab-

lished democratic traditions and pluralistic political systems, this duality of privilege often takes on a legitimate character, especially when the parameters of their socially permissible distribution and scope are exceeded, that is, when the multiple types of political privilege are in many respects overblown, unceremoniously burdening the state budget with the unrealistically inflated resources needed for them.

Against the backdrop of these distinctive features of political privilege, **the question naturally arises whether it is possible to interpret, consider and perceive privilege as a public good at all.**

The answer to this question is not unambiguous, insofar as it stems from the dual nature of the privileges themselves, due to the undeniable fact that: once (or under favourable democratic social conditions) these privileges are a concrete social good when they are granted for merit to the state and society (to eminent scientists, prominent public figures, distinguished military officers, etc.) in the form of state awards, orders, medals, pensions, reductions, etc.; and secondly, privileges are almost always contested as a recognized social good when they are granted to one or other politicians (MPs, ministers, senior officials, etc.) because, although regulated, they are granted for doing a job, not for a job already done, i.e. for political office and merit. **So there are some privileges, or those that people get on merit, and other privileges, or those that politicians get just for power. In this sense, the former can fairly be considered part of the public good, while the latter can be considered part of the anti-public good (especially when they are excessive in size and unnatural in scale).**

From the above-mentioned essential characteristic of **political privileges**, the following **conclusion** can be drawn concerning their social role: **firstly, they, privileges in politics, have a contradictory dual nature, because they presuppose equal rights, but form an unequal position of people in society; next, this inequality is the result of the formal application of legislation, because despite the legitimation of rights through privileges, these rights are blatantly violated through the adoption of laws, rules and regulations by legitimate state institutions (parliament, government, courts); third, the system of privileges (the system of benefits) constitutes a kind of internal subsystem or part (closed, hermetic) of the political system of society itself, and**

can even be defined as a hidden but extremely living, flexible and dynamic organism, which from election to election internally renews and reproduces itself, increasing the scale of existing privileges for the political elite; finally, by regulating political privileges, the line between political and non-political rights (social, economic, etc.) is effectively blurred, because the principle of justice in any social system is violated.

2. CLASSIFICATION OF POLITICAL PRIVILEGES

In the study of political privilege, there is a serious omission related to the fact that there is no ordering, systematization and differentiation of any kind. This observation is valid for all historical epochs from antiquity to the present day, for even in our modern life it is difficult to find classifications of this kind. This is an essential research problem, since the illumination of the scope of political privilege depends to a considerable extent on its scientific clarification, insofar as it evolves over time into an independent system. Moreover, the question of classification becomes even more important because privileges are usually justified (and motivated) by political elites by the need to facilitate the activities of power and to create the best possible working conditions for all high-ranking politicians (MPs, ministers, judges, prosecutors, etc.). Yet there is a rare exception to the ordering of privileges, made by the German jurist **Heinz Mohnhaupt**, who differentiated the special privileges of the peerage that existed in the 18th and 19th centuries into **five main types**:

a) **Prerogatives relating to the conferment of a right on a specific family**: it will thus have privileges relating, for example, to customs duties or income from special taxes which concern it specifically.

b) **Special rights, understood as exceptions**: individual estates are exempted from the obligation to comply with tax obligations or laws in general (tax exemptions, cases of immunity).

c) **Privileges understood as „protection“ of rights**: the various estates have special second-order rights to ensure that ordinary rights are respected in cases where, for various reasons, their validity is threatened.

d) **Concessions construed in the silence of the law:** a class possessing a special privilege, manifesting a superior status (with respect to a particular matter), must enjoy in the form of natural privileges from unwritten ones which can be deduced from other, already written, privileges.

e) **Prerogatives understood as special rights:** given the lack of a hierarchically organised legal order, in certain cases the prince must respect special contracts between private individuals and landowners in which specific considerations regarding the payment of taxes are established.²⁴

It is true that this classification refers primarily to German peerage centuries ago, but it is, besides being rare, also entirely reflective of the traditions imposed on the distribution of privilege then. Moreover, the fifth type of them (privileges) directly refers to the imposed and established special rights of the prince and the political elite in the country.

In this context, a more up-to-date qualification of political privilege would be very useful, as it would more clearly highlight the relationship between the public activity performed by politicians and the amount of privilege received depending on their work. And although we cannot always distinguish the exact criteria for **classifying privileges** (according to certain requirements), we believe that a more comprehensive picture of their magnitude could be presented in the following logical sequence (*see Diagram No. 4*).

I. According to the historical era

1. Antique
2. Medieval
3. Contemporary

II. According to the form of government

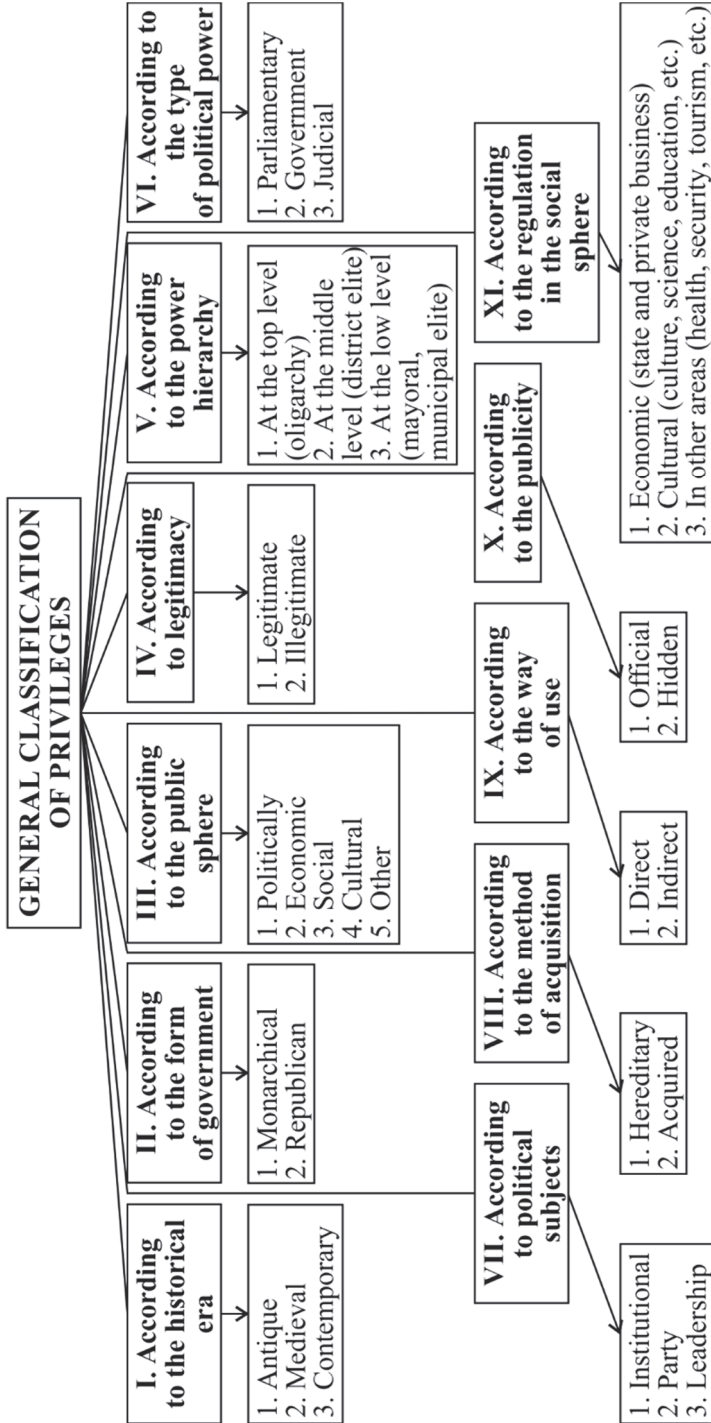
1. Monarchical
2. Republican

III. According to the public sphere

1. Politically
2. Economic
3. Social
4. Other

²⁴ See <http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/RPUB.54995>.

Diagram No. 4



IV. According to legitimacy

1. Legitimate (regulated)
2. Illegitimate (unregulated)

V. According to the power hierarchy

1. At the top level (oligarchy)
2. Middle level (district elite)
3. Low level (mayoral, municipal elite)

VI. According to the type of political power

1. Parliamentary
2. Government
3. Court, prosecutor's office, investigation office
4. Other

VII. According to political subjects

1. Institutional
2. Party
3. Individual (leadership)

VIII. According to the method of acquisition

1. Hereditary (in monarchies)
2. Acquired (under totalitarianism and democracy)

IX. By use

1. Direct
2. Indirect

X. According to the publicity

1. Official (public)
2. Hidden (non-public)

XI. According to the regulation in social spheres

1. Economic
 - state business;
 - private business;
 - others
2. Cultural
 - culture
 - education and science
 - art and literature
 - others
3. In other areas of society
 - healthcare

- national security
- tourism
- sport
- others

Within the limiting scope of this most general classification of privilege, it is imperative to mark a few more **important features**.

First, leaving aside the fact that most of the privileges are motivated by political motives, it is perfectly legitimate to speak of **so-called „primary or fundamental privileges“**, i.e. those that derive entirely from the functions (and prerogatives) of power: making political decisions, passing laws, drafting regulations (statutes, ordinances, etc.). Such in this case are the high salaries and all kinds of privileges that we correlate with political power, power hierarchy, political subjects, etc.

Second, another part of the classified privileges should be called **„secondary, or derivative privileges“**, i.e. those that are also political, but represent „perks“ (and allowances) coming „by right“ from power itself and the heights of its hierarchy (e.g. expensive cars, specialized health care, cheap rest stations, etc.). These privileges are fully attributed to the upper political echelon in any country.

Third, a special place should be given to the **so-called „indirect political privileges“** (according to their receipt and use), which are seemingly inconspicuous, but, in reality, not only exist, but also have an extremely strong pulling power (for politicians). We are talking about the participation of various politicians in various boards of state and municipal companies, in the composition of such boards, and so on and so forth, who under the auspicious goal of realizing state control receive solid financial rewards (salaries, bonuses, allowances). Moreover, it should not be forgotten at all that the ruling elites in the various states also possess a number of other, hidden privileges, such as trading in influence, votes and positions; various corruption schemes, personal benefits on political grounds; participation in patronages, trusteeships, aegis, etc. That is, all forms and ways that are „genetically“ tied to the privileged power status of high-ranking political functionaries.

Fourth, among the privileges of political subjects, we will single out those that are too rarely **called „party political privileges“**, although their dimensions are not at all to be underestimated. These are collective privileges that states regulate for their own parties and

whose material and monetary parameters are expressed in a few leading elements: decent state subsidies, campaign financing, low office rents, etc. (we will address this issue in the following volumes, chapters and paragraphs). These privileges are intended to facilitate party activity and, of course, the problem is not that, but primarily the unreasonable and inflated amounts of such financial concessions, which become an objective prerequisite for the privileged status of parties and, respectively, for the breeding of corrupt practices by their elites (note, with the help of the state!!!).

It is necessary to summarize by pointing out that **regardless of the fact of regulation or non-regulation of privileges, their manifestation and existence in the political life of societies have always led to the unequal distribution of various social goods, to giving undeserved advantage to (and favoring) individual citizens, to the unjustified redistribution of economic (material and financial) resources, etc.** In other words, all political privileges have always led to **absolutely unjust and blatant inequalities in society, the victims of which have been millions and millions of human beings at the expense of a handful of favored oligarchic elites** (throughout human history). This conclusion is also confirmed by the implementation of leading democratic principles (universal suffrage, for example), which in today's conditions really need a new and critical rethinking.

3. UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE – EQUALITY OR PRIVILEGE

It has long been accepted in the specialist literature that universal suffrage is a supreme expression of the value of equality between people and a vivid manifestation of political democracy. It is a law in modern legal and political science that today almost no one disputes because of the inherently democratic nature of this fundamental human right.

In passing, it will be recalled that the principle of universal suffrage was first applied in France, where in 1848 it was formally regulated in the then French Constitution (Art. 24). It specified that public offices could no longer be passed on by succession (Art. 18), as had

been the case until then. Thus, the idea of the republic became confused with the concept of „democracy“ („universal government“).²⁵ Whereas democracy is equality and participation of people equal in rights and in government. Moreover, men who have reached the age of majority and possess moral qualities can speak of and participate in democracy. Here everyone can be a participant not because he is a possessor but because he exists as an individual, since democracy „makes you a citizen and a voter as God made you a man“. Therefore, the means by which citizens can participate on an equal footing in legislation and in the governance of the country is by voting under universal suffrage. This is why contemporaries equate universal suffrage and democracy („it is one and the same“²⁶).

In the sense of the French Constitution (1848), **universal suffrage** has several nodal features: it is **equal**, because each voter has only one vote; it is **single**, because each voter can vote only once and in one place; it is **direct**, because each voter directly elects a deputy; it is **optional**, because each voter can abstain from voting and is not responsible for doing so; it is **personal** because the voter is obliged to cast his vote alone, without passing it on to any other citizen; and finally it is **secret** in so far as only the voter can know the content of what he has written on the ballot paper.²⁷ In other words, universal suffrage guarantees a completely new democratic electoral process to all people who meet specific conditions (certain age, gender, etc.). This explains the many diatribes about this democratic right, which define it as the apotheosis of equality in general and political equality in particular. Of course, this is undoubtedly the case, especially when we speak of the abolition of privilege in France after the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (after the Revolution), which effectively established a new type of historical equality between people.

However, despite the tendency of some to glorify the past and downplay the present, a whole series of fundamental questions naturally arise, such as: **what equality constitutes universal suffrage; does this principle really limit inequality in society; who is served by this**

²⁵ **Prelo**, M. French Constitutional Law. Moscow: Foreign Literature, 1957, p. 189.

²⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 190; and **Kiselova**, N. *Op. cit.*, pp. 101-102.

²⁷ See *id.*

originally democratic suffrage (universal suffrage); is privilege actually abolished, or merely modified into other modern forms; etc.

In order to answer these essential questions, which still do not have comprehensive and thorough answers, we will first refer to three sufficiently authoritative opinions expressed by two foreign scholars and one Bulgarian jurist.

As early as 1861, the famous liberal philosopher John St. Mill, in his book „Reflections on Representative Government“, made several serious critical arguments against universal and equal suffrage: one argument is that people on welfare should not have the right to vote because they are parasitizing on the backs of taxpayers; the second argument is against the principle of „one man, one vote“ because not all people should be equal in society (or at least not until all deserve equality as human beings); and the last argument is that representatives of different classes should be entitled to different numbers of electoral votes on the basis of their educational qualifications (i.e. the unskilled worker – 1 vote, the foreman – 3, the lawyer, the doctor and the priest – 5 or 6, etc.).²⁸ In other words, J. St. Mill does not fully accept universal suffrage because he favors the censure system for electing institutions due to the important fact that only educated and propertied people (the aristocrats and the bourgeoisie) can be quality rulers.

With his inherent sharply critical tone in his work „Philosophy of Inequality“ (1923), the famous Russian philosopher **N. Berdyaev** unceremoniously argues that the vote count, which depends on a million contingencies, says absolutely nothing about the quality of the popular will. „The universal suffrage“, he points out, „which is to this day an unquestioned dogma for many of you, raises enormous doubts. **Universal suffrage is an entirely mechanical quantitative and abstract principle.** Universal suffrage does not know concrete people with their different qualities and different weights; it is exclusively about abstract people, atoms and mathematical points. Nor does it know organic social groups. **Universal suffrage is detached from the qualitative content of life; it does not want to know about qualitative selection.** Whence, then, the confidence that a high-quality society can be arrived

²⁸ Cited in: **Fukuyama**, Fr. Political Order and Political Decay. From the industrial revolution to the globalization of democracy. Sofia: Iztok– Zapad, 2016, p. 470.

at in such a way? This is the hypnosis of the idea of equality. You have come to believe that equality, not proportional but mechanical equality, is a great truth and a great good, and that everything is good that fits it. But this deification of equality is original sin; it leads to the substitution of a concrete qualitative individual nature of man for an abducted quantitative and impersonal nature²⁹ (*emphasis mine – G. M.*). In other words, N. Berdyaev is adamant that the principle of universal suffrage not only does not solve the problems of equality, but also aggravates them to a considerable extent, since it does not carry out qualitative selection of the best and the most capable in power, thus creating objective preconditions for the sprouting (and flourishing) of democratic privileges.

The famous Bulgarian jurist **Prof. L. Vladikin** no less harshly criticized **universal suffrage**, believing that although democratic, this principle is imperfect. He is of the opinion that at the heart of this right **lies the mystical belief that the people will send the best of their environment to parliament**, even though all electoral laws around the world take extremely minimal measures to facilitate qualitative selection or at least to prevent the trust being given to manifestly unsuitable persons. For, according to the author, in implementing the principle, such special mental qualities as education, training and competence are not required for eligibility.³⁰ And moreover, for entry into Parliament „...the law does not require any intellectual ability beyond that which is necessary for the ordinary voter“³¹ (Prof. Barthelemy). Therefore, for Prof. L. Vladikin, universal suffrage does not provide a relatively more comprehensive and positive answer as to whether it can solve the problems of equality in politics, despite the fact that it has been used since the mid-nineteenth century to bring about a „democratic revolution“ in the political systems of Western societies.

There are a number of other views, propositions, and theses in the various theoretical sources that are either similar to or more critical of universal suffrage provisions (and which need not be interpreted here). We will therefore only briefly express our view on this issue, of course refracted through the substance of the equality-privilege opposition.

²⁹ **Berdyaev**, N. *Philosophy of Inequality...* Op. cit., c. 127-128.

³⁰ See **Vladikin**, L. *Organization of the Democratic State*. Sofia: SPS, 1992, pp. 293-294.

³¹ Cited by: *Ibid.*, p. 294.

So, let us recall again that as an indisputable **democratic mechanism**, on the one hand, **universal suffrage is the most effective element for the realisation of political equality in society today (the right to vote, to free choice, to participate in the political process, etc.)**. On the other hand, however, what **political equality is the realisation of this right, which regulates a bunch of privileges for the powerful minority after the elections (high salaries, special consumption, low prices, etc.) and which essentially constitutes a flagrant violation of all rights and of democratic constitutions, since an equal „electoral start“ is for all voters, while the enjoyment of privileges is only for the ruling oligarchy**. On the third hand, what is the realisation of political equality when proven unprofessionals among the public, thanks to party lists, parachute into parliamentary seats, taking the seats of those who actually deserve to be MPs. And finally, what kind of democratic political equality is it when, in full view of the people, semi-intelligent, semi-educated and semi-literate people (with university degrees) are elected and appointed to senior leadership positions (MPs, ministers, directors, etc.) just because that was the will of the people as a whole. Moreover, things become extremely negative when, due to a lack of democratic control mechanisms or an ineffective democratic process, one or other rulers who have already lost their political legitimacy cannot be removed from power. This, however, is an extremely flawed weakness of universal suffrage because its postulates „genetically“ cannot guarantee the quality political composition of future politicians, cannot sift the wheat from the chaff, and end up admitting to the heights of power not-so-elevated political representation and entirely manipulated party proposals (and lists).

From such a theoretical perspective, it is not difficult to summarise that **through universal suffrage and the assertion of privileges afterwards (after elections), both equality in general and the existing political equality between people is being violated in a categorical way, since politicians, even before they earn their income, have already voted themselves (in parliament) additional material and financial incentives as a ruling oligarchy**. This is because, as **Alain Touraine** rightly points out, **political equality**, without which of course democracy cannot exist, **is not only and solely about granting equal rights to all citizens, but is also a means of redressing social inequalities in the**

name of people's moral rights³². This emphasis of the French sociologist is very revealing because it is about morality in politics and the deep damage that unjustified and inflated political privileges do to the social and political life of society.

The precision of the analysis and the interpretative aspects of **universal suffrage** require us to note something else essential, which we can define as its **dual nature**, because: **first**, this right is democratic for the **political elites**, insofar as **it regulates all kinds of privileges** for them depending on the offices they hold; and **second**, it is absolutely undemocratic for **the electorate**, since it **totally excludes them from the scope** of the various political privileges. This dual nature constitutes a supreme social injustice, since it is in blatant contradiction and dissonance with the democratic essence of universal suffrage – a popular political vote (one man, one vote) and a restriction of privileges of a political nature. Or, it appears that there is **formal electoral equality for all people entitled to vote, and another, moreover legitimised, „privileged equality“ for the leading ruling elite and oligarchy.**³³ But this is not quite the case either, because in this case we can speak rather of **so-called „legitimate inequality“**, which is entirely derived from the conduct of different kinds of elections, where equality in terms of the right to vote automatically becomes inequality insofar as a handful of elites in politics acquire a privileged status over the majority of voters. This drastically violates the political equality of the people, as the privileges of the political oligarchy, which result from the application of universal suffrage in democratic countries, are delegated on a legal basis. In fact, this practically defeats the idea of realising political democracy to some extent, for several obvious reasons: you are nominated and proposed democratically, but rejected undemocratically (the leaderships of the party headquarters); you are elected democratically, but take privileges undemocratically (violation of the principle of one man,

³² See **Touraine**, Alain. Op. cit., p. 28.

³³ The problems of formal political (and electoral) equality have been thoroughly examined by Ivan Vinarov, PhD, which is why we only raise them here, especially since they are not the special subject of our study (See **Vinarov**, I. The Bulgarian electoral system from the Liberation to the present day. History, trends, models for improvement. Plovdiv: HSSE, 2012, pp. 402-411).

one vote); you work democratically, but receive privileges undemocratically (the political oligarchy determines them for itself); you work occasionally in parliament, but rest perfectly democratically with advantage (low prices in departmental stations of power); etc.

Having in the foregoing exposition of this section clarified some of the basic problems of the principle of universal suffrage in the context of political privilege, several fundamental conclusions are inevitably drawn from the theoretical analysis we have undertaken, through which we shall also attempt to answer the questions posed at the outset.

It is undeniable that many more traditional layers „weigh down“ the theory that treats „political equality“, and therefore it must be said and understood once and for all with perfect clarity and precision: **there is not, cannot be, and never will be even some approximation of social equality between social groups if there is not actual political equality between people.** That is to say, such adequate equality in politics in which universal suffrage is not applied formally, but in its real substantive dimensions – equal rights, equality and non-privileging of all people (participating in political life), of course, as far as this is possible.

As is probably implied, **universal suffrage** is not some kind of „magic wand“ that is only used to elect worthy politicians in the democratic political process. On the contrary, it is known that this right **regulates in priority certain quantitative characteristics in politics (number of voters, MPs, age, years) and not so high quality of political elites elected by the electorate.** In this way, incompetence in state governance increases, with injustices in the political system being far more severe and long-lasting even compared to market imperfections. For, as John Rawls aptly points out, political power quickly accumulates and becomes unequal, while universal suffrage is insufficient as a counterbalance especially when parties and elections are financed not by public funds but by multiple private donors.³⁴ To put it differently, in the current modern version, the popular vote of citizens manifests itself both as a concrete kind of inequality and as a sure brake on social development (due to the quantitative dimensions of said vote).

One cannot but note the absurd fact that one of the surest **incubators of political privilege is universal suffrage**, which confirms the

³⁴ See Rawls, John. Op. cit., pp. 276-277.

maxim that in the real world democracies themselves never fully realize their founding ideals of freedom and equality. In this sense, the famous Western scholar Fr. Fukuyama is quite right when he points out: „Rights are often violated, the law is never applied to the rich and powerful as it is to the poor and weak; citizens, although they have the opportunity to participate in government, often prefer not to use it. Moreover, **there is an inherent conflict between the idea of liberty and the idea of equality: greater liberty often leads to greater inequality**, and attempts at equalisation reduce liberty. To be successful, **democracy needs not an optimisation of its ideals, but a balance – a balance between individual liberty and political equality, and between an effective state that exercises legitimate power and the rule of law and accountability institutions that seek to constrain it**. But genuine recognition of citizens as equal and responsible human beings capable of political decision-making is a minimum condition for any liberal democracy“³⁵ (*emphasis mine – G. M.*). By the way, the conflict between the ideas of freedom and equality (incl. political equality) has another substantive dimension on a principled basis, because: **instead of a meaningful implementation of universal suffrage, we are practically confronted with a formal suffrage; instead of the realization of authentic popular sovereignty in government, we almost always encounter the usurpation of power by a narrow group of political oligarchy (circle, clique, gang, stratum); and instead of the realization of relative political equality between the rulers and the people in society, we report an unreasonable privileging (and enrichment) of the ruling minority (oligarchy), and this through perfectly legal regulations in the normative base of the democratic state**. Therefore, universal suffrage is a „mother“ for the political-oligarchic elites, because it feeds them with legitimate political privileges, and a „stepmother“ for the vast electoral majority, because it is largely deprived of all benefits and advantages, insofar as it does not belong to the political class of society at all. Or, to put it in a nutshell: **universal suffrage is equality for all and a privilege for the elite** regardless of who perceives this in contemporary socio-political reality.

³⁵ Fukuyama, Fr. Identity... Op. cit., p. 59.

* * *

Such are the more substantive theoretical aspects of some key concepts and of political privilege as a social phenomenon, the nature, classifications and characteristics of which we have examined in this paper. On this basis, let us now turn more specifically to the actual incarnations of privilege in power and politics, and in particular to its dozens of forms and modifications throughout all historical epochs, from Antiquity to the modern XXI century.

APPLICATIONS



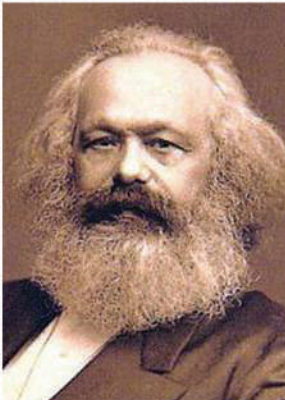
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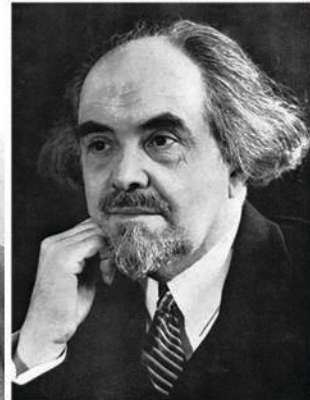
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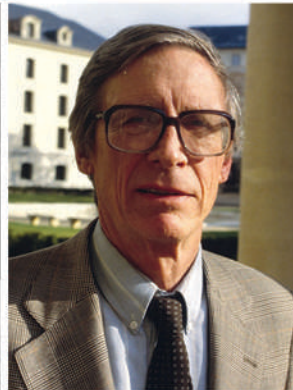
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