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Collective Leadership in Soviet Politics

Graeme Gill



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PREFACE

I have wanted to write a book on this topic for many years, not only because of the dearth of studies of the Soviet leadership as a whole as opposed to biographies of individual leaders, but because of the intrinsic interest of political leadership in authoritarian systems. My introduction to this came through the popular media, more specifically a series of reports that must have been in the mid-sixties about the overthrow of Nikita Khrushchev. Indeed, it was this that piqued my interest not only in authoritarian leadership (although I did not conceive of it in such terms at the time) but also in Soviet politics. My passage to the point of writing this book was influenced by so many scholars of Soviet politics and history that they are too numerous to name because of the fear of omitting someone who should be there. However, three people in particular have shaped my understanding of communist leadership and of the Soviet leadership in particular. The late Harry Rigby was the doyen of Soviet studies in Australia. His meticulous scholarship, generosity of spirit and complete lack of pretention have been an inspiration as well as providing the necessary corrective a sometimes too enthusiastic younger scholar needed. In more recent times, Archie Brown has been a significant influence, both personally and intellectually. His nuanced work on Gorbachev remains the standard, while his later study of leadership has helped to redefine our appreciation of the relationship between a leader and those around him. And finally, Fred Teiwes, whose painstaking work on Chinese elite politics has defined that field, has significantly shaped our understanding of how individual and collective

leadership have worked in the Chinese context. To these three in particular, I owe a great debt of gratitude. Fred and Sheila Fitzpatrick both read parts of the manuscript and gave valuable feedback, while Tomas Sniegón provided particular insight into the role of the KGB. My thanks also to Rod Tiffen, who has given the sort of friendship and support that is essential to overcoming the potential loneliness of the academic endeavour. He has also brought his comparative wisdom to bear in an attempt to lever me out of a narrow specialization. I should also thank the Australian Research Council who, through Discovery Project Grant DP150101966, funded the research upon which this book is based. Writing the book has been made much more enjoyable by the visits of our granddaughter Bethany, whose arrival lights up the house and makes me realize what is really important. And finally, my thanks to Heather, without whom none of what I have done would have been achieved. Her love, support, forbearance and general good humour have been what has sustained me.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The Study of Soviet Leadership

One of the most important determinants of the survival of authoritarian regimes is the maintenance of unity within the ruling elite. Disunity within the elite has been a major cause of regime change. It has also been the main reason for the overthrow of individual leaders; one study has shown that more than two-thirds of all authoritarian leaders who lost power through non-constitutional means between 1946 and 2008 were removed by individuals from within that leader's inner circle.¹ The stability of such ruling groups, and the strategies they use to bring this about, is therefore one of the most pressing questions in the scholarship on authoritarian rule and the focus of this book.

A recent influential book on leadership in authoritarian political systems by Milan Svoblik² argues that the politics at the apex of authoritarian regimes are characterized by two basic factors: the absence of an independent authority to enforce agreements and rules of the game, and the presence of violence as the means for resolving differences. Essentially he sees authoritarian leadership as comprising two actors, the dictator who is continually seeking to expand his power at the expense of others, and the leader's "allies" (i.e. the other members of the leadership group) who are continually trying to limit the leader and his attempt at power acquisition. The only effective deterrent to the leader's search for increased power is said to be the allies' threat to replace him. However, this threat is seen to be credible only when the leader has not yet accumulated great power, and it is hindered by the collective action problem faced by the allies and emanating from the paucity of accurate information available to

all actors. Svulik argues that institutions may be able to help stabilize the leadership: the regularized functioning of executive or legislative bodies may facilitate the exchange of information and thereby alleviate the uncertainty surrounding the dictator's intentions and actions. He argues that there are two "politically distinct forms" of interaction between dictator and allies.³ First, "contested autocracy" where "politics is one of balancing between the dictator and the allies—the allies are capable of using the threat of a rebellion to check the dictator's opportunism, albeit imperfectly", and second, "established autocracy" where "autocrats have acquired so much power that they can no longer be credibly threatened by their allies—they have effectively monopolized power". These equate to oligarchy and dictatorship.

This is an alluring model of leadership. It is simple, contains a causal explanation and seems to fit many of the cases he cites. However, the model is too simplistic on a number of grounds:

1. It assumes that authoritarian leadership consists of a dichotomy, of the person of the dictator on the one hand and the other members of the leadership, his "allies", on the other. However, in practice, this is usually much more complicated. The leader is rarely alone in confronting the "allies", some of whom may actually support the leader rather than being in fear for their positions as Svulik seems to imply. This means that the "allies" are not a homogenous group. Some may support the leader completely, while some will support him on some issues and not others. Some are therefore likely to be stronger supporters of the leader than others, and some may actually be opponents of the leader. This means there will not just be two actors, but potentially multiple actors in the game of elite politics. This is reflected in the diversity of models of collective leadership that are available (see below).
2. Svulik assumes that everything is about power, that this is the only issue of concern to the leadership. Antagonistic power relationships are therefore built into the leadership group by definition. But in real life, power is rarely the only concern. Policy may be important, with the result that conflicts may occur within the elite over issues other than power distribution. Of course, such issues may feed into the question of power distribution, but they may not, and in any event they create potential lines of division ignored in the Svulik model.

3. The assumption that a leader will inevitably seek to expand his personal power at the expense of his colleagues is something that needs to be established in each case, not simply assumed.
4. The assumption that violence is always present, even as a threat, as the means of resolving differences is not always correct. The role of violence needs to be established in each case rather than assumed as part of the structure of the model.
5. The model assumes that there are only two courses open to the allies: passivity and acceptance of the leaders' power, or rebellion. In practice, the relationship may be much more nuanced, with a range of responses possible.
6. The discussion of the role of institutions is cast purely in terms of the way that, under certain circumstances, they may assist in the reining in of the dictator. But such institutions may also assist in a dictator's search to enhance the powers at his disposal.
7. Although Svolik acknowledges that there may be agreements and rules of the game, he denies their importance by saying that there is no independent authority to enforce them. This assumes that such norms carry no independent authority themselves but rely for their application upon enforcement by an external authority. Such a view denies the possibility of there being assumptions, even a consensus, about how it is proper and correct to act, of norms that rely not on external enforcement but upon recognition of their own value and authority. Rejection of this possibility means politics is seen as a war of all against all with no rules. Such a view is unrealistic.

The heart of the problem as reflected in these points is that the model has at its kernel the assumption that leadership relations are inevitably antagonistic, either overtly or potentially.⁴ This sort of assumption denies the complexity that can occur within authoritarian leadership, a complexity in terms both of structure and process. This is clear if we look at the Soviet experience.

As the longest lasting authoritarian regime of the twentieth century and the one which, for much of its life, was seen as posing a major geopolitical and ideological threat to the West, the state of leadership in the Soviet Union was a matter of central scholarly and international political concern. However, for much of its life, the secretive *modus operandi* of the Soviet system prevented the sort of systematic analysis of political

leadership that emerged in the study of more open polities. This lack of transparency, combined with the assumption that in dictatorial regimes like the USSR political institutions had little role to play in the structuring of the political life of the elite, meant that much of the early study of Soviet leadership has been conducted through the prism of personal biography.⁵ Much of the study of elite politics in the 1917–53 period was presented through the biographies of Lenin and Stalin. It was not really until the Khrushchev period beginning with Stalin's death that the focus of analysis broadened from a primary concentration upon the leader.

This broadening of approach was welcome because the focus on the leader personally often obscured the nuances of Soviet political life and exaggerated the power that the individual leader could exercise. In part, this was a function of the dominance Stalin was widely perceived to have,⁶ but it also reflected the under-developed nature of political science as an academic discipline. As this discipline expanded after 1945, it became increasingly concentrated upon structures, processes and policies. Individuals still had a part to play, but within a broader compass, and as a result "leadership studies" developed as a sub-theme within the broader discipline. This sought to place leaders within their institutional and policy contexts, and could thereby present a more sophisticated and nuanced analysis of leadership than the focus purely on leaders was able to do. Unfortunately, this development was somewhat retarded in the study of Soviet politics because of the above-noted secrecy of the regime's operating procedures. This is reflected in the characterization of the study of Soviet leadership politics as "kremlinology" and as a form of study akin to ancient history: looking for diverse clues that may enable an understanding to be gained of what was transpiring behind the Kremlin's doors. Nevertheless, as the post-Stalin period wore on, more information became available, scholars began to search for patterns and they began to ask new questions.

In the first two decades after the end of the war, students of the Soviet system saw individual dominant leadership as one of its central characteristics. The doyen of British Soviet scholars, Leonard Schapiro, captured this feeling in 1960: "The Soviet Communist Party, more than any civilian organization known to history, depends upon the personalities of those who rule it from the top".⁷ Allowing for some hyperbole in this, the central point is one that most students accepted without question until at least the mid-1960s: individual dominance was an essential

part of the Soviet system. But in accepting this, many also pointed to the way that the notion of individual leadership seemed to be in significant tension with the principal thrust of both Marxism and the formal doctrines of Marxism–Leninism that were claimed to animate the Soviet state. Students pointed to the way that Soviet ideologists had tried to reconcile this tension between a dominant leader and a class-based analysis of historical development,⁸ but this sort of study told us more about Soviet ideology and its flexibility than it did about the nature of Soviet leadership.

Also evident has been a focus upon the perceived tension between individual leadership and collective leadership. Collective leadership had been a major theme of the party throughout its life, reflected most clearly in the principle according sovereignty in the party to collective organs, the congress and, between congresses, the Central Committee (CC). The theoretical primacy of collectivism in party life, even if in practice it was not always observed, did not sit easily with individual primacy and many scholars were quick to point this out. Some have later studied the personal relations between leaders during the Stalin period⁹ and, in a more limited way, other periods,¹⁰ but none of these have sought to place intra-elite relations within the context of collective leadership, thereby giving an amorphous conception of the nature of the Soviet ruling elite. Associated with this was the argument that the political institutions at the apex of the party were not highly institutionalized.¹¹ This was particularly the case with the position of party leader, the General Secretary (1922–34 and 1966–91) and First Secretary (1953–66). This post was not mentioned in the party's Rules until an amendment in 1966 declared that the position was elected by the CC. At no time do the powers, responsibilities or term of office appear formally to have been specified, while the provision that the post should be filled by election by the CC left open what sorts of considerations should be taken into account in this decision, the nature of the vote in the CC and how the mandate thereby given could be withdrawn. Given that the Rules were equally vague about the nature of the powers of the CC, elite politics was seen to be conducted in an institutional environment characterized by significant fluidity.

Based on this situation and the Stalin and Khrushchev experiences, many in the 1950s and early 1960s in particular argued that Soviet leadership politics was characterized by a cycle: a period of collective leadership degenerated into internal conflict leading to the emergence of

a dominant leader who, when he died (Lenin and Stalin) or was overthrown (Khrushchev) would be replaced by another collective, so setting the process in train once more.¹² This view of an oscillation between monocratic and oligarchic tendencies underpinned “kremlinology”, at the heart of which was the attempt to establish factional affiliations among the leadership group to determine who had the real power. However, this view, which saw power struggle, either incipient or full-blown, as central to Soviet politics was called into question by the Brezhnev period where there seemed to be no equivalent of the factional conflicts of the 1920s or of the anti-party group of 1957. What this suggested was that the power struggle model captured only one aspect of Soviet elite politics, that the dynamics of collective leadership were more complex and nuanced than this conflict model provided for. Collective leadership was not always a continuing struggle for power.

But while accepting that the nature of collective leadership could not inevitably be reduced to a question of the struggle for power, there remained the question of explaining leadership dynamics, including how a leader gained and retained personal dominance. This has been a major focus of scholarship throughout the last decades of the Soviet regime’s life. One approach has been to analyse the institutions and how they work, including how they can promote or restrain an ambitious individual. Scholars noted attempts to institutionalize the post of General Secretary rather more, and how these had little practical effect.¹³ Also noted were attempts to give a greater sense of regularity to both the membership and the *modus operandi* of the Politburo. In terms of membership, while scholars continued to look for factional affiliations among its members, they also recognized that most members of the Politburo also held substantive positions elsewhere in the political system. Membership has tended to comprise three broad groups: CC secretaries, leading republican and regional party bosses, and key government leaders (prime minister, president and usually some representation from among government ministers). The balance among these groups has differed at different times,¹⁴ but they have been the essential building blocks of the Politburo’s membership. Viewing the Politburo in this way presents it as much more an integral part of the party and its structure than does the view which sees membership purely in factional terms. It also opens the way for an institutional or bureaucratic politics analysis.

Scholars also pointed to the way in which the CC was becoming more regularized in terms of composition. Although this began in the 1920s,¹⁵

it became more marked in the post-Stalin years. This involved what scholars have called “job-slot representation” in the CC.¹⁶ What this means is that people were members of the CC not because of their personal qualities, but because they filled positions throughout the political structure that were considered the most important. Central and regional party and government officials, military and security leaders, heads of trade unions and enterprises, newspaper editors, leaders of youth organizations and other figures combined membership of the CC with those roles. Also included could be some “mass representatives”, such as those who were held up as models of production or cosmonauts, but the essential nature of membership was that it gave representation to the chief positions in the country. Usually, the largest contingent were party secretaries with government officials the second largest group.¹⁷ As such, the CC too seemed to be solidly rooted in the bureaucratic interstices of the system and was not purely the plaything of factional affiliation.

Scholars also studied other leading institutions in the Soviet system. Most important here was the party,¹⁸ but there were also studies of such other central institutions as the Supreme Soviet¹⁹ and Sovnarkom (the Council of People’s Commissars).²⁰ But while most such studies gave us a good sense of some aspects of the institutional contours of the system, they did not add much systematically to our understanding of elite dynamics. Exceptions here have been Harry Rigby’s work on Sovnarkom and Arch Getty’s on the government.²¹ Rigby shows how in the early years of the regime and Getty how in the mid-1930s individual leaders (respectively Lenin and Stalin) used the leading institutions of the system to get their way in elite discussion of policy. Also useful in this regard were studies of decision-making,²² but much of this related specifically to the Brezhnev period.

More important for our understanding of the dynamics of elite politics has been those studies that have turned attention to the development of informal rules of political practice within the elite. Two different sorts of rules were identified: one related to the general question of succession, and the other to the broader issue of the construction and maintenance of a political power base.

Leadership succession has always been a major focus of scholarly concern,²³ but it became more prominent in the mid-late 1970s as Brezhnev aged and the succession question seemed to be particularly acute. With the policy drift of the last stages of Brezhnev’s rule, one question that became particularly widely debated was the implications of leadership

change for policy change and innovation.²⁴ The ageing of the leadership also produced broader studies related to generational change.²⁵ But more important for immediate purposes was the identification of various principles that seemed to underpin leadership succession. One was the importance of being a senior CC Secretary. CC Secretaries were responsible for the leadership and oversight of the management of the CC departments, effectively the central bureaucracy of the party which not only prepared material for the elite decision-makers in the Politburo, but also made many important decisions on its own part, and oversaw the implementation of those decisions. These secretaries were at the very top of the chain of secretaries that ran the party at all levels throughout the country, with the General or First Secretary at the apex. CC Secretaries were divided into two ranks: those who were members of the Politburo, and those who were not. Those who were full (or voting) members of the Politburo, the so-called “senior secretaries”, generally tended to be the more important, although this was not inevitably the case. However, in every case of succession, the successor came from within the ranks of the senior secretaries.²⁶ Current occupation of this post seems to have been more important than the length of time one had spent in it when the leadership became vacant; a variety of work experience (both party and state office) was seen as advantageous, although all successors had made (usually a major) part of their careers within the regional and then the central party apparatus. The record suggests that the rule was that in order to become General Secretary, one had to be a senior secretary at the time of the succession. In the cases of the Chernenko and Gorbachev successions, this principle was acknowledged by the other members of the elite who accepted that the one who would ultimately succeed when the newly-elected General Secretary retired or died would act as the effective “second secretary” to the General Secretary while he was alive. It was also assumed that the putative General Secretary had to be an ethnic Russian.

Another principle which some identified from the multiple successions in the first half of the 1980s was that the person who was named head of the funeral commission was selected as General Secretary. Each succession—from Stalin to Khrushchev, Brezhnev to Andropov to Chernenko to Gorbachev—saw the person named to head the commission go on to become General Secretary. This was not the case in 1924 when Stalin was not a member of Lenin’s funeral commission,²⁷ and in 1953 although Khrushchev headed the commission, he was not chosen to speak at the funeral; however, the person who did take the lead in

Stalin's funeral, Malenkov, did initially appear to be the most important person in the leadership. But if the rule structuring the succession was that the prospective General Secretary acts as the head of the funeral commission, it was not one with much force in the sense that that role carried little in the way of effective political resources, and it is likely that the choice was first made about the identity of the General Secretary, who was then named head of the funeral commission. This may have been more a signalling process, letting CC members (who would have to ratify the choice made in the Politburo) and others know who the incumbent was likely to be before the public announcement.

Western scholars have generally been unable to come up with other clear principles that structured the process of succession, something reflected in their poor record in foreseeing succession outcomes.²⁸ Nevertheless, accepting that the succession issue was decided essentially by a small group of party leaders and ratified by a larger (but still small) group—a recommendation from the Politburo confirmed by the CC²⁹—some scholars attempted to devise a profile of the sort of person most likely to be chosen as the new General Secretary. One sophisticated analysis³⁰ emphasizes the role of contingency in shaping succession outcomes, something which seems to imply that it may be impossible to identify principles which underpin Soviet succession politics. Nevertheless, he then goes on to identify 13 factors that he believed would, in the mid-1970s, most qualify a person to become a long-term General Secretary (Table 1.1).

What is striking about this list of qualities is how closely they match Brezhnev's (and Khrushchev's) attributes but not those who followed him. This may be shown by matching Hodnett's qualities to the profiles of the three general secretaries who quickly followed Brezhnev in office (Table 1.2).

All three General Secretaries after Brezhnev were deficient in a number of these qualities. Furthermore, even in those cases where the individual seemed to meet the qualifications, there were significant differences between each of the General Secretaries.³¹ All three possessed higher technical education, but Gorbachev also had a law degree from Moscow Lomonosov State University. In terms of institutional experience, Andropov spent only 19 of his 46 pre-1982 years in party positions in the regions and the centre (and therefore not "predominantly" in party work), while Chernenko spent 5 of his 55 pre-election years and Gorbachev 7 of his 30 pre-election years outside the regional or central

Table 1.1 Hodnett's "probable" qualifications for a full-term General Secretary^a

1. Age	Between 50 and 60
2. State of health	Good
3. Ethnic origin	Russian
4. Education	Higher technical
5. Politburo status	Full member
6. Past institutional affiliations	Predominantly but not exclusively party
7. Areas of experience	Significant service as party first secretary in important regions Significant service in CC Secretariat Broad experience with cadres work, industry and agriculture Exposure to military and security affairs Extensive exposure to foreign affairs Experience in nationality affairs Lengthy Moscow service in All-Union administration
8. Present position	Senior CC Secretary for organizational affairs, Chairman of USSR Council of Ministers, Chairman of Presidium of USSR Supreme Soviet
9. Support in Politburo	Tolerable to a majority
10. Policy stands	Centrist positions on security, resource allocation and ideological issues
11. Reputation in higher elite circles	"Solid", effective administrator with real leadership qualities
12. Following	A substantial "tail"—distributed in multiple bureaucracies and sectors
13. Main territorial base	Moscow region, Leningrad, the Donbass or the Urals

^aHodnett (1975), p. 16. He also gives "possible" and "improbable" qualifications

party apparatus; neither of the latter had wide experience outside the party. This was reflected in the areas of experience they had: Andropov had wide experience in foreign and security affairs but none in cadres work, industry or agriculture, Chernenko had wide experience in personnel matters, but Gorbachev's area of experience was virtually limited to general party matters and agriculture. And none actually came from any of the territorial bases specified, although prolonged service in Moscow would have enabled Andropov and Chernenko to build up relevant support. This demonstrates just how difficult it was to generate a coherent set of principles relating to the Soviet succession.

Table 1.2 Hodnett's qualities and successive leaders

<i>Quality</i>	<i>Andropov</i>	<i>Chernenko</i>	<i>Gorbachev</i>
1. Age			X
2. Health			X
3. Russian	X	X	X
4. Education	X	X	X
5. Politburo status	X	X	X
6. Institutional experience	X	X	X
7. Areas of experience	Some of these	Some of these	Some of these
8. Present position		X	
9. Support	X	X	X
10. Policy	X	X	X
11. Reputation	X		X
12. Following			
13. Territorial base	X	X	

X indicates the quality is met by the General Secretary

One view of how succession was structured did emerge and gain widespread support, the so-called “circular flow of power” theory.³² The essence of this theory was that a central official was able to use his position to appoint people to fill lower level responsible posts (mainly regional party secretaries), who in turn choose delegates to the party congresses, who then elect the CC which then appoints the central officials. In this way, a central official—and this had to be the General Secretary, the CC secretary in charge of personnel/cadres or the official in charge of that department of the Secretariat (and the assumption was that the latter two posts were filled by supporters of the General Secretary)—could appoint his supporters (or in the case of CC secretary and department head, supporters of the General Secretary) to positions which enabled them to then support him in party politics. As an elaboration of this theory, and one that avoided the assumption that actual existing supporters needed to be appointed for this process to work, the act of appointment and the promise of security of tenure that support for a leader could ensure was also seen as a source of the generation of loyalty by lower level officials to particular individuals at the top of the party structure.³³ This will be discussed further below, but it is important to recognize that this “circular flow of power” model appears to be less a way of determining the actual succession (i.e. who should be General Secretary) than of strengthening the General Secretary’s position once

the decision had been made. This is because the decision about who should be General Secretary is made in the Politburo, principally by the full, or voting, members; candidate members and CC secretaries who are not members of the Politburo would be likely to be in attendance, but primary responsibility lay with the full members. Prior to becoming General Secretary, no one has been able to build up their core of solid supporters into a majority in the Politburo. They have had to rely upon the support of allies, and while the views of such people may have been influenced by their understanding of the level of support for particular individuals elsewhere in the party, this is different from the sort of relationship posited by the “circular flow of power” theory.

This leads to the second type of rule noted above, rules for the establishment and maintenance of a personal power base. This is encompassed within considerations about the way in which leadership was structured. One approach that has been advocated has been to see the post-Stalin period as differing significantly from that of Stalin in that after 1953, a diversity of interests found representation at the centre, manifested in the establishment of coalition government.³⁴ In this conception, there needs to be broad consensus on policy issues, the General Secretary acts as a power broker able to offer incentives or impose sanctions in order to bring about compromise, and issues that are too divisive are simply left off the agenda. Leading figures are seen as representatives of broader institutional or maybe social interests, and they promote those interests within the political arena. Similar conceptions, including corporatism,³⁵ emerged, and although they were valuable in emphasizing the way in which institutional interests had an important part to play in the structuring of Soviet politics, they were mistaken if they assumed that this was not present under Stalin (see Chapters 3 and 4) and they told us little about the balance of forces within the top leadership and how those forces played out.

More important for our understanding of the dynamics of elite politics, at least in the late 1960s and 1970s, was the argument that accompanying the Khrushchev overthrow, the elite worked out a basic set of rules to structure their activities. T.H. Rigby³⁶ referred to this as a “veritable charter of oligarchy” or an “implicit compact”, and saw it as consisting of four elements: keeping the top two posts (General Secretary and Chairman of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, i.e. party leader and prime minister) in different hands, reducing the opportunities for the exercise of patronage, distributing seats in the leading bodies

(Politburo, Secretariat and Presidium of the Council of Ministers) in such a way as to avoid dangerous patterns of overlap and therefore power concentration, and maintaining countervailing power among the top leaders. Central to this compact was the limited but balanced turnover of personnel, reflected in the “stability of cadres” policy in evidence under Brezhnev. This sort of agreement, which in its literal aspects seems to have been basically observed under Brezhnev (see Chapter 6), was a set of rules designed to stabilize collective leadership and prevent its being undermined by the excessive growth of power of one individual. This was a really useful way of seeking to understand the dynamic of politics following Khrushchev’s ouster, but except in a reverse sense, it had little applicability outside the Brezhnev era. However, the key assumption of this relating to appointment powers—that the emergence of personal dominance was related to the mobilization of support in key party organs—does have relevance for the whole of the Soviet period. Scholars have tended to discuss this chiefly in terms of patrons and clients.

The essential nature of the patron–client relationship in Soviet politics is transactional: the patron promotes the client and provides a degree of protection and access to rewards, and in return, the client supports the patron and his policies and works to defend his interests against those of competitors. As noted above, this was the basis of the “circular flow of power” theory and of most analyses of Soviet politics. It was seen as being particularly important because Soviet political structures and processes seemed to have personnel appointment at their heart. The *nomenklatura* system was established in 1923.³⁷ This was a system whereby all responsible positions within the party hierarchy were filled by appointment from above, and in many cases then ratified by election. Party committees at all levels had lists of positions they were able to fill and lists of eligible candidates who could fill them. Suitability for appointment stemmed from the judgement of superiors rather than any objective criteria. This power was vested principally in the party secretaries. At the apex of this hierarchy was the Politburo, which worked through the Orgburo until it was abolished in 1952 and the CC Secretariat, and in particular the department of the Secretariat (whose name changed over time) responsible for personnel matters. Control over these personnel decisions at the centre seemed to give substantial scope for the sort of appointment central to the “circular flow of power” theory. The *nomenklatura* system therefore seemed to be a perfect instrument for the development of patron–client ties.

The centrality of appointment is linked to what one scholar has identified as four “rules of the game” of Soviet politics.³⁸ These rules may be outlined as follows:

1. The need for patrons and clients. Promotion in the Soviet structure relies upon support from above. Therefore, everyone who seeks to rise up the ladder needs to have a patron. In reverse, every patron needs to have clients who will support him over and above potential competitors, working to put his policies into practice and to promote people who will support him. This is essentially a hierarchical relationship.
2. The need for allies and the building of coalitions. A leader cannot rely upon his clients alone because, by the nature of Soviet clientage, a leader will be unlikely to have many if any clients in the Politburo early in his tenure.³⁹ It will take time to build up such numbers. Therefore, a leader must also build coalitions with figures who are not his clients and who may owe him nothing. This is more a horizontal relationship than a vertical one.
3. “Delivering the goods”. Both patron and client need continually to meet the other’s expectations about performance if the relationship is to be sustained. Only if both are satisfied with the relationship, will it continue. Ultimately, for a client, this means security, promotion and access to rewards; for the patron, support at all times.
4. Willingness to bend the rules and to exercise initiative in the pursuit of goals, including the support of the patron or client. Formal rules are less important than the achievement of tasks, and a willingness to break the formal rules is often essential to “delivering the goods”. Of course, there is a risk here: breaking the rules could leave one vulnerable to attack by one’s opponents, but this merely reinforces the importance of maintaining the patron–client relationship.

The relationship between a leader, his subordinates, his allies and other members of the leadership is clearly central to the dynamics of collective (and personal) leadership. This means that there is a need to distinguish between the different categories of people involved in leadership politics. Scholars have used a variety of names for these and a variety of definitions for those categories. I am defining these central categories as follows:

- (a) Clients.⁴⁰ These are people who owe their careers to the leader/patron, in the sense that their promotion up the Soviet ladder was wholly due to that leader. They gain their initial association with the patron through shared career experience, usually through working in the same geographical area or organization. (Pat Willerton calls such people who had past common experience with the leader and who enjoyed mobility under him “protégés”.) The evidence adduced to indicate clientage is said to be two promotions under the leader’s influence.⁴¹ These people were often in possession of institutional resources through their leadership of major institutional structures, but because of their longer term personal associations with the patron, they were seen as being more consistently loyal to and supportive of their patron than were allies.
- (b) Allies. These are people whose careers have been substantially independent of the leader’s actions, but they come to support the leader. Generally, they also possess significant institutional resources in the form of headship of a major institutional structure. They are seen as seeking to retain considerable independence of judgement from the leader and therefore as not necessarily being as committed to the long-term support of their ally as are clients.

This distinction is clear in principle but murky in practice. This is evident when we note the sources of clients. Rigby⁴² talked about three main sources. First, the common experience of working together by the client and patron. Work in the same party organization, or in some other institution like the KGB, has been an important source of the development of a tail of clients. As the putative patron moves up the ladder, he drags with him people with whom he has worked in the past. The relationship is therefore based not just on the promotion/support trade-off, but on an often long-term history of cooperation. This source of clientage is said to be stronger than any others, in part because it may also have a friendship element to it, but also because it is often long-lasting. Second, victims of rivals. When people suffer as a result of the actions of one leader, they may look around for another potential patron to hitch themselves to. Such a basis for a clientelist relationship may not be very strong because it arises less out of the positive of established benefits gained than of the negative of the client’s fear of the consequences of

remaining where they are. Third, figures without any links to the leader who are promoted by that leader. This may come about as a result of leadership conflict, when the clients of one believe that they are on the wrong side and cross over to the opponent of their patron. Or it may be that a person is linked to another patron (who may be a client or an ally of the leader) and receives preferment from the leader.

An important part of this third category is the person who may have lacked earlier career associations with the leader but was promoted into the elite and remained there over a prolonged period of time, including through occasions when other members of the elite were dismissed. In such cases, regardless of who was responsible for their promotion into the leadership, their continued tenure of a leadership post was owed to the leader; he was either directly responsible or acquiesced in the wishes of another that the person be retained. Thus, their leadership job may be seen as dependent on the leader in the same way as that of a client is, but given that they are already in the leadership, their relationship with the leader is likely to be based more on how the leader treats them and on policy than on their initial promotion. Indeed, it is probable that the longer a person is part of the leadership, the more important such considerations are, even eclipsing residual loyalties arising from previous shared career experience. They are allies of the leader.

The distinctions between these are often difficult in practice. For example, when does a long-term ally of a leader who has enjoyed significant tenure of office and maybe even promotion become a client? Or is the client of a client better seen as a client of the overall patron, or is he to be classed as independent of the leader and therefore an ally? These are questions not easily resolved. The best course is to keep the basic, theoretical distinctions in mind while recognizing a degree of messiness in practice, and that is the approach adopted in the discussion in succeeding chapters. In individual cases, judgement about a person's status (client, ally and opponent) is based upon that individual's career relative to the leader as reflected in the major source book of the careers of the Soviet elite used in this study.⁴³

These two types of rules—governing succession and the consolidation of power—are actually part of a broader set of norms that structure political life. All institutions have their own particular normative order, or structure of rules, principles and assumptions about the way the institution should function and those within it should act.⁴⁴ These norms may be official and inscribed in formal documents (such as the Rules of the CPSU) or they may be more informal and reside purely in the

patterns of action pursued by the incumbents of office in that particular institution. The latter (and the former often originally also) arise out of practice and are further shaped by continuing practice. These informal norms encapsulate what were referred to earlier as the rules of the game, and they are the most important struts of an elite institution, even more important than the formal rules because they shape how those formal rules function. They usually deal with all aspects of how an institution operates: the succession question, how decisions are made and who makes them, whether opposition is accepted as legitimate, the forms it may take and how it is treated, how is discussion handled and who may be involved, how power and authority are distributed, and the part that particular institutions play. Identification of such unwritten, informal norms is not always easy. They can only be said to exist when they have functioned to structure action on a number of occasions. How many such occasions is an arbitrary judgement, but it would need to be sufficient to establish a discernible pattern of activity. While that pattern, and the norms' normative authority, was being established, they would be considered emergent norms. Recognition of the emergence of such norms would also need to take into account how they operated under different sets of political circumstances; for example, do the norms about succession function in the same way regardless of the power constellations of the individuals involved?

Recognition of the existence of such norms is also complicated by the fact that actors do not always obey them. While the dynamics of elite relations is in part structured by such norms, elite political activity may at times be in tension with some or all of those norms. This simply reflects the fact that the authority of the norms stems from their acceptance by the actors rather than from validation by some external authority. It is the conviction that the normative order possesses authority, and therefore should be obeyed, that is the source of the norms' power to shape action. Examination of how the normative order at the apex of the Communist Party changed is a major focus of this study and is central to an understanding of how Soviet collective leadership changed over time.

THE INSTITUTIONAL BASIS OF ELITE POLITICS

The notion of "elite" has been used to discuss the Soviet leadership from the time this became a subject of systematic scholarly analysis, but precisely who was to be included in that elite was not always clear. One of

the earliest studies limited this to the Politburo,⁴⁵ but later scholars have expanded the boundaries to include, for example, all CC members⁴⁶ or leadership groups in the other main bureaucratic hierarchies of the Soviet system.⁴⁷ In this study, the elite encompasses CC members and bureaucrats, and government ministers, with the CC the chief organizational vehicle for this group. Within this elite, there is a smaller oligarchy comprising members of the Politburo, Orgburo (until 1952) and CC Secretariat,⁴⁸ a group that rarely exceeded 25 people. While the Politburo and the Secretariat (and up until 1952 the Orgburo) are the focus of this study, the relationship between these institutions and the CC and party Congress is also relevant, because there were times when the members of these bodies played a decisive role in oligarchic and elite affairs. Their involvement, however, was intermittent and generally occurred at the behest of the Politburo (or part of its membership). As can be seen from this, both the oligarchy and the elite are institutionally based, located within the leading institutions of the ruling communist party and state. We need to understand this institutional structure if we are to appreciate the real context within which elite members interacted.

The Politburo (between October 1952 and April 1966 called the Presidium) was the leading decision-making centre of the party and country as a whole from its establishment in 1919. It comprised the most important and influential people in the party. There were two classes of membership: full or voting members, and candidate members who could attend meetings and speak but did not vote. Full membership was often preceded by candidate status, but this was not inevitable. All members of the Politburo also held other offices. Some were CC secretaries, to be discussed below. Others were republican party first secretaries (usually of Ukraine but especially after 1957 of other republics also), sometimes the first secretaries of the Moscow and Leningrad party organizations, and incumbents of leading positions in the state machine, the prime minister (Chairman of Sovnarkom/the Council of Ministers), the president (Chairman of the Central Executive Committee/Presidium of the Supreme Soviet) and some government ministers. The precise offices represented in the Politburo differed at various times, as did the balance between state and party officials. Thus, Politburo members had full-time jobs apart from their role within the party's leading decision-making organ.

The Politburo was served by a CC apparatus. This was a hierarchical, bureaucratic body staffed by the party's "civil servants", and was

essentially the central party machine.⁴⁹ It was organized into separate departments dealing with specific areas of responsibility, such as cadres (personnel), organizational matters within the party, ideology/culture and policy areas like industry, agriculture and international affairs. These departments, staffed by permanent officials, had a head who ran the department. The departments were the main channel for information into the party leadership (e.g. government ministries' proposals were meant to be directed through the relevant CC department which would comment on the proposal and forward it, with a recommendation, to the Politburo through the normal party channels) and for information from that leadership passing down the structure to party officials throughout the country; it was also to execute all central decisions. At the apex of this bureaucratic structure was a Secretariat and, until 1952, an Orgburo. There was significant overlap between these two bodies with the Orgburo meant to take the high-level, important decisions while the more run of the mill matters were handled in the Secretariat, but the evident duplication led to the effective merging of these bodies in 1952. CC secretaries were each responsible for one or a number of departments of the apparatus; generally, the secretaries in charge of the most important departments, like those responsible for housekeeping for the Politburo and cadres, led only those departments, while others could have up to half a dozen departments within their bailiwicks. The CC secretaries were crucial as the bridges between the apparatus and the Politburo, and generally some of them were full members of that body, although this changed frequently over the life of the Soviet regime. CC secretaries usually attended meetings of the Politburo even if they were not members. Those secretaries who were also full members of the Politburo were considered the most important, or "senior", secretaries. At their head was the General (between October 1952 and April 1966 First) Secretary.

These, the members of the Politburo and Secretariat, were the central members of the elite, the oligarchy. Individual members of the Politburo and Secretariat could also have personal assistants, and they could at times be very significant both in general elite politics and in shaping the views of the individual they served. But because they were subordinate to the Politburo and Secretariat members, they are not considered part of the oligarchy. Similarly, members of the CC are not considered part of the oligarchy. Most of the members of this body were significant figures in their own particular regions, be those regions geographical or

functional. Although the composition of the CC changed over time, it always comprised the most important party officials throughout the country—the first secretaries of the union republics and subordinate regions within some of those republics—and leading figures from the government apparatus, including the military and security forces. Formal meetings of this body (called plenum/plena) were usually called a couple of times a year, but such meetings may have been more important for the opportunities for the exchange of information between oligarch and lower ranks than they were for the formal debates that characterized them. The principal job of the chain of regional party secretaries was to run the party within their particular geographical area, so they had little opportunity for active involvement in elite affairs, even if such involvement had been welcome. They were all appointed from above, with the most important posts being filled by decision of the Orgburo/Secretariat/Politburo. They were also brought together in the party Congress. The Congress was formally the sovereign body of the party, but it was too large and met too infrequently to play a continuing role in elite affairs. Nevertheless, it was at times important in the structuring of elite politics, especially in the first decade and a half of the regime's life.

Another important group, which at the top overlapped with the Politburo, was the leading figures in the government. These were the government ministers and the chairs of leading government committees (like the KGB) and were headed by the Chair of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (president) and, more importantly, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom, from 1946 the Council of Ministers) or prime minister. Government ministers had one advantage compared with most party secretaries: they were located in Moscow and therefore better placed to seek to influence matters within the elite. Some ministers were frequent attendees at Politburo sessions, but their jobs were mainly concerned with running their ministries, so they actually had little time for more systematic involvement in the affairs of the elite. Nevertheless, their positions at the heads of large bureaucratic structures that combined expertise in policymaking in a particular sphere with implementation, constituted an important political resource, especially for those in key portfolio areas like foreign affairs, defence and security. Given the nature of the Soviet structure, with the institutional hierarchies in the society tied together into a single inter-connected structure through the agency of the party, it was principally through

government ministers that economic matters gained representation at the highest level of the system.

Thus, the oligarchy was surrounded by a penumbra of institutionally-based figures, and although that oligarchy was not generally constrained by that penumbra on a daily basis, it for the most part did not ignore it. Indeed, as the emphasis upon clientelism noted above implies many of those within the oligarchy spent great efforts to shape these broader constituencies. Of course, clientelism and patronage were also used in an attempt to shape the oligarchy itself, and this will be a major focus of attention in the coming chapters.

Finally, we need to address the notion of collective leadership, especially within the context of dominant leaders such as Stalin in the USSR. Collective leadership was the official description of leadership in Soviet politics. There has been much confusion over what collective leadership means. I intend to use three models:

1. Pure collective leadership model, where all leaders were broadly equal and none had more power or influence than any of the others, except perhaps in their own particular fields of personal responsibility. This type of leadership is, in practice, very rare; collective leadership is, by its nature, characterized by a tension between monocratic and oligarchic tendencies, if for no other reason than the operation of personal ambition.
2. Predominant leader collective leadership model, where one individual is clearly the most powerful or influential, but usually does not ride roughshod over the views of his colleagues. This is often referred to as “first among equals”, but I prefer “predominant leader” because this leaves open the possibility that there is actually a hierarchy of power and influence within the group; it is not one leader who is predominant and everyone else has the same level of power capacity. This is similar to Svoboda’s “contested autocracy”.
3. Dominant leader collective leadership model, where a leader has so much power that he can ignore the views and objections of his leadership colleagues and decide whatever he wishes to decide. This is Svoboda’s “established autocracy”.

It may be objected that this third model is not a model of *collective* leadership at all, that where a leader may decide whatever he wishes regardless of the views of his colleagues, there is no real collectivism; there

is single person dictatorship. In principle, this may be so, but in practice, the situation is more complex. Such a view fails to recognize the collective dimension to what may appear to be single person rule. This complexity relates to the practical relationship between members of the leadership including the putative leader, to the interplay between personal and collective power, to the balance between monocratic and oligarchic tendencies, and to the form this takes. Even under a dominant leader, there may be a number of different ideal types of the personal vis-à-vis collective power relationship. In order of increasing degrees of collectivism:

- (a) The single leader makes *all* decisions. In practice, this would be impossible, but even assuming that it was, it is likely that not all of those decisions would be made in the absence of advice and input from others. While the dictator may make the final decision, that decision will be informed and shaped by the views of his leadership colleagues and/or advisers. This would be consistent with both a pattern whereby formal institutions meet and issues are discussed but the leader makes the decision, and one in which the leader decides without a formal meeting but in the context of more informal advice from his colleagues.
- (b) The leader may make any decision he wants, but there will be some decisions he will not make which will be made by his colleagues. The distinction may be between decisions that are considered more important and those less important, or between different policy sectors, or between those of principle and those of practice, or it may simply reflect the idiosyncratic will of the leader. Whatever the basis of the distinction, it means that some decisions are made by leaders other than the dominant one, although all may be subject to his approval.
- (c) All decisions may be collectively considered, but only a decision approved by the leader will be acceptable.

In these three types of relationship, a dominant leader exists, but so too does collective leadership, with the strength of collectivism increasing as we go down the list. This reflects the fact that the difference between the three different models of collective leadership (pure collective leadership, predominant leader collective leadership and dominant leader collective leadership) is one of degree, of the balance between monocratic

and oligarchic tendencies. A central element in collective leadership is the structuring and handling of these tendencies. In practice what this amounted to was how the ambitions of individual oligarchs were handled and how attempts to realize those ambitions shaped the collective as a whole. As a result, central to an understanding of the collective leadership at any particular point in time is the place in it of a prominent leader. This will be a major theme of this study.

What follows is not a history of high politics in the USSR; it is a study of the way leadership worked in different stages of Soviet history. This will at times involve analysis of details of elite conflict, but this is intended to expose the dynamics of collective rule rather than to simply tell the story.

NOTES

1. Svolik (2012), p. 4.
2. Svolik (2012).
3. Svolik (2012), p. 6.
4. This is also the problem with another sophisticated attempt to discuss authoritarian leadership. Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003).
5. There were some honourable exceptions. For example, Towster (1948) and the classic Fainsod (1953).
6. This is reflected in the fact that a dominant individual leader was seen as a central element in the first model that was developed to understand the Soviet Union, totalitarianism. For classic statements, see Friedrich and Brzezinski (1956) and Schapiro (1972). Also see Tucker (1965).
7. Schapiro (1960), p. 590. Schapiro seems to have moved from this position by the time of the second edition of his book in 1970; this line is missing and his view on the likelihood of collective rule replacing one-man rule is more open, even though he argues the system remains totalitarian.
8. For example, Swearer (1963). This was part of a symposium entitled “Ten Years After Stalin”.
9. See Fitzpatrick (2015), Khlevniuk (2009), Medvedev (1983), Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), and Sebag Montefiore (2003).
10. Schattenberg (2015).
11. For example, in the words of one scholar, the Soviet system has “no mechanism for effective long-term sharing and transfer of leadership at the top...” Rakowska-Harmstone (1976), p. 52.
12. For a succinct statement of this view and an argument that such a cycle is not inevitable, see Gilison (1967).

13. For studies of this institution, see Brown (1980) and Gill (1986).
14. For a study of the Politburo over the regime's life, see Lowenhardt et al. (1992).
15. On this see Daniels (1980). Its course up to the war is charted in Gill (1990).
16. Mawdsley and White (2000). Also see Daniels (1976) who originated the term.
17. Daniels (1976), p. 80.
18. For a few examples, Schapiro (1970), Hill and Frank (1981), Gill (1994), and Ogushi (2008). For the party's Rules, see Gill (1988). On membership, see Rigby (1968).
19. For example, Minagawa (1985).
20. Rigby (1979).
21. Respectively Rigby (1979) and Getty (2005).
22. For example, see Valenta (1979), Lowenhardt (1981), Gustafson (1981), and Dawisha (1984).
23. For some examples from different periods, see Young (1953), Rush (1965), Rush (1974), Hodgson (1976), and Ra'anani (2006).
24. On this, see Bunce (1976, 1980, 1981), Roeder (1985), Bunce and Roeder (1986), and Breslauer (1980).
25. For example, Bialer (1980) and Hough (1980).
26. The Lenin–Stalin succession does not fit this pattern, in the sense that Lenin held no formal position in the party for Stalin to succeed to and Stalin did not take over the post Lenin held as Chairman of Sovnarkom (or prime minister). Furthermore, Stalin was a member of the Politburo from its creation in 1919 and became a CC secretary only when he was appointed General Secretary in April 1922.
27. Although he did speak at the funeral meeting in Red Square. The commission was initially named as comprising Dzerzhinsky (as chair), Bonch-Bruевич, Voroshilov, Yenukidze, Molotov, Muralov, Lashevich and Zelensky, with Avanesov, Krasin and Sapronov added later. Velikanova, p. 51.
28. For just one example of an attempt to plot a process of succession that proved to be wrong, see Ryavec (1982). For a judicious discussion of many of the issues, see Brown (1982). Brown actually identifies Gorbachev as “in a number of respects the most obvious choice” (p. 240) to succeed Brezhnev.
29. It was only in 1966 that it was established in the party's Rules that the General Secretary was to be elected by the CC, but the previous practice remained: the CC ratified the decision made by the Politburo.
30. Hodnett (1975).
31. Details about their careers are based principally on Goryachev (2005), pp. 128, 179 and 416.

32. For an attempt to apply this to Gorbachev, see Gustafson and Mann (1988).
33. Harris (2005).
34. For example, see Ross (1980).
35. For example, Bunce (1983).
36. Rigby (1970).
37. The development of this system and its implications are explained throughout Gill (1990). For later, see Harasymiw (1969) and Rigby and Harasymiw (1983).
38. Rigby (1984). I have slightly reworked Rigby's rules, which are outlined on pp. 39–42.
39. The same point applies at lower levels of the political structure, for example, the regional party organization.
40. The best discussion of this in the Soviet context is Willerton (1992), ch. 1. Also see Miller (1989).
41. In the case of allies already in the Politburo, they are deemed to have become clients if they have retained their positions over two instances of major changes in the membership of that body, plus evidence of supporting the patron.
42. Rigby (1984).
43. Goryachev (2005).
44. For a sophisticated analysis of the operation of norms in a communist party, see Teiwes (1993).
45. Schueller (1965). Schueller's essay originally appeared in 1951.
46. Mawdsley and White (2000).
47. For example, Lane (1988).
48. The oligarchy as conceived here is very different from those approaches that rely on the control of economic resources. For example, Winters (2011).
49. For a good brief description, see Hill and Rahr (1988), pp. 49–51.

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Oligarchy with a Predominant Leader, 1917–22

The circumstances of the existence of the party prior to 1917 meant that there was no regularity in its functioning and little opportunity for authoritative norms structuring party life to become established. Nevertheless, a number of principles pertaining to the operation of the party did seem to exist in party lore. One of these related to collective leadership, manifested in the declared sovereignty of the party's collective organs. Throughout the bitter disputes within the party, resolution was almost invariably sought through one of the party's formal bodies, the Congress or Central Committee. This does not mean that the conflict took place only in these bodies, but that the final resolution was sought in them. While these outcomes were not always accepted by everyone, these fora were acknowledged as sovereign, as being the place where such disputes should be resolved. These were the bodies that both formulated the party's programmatic statements and laid down policy, and it was the Congress that chose the party's leadership. But the integrity of this principle was undercut somewhat by two others. First, recognition that organizational manipulation could be used to gain an advantage in such collective organs. Such manipulation could include rigging the selection of delegates or the editorial boards of party publications, convening of meetings when it was difficult for opponents to attend and the taking over of party bodies.¹ Second, recognition of a special role by a predominant leader, Vladimir Lenin. This was actually quite problematic within the party, with the role Lenin sought to play a major factor in the continuing Bolshevik-Menshevik split, but among

Bolsheviks his role as leader was widely accepted. This does not mean that all Bolsheviks blindly accepted what he said, but the Bolsheviks did generally acknowledge his place as party leader. This established a norm of the acceptance of a predominant leader. Another principle emanating from this period (and from Lenin's activity in particular) was the importance of ideas. The principal currency of party life, and a major factor dividing party members, was the theory of Marxism and its application to Russia. This question, in various manifestations, was central to the disputes that wracked the party prior to 1917, and what it means is that in party lore, power was directly associated with ideology, and policy discussion was acceptable within the party but not outside it. When the party seized power in 1917, these principles were embedded within its operating system.

INSTITUTIONAL FLUIDITY

This initial period was one in which the institutional framework at the regime's apex was established, but which experienced significant fluidity as the different institutions were created and sought to settle into a pattern of stable relations, something that did not really happen until later in the 1920s.² Initially the main institutional seat of power was in the state rather than the party, Sovnarkom and its two executive organs the Little Sovnarkom and the Defence Council (later the Labour and Defence Council, STO).³ This is not surprising. The norm in other countries was for power to be located in leading organs of government rather than a political party, such that when party organs and in particular the Politburo did become the principal seat of power later in the decade, this was a radical innovation in international statecraft. Furthermore the fact that the leaders of the government ministries that actually ran the country were all members of Sovnarkom, that the only position Lenin formally held was Chairman of Sovnarkom, and that it met virtually daily in the initial months of Soviet rule⁴ (and therefore far more frequently than party bodies), all propelled this body into the central place in the elite structure. Most of the decisions about day-to-day issues were made here. While party institutions were more important for resolving major policy questions and issues of principle, it was in Sovnarkom that most of the basic decisions about the administration of the country were resolved.

Although it was the chief organ of government, Sovnarkom's ability to act as an effective collective organ was hamstrung by a number of factors⁵:

1. There was a high level of turnover of members of this body; by the end of 1922 only Lenin, Stalin and Lunacharsky had retained continuous membership of it while a further 52 people had served as commissars at some time.⁶
2. Many people's commissars did not regularly attend Sovnarkom meetings, delegating their places to subordinates from within their commissariats.⁷ This meant that meetings were often characterized by a predominance of lower level officials rather than the people's commissars themselves, with the former clearly carrying less weight in discussion than the latter.
3. Meetings were also attended by a large range of non-members, including other lower level officials from the commissariats, accredited representatives of other central agencies and others perceived to have expertise relevant to whatever was under discussion.
4. Agendas were very heavy, with the result that some issues were shunted off into commissions, some were dealt with by ad hoc committees of officials and others were handled executively by Lenin and a few others. All of these modes of action reduced the importance of the plenary Sovnarkom meetings.
5. The propensity of oligarchs, particularly Lenin, to transfer issues from one forum to another (e.g. from Sovnarkom to the Politburo) where they thought they might get a better outcome.⁸ This practice illustrates the weakness of institutional boundaries and the limited nature of the institutionalization of these bodies.

This combination of factors expanded the power of the chairman, Vladimir Lenin, whose standing and (given the speed and rate of membership turnover) experience, far exceeded those of other participants. And given the large size of meetings and the crowded agendas, a firm hand was required to move matters along, something which increased the potential for power exercise by the chairman. These characteristics also enhanced the power of the two executive organs, the Little Sovnarkom and STO, with both bodies also dominated by Lenin. Indicative of this is the way that decisions could be reached as a result

of Lenin talking to some members on the telephone rather than in the meeting, and decisions of both bodies entered into force as soon as Lenin signed them.⁹ It was principally through these state organs that Lenin sought to govern.

The dominance of Sovnarkom began to slip with the greater regularization of party structure and processes from 1919, when the Politburo was created. Henceforth, although throughout this initial period Sovnarkom remained an important institution, the process of shifting power and authority to leading party organs accelerated over time. This was a development that most oligarchs would have welcomed, given that their personal histories had been bound up with the party rather than any state organ, that many of them were not people's commissars and were therefore not members of the main governing council, and that they were seeking to create a revolutionary state rather than something like all other states at the time and therefore would have seen a different style of governing as being more appropriate. And with Lenin's illness from May 1922, a major barrier against such a transfer would have been significantly weakened.¹⁰

The key to the shift of power to party organs was the creation of the Politburo, which was envisaged to be the principal decision-making organ of the party between meetings of the CC. At the same time, the Secretariat and Orgburo were established, essentially to constitute the bureaucratic apparatus of the party and to provide secretarial support to the Politburo.¹¹ To head this apparatus, and conceived as a purely routine administrative position, the post of General Secretary was created in 1922. The emergence of these bodies, and especially the Politburo, and the subsequent growth in its power and authority confirmed the norm of leadership collectivism while at the same time laying the basis for the erosion of the position of those two bodies that this had formerly been embedded in, the Congress and CC. Over time, the increasing size of the Congress and the CC—the Congress grew from 106 delegates in 1918 to 686 in 1922 (it had been 1135 at the contentious X Congress in 1921) and the CC from 23 in 1918 to 46 in 1922—and lesser frequency of their meetings rendered these vulnerable to the slippage of effective power out of their hands and into those of the new executive organs. The Congress met annually (there were also party conferences each year from 1919–22) while the CC met more frequently, but not as often as either Sovnarkom or the Politburo.¹² After the Politburo was established in March 1919,¹³ it met much more frequently, with its

workload increasing over time. The most important questions tended to be handled here, but many issues of lesser importance were also dealt with at Politburo sessions, including some cases of interdepartmental disputes (Table 2.1).¹⁴

As well as the items handled in sessions of the Politburo, from 1921 some issues were handled by circulation rather than in the full meetings. The boundaries between these different institutions (Congress, CC and Politburo) were in practice vague and assumptions about institutional responsibility expansive, resulting in a high level of uncertainty about the proper role and task of each body, but clearly the Politburo where the leading oligarchs were to be found was best placed to leach power out of the other organizations. What prevented institutional breakdown or excessive conflict was the broad consensus that existed within the elite.¹⁵

The establishment of the Politburo in 1919 raised concerns among many CC members that their role in decision-making was about to be sidelined, and the provision that all CC members could attend Politburo sessions (without a vote) and that the Politburo had to provide a written report to the fortnightly CC meeting on its actions did nothing to assuage these concerns. The Politburo was a council of notables, with all of its members except Leon Trotsky having long careers in the party and all of them (including Trotsky) having high reputations for their history of revolutionary commitment. Although it was riven by personal antagonisms, especially concerning Trotsky, and there were differences over the trade union issue in 1920–21, the body worked reasonably efficiently; the regular absence of Joseph Stalin and Trotsky on war duties and Grigorii Zinoviev in Petrograd may have facilitated this, as well as bolstering Lenin's ability to dominate its proceedings. The key to this latter was his personal standing. However, the creation of an administrative

Table 2.1 Politburo workload 1919–22^a

	<i>Number of sessions</i>	<i>Resolved in session</i>	<i>Average per session</i>	<i>Resolved by circulation</i>	<i>Total questions</i>
1919	51	394	8	0	394
1920	75	1038	14	0	1038
1921	94	1382	15	201	1583
1922	70	1335	19	259	1594

^aBased on material in Adibekov et al. (2000), T.1. On proposals by Krestinsky that the Politburo meet weekly, see Adibekov et al. (2000), T.1, p. 13

machine to service the Politburo in the Secretariat¹⁶ created the circumstances that would enable future domination to stem from control over organizational resources rather than personal repute, and thereby created the organizational structure that would enable effective realization of the emergent norm of the acceptance of organizational manipulation for partisan advantage. This was a source of potential power that Stalin was able to harness once he became General Secretary in 1922. By the XI Congress in 1922, there were already complaints about the centralization of power in the Politburo and the secrecy of its proceedings.¹⁷

The way in which the organizational wing of the party embodied in the Orgburo and Secretariat established at the same time as the Politburo potentially seemed to be moving into a position whereby they could dominate the Politburo as well as undercut democratic processes in the CC and the party's lower ranks became visible early. This potential for the consolidation of organizational control is reflected in the different levels of personnel continuity in the legislative compared with the organizational wings of the party, the Politburo compared with the Orgburo and Secretariat, and the affiliations of individual members (Table 2.2).

Comparison of these two years shows considerable fluidity in the leadership of these leading party bodies, especially on the organizational side. Of the eight full and candidate members of the Politburo in 1919, only Nikolai Krestinsky was not included in 1922, while four people (Aleksii Rykov, Mikhail Tomsky, Nikolai Bukharin and Vyacheslav Molotov) were added by 1922. Of the six members of the Orgburo and Secretariat in 1919, only Stalin remained in 1922. Of the nine people added to the Orgburo and Secretariat by 1922, five (Andrei Andreev, Mikhail Kalinin, Valerian Kuibyshev, Molotov and Yan Rudzutak) were close associates of Stalin into the 1930s,¹⁸ working with him to establish his control over the party's organizational machinery. In 1919, of the 12 people in the oligarchy, only two members of the Orgburo were also members of the Politburo, while the sole CC Secretary (Yelena Stasova) was a member of the Orgburo but not the Politburo.¹⁹ By 1922 the number of people had increased to 16, and now among the ten Politburo members (full and candidate), four were also on the Orgburo and two also on the Secretariat. This represents a growth in the strength of representation of the organizational wing of the party in the legislative one; only Stalin and Molotov were on all three bodies. It also represents the strengthening of Stalin's position in the organizational wing, but not in the Politburo; in the 1922 Politburo, six members were to come into conflict with

Table 2.2 Leadership elected in March 1919 and April 1922^a

	<i>Elected after VIII Congress March 1919</i>	<i>Elected after XI Congress April 1922</i>
Politburo: full members	Kamenev Krestinsky Lenin Stalin Trotsky	Zinoviev Kamenev Lenin Rykov Stalin Tomsky Trotsky
Politburo: candidate members	Bukharin Zinoviev Kalinin	Bukharin Kalinin Molotov
Orgburo: full members	Beloborodov Krestinsky Serebryakov Stalin Stasova	Andreev Dzerzhinsky Kuibyshev Molotov Rykov Stalin Tomsky
Orgburo: candidate members	Muranov	Zelensky Kalinin Rudzutak
Secretariat	Stasova	Stalin Kuibyshev Molotov

^aThroughout, membership details are taken from Sostav (1990)

Stalin and be killed (Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, Rykov, Tomsky, Trotsky and Bukharin). All members of the Politburo also held other full-time jobs, and there was a clear shift in emphasis between the two years. In the 1919 Politburo, five of the seven members held positions in the central state machine, while in 1922 this had been reduced to five out of ten,²⁰ reflecting the process of the sidelining of state institutions that was underway. It did not, however, end bureaucratic politics, as those at the head of the government commissariats and other institutional structures continued to struggle for the institutional interests of the bodies they headed.

This array of institutions created a complex network within which the Soviet elite functioned. There was no clear distribution of responsibilities, although the most important questions tended to be discussed in party rather than state organs, while questions of economics and finance

were the province principally of Sovnarkom's executive bodies. But this could be a moveable feast because individual oligarchs often sought to transfer questions from one institution to another, and meetings could change their identity (e.g. from Orgburo to Politburo) during their course as a result of the comings and goings of individual members. However, there was general acceptance that the Congress was sovereign, meaning that it was here that the final word lay. But because the Congress and the CC constituted arenas within which party members could question their leaders and the decisions they took, these were the scene of major discussion and debate. In theory, party oligarchs welcomed such lower level involvement in decision-making, but in practice their attitude was more ambiguous.

DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT WITHIN THE COLLECTIVE

During the initial period of Soviet rule up until Lenin's effective withdrawal from active politics in 1922 owing to the stroke he suffered in May,²¹ there were three main dynamics of conflict in the regime. The first, reflecting the norm of the discussion of policy questions, occurred mainly within the leading state and party organs and involved debate over policy questions by people's commissars and other officials. This involved not just questions of what was the most appropriate course of policy to adopt, but also issues of resource distribution among the various institutional interests represented, principally the people's commissariats (or government ministries); this was the classic bureaucratic politics paradigm. In principle, these were resolved in Sovnarkom by a simple majority vote, but given the authority and influence that Lenin wielded, such disputes are often better seen in terms of attempts to gain his support. This sort of conflict was endemic but did not involve major questions of principle and often, given their relative lack of attendance at Sovnarkom meetings, oligarchs were not actively involved.

The second dynamic of conflict was centred in the party and pitched a generally united oligarchy against a series of opposition groups based in the CC and the lower reaches of the party. These successive oppositions—Left Communists, Military Opposition, Workers Opposition and Democratic Centralists—overlapped in their memberships and experienced considerable continuity in the general policy positions they occupied, and all were based in the regional party apparatus (the Moscow party organization was particularly important) and well represented in

the CC. None of the party oligarchs was active in any of these oppositions, except for Bukharin who was a member of the Left Communists.

The third dynamic involved division among the oligarchs over three major questions: a single party or a coalition government in 1917 when Zinoviev and Kamenev (among others) argued for a coalition government and Lenin vigorously supported single party rule; the terms of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty in 1918, when Lenin, Trotsky and Bukharin all championed different courses of action and in 1920–21 the role of the trade unions where during open debate in the party different sets of these were put forward by Lenin (known as the “Platform of the Ten” and supported *inter alia* by Zinoviev, Tomsy, Rudzutak, Kamenev, Kalinin and Stalin), Trotsky and Bukharin, with four other platforms not linked with particular oligarchs.²²

On the single party versus coalition question, there was significant support both within the CC and the party more broadly for a coalition of all socialist parties. This discussion took place under the threat of strike activity by Vikzhel, the Executive Committee of the All-Russian Union of Railway Workers. On 12 November 1917, the CC meeting without Lenin and Trotsky agreed unanimously on the entry of representatives of the socialist parties into the government. At the following series of meetings of the CC, Lenin vigorously argued against this proposal, including threatening to expel dissenters, leading the CC to agree to reverse its earlier position and condemn those seeking a coalition. As a result, most of those dissenters resigned from the CC and as people’s commissars, but they recanted within a month.²³ However, under pressure from outside and with the CC wavering, Lenin agreed to accept a narrow coalition with the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, the only party that would countenance an alliance with the Bolsheviks. The coalition collapsed in March 1918, principally owing to the terms of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty. So the debate on the coalition question was open and hard fought and conducted chiefly in the CC and the formal government organ, VTsIK. Those favouring a broad coalition lacked a leader of Lenin’s stature and their position was undermined by the refusal of most socialist parties to enter such a coalition.

In the case of Brest-Litovsk, the debate was equally vigorous and conducted largely within the CC. Its origin lay in Lenin’s decision to abandon established policy on waging revolutionary war in favour of reaching an immediate peace treaty with Germany, a reversal widely opposed within the party. The CC was split along the lines of the three

oligarchs who took leading positions on this question (Lenin and immediate peace, Trotsky and “neither peace nor war”, and Bukharin and revolutionary war) and the proponents sought to mobilize support among lower level party bodies. As the stalemate continued, the crisis escalated when the Germans renewed their military advance. When the CC continued to frustrate Lenin’s position, he threatened to resign. In a new vote in the CC, some former opponents abstained, thereby allowing Lenin’s position to emerge victorious.²⁴

The trade union controversy was intertwined with a number of other pressing issues—the form of economic management, the growing economic crisis and the centralization of control within the party and regime more generally—as well as being laced by the anti-Trotsky campaign already being waged by Zinoviev. But it was the trade union issue that crystallized the conflict and that brought division to the CC. As a result of this division in the CC, party-wide discussion was held in late 1920–early 1921. Proponents of the various platforms advanced their views through the press and at rallies, meetings and conferences, and when it was decided that delegates would be elected to the forthcoming X Congress of the party on the basis of those platforms, in the party election campaign as well. Lenin and the other oligarchs worked to obtain the most favourable delegate profile they could, with Lenin’s personal standing and oratorical skills supplemented by organizational manipulation able to produce a favourable delegate outcome. Debate in the Congress ended with the adoption of Lenin’s “Platform of the Ten”. At the same time, the oligarchs basically remained united against the challenge from below from the Workers’ Opposition and Democratic Centralists on the question of democracy versus centralism in the party.

In all of these cases, Lenin ultimately got his way, even if on the first two questions this was in part a function of developments outside the party and beyond his control. But what was evident in all cases was that his ability to persuade his colleagues around to his point of view far surpassed that of the other oligarchs and this was a major reason why he was successful. And in all cases, once the question was resolved in Lenin’s favour, all the oligarchs fell in behind it. The norm of the predominant leader remained intact.

There were also personal arguments and disputes between individual oligarchs (e.g. between Stalin and Trotsky in 1920 over military matters²⁵ and between Trotsky on the one hand and Zinoviev and Kamenev on the other, based mainly on personal dislike). However, generally this

was a period when the oligarchy was united in defending itself against attacks from below and enjoyed a reasonably strong esprit de corps (see below) despite these personal tensions. The means whereby these challenges from below were put down, even though they did not usually involve splits within the oligarchy, generated patterns of action and principle that were to be significant in the later bouts of elite conflict.

There was a general consensus that debate should be contained within the bounds of the party and that oppositions should not take the battle into society or into non-party organs. On many occasions discussion did take place in Sovnarkom, but this was acceptable because this was an organ dominated by party members; from March 1918 all people's commissars were party members following the withdrawal of the Left Socialist Revolutionary members over the question of Brest-Litovsk.²⁶ This principle of restriction of discussion to the party was violated during the debate on the role of the trade unions in 1920–21 when the organization and mobilization of support from within the unions themselves occurred, but this was generally accepted because this dispute was in part about how the unions should relate to the party.²⁷ Less acceptable was the so-called "Declaration of the Twenty Two", an appeal by members of the Workers Opposition for support from foreign communists in 1922. This issue was examined by a commission established by the XI Congress in March–April 1922, and this found that although the submission of this declaration to the Comintern (the Communist International) did not in itself violate party discipline, the maintenance of a factional grouping that enabled this to take place was an "anti-party" act and the submission to the Comintern of false information was "completely inadmissible".²⁸ Given that at this stage many still saw the party as being but one part of the international revolutionary movement led by the Comintern, acknowledgement of the right of that body to be concerned for developments within the Russian party was the default position. But the criticism of the "twenty two" at the XI Congress shows that despite this there was a strong sense that all of their actions, including the appeal to the Comintern, were unacceptable.

With debate to be focused in the party, the pre-revolutionary norm of the Congress and CC as arenas of vigorous debate and argument, and the opposition rooted in regional party organizations while the leadership was based principally in the central organs, both the leadership and successive oppositions concentrated their attention upon arguing their cases before party members in general. Debate was not, as it was to

become in the future, restricted to the oligarchy, but was spread widely through the party. The party press was a major vehicle for this, with both central and regional newspapers carrying speeches and statements from the various sides of each debate. This was particularly marked in the lead up to meetings of the CC and the Congress as the different sides on the issues sought to rally support in these bodies. In particular, the Congress, which was constitutionally the supreme organ of the party, was the place where crucial decisions were made. The process that was to turn congresses into passive talking shops that simply echoed and supported the leadership's positions had not been completed by the time of Lenin's illness, and although during this period there was some central manipulation of delegate selection in an attempt to guarantee support on the floor of the Congress, these meetings were much less under central control than they were to become. Delegates needed to be convinced, and this turned these gatherings into real contests for their support. Because the capacity of the centre to choose congress delegates was not yet well developed, during this time there was a real contest in many regional party organizations between the opposition and the leadership to determine the identity of those delegates²⁹; at the X Congress, delegates were actually selected on the basis of alternative platforms on the principal issue facing the Congress, the trade union question, and at the XI Congress delegate selection was manipulated by Lenin and his supporters to limit the number of supporters of Trotsky.³⁰ The high turnover of delegates from congress to congress meant that at each of these gatherings, newcomers constituted an overwhelming majority,³¹ reflecting this practice of competition for delegates.

During this initial period, discussion in the CC, the party Congress and the party Conference was open and relatively unconstrained; only the issues raised by the Military Opposition at the VIII Congress and the "Declaration of the Twenty Two" at the XI Congress were discussed behind closed doors and the proceedings not published; all other questions were widely canvassed in these meetings. On each occasion, opposition speakers were given the floor and were able to present their cases, including vigorous criticism of the leadership, without undue interference either from meeting chairmen or assembled members/delegates.³² Furthermore decisions were taken in these meetings, and although the membership may have been manipulated through structured delegate selection (and in the case of the CC it was a membership shaped by the leadership and confirmed at the Congress), the principle that it was

in such fora that major questions were to be resolved was affirmed. In these discussions, generally the leadership around Lenin was victorious,³³ although sometimes not without difficulty; for example, Lenin had difficulty getting CC agreement to his position on Brest-Litovsk, which led to it going to the VII Congress where he ultimately got his way.³⁴ A major reason for the leadership's record of success in these fora was the role of Lenin and the prestige he possessed in the party (see below). These were venues for real discussion and debate, even if in the end each opposition group was defeated.³⁵ It is important to note that this was not a consistent pattern of CC or Congress adjudicating between sections of the oligarchy, but it was often about reaching decisions on issues that broadly pitted the oligarchs against sections of lower party officialdom. But even when the oligarchy was divided with different oligarchs pressing different views, the debate was generally free and open to participation by all at the meeting. On those occasions when the oligarchy was divided, the VII Congress decision on Brest-Litovsk and the X Congress on the trade unions, those oligarchs ranged alongside Lenin emerged victorious, able to carry the day on the floor of the Congress. Lenin acknowledged the role of the Congress in saying "when more or less equal groups form in the CC, the party will make a judgement and it will judge in such a way that we will unite in accordance with the party will and its instructions".³⁶ The Congress and CC were accepted as appropriate venues for the airing of differences over policy and practice, and where decisions could be made on the basis of a vote of delegates/members.

But at least as important as this open discussion of issues as a precedent for the handling of conflict in the party was the powerful emergence of a sentiment of party unity. Successive opposition groups were lambasted for the way in which their actions breached party unity and, by so doing, aided the party's opponents. This principle, which was to become of great importance later, was given institutional teeth at the X Congress in 1921 when the Congress adopted decisions placing clear limits on what was acceptable opposition activity. One resolution, "On the Syndicalist and Anarchist Deviation in Our Party",³⁷ mounted a sustained attack on the Workers Opposition and its views and declared that the propagation of its views was incompatible with continued membership of the party. This meant that the propounding of certain views, even though for many they would have seemed consistent with the intellectual traditions from which the Bolsheviks had emerged, was no longer

acceptable within the party. The other resolution, “On Party Unity”,³⁸ outlawed fractional activity within the party by ordering “the immediate dissolution, without exception, of all groups that have been formed on the basis of some platform or other and instructs all organizations to be very strict in ensuring that no fractional manifestations of any sort are tolerated”. All organized opposition on the basis of a “platform” was now outlawed, despite the fact that precisely this had been encouraged in the lead up to the X Congress.

The precise object against which this resolution was directed remains unclear. The context within which it appeared was one in which individual oligarchs had sought to mobilize lower level supporters among Congress delegates into political machines on the basis of published platforms in an attempt to be victorious in the trade union debate. This involved extending a disagreement within the oligarchy into the lower ranks of the party in an organized fashion; it involved the creation of a fraction whereby the party apparatus and rank-and-file were divided vertically across party levels. A fraction is different from a faction.³⁹ The latter involves individuals at the same party level coming together to coordinate their activity the better to achieve their common end. Fractional organization transformed disputes among leaders into potentially party-wide disputes, with the obvious potential danger of splitting the party. Factional organization would structure oligarch disputes while corralling them within the oligarchy. A prohibition on fractions but not factions could, therefore, be seen as a defensive measure against challenges from below. It was also something that Lenin would probably have seen as unlikely to bind his hands given his capacity to generate support among the broader party membership independent of organizational efforts. However, while this measure appears to have been mainly directed at opposition outside the oligarchy, its ambiguity meant it could have direct implications for the oligarchs and the future conduct of politics within that group. This is reflected in the final provision of the resolution not published until 1924 placing the expulsion of people from the party in the hands of the CC (and for members of the CC, of a joint meeting of that body and the Central Control Commission; this also applied to members of the CCC, which effectively became a high party court). This measure did not, of itself, mean a major change in course in the party because it could have simply lain on the books unenforced, like many other decisions that were taken. However, the anti-fractional decision did provide a weapon that oligarchs could use against both any

further opposition groups from outside the oligarchy and, by collapsing the distinction between faction and fraction, other members of the oligarchy. It could, therefore, become a means of disciplining oligarchs. This became evident later in the 1920s.

THE SHAPE OF ELITE CONSENSUS

The contours of political life sketched above reflected the experience party oligarchs brought with them from pre-revolution party history.⁴⁰ They were used to a situation in which formal party meetings, principally the CC and Congress, were arenas of vigorous policy debate in which party leaders had to vie for the support of rank-and-file party members. This reflected a formal commitment to the notion of rank-and-file sovereignty, even if in practice the manipulation of party rules and practices to undermine this control was accepted,⁴¹ and to the principle that opposition had a legitimate place in party life. They were also sensitive to the principles of party unity and party discipline (which initially meant acceptance of party decisions but did not require the renunciation of one's views), even if in practice the oligarchs (in particular Lenin) were not averse to splits if this furthered their immediate political aims. As a result of this combination, the oligarchs were prone to stand up for their beliefs in party circles but also to combine against challenges from below. Most of the oligarchs at this time argued vigorously over policy issues—Brest-Litovsk, war communism and NEP, and the role of trade unions—and refused to accept Lenin's authority automatically. But also generally they did not create fractions extending into the lower reaches of the party that could be mobilized into elite conflict, although the Left Communists headed by Bukharin were rooted in the Moscow party organization. Debate was open and oligarchs plotted privately to establish agreement among peers on particular issues, including the practice of decisions being made by a small group of the oligarchs and presented effectively as a *fait accompli* to the rest. As early as March 1919, an oppositionist, Valerian Osinsky, charged that decisions were being made by Lenin and Yakov Sverdlov, occasionally assisted by a few others,⁴² while later it was common for a small group of Politburo members to meet prior to the full meeting of the Politburo to agree their common position, a group which did not include Trotsky.⁴³ Lenin frequently met with individual oligarchs to get them to his side on particular issues, thereby building up a coalition to get measures through. The oligarchy

was not divided into firm factions, even if there were temporary alliances and cabals. Politics was personalized and free flowing, with institutional boundaries having little importance; the oligarchs were quite happy to take issues on which they had been defeated in one organ (such as Sovnarkom) to another one (for example, the CC) seeking a more acceptable outcome. And given the demands of the civil war or their substantive appointments, many of the oligarchs were often absent from Moscow for extended periods.⁴⁴

The elite consensus referred to above was rooted in a shared past and a common commitment to the revolutionary enterprise. Some of the oligarchs had shared the experience of exile in Western Europe, where they had been participants in the course of political struggle within the socialist movement. Some, such as Lenin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, were personally well known to one another, while Trotsky had been a bitter critic of Lenin while sharing the commitment to the establishment of socialism in Russia. Stalin and Molotov had spent most of the time in the underground or in exile in Russia and had worked together in 1917 and were at least known to Lenin, although not well. Once in power, the shared commitment to the socialist future added to success in the civil war against what had seemed to many to be insuperable odds, generated both a sense of achievement and of being the chosen ones. They had led the struggle, had overcome enormous pressures on them personally, and could now face the task of building the new world. This engendered an esprit de corps and a sense of identification, a view that they had not only the right to lead, but also the duty to do so. This identification, which was to be recognized by the use of the term “Old Bolsheviks” (although the compass of this was much wider than just the elite, referring to those who had joined the party before 1917), remained a significant factor in elite mentality right up until the Terror of the 1930s.

PERSONALIZED POLITICS

This oligarchy under Lenin remained highly personalized, in the sense that the oligarchs’ prominence stemmed from their revolutionary reputations rather than any office they held, and they did not share an organizational power base. As noted above, the members of the Politburo all held other positions in the politico-administrative structure; for example, in 1922 Lenin was the chairman of Sovnarkom, Stalin was General Secretary, Zinoviev chairman of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet,

Kamenev chairman of the Executive Committee of the Moscow Soviet and Trotsky People's Commissar for War. As the leaders of other organizations in the decision-making arena, these Politburo members were subject to the pressures of bureaucratic politics, of seeking expanded resources for their bureaucratic constituencies. This was a common theme in Sovnarkom discussions where budgetary issues were prominent. But on this their interests were divided. In contrast, those members of the Secretariat and Orgburo had a consolidated interest, in that these full-time workers in the central party apparatus shared a set of institutional interests relating to the strengthening of that apparatus that were not shared by the oligarchs as a whole,⁴⁵ although from 1922 they were shared by Stalin. The effect of this shared interest did not become apparent during this initial period, but it was to become important later in the 1920s and after.

Another aspect of the personalized nature of the elite was the position of Lenin as predominant leader. Although his post as chairman of Sovnarkom and his position on the Politburo gave him some organizational power, the basis of his power was personal authority stemming from the prestige he gained owing to his role in the party's history. His authority was personal, not institutional, and as a result power and authority were decoupled from institutional structures, thereby inhibiting the ability of leading institutions to develop normative authority. The weakness of such normative authority on the part of the leading institutions facilitated the continued personalization of politics in subsequent years. During this initial period, it was reflected in the way that politics was played out. Lenin was the hub of the governmental and administrative networks that emerged in the first six years of the regime's life. He was involved in all questions of significance, and on all of those questions over which he fought hard, he was victorious. This may have been due to a rallying of the support of the rank-and-file Congress delegates against oligarch opposition (Brest-Litovsk), by partial or apparent concessions to the opposition (the organizational question at the VIII Congress), by administrative measures (after the X Congress), or a combination of all three (the trade union debate), but what is clear is that when he threw all of his efforts into the struggle, he was successful. He was defeated on individual occasions and issues, especially in Sovnarkom, but these were never on major issues or were carried by Lenin into other fora (usually the CC) where his defeat was overturned.⁴⁶ In his handling of discussion in Sovnarkom and the Politburo, Lenin appears to have exercised a firm chairman's hand, but not to have limited debate nor sought to censor speakers or points of view.⁴⁷

Lenin, whose role in party history and in the revolution gave him unrivalled standing in the party,⁴⁸ was thus the predominant leader until his illness in 1922. But this does not mean that he ruled alone. While he was ultimately victorious on all of the major issues that came up for debate, this was not achieved by fiat but by a combination of argument, his personal prestige and organizational manipulation. People appealed to him when there were disputes over issues,⁴⁹ and openly opposed him and disputed the positions he took, but ultimately he was able to win over sufficient support to prevail. His personal authority was immense. This sort of attitude to him is captured by the comment of one of his Workers Opposition opponents in 1921, Aleksandra Kollontai: "Not in vain will the rank-and-file worker speak with assurance and reconciliation: 'Ilyich (Lenin) will ponder, he will think it over, he will listen to us. And then he will decide to turn the Party rudder toward the Opposition. Ilyich will be with us yet'".⁵⁰ Or in words attributed to Bukharin: "To fight with Lenin? That would mean a revolt against all our past, against our discipline, against the comrades in arms... Am I of sufficient stature to become a leader of a party and to declare war on Lenin and the Bolshevik Party...? No, no... I couldn't do that!"⁵¹ Lenin's authority was personal and it was acknowledged by all of the oligarchs. Lenin was predominant, the leading figure, but he was not dominant.

Despite Lenin's predominance, the other members of the oligarchy had important parts to play, especially given that most of Lenin's time and effort were devoted to the affairs of the government rather than the party,⁵² thereby leaving greater scope for others (particularly Stalin) to play a greater role in shaping the development of the party. None were simply the puppets of Lenin, willing to accept his word as law and go ahead blindly and follow it. Zinoviev and Kamenev differed with him over the question of whether the Bolsheviks should rule alone or in coalition, Stalin differed with him over the national question, Trotsky and Bukharin differed with him (and among themselves) over Brest-Litovsk and the trade unions. The oligarchs were all people with substantial revolutionary careers of their own, expansive egos and a sensitivity to personal slights. Within a weakly institutionalized structure, their personal relationships were crucial to the conduct of elite politics. This was fractious and argumentative, but kept in check by both the sort of consensus noted above and the strength of personality and authority of Lenin. When he disappeared from the scene, essentially from May 1922, the Soviet regime entered a new phase.

CONCLUSION

The initial five years of Bolshevik rule saw a fluid elite led by a person whose authority rested principally upon charismatic foundations. Lenin's ability to generate support for his positions among CC members and Congress delegates (an ability bolstered at times by organizational manipulation) meant that he was relaxed about the CC and the party Congress playing a leading role in the discussion and resolution of issues. With the prominent role played by Sovnarkom and its executive organs in the early years gradually being undermined following the formal establishment of the Politburo in 1919, the institutional arena of elite politics remained fluid. The composition of the elite was also fluid. With the seizure of power, the pre-1917 undergrounders and exiles came together in a context within which established hierarchies of authority and power were absent. Even Lenin, while acknowledged as the predominant leader, could be challenged on issues. With strong personalities in evidence, and some of the oligarchs frequently absent from Moscow on civil war or other duties, and given that at this stage individual members of the oligarchy had few established linkages into the party's lower reaches, politics was not highly structured. Prior to Lenin's incapacitation, the oligarchy was not strongly factionalized, although personal pride and large egos were already building tension, and conflict with and resentment against Leon Trotsky was building the factional lines that would become so important in 1923–24. Despite the fluidity of the elite situation, most debate and discussion did not lead to bitter disputes among the oligarchs. Rather, with the principal exceptions of Brest-Litovsk which was resolved by March 1918 and the trade union controversy, the general tendency was for the oligarchs to unite against criticism and challenges from below. This foreshadowed the emergent norm of restricting effective policy discussion to the oligarchy and mobilizing lower levels in an instrumental fashion for the resolution of that conflict in the Congress and CC. But such conflict was not a major feature in this period. Individual oligarchs did meet together in small groups to discuss issues, to plot and to plan in order to get their way on these issues. Such meetings did not need to be covert because even following the adoption of the anti-fractional decision in 1921, it was not clear that this decision had any real normative authority; intrinsically it had no special authority over and above many other decisions made about party life at this time. It became important only when individual oligarchs decided to use it in

an instrumental fashion against their opponents. So the leading members of the regime generally conducted their politics openly, confident in their own personal standing in the movement and cognizant of the desirability of winning Lenin over to their point of view if they were to prevail. The openness and fluidity of this system were to be greatly reduced after Lenin became incapacitated.

NOTES

1. The most egregious case of this was the splitting of the party and the attempt to monopolize its name.
2. For a study of the institutions and their development, see Gill (1990), Part I.
3. According to the 1918 Constitution, the supreme organ of state was the Congress of Soviets and its executive organ the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK), and despite some initial confusion over which organization did what, over time these became secondary to Sovnarkom. For a discussion of the relationship, see Rigby (1979), ch. 12.
4. By 1921 it was meeting weekly. Rigby (1979), pp. 33, 65.
5. On reasons for Sovnarkom's decline, some of which were related to its operating principles, see Rigby (1979). The reasons are summarized in Rigby (1989), pp. 13–14.
6. The changing composition is documented in Rigby (1979), pp. 239–243.
7. On the numerical dominance of people other than the commissars, see Rigby (1979), pp. 66–68.
8. Rigby (1979), p. 183.
9. Rigby (1979), pp. 80, 97.
10. On Lenin preferring to retain significant power in Sovnarkom rather than seeing it slip to the party, see Gill (1990), pp. 55–56. On measures seeking to facilitate Sovnarkom's functioning in Lenin's absence, see Rigby (1979), ch. 14.
11. The responsibilities of these bodies were expressed in exceptionally vague terms in the decision establishing them: the Politburo “adopts decisions on questions requiring immediate action”, the Orgburo “directs all the organizational work of the party” and the Secretariat “organizes a number of departments”. It is no wonder people were worried about the concentration of power here, despite the provision that they were each to report to the fortnightly meeting of the CC. Vos'moi (1959), p. 425.
12. The CC met on 27 occasions in 1918, 10 between March 1919 and March 1920, 29 between March 1920 and March 1921, and 15 between March 1921 and March 1922.

13. For its predecessor, see Getty (2013), pp. 100–101; also Rigby (1979), pp. 178–180.
14. For example, see Lenin’s comments at the Eleventh Congress. *Odinnadtsatyi* (1961), p. 35.
15. For one discussion, see Service (1984), p. 81. Also see below.
16. On this, see Gill (1990), pp. 69–83.
17. See *Odinnadtsatyi* (1961), pp. 84, 86–87 and 126.
18. Andreev remained in the oligarchy until 1952, Kalinin until he died in 1946 and Molotov until 1957. Kuibyshev died of natural causes in 1935 and Rudzutak was sacked in 1937, but he was not caught up in the Terror, suggesting he was not in total disgrace.
19. Stasova acted as a temporary member of the Politburo in July–September 1919 following Sverdlov’s death.
20. Politburo members often held more than one other position at the same time. Throughout this book, I have based the analysis on what was the most important of the other posts they held. Representation in 1919 and 1922 was as follows:

	1919	1922
Central state machine	5	5
Central party apparatus		2
Regional state machine	1	1
Other	1	2

In both Politburos, the effective posts of state president (Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets) and prime minister (Chairman of Sovnarkom) were both present plus some people’s commissars. The central party apparatus was represented in 1922 by the General Secretary and a CC Secretary. The Other category involves the head of the trade union organization and the editor of *Pravda*.

21. Lenin was suffering from powerful headaches which could prevent him from working from mid-1921, and he suffered his first stroke on 25/26 May 1922, remaining in convalescence until 2 October. He suffered a second stroke in mid-December 1922 which rendered him unfit for regular work and a third totally disabling stroke in May 1923. For one study of this, see Lewin (1968).
22. On this, see Daniels (1969), ch. 3 and Schapiro (1965), ch. 6. The flexibility of individual oligarchs is shown by the way Tomsky along with other trade union leaders opposed Lenin in early 1920 on the question of industrial management (which included the role of trade unions) but supported him in 1921.

23. For a list, see Schapiro (1965), pp. 77, 79. Bolshevik action in muzzling the press was also important in prompting their resignation.
24. Daniels (1969), pp. 70–76.
25. For a discussion of this, see Khlevniuk (2015), pp. 62–63.
26. On Left Socialist Revolutionary membership of Sovnarkom, see Rigby (1979), pp. 26–29.
27. See Daniels (1969), ch. 5.
28. Odinnadtsyati (1961), p. 579.
29. For an example, see Daniels (1969), p. 140.
30. This sort of organization also occurred at other levels. On Lenin holding a meeting of supporters to ensure his list of candidates was elected to the Politburo at the XI Congress and Stalin reproaching him for factional activity, see Chuev (1991), p. 181.
31. On turnover, see Gill (1990), pp. 57–58.
32. Although at the X Congress the opposition was excluded from the Congress Presidium, the body established to run the Congress proceedings.
33. This did sometimes involve concessions. Gill (1990), p. 58.
34. For the minutes of the CC meeting, see Bone (1974), Part. 3. The CC also refused to agree to Lenin's call for the expulsion of Shlyapnikov in August 1921. Service (1979), p. 181.
35. On reasons for the leadership's success, see Gill (1990), pp. 58–59.
36. Desyatyi (1963), p. 122.
37. Desyatyi (1963), pp. 574–576.
38. Desyatyi (1963), pp. 571–573.
39. See Gill (1990), pp. 96–98. We may distinguish between fractions and factions, although there is no such distinction in the Russian language.
40. On the conventions of political life, see Gill (1990), pp. 86–110.
41. Gill (1990), pp. 87–88.
42. Vos'moi (1959), p. 164.
43. Chuev (1991), p. 424.
44. For Zinoviev, who at the time was chair of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet and therefore lived in Petrograd, acknowledging that he took only episodic part in the work of the CC because of where he lived (he hastened to add that this was at the direction of the CC), see Vos'moi (1959), p. 284.
45. Their interests and growing power was a source of frequent criticism within party ranks, especially by successive opposition groups, the Democratic Centralists and the Workers' Opposition. See discussions in Schapiro (1965) and Daniels (1969).
46. On this see, Rigby (1979), p. 73.
47. Rigby (1979), pp. 69–75.

48. On the nature of his power, see Gill (1990), pp. 107–109.
49. For example, for the appeal to Lenin over the Stalin-Trotsky dispute at Tsaritsyn in 1918, see Khlevniuk (2015), pp. 58–59.
50. Kollontai (1921), p. 48.
51. Cited in Daniels (1969), p. 80.
52. Rigby (1979), pp. 108–110.

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Rule by Pure Oligarchy, 1923–29

By the time the second period opened with Lenin's illness, the emergent norms the party had carried with it into power had been strengthened. The sovereignty of collective organs, the place of a predominant leader, the use of organizational manipulation, and the importance of ideas had all been confirmed in the patterns of action adopted by elites in 1917–22. The last of these had been elaborated by an acceptance of the right of opposition and of open discussion in the party, the beginning of informal organization to pursue political (or factional) ends (both of these had been implicit prior to 1917), bureaucratic politics based on institutional affiliation as a new potential source of conflict, and an increased emphasis upon unity and discipline within an elite that was becoming more isolated from the party rank-and-file.¹ During the 1920s there was significant modification of these norms. Opposition gradually became no longer acceptable and the scope for open discussion narrowed, developments driven by the growth of factional conflict and the regularization of organizational manipulation in pursuit of political ends. Policy remained an important source of conflict, but over time the role of the Congress and CC in its resolution declined as this became concentrated in the hands of the oligarchs. As the focus on unity and obedience increased, a party "orthodoxy" emerged and the security services began to be mobilized into intra-party affairs. There was no predominant leader during this period, and revolutionary stature was increasingly becoming less of a guarantee of a central role in party affairs. The normative order thus underwent a considerable shift during the 1920s.

The conditions of elite life changed with Lenin's illness beginning in May 1922. This removed from the scene the one figure whose standing elevated him clearly above the other oligarchs. His authority had never been unchallengeable. Indeed, the oligarchy contained other people of significant standing in the history of Russian social democracy as well as possessing healthy egos, with the result that there were no areas or figures that could not be subject to challenge. However, Lenin was different. He was the "starik", the "old man", not just in terms of age, but the aura that surrounded him as a result of driving the party to victory in October meant that even self-possessed oligarchs like Trotsky ultimately bowed to his authority. Once he was removed from the scene, that source of authority was transformed; no longer residing in an actual political participant, it became something that others sought to use as a weapon in elite conflict (see below). But what is crucial here is that elite conflict. The remainder of the 1920s was a period in which the unity of the oligarchy was continually fractured as factions emerged in a series of battles for power, and these were battles that extended into the party more broadly.

This was also a period in which the membership of the oligarchy was transformed under the impact of the factional conflict: of the full members of the Politburo in 1922, by the end of 1930 only Stalin remained,² with the other five 1922 members (except for Lenin) removed following political defeat; among the 1922 candidate members, two (Kalinin and Molotov) were promoted to full membership during this time, while the third (Bukharin) was promoted to full membership in June 1924 and dismissed in November 1929. This means that overall, only three of the ten members of the Politburo in 1922 remained at the end of 1930 (Stalin, Molotov and Kalinin). In the Orgburo and Secretariat, only Stalin was still there at the end of 1930, although Molotov had left both bodies in December 1930 when he became Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, or prime minister (Table 3.1). This was a higher rate of elite turnover than at any other time in Soviet history prior to the 1980s, including the 1930s. And rather than a situation of unity against challenge from below, the oligarchy was divided with different sections of it seeking support from lower down in the party. In this sense, the party machine developed divisions mirroring those within the oligarchy.

The course of elite conflict during the 1920s began while Lenin was still alive, if incapacitated.³ It saw the emergence of factions as major

Table 3.1 Leadership elected in April 1922 and December 1930

	<i>Elected after XI Congress April 1922</i>	<i>Elected December 1930</i>
Politburo: full members	Zinoviev Kamenev Lenin Rykov Stalin Tomsky Trotsky	Voroshilov Kaganovich Kalinin Kirov Kosior Kuibyshev Molotov Rudzutak Stalin Ordzhonikidze
Politburo: candidate members	Bukharin Kalinin Molotov	Mikoyan Petrovsky Chubar
Orgburo: full members	Andreev Dzerzhinsky Kuibyshev Molotov Rykov Stalin Tomsky	Akulov Bauman Bubnov Gamarnik Kaganovich Lobov Moskvin Postyshev Stalin Shvernik
Orgburo: candidate members	Zelensky Kalinin Rudzutak	Dogadov Kosarev Smirnov (A.P.) Tsikhon
Secretariat: full members	Stalin Kuibyshev Molotov	Stalin Bauman Kaganovich Postyshev
Secretariat: candidate members		Moskvin Shvernik

elements structuring elite political life. With Lenin removed, many thought that the most able man remaining was Trotsky. Not only an excellent speaker, and therefore able to generate rank-and-file support in many party fora, he was also seen as someone who had shown real leadership qualities through his work in establishing and leading the Red Army during the civil war. However for some in the elite he was seen

as an upstart (he had not joined the party until 1917), a blowhard, and somebody who could not be trusted. He was opposed by the troika of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin, with the public lead being taken principally by Zinoviev, who upon Lenin's death had taken over the role of delivering the main address to the party congresses in 1923 and 1924. Upon the defeat of Trotsky in early 1925, the troika broke apart with conflict between Zinoviev and Kamenev leading the so-called "Left Opposition" on the one hand and Stalin supported by Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky on the other. Following their defeat at the XIV Congress in December 1925, Zinoviev and Kamenev joined with Trotsky in what was called the "United Opposition" to oppose Stalin and his supporters, comprising members of the future "Right Opposition" plus allies/clients more directly associated with Stalin. They were unsuccessful in this, going down to defeat in autumn 1926, although they were not removed from all of their elite positions until 1927. Finally, there was a split between Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky, the so-called Right Opposition, on the one hand and Stalin and his supporters on the other. This was played out over 1928–29, with Stalin victorious and becoming the predominant leader by the end of 1929.

The post-Trotsky opposition groups seemed, on the surface, to be more likely than Trotsky to gain a dominant position within the collective leadership because of their higher levels of representation in the elite organs: Trotsky had been virtually alone, and certainly had no supporters among Politburo members, in contrast to the other groups. Trotsky also had something the others did not, an apparent potential power base in the military. However recognition of the fate of the French Revolution (the coming to power of a military dictator, Napoleon) was common throughout the elite, and Trotsky was certainly aware of the potential parallel. In the event, no member of the elite, including Trotsky, seriously considered mobilizing the military into elite conflict, although this reluctance was not extended to the security services (see below).

This rolling process of elite conflict in which Stalin was able to mobilize successive factions in support of his positions, took place within a leadership structure where no one figure was dominant. Despite the prominence of, successively, Trotsky, Zinoviev, and then Bukharin and Stalin, none was dominant in the sense that other oligarchs lived in his shadow. Therefore none of the strategies to be discussed below was specifically seen to be about protecting the other oligarchs from a dominant figure. Those strategies were designed to shore up the different

individuals' positions within the leadership, and therefore could constitute potential models that oligarchs might use in future as a defence against overwhelming individual power. So what were the strategies utilized in the leadership conflicts of the 1920s? Essentially the same basic strategies were followed by both winners and losers in all the bouts of elite conflict in the 1920s. These involved the appeal to Leninist authority, involvement in policy debate, and principally through the use of personnel appointments, the mobilization of political institutions in elite conflict. These strategies constituted the major dynamic of collective leadership during this period.

STRATEGIES OF FACTIONAL CONFLICT

Appeal to Authority

With Lenin's incapacity, the process began of the transformation of the ill leader into a symbol of authority to which all sides in the bouts of elite conflict appealed. The tone for this was set by Kamenev when he opened the first congress not attended by Lenin, the XII in April 1923. After referring to Lenin's having led them along the revolutionary path and to his "tactical genius", he declared: "we know only one antidote to any crisis, to any incorrect decision: this is the teaching of Vladimir Il'ich, and to this antidote the party will constantly turn in all the difficult moments, in the days of revolutionary humdrum, equally also in the days of revolutionary holidays".⁴ At that congress, Zinoviev was the most assiduous of the principal protagonists in ostentatiously referring to Lenin both in terms of his general guidance and also on specific points of policy. Perhaps reflecting an awareness that to be seen to be hastily trying to fill Lenin's shoes could backfire politically, both Trotsky and Stalin were more restrained at this congress in their references to the ill leader. Nevertheless, all three of these oligarchs set out to establish that they were the genuine ideological inheritors of Lenin's mantle. In spring 1924, Stalin published lectures he had given in April at Sverdlov University, entitled "Foundations of Leninism"⁵ in which he sought to systematize and present the essence of Lenin's thought. Later that same year, Trotsky published two books seeking to establish his Leninist credentials: *On Lenin* in June 1924 and *Lessons of October* in October 1924.⁶ In October 1925, Zinoviev published *Leninism. An introduction to the study of Leninism*.⁷

While none of these works were as hagiographical as such publications were later to become, the tone of the writings of these different oligarchs was very different. Trotsky's works were primarily historical analyses of their particular subjects, and while they may have been reasonably accurate in strictly historical terms, they did not fit with the emerging picture of Lenin as the revolutionary leader guiding the party to the promised land. Indeed, it was difficult to escape the impression that Trotsky was suggesting that Lenin's success was due to the part played in it by Trotsky himself. Similarly, Zinoviev's book cast the author as a fellow Marxist philosopher to Lenin, elaborating on Lenin's teaching and seeking to use Lenin's views as a support for his criticism of aspects of current policy and leadership politics. Zinoviev appeared as the ideologue mobilizing Lenin's ideas to support his own policy positions. He appeared as the equal of Lenin. Only Stalin projected an image consistent with a deferential attitude to Lenin. He sought to simplify and systematize Lenin's thought, presenting his ideas in formulaic terms which could be understood by those not highly versed in the intricacies of Marxist philosophy. He appeared as the disciple of Lenin, the one who was concerned to stand up for the leader's values and position in the face of challenge from others, and as the one who spoke for that vast mass of party members ill-versed in Marxist thought. These publications reinforced the symbolism reflected in the speeches at the time of Lenin's funeral. While most speakers praised the dead leader in the orthodox terminology of Marxism, Stalin's speech was much more of a devotional appeal. His speech was filled with incantations like the following: "Departing from us, comrade Lenin enjoined us to hold high and keep pure the great title of member of the party. We vow to thee, comrade Lenin, that we will with honour fulfil this thy bequest.... Departing from us, comrade Lenin enjoined us to keep the unity of our party as the apple of our eye. We vow to thee, comrade Lenin, that we will with honour fulfil this thy bequest..."⁸ Stalin's image was in clear contrast to those of the other speakers, and also to that of Trotsky who did not attend Lenin's funeral, an act that was widely interpreted as reflecting his lack of respect for the dead leader.⁹

The sort of image conjured by Stalin was consistent with the emergence at this time of a cult of the dead leader.¹⁰ Reflected materially in the placement of Lenin's body in a specially-built mausoleum on Red Square, the production of numerous different images and representations of Lenin (statues, pictures, posters), and the republication of his

writings, the cult also constituted a narrative into which much public discussion was directed. The cult provided both a language and a source of authority that was used to structure the public debate, so that from the middle of the 1920s, to be accused of deviation from Lenin's line was to destroy any authority one had in the party debate. As a result, both leadership and successive opposition groups appealed to Lenin in the course of their disputes, and in so doing stimulated the further development of the cult and consolidated its role as a weapon in elite conflict. This was consistent with the extension of the party norm acknowledging a predominant leader to recognition of his continuing authority, even in his absence.

Both sides to the successive disputes sought to root their positions in adherence to Lenin and his guidance. For example, at the XIV Congress in December 1925 Zinoviev emphasized Lenin and his words by interlacing his speech with numerous quotations from and references to the views of the dead leader to support his arguments, but this was to no avail. Other speakers disputed his claims of Leninist adherence and also used the words of the dead leader to show up claimed deficiencies in Zinoviev's views.¹¹ In the split with the Right Opposition, Lenin's words were again central, with the Right basing their arguments for a continuation of NEP upon the views Lenin had articulated towards the end of his life which seemed to suggest that he saw NEP as a valid path to socialism, while Stalin and his supporters emphasized the Lenin of the earlier, War Communism, period. Lenin became the touchstone of orthodoxy.

In addition the notion of a party or Leninist "line", which had been around since 1920 (the IX Congress resolution on the CC Report), became more prominent as factional conflict intensified, and with it the idea that opposition represented a "deviation" from that line and from orthodoxy. The argument had been used against the Trotskyists at the XIII Conference in January 1924 that their deviation was an expression of a petty bourgeois mentality,¹² and this argument was now turned against successive opposition groups. Furthermore, Stalin argued that a deviation did not need a platform or an organizational structure, but was unformed and the beginning of an error.¹³ This implied that now all that was needed to be an oppositionist was to disagree with the leadership and its "Leninist line". This represented a sharp change in the previous understanding of opposition and its rights because it implied that people could not disagree with the leadership nor hold views at variance with it. In order to establish what the line was (and to show that Zinoviev did

not support it), Stalin published *Problems of Leninism*, provocatively dedicated to the Leningrad organization of the party.¹⁴ It was now impossible for someone to appeal successfully to Lenin if they differed from the party line as defined by the leadership, as the Right discovered.

The parties to the struggle within the leadership also sought to appeal to party history in an attempt to shore up the image of their relationship with Lenin. In this endeavour, Stalin was the most advantaged, not because he had not had differences with Lenin in the past, but because the differences between Lenin and the other leaders seemed much more significant. Trotsky had not joined the party until 1917 and prior to that had been a major critic of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. There had also been major differences over the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty in 1918 and the role of trade unions in 1920–21. It was not difficult for his opponents to characterize Trotsky as unalterably at odds with Lenin, an image starkly captured in the title of Stalin's speech in November 1924, "Trotskyism or Leninism?",¹⁵ and the argument that his current positions were simply an extension of this earlier opposition.¹⁶ Zinoviev and Kamenev also had to live down those major disagreements with Lenin dating from 1917, but initially references to this were somewhat muted because of Stalin's alliance with them against Trotsky. Stalin's differences with Lenin had been more low key and less widely known, and he set about covering them over through a process of historical revision that seems to have begun in January 1924 when Stalin claimed to have been associated with Lenin at least two years earlier than the historical record suggests,¹⁷ a claim designed to shore up his Leninist credentials.

That the leadership contenders felt they had to appeal to Lenin's authority in this way may be explained in part by Lenin's so-called "testament".¹⁸ In this document, Lenin evaluated the remaining leaders of the party, found faults with them all, and called for the removal of Stalin because he had too much power and Lenin was not convinced that he would use it wisely. The evaluation of his leadership comrades was most dangerous for Stalin, not only because of this call for his removal, but because it highlighted recent policy (and personal) conflicts between the two men that Stalin would have wished to remain hidden.¹⁹ Lenin's comments and call for Stalin's removal remained secret until after his death in January 1924.²⁰ This appears not to have been by design of any of those named by Lenin, but because Krupskaya (Lenin's wife) did not pass this document on to the CC until May 1924, citing Lenin's wish that it should be brought before the next party congress.²¹ The contents

of the document were made known to the principal party leaders on or around 18 May 1924, and were read to the CC plenum on 21 May. The removal of Stalin would have substantially strengthened Trotsky's position, yet he seems not to have argued for the implementation of Lenin's will. Instead, Stalin's current two main allies, Zinoviev and Kamenev, argued before the CC that Lenin's fears had not been realized, and they moved to close debate. This was accepted. It was also decided, over Kamenev's argument not to present this material to the forthcoming congress, that it should be read confidentially only to the leaders of the individual delegations of the major party organizations. At the time the document was read to the delegations, they were also presented with a draft resolution confirming Stalin in office on the understanding that he would be responsive to Lenin's criticisms of him. At the post-congress CC plenum, Stalin's offer to resign was refused. Lenin's letter was also not published. Not only did Trotsky not seek to use Lenin's comments against Stalin, but under Politburo pressure in 1925, he even denied that Lenin's testament existed. That Trotsky did not seek to use Lenin's comments against Stalin at this time seems like another major mistake in terms of factional conflict, although it may be explained in part by Trotsky's belief that his main rival was Zinoviev, not Stalin. This sort of under-estimation of Stalin was a feature of Trotsky's life and subsequent analysis of what happened in the USSR, but it was also characteristic of Stalin's two main allies, Zinoviev and Kamenev. Although Zinoviev was becoming wary of Stalin by late 1923, he still saw Trotsky as the main threat. In any event, at this time of potential danger to them all, despite their personal conflicts, the oligarchs hung together to close off any potential move from below to unseat any or all of them.

Role of Policy

The appeal to Lenin's authority was related to the role of policy in the leadership dispute. The role of policy should not be surprising. The succession of conflicts that had wracked the party virtually since its inception were all cast overwhelmingly in terms of disputes over policy, over what was the best course for the party to follow, and debate about that policy was clearly embedded in the party's normative order. This remained true throughout the 1920s. The NEP had been a controversial change of course in 1921, and there remained many elements in the party who were highly suspicious of both it and the possible social and political

consequences it could bring. The scissors crisis (falling agricultural prices and rising industrial prices) of mid-1923 brought to the fore again the question of the relationship of NEP to the ultimate socialist goal and to regime survival. Attempts to deal with the short-term economic difficulties led to falls in workers' living standards and resultant urban discontent and unrest. The danger for the troika of Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, which was in charge of economic policy, was that these conditions added strength to the criticisms coming from the left of the party, including Trotsky and Preobrazhensky.²² The effect of this on the position of the troika was exacerbated by the concurrent emergence of a crisis in foreign policy, with the collapse of the German uprising in October 1923. The issue here was party policy towards Germany (again run by the troika) and the relationship between communism in Russia and international revolution. Against Trotsky's argument that socialism in Russia depended upon international revolution, Stalin generated the theory of "socialism in one country", at the same time attributing this to Lenin.²³ These two issues, economic development and international revolution, meant that the principal protagonists could attack one another on the basis of policy rather than person. The conflict was thus rendered a matter of principle rather than a grubby squabble over power. As such, it gained a status in the party that mere personal antagonisms may have lacked. But the argument was also over power, and the way this was presented was in terms of criticism of the way the party apparatus was working (see below).

Policy remained a central battleground in the struggle with the Left Opposition and the United Opposition. This had become clear even before Trotsky had been defeated; Stalin's barbs against Zinoviev's and Kamenev's theoretical positions in 1924²⁴ were a harbinger of what was to come. Measures initiated in April 1925 at the CC plenum and XIV Conference of the party further liberalized the rules regarding private activity in the NEP.²⁵ This alarmed the Zinovievite Left, who mounted a vigorous attack on the "pro-peasant policy" of the leadership. This was linked with continuing differences over the notion of socialism in one country and the role of international revolution (especially following the failure of the general strike in Britain in 1926²⁶ and the later setbacks in China in 1927. These debates were prosecuted through the party's leading organs, the Politburo²⁷ and CC in particular, while the international question also reverberated around the halls of the Comintern where both sides sought to ensure their supporters were in positions of power. The debate also occurred at the regional level, where the Moscow

party organization was critical of the positions taken by the Leningrad organization, in a development that presaged a concerted press campaign against opposition.

Policy was also crucial in the dispute with the Right Opposition. The break between Stalin and this group was precipitated on the policy front by the increasing difficulty the state was having in collecting grain from the peasants. As collections fell below expectations, the argument for a revision of the NEP arrangements strengthened, and when the United Opposition was vanquished, the political restraints on articulating such a position for Stalin and his immediate supporters disappeared. What was to be the Right Opposition remained opposed to this just as they had been during the struggle with the United Opposition. But it would be naïve to assume that Stalin's change in position on this was motivated purely by policy concerns. This gave him the opportunity to turn on those in the leadership who did not feel themselves beholden to him, and while he may not yet have envisaged himself having the degree of dominance he later achieved, he clearly saw this as an opportunity to strengthen his control of elite politics.

The role of policy in oligarch and elite conflict could also be complicated by considerations of bureaucratic politics. The oligarchs were not only leading party politicians, but many of them stood at the head of official bureaucratic structures. For example, Stalin was the head of the party apparatus, at various times Zinoviev of the Comintern and the Leningrad city apparatus, Kamenev of the Moscow soviet, Trotsky of the army, Tomsky of the trade unions and Rykov of the state machine. As such, they were effectively representatives of "their" institutions in elite councils, and they sought to defend the bureaucratic interests of those institutions. This could take the form of shaping their views on the major policy issues of the day, but it was also manifested in the continuing bureaucratic struggle for funding and resources. This sort of struggle, endemic in all governmental structures, underpinned Soviet elite politics throughout the entire Soviet period and was a continuing factor in shaping relationships between individual oligarchs and members of the elite more broadly.

Mobilization of Institutions

The constant refrain from opposition groups during both the years immediately following the revolution and in the 1920s was that

democracy in the party was being undermined by the actions of the party apparatus. In theory, all major positions throughout the party structure were to be filled through election, but the opposition claimed that this was being subverted by the way in which the party apparatus took upon itself to fill these positions by appointment. Such claims were well justified. The combination of a sense of the party being in danger and the creation of a system of personnel management which gave party organs at different levels the right to nominate people to fill positions at lower levels generated an environment in which the subversion of elected office could take place. The sense of danger from without—the whites, imperialist powers, kulaks—was a genuine part of the party's DNA during this period. The creation of a personnel management system picked up momentum in 1923 with the establishment of the *nomenklatura* in June of that year.²⁸ The power over personnel ultimately was vested in two executive organs of the CC—the *Orgburo* which was meant to make leading personnel decisions, and the Secretariat which was tasked with carrying out such decisions but in practice also made many such decisions for lower level party organs²⁹—and these were the organizational base of their leader, the General Secretary. Stalin had been appointed General Secretary in April 1922, and filled these organs with his supporters, or people who soon became his supporters (see Table 2.3); they were run effectively and ruthlessly first by Molotov until 1930 and then Kaganovich, both of whom chaired the *Orgburo* and were close to Stalin.³⁰ Within the Secretariat, the department responsible for personnel appointments was initially the Accounting and Assignment Department (*Uchraspred*),³¹ superseded in 1924 by the Organization and Assignment Department (*Orgraspred*).³² At this time, this department was headed by people who had been associated with Stalin, including Dmitrii Bulatov, L.B. Roshal and Ivan Moskvina.³³ These people were directly answerable to CC Secretary Molotov. Through his supporters, Stalin was able to use these bodies as a political weapon. As this continued, the norm that organizational manipulation in pursuit of political ends was acceptable and the embedding of that in the party's organizational structure became stronger.

One way in which this could be used as a weapon has been said to have been through the “circular flow of power”, discussed in the Introduction.³⁴ The essence of this is that central officials choose the people to fill lower level responsible positions, who in turn choose the delegates to party congresses, who in turn elect the central officials.

This was becoming established by the XII Congress in 1923, but was more fully operational by the time of the XIII Conference in January 1924 where only three of 128 delegates represented the opposition; no opposition member was a voting delegate at the XIII Congress in May 1924.³⁵ By shaping the identity of congress delegates through the selection of the regional leaders who chose them, the central party apparatus was able to transform the nature of the congress, discussed below, and both consolidate Stalin's position and overwhelm his factional opponents. Associated with this was the election of the leading organs of the party. At the X Congress, candidates for the CC were elected by a slate passed down to delegates by the leadership,³⁶ rather than by open vote on the congress floor. But we must be careful not to exaggerate the extent to which the centre could place supporters of Stalin (or anyone else) in responsible positions throughout the apparatus in the early 1920s. At this time, the weakness of central personnel records and the limited number of people who would have been identifiable as supporters of the General Secretary limited the capacity to place existing supporters into such positions. However, appointment could itself generate a sense of loyalty among the appointees, and as time passed Stalin's role as defender of party officials in the 1920s and the policies he espoused generated much lower level support, including in the CC.³⁷

Control over personnel could also be used at the lower levels of the political machine. It was not only secretaries at the centre who could exercise appointive powers, but those at each level of the party apparatus had the power to fill positions within their respective bailiwicks. This meant that if opposition figures occupied responsible positions in the party (or other institutional) apparatus, they could use their appointive powers to transform those sections of the apparatus into strongholds of opposition support. This is what happened during the 1920s, with the result that the elite conflicts of this period stood at the head of splits in the political, especially party, apparatus throughout the country. For example in 1922, Zinoviev was chairman of the soviet in Petrograd/Leningrad, Kamenev was chairman of the Moscow soviet (as well as being a vice-chairman of Sovnarkom, and therefore located in Moscow) and Trotsky was Commissar for War. All three potentially could use the political machines they were able to construct (Zinoviev and Kamenev regional machines, Trotsky commissariat/state machine) to combat their opponents. Trotsky generally eschewed this course while the other two did pursue it. But this strategy of constructing a personal

institutional base was really only viable while the centre lacked the effective means to shift personnel in and out of it. The central organs were developing this capacity, and during the dispute with Trotsky, this was used to undermine Trotsky's position within those institutional bases he and his supporters possessed.³⁸ The Moscow party organization had been virtually taken over by Trotsky supporters, and in late 1923 through Kaganovich's control over Orgotdel³⁹ party workers were sent into the Moscow apparatus to wrest control of it from the Trotskyists and place it in the hands of supporters of Stalin.⁴⁰ It was Stalin who was best placed to make use of the appointive powers vested in the secretarial apparatus.⁴¹

Organizational matters were also central to the conflict between Stalin and his allies and the Zinoviev-Kamenev bloc. As early as autumn 1924, Stalin removed the head of the Moscow city party organization, Isaak Zelensky, who had worked in this office effectively under the tutelage of Kamenev. Zelensky had also been a member of the Orgburo and Secretariat. He was replaced in all three posts by a former party secretary from Leningrad who had clashed with Zinoviev in 1921, Nikolai Uglanov. Uglanov worked to take control of the Moscow party organization, effectively removing it from under Kamenev's control.⁴² Stalin also sought to weaken Zinoviev's control over the Leningrad party organization,⁴³ but initially with little success. When the process of selecting delegates to the XIV Congress in December 1925 took place, Zinoviev was able to ensure that all of that delegation was loyal to him. However, following Zinoviev's defeat at the Congress, Stalin's supporters were able to take over the Leningrad apparatus and replace Zinoviev with Sergei Kirov.⁴⁴

Unlike the United Opposition which lacked any organizational basis, the Right Opposition began with such a base; as well as the presence of the three leaders in the Politburo (Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy), Bukharin was chairman of the Comintern and editor-in-chief of the main party newspaper *Pravda*, Rykov was the state premier, Tomsy headed the trade unions, and the head of the Moscow organization Uglanov was a strong supporter.⁴⁵ However, this organizational base crumbled in the face of Stalinist support in the Politburo and control over the personnel appointment process, although this did not initially encompass the three leaders in the Politburo. On 23 July 1928, Bukharin supporter Aleksandr Slepov was removed from his editorial posts at *Pravda* (although Bukharin remained editor-in-chief) and the CC's theoretical journal *Bolshevik*; his counterpart in Leningrad, Petr Petrovsky, was

removed from his post as editor of *Leningradskaya Pravda* shortly after, thereby depriving the Right of major vehicles they could use to project their policies to the party rank-and-file.⁴⁶ In September, at a meeting of the Moscow party committee, Uglanov attacked “Trotskyists”, a stalking horse for Stalin and his supporters who favoured expanded extraordinary measures in grain collection. The centre responded not only by criticism in the press, but by fostering a revolt among the rank-and-file of the Moscow organization against its leadership, just as had been done earlier against Zinoviev in Leningrad.⁴⁷ A press campaign against an anonymous “right deviation” was launched as Uglanov was white-anted within his organization, and despite his rhetorical surrender, his immediate supporters were removed in October with Uglanov following in November; he was replaced by Molotov. Both Rykov and Tomsy were weakened by the insertion into their organizational bailiwicks of supporters of Stalin, again reflecting the power of the central personnel appointment mechanism.⁴⁸

As well as these organizational moves in the party undermining the position of the opposition, the ability of Sovnarkom Chair Rykov to use the state apparatus on behalf of the policies the opposition supported was compromised by the way in which leading figures in that apparatus supported the more radical, Stalinist, line. Both the heads of Gosplan (Gleb Krzhizhanovsky) and Vesenkha (Kuibyshev), the two peak economy-related institutions, supported the push for more rapid industrialization, and they were supported in this by significant sections of both institutions’ staff. The People’s Commissar for Transport, Yan Rudzutak and the head of the joint party-state control agency, the Central Control Commission and People’s Commissariat of Peasants’ Inspection, Grigorii (Sergo) Ordzhonikidze were two other leading state officials who supported Stalin. This sort of support from within Rykov’s putative institutional constituency not only weakened that as a potential instrument in elite conflict, but significantly bolstered the credibility of the policy argument being made by Stalin and his supporters.

While the concentration of appointive powers within the secretarial apparatus provided Stalin with a potential weapon for use in factional conflict, ultimate decisions about policy directions and leading personnel matters remained formally vested in the party’s collective organs, the congress, CC and Politburo. And in the factional conflicts of the 1920s, all three were major arenas of dispute. Both sides to the dispute took the battle into these bodies as discussion of policy issues remained open

within the party. The X, XI and XII congresses were all sites of vigorous debate, with the opposition able to get significant numbers of supporters elected to the gathering, although this was less so at the XII Congress where delegates came mainly from within the party apparatus⁴⁹ and were more anti-opposition in their mood. This was even more the case at the XIII Congress, such that that body was transformed into a weapon in rather than an arena of factional conflict. Henceforth there was an emphasis on monolithism and unanimity in the Congress, with the atmosphere hostile to real debate. This was most clearly demonstrated at the time of the XIV Congress in December 1925.

The selection of delegates to the XIV Congress was dominated by the Stalin-controlled central party apparatus, with the result that the only party organization dominated by representatives of the opposition was that of Leningrad. Opposition speakers were given the floor to address the congress, but were greeted with jeers and interruptions, prompting Kamenev to say: "If you have instructions to interrupt me, say so openly".⁵⁰ Zinoviev's speech was presented as a "co-report", something permitted under the party's rules if any group numbering more than 40 delegates requested it. But while this was formally legal (and had been done by Bukharin and the Left Communists at the VII Congress and was common at lower levels), in effect it placed Zinoviev in the position of publicly declaring the split and presenting himself and his supporters as opposed to the party leadership.⁵¹ This left them vulnerable in the same way that the Trotskyists had been vulnerable; it was easy for the leadership and its supporters to emphasize party discipline and to paint the opposition as breaking party unity, being guilty of fractionalism, and as representing the interests of those who were opposed to the party. The opposition's tactic of walking out of meetings while they were under way reinforced this image of breaking party discipline.⁵²

Zinoviev was defeated on the votes at the XIV Congress and removed from his position of leadership in Leningrad, replaced by the Stalinist stalwart Kirov, and from the Comintern where he was replaced by Bukharin. Zinoviev and Kamenev now turned to Trotsky to create an opposition alliance with him. This attempt to unite the opposition within the elite was doomed to failure. Not only did the bitterness of the charges each had directed at the other during past conflicts make this alliance appear unprincipled and driven only by considerations of personal power and survival, but it was bereft of any institutional basis of support within the party structure. Zinoviev's loss of control in

Leningrad meant that no major section of the party was in the opposition's camp. All they really had by way of resources was their ability to make theoretical arguments about the course of party policy and the individual standing each had had in the party because of their historical role before and in 1917. Their problem was that the leadership group around Stalin was able to frame their current actions as just another example of their propensity to split from the leadership, as demonstrated in both the recent and more distant past. The taunt directed at Zinoviev at the XIV Congress hit home for both wings of this opposition: "When there is a majority for Zinoviev, he is for iron discipline. When he has no majority...he is against it".⁵³ The Congress had clearly become a weapon in elite conflict.

The XV Congress convened in December 1927. The Congress was virulently anti-opposition, with attacks on the former United Opposition and an attempt by some members of that opposition to recant and promise to abandon all factional activity in the future.⁵⁴ But some members continued to defend their positions and declare their actions to be consistent with the party's rules.⁵⁵ The Congress confirmed the earlier expulsion from the party of Trotsky and Zinoviev and also expelled a further 75 opposition leaders, including Kamenev.⁵⁶ However this was also the Congress that brought about the re-orientation of policy that was to lead directly to agricultural collectivization and forced pace industrialization, and therefore to the end of NEP. This policy change would help undercut Right support among many of those CC members charged with administration in the rural areas for whom it was becoming clear that change was needed, and the sort of change flagged at the XV Congress seemed more consistent with the heroic task of building socialism than a further expansion in the market economy. So under the wave of the public denunciation of the United Opposition, the break between the Stalinists and the Right Opposition opened at this Congress.

Both the United and Right Oppositions were also caught by the extension of the 1921 norm in the party opposing fractions to factions within the leadership. Because the United Opposition lacked an organizational base in the party, it was even more reliant upon meetings of its members outside official party gatherings⁵⁷ than the previous opposition groups had been. And such meetings had to be clandestine in order to avoid disruption, meaning that the whole conduct of their operations had to take place in a secret fashion. This enabled the leading group to charge, with significant justice, that the opposition had set

up an illegal, clandestine organization with its own platform in opposition to the party,⁵⁸ and although the United Opposition disputed that their activity was of a factional nature, this is how it was adjudged by successive party meetings. The United Opposition further breached party norms in September 1926 by mounting a direct appeal to the party rank-and-file and in October by conducting a public demonstration in Leningrad, thereby infringing the principle that debate should be restricted to the party and should not go outside its bounds.⁵⁹ They repeated this in 1927 when, in Daniels' words,⁶⁰ a "campaign of petitions, pamphleteering, and speech-making" was conducted, resulting in the so-called "Declaration of the Eighty-four". This was followed in June 1927 by further popular meetings and demonstrations in Moscow and Leningrad as the United Opposition sought to take their criticisms of the leadership to the party at large. These attempts to break out of the organizational straitjacket in the party were to no avail. In CC meetings and in the Politburo, the United Opposition was roundly criticized for its factional activity, and although they sought to justify themselves, they were routinely condemned in decisions of these bodies. The Right Opposition tended to be labelled a "group" or a "right deviation", but as the CC decision of 17 November 1929 shows, these were synonyms for "faction".⁶¹ In both cases, those accused of factional activity were disciplined, including in some cases expulsion from the Politburo (e.g. Trotsky and Kamenev in October 1926), from the CC (e.g. Kamenev in November 1927) and even from the party (e.g. Trotsky and Zinoviev in November 1927) for their anti-party activity.⁶² Some lesser members of the opposition were also arrested, the first time in party history this had occurred.⁶³ The casting of the opposition's activity as factional in nature⁶⁴ condemned them to defeat.

The CC was a more important arena than the Congress for elite conflict at this time, in part because during the early 1920s, it was virtually impossible to exclude leading party figures from this venue,⁶⁵ because it was here that the opposition generally was strongest, and because it met reasonably frequently, although this was less true in the second half of the decade.⁶⁶ Both opposition figures and those they were opposing used the CC to attack one another as most controversial issues were transferred from the Politburo to the CC, which thereby became effectively the arbiter of factional conflict. This usually took the form of a policy debate, with the key questions confronting the party, especially those on which the two sides differed, being the immediate focus of discussion.

This focus upon policy reflected two things. First, elite conflict during the 1920s was explicitly linked to the question of the direction the party should take because, unlike in the late 1930s, differing opinions about this were widespread throughout the party and especially within the leadership, as the earlier debates around war communism and NEP showed. Policy difference was both the public face of the conflict and a real factor in its unrolling, and historically the CC had been the chief arena within the party where such issues had been resolved. Second, the CC included the most important people in the party. This was not just the small number of oligarchs based in the Politburo, but regional party leaders as well. Upon the latter in particular depended the capacity of the centre to have its decisions implemented. The CC was therefore an important forum within which regional officials could be both informed about and persuaded of the correctness of the policies under debate. And this also applied to the leadership issue, in that decisions by the CC in support of the leadership against the opposition were important weapons in the struggle between the two sides.⁶⁷ And given that Stalin always supported the party secretaries against the possibility of threat from the opposition's call for party democracy,⁶⁸ many of those in the CC saw their best interests to lie in support of Stalin and the leadership against that opposition. The practice which began at this time of holding joint plena of the CC and the party's chief disciplinary organization, the Central Control Commission (CCC),⁶⁹ created an arena even more hostile to the opposition than the CC alone was becoming; the leadership always had the numbers over the opposition in the CC.

Over this period, the CC continued to grow in size, increasing from 46 in 1922 to 121 in 1927. This expansion meant that this body had become too large to be an effective decision-making organ. But with central controls over personnel improving, and therefore delegate selection becoming more efficient in the centre's eyes, this increased size, rather than hindering the CC's ability to function, meant that its new role as the condemner of opposition and affirmer of the leadership appeared even more overwhelming. And when successive oppositions came before this body, their arguments gained little traction. Stalin's ability to appoint supporters was one element here, but also crucial was the way he was able to appeal to those members of the CC who came from the party apparatus, a group which by 1923 constituted about half of the membership of this body.⁷⁰ The basis of this appeal was twofold. First, the attacks that successive opposition groups launched on

the decline of democracy in the party effectively constituted an attack upon these officials. Stalin and his supporters were their chief defenders. Second, at each stage of the battle with the successive oppositions, Stalin was able to present his economic policy (initially continued support for NEP, then when it ran into difficulties, a more state-driven, non-market solution) as better suited to the current challenges, and given that it was the regional officials who had to administer such a policy, this was a potent source of appeal. The CC became an arena that was unremittingly hostile to the opposition, and by the middle of the decade, opposition speakers were being subjected to verbal, and sometimes physical, harassment.⁷¹

Although over time the composition of the CC increasingly came to be determined by the leadership, with slates of recommended candidates given to congress delegates to elect, this body remained one in which opposition speakers could hope for a hearing. In part this was because, at least during the early 1920s, regional leaders were not yet integrated into a central personnel machine and speakers could still hope that these people would exercise some independence of judgement in that body's deliberations. In addition, successive opposition groups argued that intra-party democracy was being destroyed by the way in which the party apparatus was replacing the will of the members by that of the leadership of that apparatus. Accordingly, the opposition believed that if they could reach over the heads of the appointed lackeys of the apparatus to the rank-and-file membership, they would be able to provoke an upsurge of mass support that could carry them to victory. Regardless of how unrealistic this aspiration was, it appealed to the opposition because it seemed to play to their oratorical strength, to their perceived greater ability to persuade people of the correctness of their course. Thus the opposition placed great emphasis upon carrying the fight into the party at large; Trotsky's 8 December 1923 open letter to party meetings about the "New Course" published in *Pravda* is a good instance of this.⁷² But this was also a strategy used by the leadership, which sought to structure such debate through its control over the major means of dissemination of information, principally the party newspaper *Pravda*. The result was that the conflict at the top of the party was also played out at lower levels as supporters of the two sides fought for control over regional party organs; they sought to turn factions into fractions. In this, the leadership was victorious, and this was reflected in the generally anti-opposition tenor of the CC.

But the most important arena of factional conflict was the Politburo, which emerged during the 1920s as the leading formal organ of the party, meeting on a regular basis and discussing the most important issues of the day. Its role is reflected in the number of meetings and decisions taken (Table 3.2).

These figures reflect the relative decline of formal Politburo sessions as an effective arena for collective decision-making (between 1928 and 1932 there were also “working Politburo sessions” where members gathered to collectively work through a particular issue⁷³). Although the average number of questions per meeting is not so great as to prohibit effective consideration of important issues, the increase in the number resolved outside such sessions does reflect an erosion of the Politburo’s collective decision-making capacity. In 1923, some 86% of Politburo decisions were made in the formal session; by 1929, this figure had dropped to 47%. Most decisions made outside the formal sessions were made by circulation. There were three forms of this: a draft decision was circulated during a formal session of the Politburo and members signed off on it without discussion, members were telephoned and asked to convey their views verbally, or members were couriered a draft decision (often with supporting papers) and required to return them with their recommendation. Under all three forms members were contacted individually and asked to make a decision. Decisions made by circulation were, therefore, not collectively taken but individually taken and mechanically aggregated. From 1928 another form of decision-making

Table 3.2 Politburo workload 1923–29^a

	<i>Number of sessions</i>	<i>Resolved in session</i>	<i>Average per session</i>	<i>Resolved by circulation</i>	<i>“Decisions of the Politburo”</i>	<i>Total</i>
1923	78	1315	17	210	0	1525
1924	76	1251	16	629	0	1880
1925	54	859	16	790	0	1649
1926	74	994	13	686	0	1680
1927	66	1084	16	746	0	1830
1928	54	961	18	757	141	1859
1929	54	1071	20	654	536	2261

^aBased on Adibekov et al. (2000). For slightly different figures, see Wheatcroft (2004), p. 88 and Rees (2004b), p. 25. Also Getty (2013), p. 111

was reflected in the record of Politburo proceedings. These were called “Decisions of the Politburo” and were made by a “narrow group of members” at irregular or “closed” sessions of the Politburo,⁷⁴ or perhaps in Politburo commissions. Such decisions were simply ratified by the Politburo without discussion, and provided a mechanism for formalizing decisions without involving all members of the Politburo. With the considerable number of questions being resolved outside the formal sessions, not only did many issues escape effective discussion by Politburo members, thereby compromising that collective function, but increased power was placed in the hands of those who organized the work of the Politburo. And these were Stalin’s people (see below).

The Politburo was a major institutional focus of elite conflict, and therefore of collective leadership, with opposition representation on this body evident throughout the decade. Although this did not always reflect the strength of the opposition—late in the decade opposition members often retained their seats some time after they had been defeated—it did give them a potential arena in which to argue their cases. However the Politburo was a secret organ, in that unlike the Congress and CC, the speeches made at it were not publicly available and the dynamic of elite conflict here was not played out in front of the party as a whole, although members of the CC and others often attended Politburo sessions⁷⁵ and reports of many of its proceedings did have wide circulation within the party.⁷⁶ In addition, members of the Politburo formally had the right to demand transfer of an issue from the Politburo to the CC.⁷⁷ The Politburo remained solidly in the pocket of the leadership group, with a majority of oligarchs hostile to the opposition. As successive bouts of elite conflict were worked through, Stalin’s position, including his control over personnel, was strengthened and he was able to promote supporters into this body (see Table 3.3). In the 1920s, there were essentially three categories in the Politburo: an anti-Stalin faction, a pro-Stalin faction, and a group of neutrals, and although the boundaries between these were fluid,⁷⁸ the results of elite conflict over the decade were clear: the elimination of the anti-Stalin faction, the strengthening of the pro-Stalin faction, and the dramatic constriction of the neutrals. Over time, most of those neutrals acted as allies, and as Stalin’s power grew, became transformed into clients. Of the nine people who left the Politburo during this time, three died in office (Lenin, Dzerzhinsky and Mikhail Frunze) and Ordzhonikidze was rendered ineligible for continued membership by his transfer to the CCC. The other five—Zinoviev,

Table 3.3 Changes in leadership 1923–29^a

	<i>April 1923^b</i>	<i>June 1924^c</i>	<i>January 1926^d</i>	<i>December 1927^e</i>
Politburo: full members	Zinoviev <i>A</i>	Bukharin <i>A</i>	Bukharin <i>A</i>	Bukharin <i>O</i>
	Kamenev <i>A</i>	Zinoviev <i>A</i>	Voroshilov <i>C</i>	Voroshilov <i>C</i>
	Lenin	Kamenev <i>A</i>	Zinoviev <i>O</i>	Kalinin <i>A/C</i>
	Rykov <i>A</i>	Rykov <i>A</i>	Kalinin <i>A/C</i>	Kuibyshev <i>A/C</i>
	Stalin	Stalin	Molotov <i>A/C</i>	Molotov <i>A/C</i>
	Tomsky <i>A</i>	Tomsky <i>A</i>	Rykov <i>A</i>	Rykov <i>O</i>
	Trotsky <i>O</i>	Trotsky <i>O</i>	Stalin	Rudzutak <i>A</i>
Politburo: candidate members	Bukharin <i>A</i>	Dzerzhinsky <i>A</i>	Dzerzhinsky <i>A</i>	Andreev <i>C</i>
	Kalinin <i>A/C</i>	Kalinin <i>A/C</i>	Kamenev <i>O</i>	Kaganovich <i>C</i>
	Molotov <i>A/C</i>	Molotov <i>A/C</i>	Petrovsky <i>A</i>	Kirov <i>C</i>
	Rudzutak <i>A</i>	Rudzutak <i>A</i>	Rudzutak <i>A</i>	Kosior <i>C</i>
		Sokolnikov <i>A</i>	Uglanov <i>A</i>	Mikoyan <i>A/C</i>
		Frunze <i>A</i>		Petrovsky <i>A</i>
				Uglanov <i>O</i>
Orgburo: full members	Andreev <i>A</i>	Andreev <i>A/C</i>	Andreev <i>A/C</i>	Chubar <i>A</i>
	Dzerzhinsky <i>A</i>	Bubnov* <i>A</i>	Artyukhina <i>C</i>	Andreev <i>C</i>
	Molotov <i>A/C</i>	Voroshilov <i>C</i>	Bubnov <i>A</i>	Artyukhina <i>C</i>
	Rudzutak <i>A</i>	Dogadov <i>A</i>	Dogadov <i>A</i>	Bubnov <i>A</i>
	Rykov <i>A</i>	Zelensky <i>A</i>	Evdokimov <i>O</i>	Dogadov <i>A/O</i>
	Stalin	Kaganovich <i>C</i>	Kviring <i>A</i>	Kosior <i>C</i>
	Tomsky <i>A</i>	Kalinin <i>A/C</i>	Kosior <i>A/C</i>	Kubyak <i>A/C</i>
		Molotov <i>A/C</i>	Molotov <i>A/C</i>	Molotov <i>A/C</i>
		Nikolaeva* <i>A</i>	Smirnov <i>A</i>	Moskvin <i>A/C</i>
		Smirnov <i>A</i>	(A.P.)	Rukhimovich <i>A</i>
	(A.P.)	Stalin	Smirnov <i>A/O</i>	
Orgburo: candidate members	Zelensky <i>A</i>	Antipov <i>A/C</i>	Lepse <i>A</i>	(A.P.)
	Kalinin <i>A/C</i>	Dzerzhinsky <i>A</i>	Mikhailov <i>A</i>	Stalin
	Mikhailov <i>A</i>	Lepse <i>A</i>	Ukhanov <i>A</i>	Uglanov <i>A</i>
		Tomsky <i>A</i>	Chaplin <i>A</i>	Sulimov <i>A</i>
		Chaplin <i>A</i>	Schmidt <i>A</i>	Uglanov <i>A/O</i>
		Frunze <i>A</i>		Kotov <i>A/O</i>
				Lepse <i>A</i>
			Lobov <i>A</i>	
			Mikhailov <i>A/O</i>	
			Ukhanov <i>A/O</i>	
			Chaplin <i>A</i>	
			Schmidt <i>A/O</i>	

(continued)

Table 3.3 (continued)

	<i>April 1923^b</i>	<i>June 1924^c</i>	<i>January 1926^d</i>	<i>December 1927^e</i>
Secretariat: full members	Stalin Molotov <i>A/C</i> Rudzutak <i>A</i>	Stalin Andreev <i>A/C</i> Zelensky <i>A</i> Kaganovich <i>C</i> Molotov <i>A/C</i>	Stalin Yevdokimov <i>O</i> Kosior <i>A/C</i> Molotov <i>A/C</i> Uglanov <i>A</i>	Stalin Kosior <i>C</i> Kubyak <i>A/C</i> Molotov <i>A/C</i> Uglanov <i>O</i>
Secretariat: candidate members	nil	nil	Artyukhina <i>C</i> Bubnov <i>A</i>	Artyukhina <i>C</i> Bubnov <i>A</i> Moskvin <i>A/C</i>

Key: *A* = ally; *C* = client; *O* = opposition

*Bubnov deserted from the Trotskyists in 1923 and Nikolaeva joined the opposition in 1925

^aDetails come from "Sostav"

^bChanges: Lenin died in January 1924 but was not replaced; Rudzutak (*A*) was replaced by Andreev (*A/C*) as a CC Secretary in February 1924, but retained his candidate membership of the Politburo. In September 1923 Zinoviev (*A*) and Trotsky (*O*) became full and Bukharin (*A*) and Korotkov (*A*) candidate members of the Orgburo

^cChanges: Politburo: Frunze died in October 1925 and was not replaced; Orgburo: in August 1924 Uglanov (*A*) replaced Zelensky; Secretariat: in August 1924 Uglanov (*A*) replaced Zelensky and in April 1925 Kaganovich was replaced by Bubnov (*A*)

^dChanges: Politburo: in July 1926 Dzerzhinsky died, Zinoviev was expelled from the Politburo, Rudzutak was promoted to full membership, and 8 new candidate members of the Politburo were elected: Andreev (*A/C*), Kaganovich (*C*), Kamenev (*O*), Kirov (*C*), Mikoyan (*A/C*), Ordzhonikidze (*A/C*), Petrovsky (*A*), and Uglanov (*A*); in October 1926 Trotsky and Kamenev (candidate member) were dropped from the Politburo; in November 1926 Ordzhonikidze was replaced by Chubar (*A*); Orgburo: in April 1926 Yevdokimov and Shvernik joined; in April 1927 Kubyak, Rukhimovich and Sulimov entered the Orgburo as full and Lobov as a candidate member, while Shvernik and Kviring were removed. Secretariat: in April 1926 Shvernik replaced Yevdokimov; in April 1927 Kubyak replaced Shvernik.

^eChanges: Politburo: in April 1929 Uglanov was replaced by Bauman (*A*); in June 1929 Syrtsov (*A*) became a candidate member; in November 1929 Bukharin was expelled from the Politburo. Secretariat: in April 1928 Kubyak was replaced by A.P. Smirnov (*O*) while Bauman became a candidate member; in July 1928 Kosior was replaced by Kaganovich (*C*); and in April 1929 Uglanov was replaced by Bauman

Kamenev, Trotsky, Bukharin and Uglanov—were all opposed to Stalin at the time of their removal. Twelve of the 16 people who joined the Politburo during this period—Kliment Voroshilov, Rudzutak, Grigorii Petrovsky, Andreev, Kirov, Anastas Mikoyan, Kaganovich, Vlas Chubar, Kuibyshev, Stanislav Kosior, Karl Bauman and Sergei Syrtsov—either supported Stalin or were neutral (although Syrtsov was accused of being an opposition member in 1930). Of the other four who joined—Dzerzhinsky, Frunze, Uglanov and Ordzhonikidze—the last three opposed Stalin's opponents at the time of appointment.⁷⁹ The Orgburo and Secretariat, those institutions directly responsible to the General

Secretary, were much more filled with Stalin's clients or allies throughout this period, with the opposition having little representation in these bodies.

The following table shows these changes in the Politburo, Orgburo and Secretariat, and the strengthening of Stalin's position (Table 3.3).

This table shows the weakening of the opposition in the 1920s and that generally Stalin was stronger earlier in the organizational organs of the party than in the Politburo. His growing strength in the elite organs is reflected in the way in which clients became more prominent at the expense of allies. In the fire of factional conflict, some allies were transformed into clients; they survived and were promoted, and they loyally supported Stalin both at that time and, in the case of some, in the future. Other allies were transformed into opponents. By 1930 (see Table 4.1) all members owed their positions to Stalin, although few were completely at his beck and call. Most clients retained an element of independence, even if they were firm supporters of the General Secretary.

Over this four year period, the elite doubled in size, with most of this growth occurring in the organizational wing of the party, especially the Orgburo. All members of the Secretariat were also members of the Orgburo, but the overlap of the organizational wing with the Politburo was limited⁸⁰; only in 1923 did members of the Orgburo constitute more than a third of Politburo members. This highlights the more exclusive nature of the senior secretaries, and the strategic location they occupied at the intersection of decision-making and implementation. And all senior secretaries were, at that time, supporters of Stalin, although Uglanov ultimately threw in his lot with the Right Opposition. In terms of the other jobs held by Politburo members, those holding state (and especially central) positions remained the largest group, with the result that bureaucratic conflict remained an important element in oligarch relations.⁸¹ The decline in the level of organizational wing representation in the Politburo later in the decade shows that as time passed, Stalin's power and personal associations became less reliant upon his organizational bailiwick.

Four methods other than the promotion of supporters were used by the Stalin group to overcome opposition in the Politburo: structuring of the discussion through control of the agenda-setting process, the convening of joint meetings with the party's chief discipline organization the Praesidium of the CCC, actual discussion in the Politburo, and meeting informally to make decisions without the opposition. Control of the

agenda-setting process was effectively vested in Stalin from the time of his appointment as General Secretary in 1922. The preparatory work for Politburo (as for Orgburo and Secretariat) sessions was carried out by a department of the Secretariat. This department underwent a number of name changes, and there is confusion in the sources about its exact name and when it changed. Initially known as the General Department or the Bureau of the Secretariat, this became the Secret Department in the early-mid 1920s, and in 1934 the Special Sector. Throughout this was headed by people associated with Stalin. The most important of these were Lev Mekhlis (head 1924–26), Ivan Tovstukha (head 1926–30, deputy 1922–24) and Aleksandr Poskrebyshv (1930–52), all of whom were also personal assistants to Stalin.⁸² This means that effectively there was a merging between Stalin's personal office and the Secret Department/Special Sector, thereby giving Stalin direct control over the agenda of the Politburo as well as oversight of the implementation of decisions, communications with lower level party bodies, and the security apparatus. Stalin was at the organizational focus of the party's most important operations. The Secret Department was responsible for setting the meeting date, preparing the agenda and supporting materials, and inviting non-members to Politburo sessions. This power of organizing Politburo meetings, even if it could not determine what actually happened in the meeting, was an important weapon that could be used to gain advantage over opposition oligarchs.⁸³ Politburo sessions normally were chaired by the Chairman of Sovnarkom, Rykov, although Kamenev may at times have stood in for him⁸⁴; in either event, this meant that the chair was hostile to Trotsky and, later in the decade, to Stalin.⁸⁵ Despite a Politburo environment hostile to the opposition, that opposition still appealed to the Politburo to argue their case.⁸⁶

These organizational factors notwithstanding, throughout the 1920s there was genuine and vigorous debate in the Politburo between the successive opposition groups and the changing constellation of Stalin supporters. These debates were not dry and sedate affairs, but involved heated exchanges of views that mirrored the sort of language used in the CC, the Congress, and in the press. The oligarchs believed in many of the positions they espoused in these Politburo debates, and they tended to argue them aggressively and without moderation. Ultimately, the case propounded by each opposition group was less compelling than that put by Stalin and his supporters, especially in the joint meetings with the CCC Presidium whose members were by inclination much less

favourably disposed to opposition activity than the normal party member. In this sense, the intellectual argument was as important as organizational factors in garnering political support for Stalin and those around him.

The final practice, convening before Politburo sessions in order to coordinate action, had begun under Lenin and was a major practice throughout the Stalin period. The troika would often consult one another, while from August 1924 a larger group, the so-called “semerka” (Stalin, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev Rykov, Tomsky and CCC chair Kuibyshev⁸⁷), often met although they did not always agree on specific issues. However, they were generally able to present Trotsky with a united front.⁸⁸ According to Kaganovich, Stalin also often used to meet at his dacha with Kaganovich, Molotov and Bukharin., and in his office,⁸⁹ although these were much less frequent than they were to be in the 1930s and there appears to have been no pattern regarding attendance.⁹⁰ Stalin followed this practice of informal meetings to coordinate action throughout the decade. In addition, later in the decade, the use of Politburo commissions (whose membership was decided within the secretarial apparatus) to discuss questions created a forum for the exclusion of opposition from discussion while the “decisions of the Politburo” were a mechanism for legitimating decisions reached at such meetings. The opposition could thereby be presented with a *fait accompli*. Of course, such prior meetings were also held by the opposition, but when this was discovered it was taken as further evidence of factional behaviour.

ON FACTIONS

In understanding the course of elite conflict at this time it is important to recognize the nature of the protagonists. Neither the opposition nor the leadership group around Stalin constituted a highly disciplined organizational group. The opposition was united by a general conviction that both the course of economic policy and of developments within the party were going in the wrong direction and that change was needed. Trotsky was the most important person giving voice to this view, reflecting his standing in the party, but he was not the only one. However, his supporters were for the most part, united on this policy basis rather than in any formal organizational opposition structure. The troika was united rather more by antagonism toward and fear of Trotsky than by a stable

policy consensus. This means that both groups were more coalitions of allies than organizations of leaders and followers. This is reflected in the fact that throughout the decade on both sides, there was a need for meeting and caucusing outside the formal party organizations in order to agree positions and tactics. The coalition nature of the troika is reflected in the mid-1923 meeting in Kislovodsk where Zinoviev and some of his closest supporters, worried by the increasing power Stalin was accumulating and reflected in the personnel changes at the XII Congress, met to try (unsuccessfully) to work out a means of limiting that power,⁹¹ while as indicated above Stalin also met with colleagues other than the troika to coordinate activity. Such meetings were essential to both sides to work out their strategy and tactics, but this proved to be a major problem for the opposition, especially in conjunction with the attempts by both sides to mobilize support from within the regional party organizations. Following the adoption of the decisions relating to fractions at the X Congress, by meeting surreptitiously and seeking support from below, both groups made themselves potentially vulnerable to attack for infringing this rule. However, because the Stalin group was always able to speak in the name of the party, and to get majority support in party organs, it was able to cast its opponents in the guise of an “anti-party opposition” which was infringing the anti-fractional rule. As a result, the Stalin group was able to stand on the high ground of party principle and cast their opponents as unprincipled intriguers seeking only to take over power. This was a serious handicap for the opposition, as reflected in the position Trotsky was forced to enunciate at the XIII Congress: “Comrades, none of us wishes to be nor can be right against our party. In the last analysis the party is always right, because the party is the single historical instrument that the proletariat possesses for the resolution of its basic tasks...I know that it is impossible to be right against the party. It is possible to be right only with the party and through the party, because history has not created any other means for the realization of rightness. The English have an historic proverb: my country right or wrong. With much greater historical right we can say: right or wrong in particular, specific, concrete questions at particular times, but this is my party”.⁹² No opposition group was able to escape this dilemma: those who could present themselves as the leadership could dictate the terms of the conflict.

Thus in the conflict between the pro-Stalin group and the successive oppositions, both used a number of means to try to strengthen their positions: the construction of power bases within the party machine, use

of the party's decision-making organs, appeal to regional party leaders and party rank-and-file, argument over policy, and appeal to the authority of Lenin. The problem for the opposition was not just that Stalin had growing control over the secretarial apparatus and therefore of the arenas within which the conflict was fought out, but that for many in the party, the policy positions associated with Stalin (initially the commitment to NEP then support for more direct action when NEP seemed to be experiencing difficulties) seemed on each occasion to be more attractive and realistic than those of the opposition. The strategies used by the opposition were basically the same as those used by the Stalin group, but the ability of the latter to associate themselves publicly with the party and its leadership and what it stood for and to wield the personnel weapon effectively, enabled them to carry out those strategies in a more effective and successful fashion than the opposition.

THE DYNAMICS OF OPPOSITION

Each opposition group faced the same problem: decisions about its fate rested in the hands of institutions controlled by its opponents. Regardless of the cogency of the opposition's policy and ideological arguments, the group around Stalin was able to use pliable majorities in party fora to win the day. Broadly united on policy outlook and underpinned by Stalin's growing control of the organizational levers of the party, this group remained a more disciplined force than the opposition. This does not mean that the leading group did not engage with the ideas of the opposition or seek to defend their own positions; much of the debate with the opposition concerned policy in those familiar areas of concern, the international situation (international revolution vs socialism in one country) and economic policy and the fate of NEP. But there was no likelihood of the leading group giving way on policy to the opposition because such a surrender would have strengthened that opposition and weakened the leadership as well as, in their view, leading to undesirable policy outcomes.

Successive oppositions could not effectively combat the use of the policy and personnel weapons of Stalin, and this contributed to their inability to generate the same discipline that those around the General Secretary were able to evince. Each attempt to unite opposition forces within the elite failed. The history of abuse between Trotsky and Zinoviev, something which the Stalinists emphasized, was a major

difficulty for the United Opposition. They had tried to negate this by reaching a series of compromises over the issues that had separated them in the past: Trotsky declared a renunciation of the notion of permanent revolution to the extent that it differed from Lenin's views, while Zinoviev and Kamenev acknowledged the correctness of Trotsky's criticisms of the power of the party apparatus (even though they had been part of the focus of such criticisms) and admitted that the attacks on "Trotskyism" were simply a theoretical cover for a struggle for power. It is difficult to understand how the partners to this coalition could have had any faith in the constancy of the other side given their previous history, but it may be that they believed they had little choice given the position they were in. Trotsky's later comments suggest that he thought that Zinoviev's and Kamenev's crossing to the opposition (as he saw it) was prompted by their genuine recognition of the need for international revolution rather than Stalin's socialism in one country.⁹³ But it is difficult to see this as anything other than a forced marriage of convenience. And like many such marriages it was doomed to fail.⁹⁴ The Right also reached out for unity when on 11 July 1928 Bukharin met with former oppositionist Kamenev with a view to uniting with the former Left Opposition against Stalin (both Kamenev and Zinoviev around that time had been re-admitted to the party). In February 1929, they were forced to account to the joint Politburo-CCC Presidium session for the meeting with Kamenev. Bukharin acknowledged the accuracy of the reports about it but denied that it constituted factional activity. His continued refusal to buckle to the Politburo majority led to a formal resolution criticizing him, but this was not published,⁹⁵ and achieved nothing, except to leave the opposition open to further attack.

Attempts to carry the dispute outside elite political organs, a clear breach of party norms, also failed. Trotsky's 1923 open letter to party meetings and the public meetings and demonstrations in 1926 and 1927 had no effect in generating widespread support for the opposition, and were used by the leadership as a pretext to discipline members of the opposition.

The strategy of the Right Opposition not to bring the dispute into the open but to restrict it to the leading party organs also failed. Both sides were reluctant to bring on an open break. Although from the July 1928 plenum the issues were clearly defined,⁹⁶ a compromise resolution⁹⁷ covered this over; no Right Opposition member was publicly named until April 1929.⁹⁸ The opposition did not want to be caught like

earlier oppositions in being the one to make the dispute public because this could be seen as factional activity and would cast them as the ones breaching the unity of the party, which had by then become almost a transcendental value, while the party leaders around Stalin were still sensitive about how only a short time ago they had been criticizing the sorts of policies they were now espousing. In addition, Stalin wanted to portray himself as the proponent of unity and the opposition as schismatic, while some of his supporters still held out hopes for some kind of reconciliation with their opponents.⁹⁹

The problem that the continuing secrecy of the split posed for the opposition was that when they came out to criticize party policy, they could easily be accused of dissent from the line the party (including themselves) had accepted. This was exacerbated by the practice of using Politburo commissions that excluded the opposition to discuss and resolve issues because this locked them into the requirement to support official decisions which they had had no part in making and enabled the Stalin group effectively to caucus without breaking the anti-factional principle. The secrecy also hindered any ability they may have had to generate broader support within the party, and accordingly the opposition was defeated by majority votes in both the Politburo and the CC.

The weakness of successive opposition groups was reflected in the strategy used by the Stalin group: organizational control of personnel, projection of a policy message that would appeal to wide ranks in the party, control over the press that enabled such a projection to take place and hindered that of the opposition, utilization of the measures adopted earlier by the party relating to discipline and factionalism (including the principle that all were subject to decisions of the leadership regardless of personal preferences¹⁰⁰), and the unity of Stalin and his supporters in elite councils. The greater political skills of Stalin and those around him compared with his opponents were also important. Stalin's ability to define issues in ways that appealed both to many of his leadership colleagues and to those lower down the administrative hierarchy was significant. His framing of issues and of the positions taken by his opponents was central to the organization of factional struggle in the Politburo; it was the basis upon which the unity of his changing group of allies rested and central to the strategy that was adopted.¹⁰¹ But it was also the basic weakness of the opposition when confronted by this range of weapons that was important. Attempts to build up and maintain an organizational power base were undercut by the centre's growing control

over personnel disposition. Efforts to shift debate out of the Politburo, whose operations were secret, into the CC or Congress in an attempt to generate support were suborned by the central power over personnel appointment and by the attitude of many regional leaders for whom such opposition could have been seen as potentially encouraging similar developments within their own bailiwicks.¹⁰² Attempts to organize in order to oppose the leadership ran foul of the way in which the anti-fractional provisions came to be interpreted. Keeping the dispute secret condemned the opposition to fighting within arenas they did not control while bringing it into the open made them vulnerable to the party's disciplinary provisions. Even submission to the leadership was not a viable strategy: this could be criticized as simply a subterfuge, a means of trying to maintain their position while pretending to surrender. Furthermore in the debates of the 1920s, both sides tended to take up uncompromising positions and to assert them in vigorous, black and white terms, which left little room for accommodation or compromise. The weakness of these opposition groups was a forerunner of the position members of the elite were to find themselves in once Stalin became the dominant *vozhd*.

One feature of collective leadership at this time is that public conflict and the defeat of oppositionists did not always lead to the immediate banishment of those defeated; factional conflict was not yet a struggle to the political (let alone physical) death. For example, the continued membership of the Politburo by Trotsky until October 1926 and by Rykov until December 1930 and Tomsky until July 1930 following their mid-1929 defeat, and Rykov's continued occupation of the post of Sovnarkom Chairman until December 1930. Personal relations were not always poisoned by political conflict; for example, Mikoyan spoke of his continuing good relations with Kamenev in late 1926 despite their being on opposite sides in the conflict,¹⁰³ while Bukharin (who was a friend of Stalin's wife Nadezhda) continued to be a visitor to Stalin's dacha into the 1930s.¹⁰⁴ It may be that this was due to Stalin's caution, or to a sadistic streak that was satisfied by seeing people beg for their futures.¹⁰⁵ But it is more likely that attitudes to such opponents were softened by the sense of group solidarity that had emerged in their struggle to build the new world. Many of the leaders had been comrades for a long time and had developed close personal relations despite political differences.¹⁰⁶ And after Lenin died, with the public ethos one of looking back to him for guidance, his acceptance of Zinoviev and Kamenev as continuing members of the leadership after their "strike-breaking" actions in

1917 was seen as a counsel for continuing toleration. This culture continued to function through to the end of the Stalin period, although it was severely tested from the mid-1930s.

The limited toleration of oppositionists after their defeat also reflects the acceptance of two principles: the importance of party unity and the need to avoid a split, and the right to take up different positions and to articulate them. These principles were theoretically reconciled through the demand that once a decision was made, all disagreement should cease as everyone obeyed that decision. This was a neat formula in theory, but not always easy to implement in practice.

By the end of 1929, the basis for opposition among the oligarchs had become considerably weakened. Direct and open opposition to the leadership's policy was no longer acceptable and the conception of opposition had expanded; it was broadened from factionalism to include such amorphous notions as "deviation" and even "conciliatory tendency toward a deviation". The party norm of freedom of discussion was undermined, and opponents were now expected to make a public recantation of their sins; no longer was it acceptable to openly hold views at variance with those of the leadership. Furthermore, the punishment for opposition became more severe; expulsion from the party was acceptable while in 1929 a party member was shot without trial on the basis of a decision by the OGPU leadership for a party misdemeanour (Yakov Blyumkin for "treasonable" contact with Trotsky).¹⁰⁷ This meant that not only was the extreme measure becoming an acceptable form of punishment, but the security service could be directly mobilized into party affairs. This was a grim portent of what was to come.

CONCLUSION

So in the 1923–29 period, party norms continued to shift significantly. There was no predominant leader in the style of Lenin and leadership remained collective in that the most important decisions were, at least formally, a result of collective deliberation in the party's chief fora. Leading figures—Trotsky, Stalin, Zinoviev and Bukharin—were the primary poles around which lesser members of the elite—like Kamenev, Rykov, Tomsy, Voroshilov, Molotov, Uglanov, Mikoyan, and Kalinin—came together to constitute factional groups. The contours of such factions were fluid. Among the leading figures, Stalin allied successively with Zinoviev and Bukharin before splitting from both, while Zinoviev's

initial opposition to Trotsky gave way to an alliance with him against Stalin. Factional lines were recast as each successive dispute was resolved, although over the period there was a consolidation of the group around Stalin. Elite figures remained important in their own right during this period; many had a distinguished revolutionary lineage and all possessed institutional resources as a result of their leadership of major bureaucratic hierarchies within the party or state structures. None of them saw their situation as being one in which they needed to protect themselves against a dominant leader, but rather how to best place themselves to win the factional conflict. In this regard both the CC and Congress were seen as arenas for the working out of elite conflict as both sides sought to mobilize support within these bodies, although their role was increasingly compromised by the practice of using institutional resources as a weapon in such gatherings; Zinoviev's control of the Leningrad party delegates to the XIV Congress in 1925 and the use made by Stalin's supporters in the central party apparatus in shaping the selection of CC membership and Congress delegates are clear instances of this. The use of such resources was a major factor in transforming CC and Congress from organs with real decision-making power into bodies to condemn opposition and ratify central decisions. This was a path along which both organizations travelled during this period.

This development had a significant implication for elite relations: it meant that as the period wore on, the institutional focus of elite relations became even more strongly bodies at the apex of the hierarchy with a small membership, principally the oligarchs in the Politburo. And this increased the importance of elite factional considerations. The problem for the various opposition groups is that in the successive factional struggles, the Stalinist group was ultimately able to outvote the opposition in the Politburo and to mobilize second echelon support in the CC and Congress, in part because of personnel manipulation but also because of support for the policies they espoused. This enabled them to use the 1921 anti-fractional decision as a weapon against the opposition. Within this context, it was very difficult for the opposition to counter the moves of the Stalin group. Meetings, secret or otherwise, and attempts to organize support within the party or state apparatus, could be labelled as factional activity and therefore in violation of the 1921 decision, while the majority position of the group around Stalin enabled its similar activity to avoid censure. Essentially the Stalin group prevailed on the policy questions because of their strength in elite organs which enabled them to use

formal means to destroy the opposition. Furthermore the mobilization of the OGPU, which was headed by a Stalin supporter (Dzerzhinsky then Vyacheslav Menzhinsky), into intra-party affairs also posed a distinct danger to the opposition and lay the groundwork for an expanded role in the future. In the face of this, the members of successive opposition groups continued to function as they had under Lenin and which they saw as consistent with the party's norms as reflected in its history. They pursued their roles as managers, as heads of the institutions they led, generally trying to carry out party policy as best they could. They conducted themselves as politicians within the Politburo, CC and Congress, attempting to prevail on policy issues against the group around Stalin while trying to prevent themselves from being cast in the guise of the opposition. This was a strategy embedded within the culture of party life inherited from the pre-revolutionary and Lenin periods which both valued revolutionary service and acknowledged the legitimacy of differences of opinion within certain bounds. But as the period wore on, this strategy, which relied on the mobilization of support within the broader party structure, became less viable as the arena of elite politics became more concentrated and separated from the CC and Congress and as party norms providing for opposition shifted. The rules of elite politics had changed.

NOTES

1. This sort of isolation had also been evident prior to 1917.
2. Tomsy was removed in June 1930 and Rykov in December 1930.
3. Including the dispute between Lenin and Stalin over political organization in the Caucasus and Stalin's "rudeness" to Krupskaya. See Lewin (1968), pp. 68–75.
4. Dvenadtsaty (1968), p. 5.
5. Stalin, (Ob osnovakh). These lectures were published in *Pravda* in April–May 1924.
6. Trotsky (1924a) and Trotsky (1924b). The latter first appeared as a preface to volume III part 2 of Trotsky's *Sochineniya*.
7. Zinoviev (1925).
8. Stalin (Po povodu), pp. 46, 47.
9. At the time Trotsky was in the Caucasus and claims that he was told by the Politburo that he would not be able to get back in time for the funeral and that he should stay there. Whatever the cause of his non-attendance, it was a major political mistake. Mikoyan says he was "astonished" by Trotsky's decision. Mikoyan (2014), p. 275.

10. See Ennker (2011), Tumarkin (1983), and Velikanova (2001).
11. For example, see the comments by Bukharin, XIV s'ezd (1926), pp. 138–147.
12. “Ob itogakh diskussii i o melkoburzhuznaznom uklone v partii”.
13. XIV s'ezd (1926), p. 46.
14. Stalin (1926). It is reprinted in *Sochineniya* vol. 8, pp. 13–90 under the title “K voprosam leninizma”.
15. Stalin, “Trotskizm ili leninizm”. For the Zinoviev/Kamenev/Stalin and others criticism of Trotsky’s “Lessons of October”, see Zinoviev (1924). This volume also reproduced Trotsky’s pamphlet.
16. Stalin, “O vystuplenii t. Trotskogo”.
17. Stalin “O lenine”, p. 52.
18. At the end of 1922–early 1923 Lenin wrote what is usually referred to as his “last letters and articles”. Among these was a letter to the forthcoming XII Congress in which his evaluation of his leadership colleagues is found. Lenin, “Pis'mo” and “Dobavlenie”.
19. For discussion of these, see Tucker (1974), ch. 7 and Kotkin (2014), ch. 11.
20. Actually parts of his “last letters and articles” were published prior to the Congress, but not the section evaluating his leadership colleagues.
21. Tucker (1974), pp. 288–289. Lenin had actually said this should go to the “next”, i.e. XII, Congress, but Krupskaya said he had intended it to go to the first Congress after his death.
22. Daniels (1969), pp. 209–212.
23. Stalin “Oktyabr'skaya revolyutsiya”. Dated 17 December 1924.
24. Daniels (1969), pp. 253–254.
25. On this see, Daniels (1969), pp. 255–267.
26. On discussion of this in the Politburo and the role it played in the coalescence of the United Opposition, see Vatlin (2008). The Politburo meeting of 3 June 1926 which discussed this issue is a case of the Stalinist majority being victorious without Stalin being present (he was on vacation). Stenogramma (2007).
27. For discussion of the debate in the Politburo over economic issues, see Davies (2008), Woodruff (2008), and Harrison (2008).
28. Gill (1990), pp. 164–166.
29. The Orgburo and Secretariat each constituted a collegium of CC members responsible for overseeing the central party bureaucracy, which took the form of departments of the Secretariat. Any questions decided by the Secretariat and not objected to by a member of the Orgburo became official decisions of the latter. Getty (2013), pp. 102–103, 105–107.
30. Rees (2013), p. 85.

31. Many appointments, especially at lower levels, were made directly by this department, but for more senior or strategic appointments, recommendations might be passed by the head to the relevant CC Secretary, to the responsible senior CC Secretary, to the Secretariat collegium, to the General Secretary, or to the Politburo. See Getty (2013), pp. 99–103. On the size of the Secretariat, Getty (2013), p. 123. Most recommendations were approved.
32. Orgraspred was a result of the merger of Uchraspred and the Organization and Instruction Department (Orgotdel), which was headed from June 1922 by Kaganovich and had played a role in lower level personnel appointments.
33. Rosenfeldt (2009), vol. 1, p. 160 and vol. 2, p. 348.
34. Daniels (1969), pp. 168–169 describes this process. He used the concept earlier in Dallin (1966).
35. Daniels (1969), pp. 233, 239.
36. Gill (1990), pp. 65, 345, n. 50.
37. For an argument that appointment did not create loyalty but the security of tenure that Stalin could offer through his combatting of an opposition that was critical of the secretarial apparatus could, see Harris (2005), pp. 63–82.
38. On Trotsky's, unsuccessful, attempt to prevent his machine from being penetrated by central appointees in September 1923, see Daniels (1969), p. 212.
39. On Kaganovich's appointment to head Orgotdel in June 1922 and the functions of this department of the CC Secretariat, see Schapiro (1970), pp. 251–253.
40. Rees (2013), pp. 46–47. On the defeat of the Left in the Moscow organization, see Merridale (1990), ch. 1. On Orgotdel in October 1923 forbidding lower level party secretaries from distributing the "Platform of the 46" because it was a "factional document" see Rees (2013), pp. 47–48. In January 1925 Trotsky was replaced by Frunze as head of the Military Revolutionary Council, thereby ousting him from his potential military base.
41. On the development and problems of the personnel mechanism during the 1920s and Stalin's control of it, see Gill (1990), pp. 158–172; Rigby (1988) and Monty (2012). On an unsuccessful attempt to reorganize the Secretariat in August 1923 to limit Stalin's power, see Khlevniuk (2015), pp. 76–78.
42. On this see Merridale (1990), ch. 1.
43. Daniels (1969), pp. 254–255.
44. For a description of how Zinoviev's power base in Leningrad was undermined, see Molotov's comments in Chuev (1991), pp. 304–307.

45. On the role of the Moscow organization as an organizational base and its loss to Stalin, see Merridale (1990), ch. 2, esp., pp. 50–59.
46. For a list of Bukharin’s supporters, see Cohen (1974), p. 220.
47. For a discussion of this and Kaganovich’s role in it, see Rees (2013), p. 85.
48. For Stalin’s confidential suggestion in 1928 that Mikoyan, Kirov and Ordzhonikidze should replace Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky, and the reluctance of the former to “cut off” the latter, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 312–313. Mikoyan says he saw this as an attempt to recruit himself and the other two. On the capturing of Tomsky’s trade union base, see Rees (2013), pp. 88–89.
49. Gill (1990), p. 139.
50. XIV s’ezd (1926), p. 244.
51. For Bukharin’s pointing out how unusual this was and how it showed Zinoviev was opposed to the line of the CC, see XIV s’ezd (1926), p. 130. Zinoviev’s co-report is on pp. 97–129.
52. For Mikoyan’s comments about an instance in spring 1925, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 287–288.
53. XIV s’ezd (1926), p. 186. The speaker was Mikoyan.
54. For example see the declaration by Smilga et al., Zayavlenie (1962). “For Kamenev’s comments, see Pyatnadsatyi (1962), vol. 1, pp. 279–285.
55. Pyatnadsatyi (1962), vol. 2, pp. 1596–1600.
56. For the list, see Pyatnadsatyi (1962), vol. 2, p. 1397.
57. For one case, involving the use of the OGPU to infiltrate and report on one such meeting in June 1926, see Khlevniuk (2015), pp. 84–85.
58. See the resolution of the joint CC-CCC plenum 14–23 July 1926, “Po delu” (1984). Also the decision of the XV Conference of the party in October–November 1926, “Ob oppositsionnom bloke”. On an opposition speaker delivering a co-report to this joint plenum and the response from the leadership group, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 290–291.
59. Daniels (1969), pp. 279–280. On this sort of action infringing the personal perceptions of high ranking party members who saw themselves as members of a special group with their own culture, norms and principles, and therefore evoking a strong negative response, see Getty (2013), pp. 45–48, 302, n. 71.
60. Daniels (1969), p. 283.
61. “O gruppe T. Bukharina”.
62. “Ob antipartiinykh vystupleniyakh liderov oppositsii”.
63. Fitzpatrick (2015), p. 39. The OGPU was further involved in the factional conflict later in the 1920s.
64. Another indication of this is the way that in September 1927 the Politburo ruled that a proposed opposition platform could not be printed because it was a factional document. When the opposition went

- ahead and tried to have it printed, this was claimed to be evidence of its factional nature.
65. Although as the 1920s wore on, this became much more an arena of bureaucratic constituencies than a meeting of party notables. For changes in the nature of the CC during this period, see Gill (1990), pp. 144–152.
 66. Average intervals between meetings in the periods between congresses was as follows: XI–XII Congresses 2.25 weeks; XII–XIII Congresses 3 weeks; XIII–XIV Congresses 3.75 weeks; XIV–XV Congresses 11 weeks; XV–XVI Congresses 15.5 weeks. Gill (1990), p. 145.
 67. For example, “O zayavleniyakh t. Trotskogo i 46-ti tovarishchei” and “O vystuplenii t. Trotskogo”.
 68. On the vulnerability of party secretaries outside the centre to challenge from within their own party organizations, see Harris (2005), pp. 73–74.
 69. For details on this, see Gill (1990), pp. 150–151, 374, n. 68. For a claim for the importance of the role played by Stalin’s supporter Matvei Shkiriyatov, see Yudin. For a note on Shkiriyatov, see Torchinov and Leontyuk (2000), pp. 546–547.
 70. The proportion of members coming from the central and regional party apparatus changed as follows: 1922 34.8%, 1923 50.9%, 1924 52.9%, 1925 51.5%, 1927 49.5%. The number of regional officials greatly exceeded those from the centre. Gill (1990), p. 148.
 71. For example, at the October 1927 plenum, Trotsky was heckled and had things thrown at him during his speech. Merridale (1990), p. 41. Heckling was common before this.
 72. The text of the letter will be found in Trotsky (1965), pp. 89–98.
 73. On these, see Rees (2004b), p. 28.
 74. Adibekov et al. (2000), pp. 18, 21. Provision was made for regular closed sessions to deal with confidential, usually security, issues, with restricted attendance. Adibekov et al. (2000), p. 19.
 75. This reflects the provision of the Congress resolution establishing the Politburo which enabled members of the CC to participate with a “consultative vote”, a provision designed to meet the criticism that the creation of such a body threatened democratic decision-making within the party. “Po organizatsionnomu voprosu”, p. 425.
 76. For a discussion of what was circulated and to whom, see Gregory (2008), pp. 20–23 and Service (2008), pp. 122–123.
 77. See Tomsy’s comments of 1 January 1926, and therefore before he was in the opposition, cited in Adibekov et al. (2000), p. 17.
 78. For example, Stalin’s supporters did not always agree with the taking of active punishment measures against the opposition. Fitzpatrick (2015), pp. 36–37, 40–41 and 42.

79. Gill (1990), pp. 155–156.

80. Profile of elite organs.

	<i>April 1923</i>	<i>June 1924</i>	<i>January 1926</i>	<i>December 1927</i>
Total number of persons	16	26	27	32
Members of Orgburo in Politburo	5	4	3	5
% of Politburo	45.4	30.8	21.4	29.4
% of Orgburo in Politburo	50.0	23.5	18.8	20.0
Members of Secretariat in Politburo	3	2	3	4
% of Politburo	27.3	15.4	21.4	23.5
% of Secretariat in Politburo	100	40.0	28.5	50.0
Member of all 3 bodies	Stalin Molotov Rudzutak	Stalin Molotov	Stalin Molotov Uglanov	Stalin Molotov Kosior Uglanov

81. Representation was as follows:

	<i>April 1923</i>	<i>June 1924</i>	<i>January 1926</i>	<i>December 1927</i>
Central state machine	5	8	8	6
Central party apparatus	3	2	3	4
Regional state machine	1	1		2
Regional party apparatus				3
Other	2	2	2	2

The regional party figures were party secretaries from Leningrad, Ukraine and North Caucasus. The “Other” category is the head of the trade unions and editor of *Pravda*. In 1926 Zinoviev did not have a position at the time of his appointment, having just been removed from Leningrad.

82. Others included A.M. Nazaretyan 1922–24, N.I. Ikonnikov early 1920s, and N.I. Smirnov 1922. All are said to have been assistants to Stalin. Rosenfeldt (2009), vol. 2, pp. 352, 359 and 365.
83. Gregory (2008), p. 17. The fullest discussion of the central party apparatus and its “secret” aspects is in Rosenfeldt (2009).
84. Gregory (2008), p. 26, citing Stalin’s secretary Boris Bazhanov. Between 1923 and 1926, Kamenev was Rykov’s deputy in Sovnarkom. The practice of the Chairman of Sovnarkom chairing the Politburo probably stemmed from the fact that this was the only formal post that Lenin had held and he chaired the Politburo, and when he died the continuation of this practice seemed to be the politically neutral thing to do.
85. Lih et al. (1995), p. 181. This is a letter from Stalin to Molotov, Voroshilov and Ordzhonikidze in which the former calls for this practice to end.
86. For example, see the October 1923 Declaration of the 46. Daniels (1969), pp. 218–219.
87. Politburo candidate members Dzerzhinsky, Kalinin, Molotov, Uglanov and Frunze also sometimes attended. Rees (2013), p. 49.
88. Lih et al. (1995), pp. 68–69, 85 and 94. For a factional meeting of those opposed to Trotsky, see Chuev (1991), p. 224. For Zinoviev’s complaint about this when he was not included, see Daniels (1969), p. 239. For the assertion by one of Stalin’s secretaries that the troika would meet, initially in Zinoviev’s apartment and then usually in Stalin’s office, to discuss important issues including the Politburo agenda before that body met, see Bazhanov (1980), p. 49 and Bazhanov 1982, p. 9. Daniels (1969), p. 239. On the organization of an anti-Trotsky faction in the Politburo in 1924, see Khlevniuk (2015), p. 80.
89. Rees (2013), p. 59.
90. Such meetings were reported as having been held on the following number of days: 1924 2; 1925 2; 1926 36; 1927 13, 1928 64; 1929 48. This pattern looks as though the record is incomplete. Korotkov, Chernev & Chernobaev.
91. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 266–267 and Daniels (1969), pp. 207–208.
92. Trinadtsatyi (1963), p. 158.
93. Trotsky (1969), pp. 225–226 and Trotsky (1959), pp. 23–24.
94. On recognition at the outset of the coalition by some of Trotsky’s supporters that their new allies were unlikely to remain firm, see Trotsky (1970), pp. 521–522. The book was originally written in 1929, when Trotsky had been sent into exile.
95. “Rezolyutsiya ob’edinennogo zasedaniya politbyuro TsK i Prezidiuma TsKK po vnutripartiinyim delam ot 9 fevralya (1929) goda”, Danilov et al. (2000), Tom 4, pp. 540–548.

96. For the stenographic report of this meeting, see Danilov et al. (2000), vol. 2.
97. “Politika khlebozagotovok v svyazi s obshchim khozyaistvennym polozheniem”, Danilov et al. (2000), vol. 2, pp. 588–592. The reference to alien ideology is on p. 590.
98. “Rezolyutsiya ob’edinennogo plenuma TsK i TsKK VKP(b) po vnutri-partiinym delam”, Danilov et al. (2000), vol. 4.
99. Respectively Khlevniuk (2015), p. 105 and Fitzpatrick (2015), p. 61.
100. For example, on Mikoyan’s unsuccessful attempt to resist a move to Moscow in 1926 and Frunze’s reluctance to undergo the operation that cost him his life in 1925, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 292–299, 306–307. The opposition had frequently resisted efforts to shift them from their positions. Getty (2013), p. 57.
101. For example, see his letters to Molotov regarding the dispute with Zinoviev et al. Lih et al. (1995), pp. 103–128.
102. Getty (2013), pp. 156–163.
103. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 298–299.
104. Montefiore (2003), p. 58. This ceased when Nadezhda died.
105. Fitzpatrick (2015), p. 36.
106. This may have been instrumental in the majority vote in the Politburo in June 1929 against Stalin’s wishes but in accord with those of Bukharin appointing Bukharin to the Scientific-Technical Administration of Vesenka. On this see Voroshilov’s letter to Ordzhonikidze of 8 June 1929, Lih et al. (1995), p. 149.
107. Gill (1990), p. 191. A Politburo decision of 5 November 1929 ordered the execution. Kotkin (2017), p. 28.

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From the Predominant to the Dominant Leader, 1930–53

Soviet collective leadership in the 1930s differed from that in the 1920s in three crucial respects: In the 1930s there was no pure oligarchy but an oligarchy with a predominant and then dominant leader, the leadership was not characterized by factions continually struggling for power, and the manoeuvring within the elite was not extended in an organized fashion into the party as a whole. Oligarch politics was thus more isolated from the party rank-and-file, less factionalized and governed more by a prominent leader. These three things shaped a leadership that had some continuities from earlier, but also had significantly different patterns of operating. This was reflected in a substantial shift in the party's normative order during the 1930–53 period. With the shift from a collective leadership with a predominant leader to one with a dominant leader, institutional norms and the role of collective official bodies were weakened, while the use of organizational power and of small informal groups expanded. The relationship with the dominant leader became the major currency of politics. Opposition was unacceptable, although policy discussion and bureaucratic politics continued, but these were no longer conducted openly, being generally confined to the party elite. And such discussion was no longer linked to the question of leadership. The notion of a party line, to which total adherence was expected, was strengthened, with enforcement by the security service, even up to and including physical liquidation for members of the elite (and even the oligarchy), a real potential outcome. As this normative order developed over time, the oligarchs became increasingly distant from the party rank-and-file.

OLIGARCHY WITH A PREDOMINANT LEADER, 1930–34

The defeat of the Right Opposition left the pro-Stalin group dominant within elite circles. However, two of the Rightists remained within the Politburo into 1930—Tomsky until July and Rykov until December—and Bukharin and Rykov retained followings within the broader party (and, in Rykov's case, state) structures. In particular, Bukharin's articulation of the Rightist programme was attractive to many in the party apparatus, especially when the policy of agricultural collectivization generated widespread revolt in the countryside.¹ Given the problematic situation in the countryside, Stalin may have felt inhibited in taking further immediate measures against the Right Opposition, although this was likely to be only a short term situation; if rural policy went wrong, the Rightist criticisms and their reflection in the continuing prominence of the members of the Right Opposition would have become increasingly dangerous for Stalin. Nevertheless, pressure was maintained on perceived Rightist sympathizers at this time, reflected most clearly in the anti-Syrtsov–Lominadze campaign in the second half of 1930² and, at Stalin's insistence the replacement of Rykov as Sovnarkom Chair by Molotov in December 1930, a shift designed not only to replace an opponent by a client, but also to bring about greater coordination between the state and party and thereby avoid the tensions that had been present at times under Rykov.³ Political defeat does not appear to have poisoned personal relations within the broader leadership group, with the result that although these three may have, ultimately, lost their Politburo membership, they (and particularly Bukharin and Rykov) did not lose their standing as party grandees with a significant revolutionary heritage.

The pro-Stalin group that was left dominant was not a homogeneous entity nor a highly disciplined factional group or clique. As at the end of 1930 following the XVI Congress in July and Rykov's and candidate members Andreev's and Syrtsov's removal in December, the members of the Politburo were all allies or clients of Stalin (see Table 4.1), but they all had long careers in the party including holding responsible office before coming into Stalin's immediate sphere.⁴ Their party careers and bureaucratic positions had enabled them to build cohorts of supporters within the party and administrative apparatuses, many of whom were members of the CC. In addition, the significant positions that each held in the bureaucratic structure provided

them with resources, including expertise crucial in the discussion of policy issues. These gave them some standing independent of Stalin, even if those positions were held by grace of the General Secretary (Table 4.1).⁵

Table 4.1 Leadership changes 1930–34

	<i>July 1930^a</i>	<i>February 1934^b</i>
Politburo: full members	Voroshilov <i>C</i>	Andreev
	Kaganovich <i>C</i>	Voroshilov
	Kalinin <i>C</i>	Kaganovich
	Kirov <i>C</i>	Kalinin
	Kosior <i>C</i>	Kirov
	Kuibyshev <i>C</i>	Kosior
	Molotov <i>C</i>	Kuibyshev
	Rudzutak <i>C</i>	Molotov
	Rykov <i>O</i>	Ordzhonikidze
	Stalin	Stalin
Politburo: candidate members	Andreev <i>C</i>	Mikoyan
	Mikoyan <i>C</i>	Petrovsky
	Petrovsky <i>A</i>	Postyshev
	Syrtsov <i>A</i>	Rudzutak
	Chubar <i>C</i>	Chubar
Orgburo: full members	Akulov <i>A</i>	Gamarnik
	Bauman <i>A</i>	Yezhov
	Bubnov <i>A</i>	Zhdanov
	Gamarnik <i>A</i>	Kaganovich (L)
	Kaganovich <i>C</i>	Kirov
	Lobov <i>A</i>	Kosarev
	Molotov <i>C</i>	Kuibyshev
	Moskvin <i>C</i>	Stalin
	Postyshev <i>A/C</i>	Stetsky
	Stalin	Shvernik
Orgburo: candidate members	Shvernik <i>C</i>	
	Dogadov <i>A</i>	Kaganovich (M)
	Kosarev <i>A</i>	Krinitzky
	Smirnov (A.P.) <i>A/O</i>	
Secretariat: full members	Tsikhon <i>A</i>	
	Stalin	Zhdanov
	Bauman <i>A</i>	Kaganovich
	Kaganovich <i>C</i>	Kirov
	Molotov <i>C</i>	Stalin
	Postyshev <i>A/C</i>	

(continued)

Table 4.1 continued

	<i>July 1930^a</i>	<i>February 1934^b</i>
Secretariat: candidate members	Moskvin C Shvernik C	nil

Key: A = ally; C = client; O = opposition

^aChanges before next congress: Politburo: in December 1930 Rykov, Andreev and Syrtsov were dropped while Ordzhonikidze (A/C) was added; in February 1932 Rudzutak was dropped and replaced by the restored Andreev. Orgburo: Molotov left in December 1930, in October 1932 Akulov and Bauman were dismissed and Dogadov became a candidate member, and in January 1933 Smirnov ceased to be a candidate. Secretariat: in December 1930 Molotov ceased to be a CC Secretary and in October 1932 Bauman and Moskvin ceased to be, respectively, a CC Secretary and a candidate member of the Secretariat

^bChanges before next congress: Politburo: December 1934 Kirov died; in January 1935 Kuibyshev died; in February 1935 Mikoyan and Chubar were promoted to full membership of the Politburo and Zhdanov (C) and Eikhe (A) became candidate members; in February 1937 Ordzhonikidze died; in May 1937 Rudzutak was excluded from the CC (and therefore from the Politburo); in October 1937 Yezhov became a candidate member; in January 1938 Postyshev was replaced as a candidate member by Khrushchev (C); in June 1938 Chubar was dropped from full membership; in February 1939 Kosior died. Orgburo: in January 1935 Kuibyshev died, in January 1938 Mekhlis joined and in August 1938 Stetsky was shot. Secretariat: in February 1935 Yezhov became a CC Secretary

The elite was reduced from 29 to 24 people, and there was little overlap between the party's organizational and legislative wings⁶; the representation of CC Secretaries increased, but their weight of numbers in the Politburo remained small. But what is important here is their identity: Stalin and his client Kaganovich remain throughout, and when Molotov left to become the Chairman of Sovnarkom, he was replaced by another client, Kirov; all of the senior secretaries were clients of Stalin. All members of the Secretariat were members of the Orgburo. Stalin's leverage through his position and that of his clients remained undisturbed from the earlier period. In both of these Politburos, there was a strengthening of state representation compared with 1927, bringing it back closer to the situation earlier in the 1920s.⁷

All of these people owed their positions at the end of 1930 to Stalin, and given his dominance (through his people) of the appointment process, henceforth it makes little sense to distinguish between clients and allies; all were aligned with Stalin. But as indicated above, most of them also had substantial party careers independent of Stalin. Many of them had careers in which they would have been likely to have come across one another; of the 12 members of the 1930 Politburo carried forward

to 1934 excluding Stalin, seven had a background of working in or coming from the Caucasus region or Ukraine. Kaganovich, Mikoyan, Kirov and Ordzhonikidze appear to have been close friends, while Molotov and Kuibyshev were close; Kaganovich also seems to have been close to Voroshilov.⁸ Voroshilov, Molotov and Ordzhonikidze usually referred to Stalin as “Koba” (his pre-revolutionary pseudonym), while almost all (Mikoyan, Ordzhonikidze, Kalinin, Molotov, Voroshilov, then also Kirov, Bukharin and Kamenev but curiously not Kaganovich⁹) seem to have used the familiar form of “you” in address to Stalin.¹⁰ Friendly relations were the norm¹¹; Bukharin’s continuing to visit Stalin’s dacha in 1930, reflecting his long-standing friendship with Stalin’s wife Nadya, has already been noted. Politics did not poison inter-personal relations, nor did it overturn the sense of broad elite unity at the top of the Soviet political structure, even if Stalin did not always trust his colleagues.¹² Although these oligarchs were clients or allies of Stalin, most of them clearly saw themselves as able to disagree with him if they thought it necessary.¹³ They were broadly united on the basis of personal commitment to Stalin, but they were also united on agreement with the principal lines of policy, in particular agricultural collectivization and forced-pace industrialization. Policy remained central to Stalin’s appeal to his oligarch colleagues, although his close personal relationship with Molotov and Kaganovich was crucial.

The problem with reliance on policy as the source of elite unity is that should policy difficulties arise, the basis of unity becomes vulnerable. The policies that constituted the *velikii perelom* or “great break” created enormous strains, difficulties and hardship in the country; peasant revolt, strikes, famine and the widespread use of force by the regime in the countryside stimulated questioning within party ranks about those policies and who was responsible. This was particularly the case following Stalin’s “Dizzy with success” article of March 1930 in which he blamed lower level officials for the excesses of collectivization.¹⁴ But there is no evidence of major disagreements within the Politburo over this. Presumably, all members realized that regardless of how they may have felt about the immediate effects their policies were having, they could not afford a re-run of the factional conflict of the 1920s and that a united front was necessary to ensure not just the success of those policies but perhaps even the survival of the regime. The apparent lack of discord over the fate of Martem’yan Ryutin in 1932¹⁵ may reflect this commitment to unity. This was maintained throughout this period, with

the easing of policy in 1931–34 a result of a general consensus led by Stalin, not a case of this being forced on Stalin by a reformist faction as some have claimed.¹⁶ What disagreements occurred were, in contrast to the earlier period, conducted mainly behind closed doors. No longer was there open criticism of party leaders at party meetings and policy debate was no longer publicly linked to considerations about the suitability of particular individuals for leadership positions. As speeches at the XVI Congress in 1930 made clear, there was now no room for opposition; as Rudzutak declared, “Who is not with us is against us”.¹⁷ This reflected a significant shift in the party’s norms.

Stalin’s authority within the collective rested on a combination of power over personnel that resided in his office plus his perceived leadership successes in the policy sphere, even if many saw collectivization as a very near run thing. But he was still seen as a colleague rather than a *vozhd*, predominant rather than dominant. The cult of Stalin had burst onto the public scene in December 1929,¹⁸ but it is unlikely that any of Stalin’s leadership colleagues would have either believed the claims of the cult or been awed by it. However, according to Mikoyan,¹⁹ Kaganovich began to glorify Stalin when he spoke, and this meant that other leaders had to follow suit or engender Stalin’s suspicion. Thus while not increasing Stalin’s authority within the elite, the cult did establish a language and a form of address that they had to use in order to seek to avoid trouble.²⁰ The cult imposed a new paradigm of discussion on the collective.

This does not mean that there were no disagreements among the oligarchs. Broad consensus on future direction did not obviate vigorous differences on other matters. The principal source of such differences concerned resource allocation, in particular budgetary allocations between the different institutional constituencies that members of the elite represented. Here, there were frequent clashes between, on the one hand, the representatives of central state organs (mainly the chairman of Sovnarkom, Molotov²¹ from 1930, and Kuibyshev who was his deputy and head of Vesenkha 1926–30 and then Gosplan 1930–34) and those representing various commissariats (principally Voroshilov, Andreev and Mikoyan in the Politburo, but other ministers were able to attend meetings and press their cases). There was also conflict between the people’s commissars of the different ministries, all struggling to maximize the resources they received through the budget. This was a classic case of bureaucratic politics, where politicians argued the case depending upon their institutional affiliation; for example, when Ordzhonikidze was chair

of Vesenkha 1930–32, he argued for smaller budgetary allocations to people’s commissariats, but when he was People’s Commissar for Heavy Industry 1932–37, he argued the case for greater allocations to his commissariat.²² In these cases, Stalin often acted as referee or arbiter,²³ and at least in late 1931 he was concerned that such disputes could cause divisions within the “ruling group”.²⁴

Institutional Context

In institutional terms, the main official arena of decision-making remained the Politburo, but this was an institution that over time became less important as a real site of oligarch policy interaction. This process reflects the erosion of the norm of the effective expression of collective sovereignty through the party’s formal organs, a process that would reach its culmination later in the 1930s and 1940s. This is reflected in the decreased frequency of Politburo meetings and the very heavy agenda (see Table 4.3). Furthermore, Politburo meetings, which were chaired by Molotov even though Kaganovich was from 1930 responsible for managing the business of the Politburo, could be quite large affairs. They were usually attended by all of the full members in Moscow at the time (members posted elsewhere like Kirov and Kosior, respectively, in Leningrad and Ukraine, were more sporadic in their attendance, while members who were on holiday, as Stalin was for two–three months each year,²⁵ did not attend during that time), although it was not unusual for members to miss some meetings; over the period as a whole, and especially from 1931, Mikoyan was the only regular attender. As well as these people, sessions were also usually attended by some members (both full and candidate) of the CC and the Central Control Commission; some of the CC members were also people’s commissars and may have attended in that capacity.²⁶ This meant that full and candidate members of the Politburo constituted a minority at these sessions (Table 4.2). The proportion of attenders constituted by full members was as follows.²⁷

Table 4.2 Full Politburo members as a proportion of all attendees at Politburo meetings

<i>Year</i>	<i>1930</i>	<i>1931</i>	<i>1932</i>	<i>1933</i>	<i>1934</i>
PB member as % of total	11.7	13.8	10.4	11.6	13.2

With most of the non-Politburo members present in order to speak to particular issues on the agenda if required, Politburo members were clearly the most important participants, but nevertheless in a meeting with up to some 50–60 people present, and especially given the very heavy agendas, this was an unwieldy body and raises the question of how the Politburo could handle the volume of business suggested by Table 4.3, and therefore what role it actually played.

The rules of procedure specified that questions coming before a Politburo session had to be accompanied by short explanatory papers and a draft resolution.²⁸ These would be drawn up in one of the departments of the Secretariat (often on the basis of a recommendation from a people’s commissariat or other body) and sent to the Secret Department/Special Sector, where it would be decided how the issue was to be handled. This decision was confirmed by the relevant CC Secretary or by the Secretariat as a whole. The three mechanisms for the Politburo to handle an issue evident in the late 1920s continued in the early 1930s: resolution in a session of the Politburo; resolution by circulation (on 16 October 1932, on Stalin’s recommendation, the Politburo instructed the Secret Department to cease the practice of having members decide by circulation during a Politburo session because this distracted their attention from the agenda; this would have left decision on the basis of a telephone call or by couriered papers as the two means of resolution by circulation); and “Decision of the Politburo”. From January 1930, Stalin had greater responsibility for the preparation of Politburo meetings and management of the Secretariat.²⁹ Over time, those matters handled in session shrank while those by circulation grew; “Decision by the Politburo” remained limited.

Table 4.3 Politburo workload 1930–34^a

	<i>Number of sessions</i>	<i>Resolved in session</i>	<i>Average per session</i>	<i>Resolved by circulation</i>	<i>“Decisions of the Politburo”</i>	<i>Total</i>
1930	38	1090	29	847	944	2881
1931	60	1382	23	1550	948	3880
1932	47	1446	31	2104	156	3706
1933	24	443	18	2778	31	3252
1934	18	309	17	3417	215	3941

^aThese figures are calculated on the basis of the information given in Adibekov et al. (2001). For other figures, see Khlevnyuk et al. (1995), pp. 183–238. The figures differ significantly from those given in Khlevnyuk (1996), p. 288, which include meetings of the Secretariat. The figures differ slightly from those in Wheatcroft (2004), p. 84. Also see Rees (2004b), p. 25 where he argues that the number of formal sessions in 1931 was actually 37 and in 1932 30, with the remainder “working sessions”

The proportion of total questions that were resolved in the formal sessions in 1930 was only 38%, but by 1934 it had shrunk to just under 8%. Wheatcroft argues that Politburo sessions were not actual decision-making occasions, but that the body was “largely a switching and recording mechanism”.³⁰ But this is to downplay its role. While on many issues the full Politburo simply directed an issue and its draft resolution to a commission of the Politburo (effectively a subset of its members) to finalize the draft and send it back to the Secretariat for further work, some important decisions were made here; key issues like the Syrtsov–Lominadze, the Ryutin and the Smirnov–Eismont–Tolmachev affairs were discussed in the full Politburo,³¹ so that it was not just a matter of the direction of documentation. Indeed, the leaders of the Syrtsov–Lominadze and Smirnov–Eismont–Tolmachev affairs were interrogated by Politburo members in a joint meeting of that body with the CCC Presidium (and it was clear through such interrogations that some members were more sympathetic to the accused than others). Many major economic and political matters, the former perhaps reflecting the fact that some two-thirds of the full and candidate members also held positions in the state apparatus came before the Politburo, at least until the end of 1932. But its role as a collective was much diminished during this period, with increasing numbers of decisions being taken in the Politburo’s name by narrow groups of members, Politburo commissions, the Secretariat and the Orgburo with little oversight by the body as a whole.³² The Politburo effectively ceased to be an effective organ of collective decision-making at this time.³³

But even if the Politburo ceased to act as a collective organ, its members remained busy on Politburo business. As Table 4.3 shows, far more decisions were made outside the formal sessions than at those meetings, principally by circulation.³⁴ Decision by circulation occurred between full Politburo meetings, and as the numbers in the table demonstrate, the workload was very heavy. Even if all members did not diligently read all of the paperwork attached to each item but gave it anything more than a cursory glance, this would have been a time-consuming task. However, even if this sort of decision-making constituted the aggregation of individual decisions rather than a collective form of decision-making, it may nevertheless have provided the excuse for communication with other members, and thereby the discussion of issues of all sorts, not just those

subject to circulation. In this way decision by circulation may have added to the web of personal associations that underpinned the leadership.

The Politburo did not function as the sole decision-making arena at the heart of the Soviet system. On 23 October 1930, candidate member of the Politburo Sergei Syrtsov while being interviewed by the Central Control Commission claimed that Stalin had created a small group that met before Politburo sessions to decide issues in advance.³⁵ This claim is confirmed by Stalin's letter to Molotov of 22 September 1930 in which he calls upon Molotov to "consult with our closest friends and report on any objections" regarding Stalin's secret proposal to remove Rykov and his supporters from the state apparatus.³⁶ Informal meetings of oligarchs had been a feature of party life since the party's foundation and had been common in the 1920s, both in a social and a more businesslike setting, and as indicated above, decisions made by such groups could be formalized as decisions of the Politburo as a whole. This process continued throughout the 1930s but the reason for it changed: In the 1920s (and probably also in 1930) it was to circumvent opposition, in the 1930s it was to suit Stalin's convenience and his preference to work through his most reliable colleagues. There were also frequent meetings in Stalin's office,³⁷ and at his dacha.³⁸ These often involved Politburo members but were not restricted to them, reflecting the fact that formal membership of the Politburo was as much a marker of elite status as a resource of power and authority. Increasingly authority stemmed from closeness to Stalin, with some people (e.g. Zhdanov, Yezhov and later Malenkov gaining Politburo status only after they had been among Stalin's intimates for some time). The main attendees at these meetings were in descending order of frequency as shown in Table 4.4.³⁹

It is clear from this hierarchy that Molotov and Kaganovich were closest to Stalin with both present in Stalin's office when discussions were held with a wide range of other colleagues as well as more private

Table 4.4 Main attendees at meetings in Stalin's office 1931–34

<i>1931</i>	<i>1932</i>	<i>1933</i>	<i>1934</i>
Molotov	Molotov	Molotov	Molotov
Kaganovich	Kaganovich	Kaganovich	Kaganovich
Postyshev	Postyshev	Voroshilov	Zhdanov
Voroshilov	Ordzhonikidze	Ordzhonikidze	Voroshilov
Ordzhonikidze	Kuibyshev	Mikoyan	Ordzhonikidze

sessions. While there are no records of what transpired at these sessions, the resolution of issues and questions must have occurred, with the results often appearing in the form of decisions of the Politburo. For example, the decision to transform the OGPU into the NKVD in February–March 1934 appears to have been taken by Stalin, Molotov and Kaganovich (with notes taken by Aleksandr Poskrebyshev, the then head of the Special Sector of the Secretariat and Stalin’s chief assistant) and then approved by Voroshilov, Andreev, Kuibyshev, Mikoyan, Kalinin and Ordzhonikidze, who were presumably polled by telephone.⁴⁰

These meetings constituted a sidelining of the Politburo, and while this could perhaps be justified on the basis of the workload carried by that body, it may also reflect tactical considerations; Stalin had greater faith in some of his Politburo colleagues than others. This is reflected in the fact that the frequency of attendance at meetings in his office was not related to formal party status; members of lower rank in the Politburo were often more likely to be at these meetings than some of higher rank.⁴¹ This streamlining of the decision-making process enabled Stalin both to control the agenda and keep a check on what was happening. It also constitutes something of the sidelining of the CC, a body where there were likely to be significant reservations about the course of recent policy, and thereby of Stalin’s leadership. The struggle for collectivization and Stalin’s direction of blame for excesses on the regional leadership were not well received by regional leaders, and they constituted a significant proportion of CC membership.⁴² The irregular pattern of CC meetings during this period⁴³ and Stalin’s desire to keep the evidence of differences within the Politburo behind closed doors with regard to the case of Syrtsov⁴⁴ reflects uncertainty about the views of the CC generally and the desire to prevent oligarch differences from overflowing into lower level party bodies at this time. But this also reflects a more general sidelining of the CC as a decision-making organ; in the early 1930s the CC was not even involved in discussion about its own structure.⁴⁵ While plena were still the venue for sometimes wide-ranging discussion, and while they remained an arena for bureaucratic conflict (principally over economic issues) and at times for broad-based attacks on “the opposition”, they were no longer seen as mechanisms for resolving elite conflict or for challenging the leadership; although such representatives of the opposition as Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky retained their membership, they were there by the grace of the leadership rather than a reflection of their personal standing in the party. Rather than fora for real debate

about leadership, plena became occasions for the leadership to force opponents to recant and to impose sanctions upon them.⁴⁶

The Norms of Leadership Politics

But of course central to the nature of collective leadership is the relationship that prevailed between the individuals. Although the dangers that had been presented by collectivization must have fuelled some doubts about Stalin's leadership among the elite similar to those held at lower levels of the party where policies actually had to be implemented, and reflected in the Syrtsov–Lominadze, Ryutin⁴⁷ and Smirnov–Eismont–Tolmachev affairs, the pressures for unity in the face of such challenge prevented any such doubts from taking a political form. This is especially so given the broader unease within party ranks about the way Stalin was perceived to have handled collectivization,⁴⁸ but in the face of such lower and middle-ranking disquiet,⁴⁹ the leadership remained united. The relationships among elite members seemed to remain cordial. Many of them continued to socialize together, including making extra efforts to draw Stalin in following the suicide of his wife in 1932, and there is no evidence that they were personally intimidated by Stalin. Debate remained vigorous, with some individuals opposing Stalin when they felt it necessary⁵⁰ and engaging in conflict with their colleagues, especially over issues related to the interests of their institutional constituencies; here Molotov's position as Sovnarkom Chair frequently brought him into conflict with his colleagues who wanted to loosen the state's purse strings, while his continuing rivalry with Kaganovich (to be Stalin's second in charge and possible successor) also continued to flavour elite relations. At times Stalin had to intervene to bring such conflict to an end, often seeking a compromise rather than simply imposing a resolution. But the disputes were usually conducted with a degree of civility that contrasted sharply with the sort of language directed at external enemies; there even emerged the practice of resolving particularly contentious issues in the absence of the person likely to most object, thereby enabling him to avoid the embarrassment of defeat,⁵¹ although this was obviously also a tactic to discuss questions and resolve issues without dissent.⁵² Some members even sought to get their way by threatening resignation.⁵³

Individual oligarchs enjoyed an often considerable degree of autonomy. Owing to their institutional affiliations, especially those who were also people's commissars, they usually had some bureaucratic

backing and, because of the more general oversight role exercised by the Politburo and the tradition that generally Politburo members did not interfere in the policy spheres of other members, they were able to conduct affairs within their own sphere of responsibility in significant measure without close supervision. They could structure the proposals that went to the Politburo largely as they wished, and thereby often could shape the way in which the debate was framed. This was especially important during those periods when Stalin was away and his involvement was exercised through letters mainly responding to the letters he was sent by the oligarchs remaining in Moscow. But they all recognized the primacy of Stalin,⁵⁴ often seeking to gain his preliminary support before bringing issues into the leadership milieu; even when Stalin was on vacation, Kaganovich sent highly detailed reports to Stalin about what went on in the Politburo and sought his guidance on these issues.⁵⁵ Stalin encouraged this as a way not just of keeping abreast of what his colleagues thought, but of consolidating the view of his indispensability.⁵⁶ As the exchanges of letters with colleagues while he was on vacation show, Stalin was forever giving advice on political and policy matters, and those colleagues were generally receptive to his words, even to the extent of reversing decisions already made in his absence.⁵⁷ However, as Kirov's reluctance to move to Moscow to become CC Secretary (which was decided at the XVII Congress in January 1934) shows, members of the elite could oppose Stalin's will and succeed. This was a collegial mode of decision-making in which, although he was the primary figure, Stalin was still concerned for the views and sensitivities of his colleagues.

From the defeat of the Right Opposition to the death of Kirov, oligarch politics took on a different form from that of the 1920s. The open faction fights with Stalin as a major protagonist were a thing of the past. There was conflict between individual oligarchs, often over resource allocation questions with individual figures representing the institutional interests they headed, with such conflict often being resolved by Stalin's personal intervention.⁵⁸ There were also struggles for influence between individual oligarchs, and in this loose factional groupings could form, but these did not include Stalin. Despite the fact that all oligarchs were avowed "Stalinists", some may have harboured reservations about his leadership, especially in the wake of agricultural collectivization. But they closed ranks against the welling up of discontent on the part of the lower level party officials who had to actually implement the policies of collectivization. These sorts of reservations reflect the fact that the oligarchs

were not purely creatures of Stalin; they remained significant figures in their own right. However, this was within a new context compared with the 1920s, of Stalin as predominant leader. This predominance is reflected in the emergence of the meetings in Stalin's office as a central decision-making arena, partly displacing the Politburo from this position. There was no real sense of members of the elite defending themselves from Stalin because there was little sign of overt threat from that direction, even though some were clearly closer to Stalin than others. What they sought to do was to manage the affairs of the institutions they led, act as politicians in getting measures they supported, adopted and strive for increased influence within elite circles, something which some such as Kaganovich saw in terms of currying favour with Stalin. So this remained a collective leadership, albeit with no major public policy differences or disagreements that caused Stalin to become involved in open polemics. Individual oligarchs acted as they saw fit, albeit within a context of a need generally not to upset the predominant leader.

THE LEADER DOMINANT AND INVOLVED, 1935–41

The period following the assassination of Leningrad party boss Sergei Kirov in December 1934 saw the transition of Stalin from a predominant to a dominant leader and thereby the recasting of the form of collective leadership and the norms of elite politics. The chief mechanism for this was increased uncertainty created for the rest of the leadership by the Terror, which reinforced the way in which their continued tenure was at Stalin's pleasure. This occurred against a background of a heightened search for hidden or internal enemies. This had always been a theme in party culture from the time of the revolution, but it gained a significant stimulus at the time of the *velikii perelom*. The opposition of the kulaks was evident for all to see, but through a series of trials—the Shakhty technical experts in April–May 1928, the Industrial Party in November–December 1930, the Mensheviks in March 1931 and the Metro-Vickers engineers in April 1933—added to the impression created by Stalin's "Dizzy with success" article that there were enemies hidden within the structures of Soviet society itself, the idea that the regime was beset on all sides by (hidden) enemies strengthened. That such problems extended into the party was suggested by the Syrtsov–Lominadze affair in 1930, the Ryutin affair of 1932 and the Smirnov–Eismont–Tolmachev affair in 1932–33. The party purge of 1933–34⁵⁹ followed by campaigns for

the Verification of Party Documents in 1935 and the Exchange of Party Cards in 1936 suggested that, at least in the minds of the leadership, the party was not immune from the presence of hidden enemies. In this context, the trial of the “Leningrad Counter-revolutionary Zinovievite Group” in the wake of the Kirov assassination, followed by the three Moscow show trials of 1936, 1937 and 1938 plus the Great Terror of 1937–38, the theme of hidden enemies was difficult to escape.⁶⁰

While the oligarchs were central to the development of this theme, individual members were also conscious of the potential personal implications it had for them.⁶¹ After all, the revival of charges against Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and Rykov, all of whom had been central members of the party’s ruling elite, implied that neither occupation of high office nor revolutionary reputation was a guarantee that charges would not be brought against someone, with the result that feelings of vulnerability became a general phenomenon among the oligarchs. The execution of Zinoviev and Kamenev in August 1936 following their trial, the first killing of leading oppositionists in the party’s history and a violent break with the earlier norm of the acceptance of opposition, would have reinforced such feelings of vulnerability. Stalin may have been a “loyal patron”,⁶² but a number of oligarchs disappeared at this time: among Politburo full members, Kirov was assassinated in December 1934, Kuibyshev died of a heart attack in January 1935, Ordzhonikidze committed suicide in February 1937 after a strong disagreement with Stalin,⁶³ Chubar and Kosior were arrested and shot; among candidate members, Rudzutak, Pavel Postyshev, Nikolai Yezhov and Robert Eikhe were arrested and shot, while Petrovsky was sacked but not arrested.⁶⁴ In addition, Avel Yenukidze, one of Stalin’s oldest friends who was in charge of administration and personnel in the Kremlin, was removed in early 1935.⁶⁵ Of these, only Kuibyshev died of natural causes. And some of those members of the oligarchy who survived, had subordinates or members of their family suffer: for example, Kaganovich’s brother committed suicide after being removed as commissar of the aviation industry and being accused of “counter-revolutionary activities” in 1941, Molotov’s wife was attacked in 1939,⁶⁶ Kalinin’s wife was arrested in 1938 (although he was no longer living with her) and Poskrebyshev’s wife was arrested in 1939.⁶⁷ All members experienced attacks upon and the removal of some of their secretaries and assistants, and none could prevent this.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Stalin continually sought to play individual members of the elite off against one another.

The Institutional Arena

Under these circumstances, it was clear to the oligarchs that their continued occupation of high office, not to mention their own very existence, was now subject to Stalin's will; the predominant leader had clearly become dominant. The institutional arenas of politics also now became more subject to the will of the leader,⁶⁹ reflecting the continued erosion of the norm of collective leadership being vested in leading party institutions. Politburo meetings became much rarer with proportionally more decisions made outside of formal sessions in specially-created commissions of the Politburo, by circulation, or in meetings held elsewhere (with decisions ratified either by circulation or in formal meetings) (Table 4.5).⁷⁰

The longer this period went on, the less important formal sessions of the Politburo became; in 1935, 3% of Politburo decisions were made in formal sessions, but by 1940 this had fallen to around 0.4%, the last year the Politburo formally met until 1945. After 1939, no decisions by circulation are listed in the sources, but it is unlikely that this mode of decision-making disappeared entirely.⁷¹ In 1937 two commissions of the Politburo were created, one for the economy and the other for external policy, and these may have largely displaced both the formal Politburo sessions and decision by circulation.⁷² But in effect these just formalized the small group meetings of colleagues that had been prevalent earlier, including in Stalin's office and elsewhere. Their enhanced importance is reflected in the increased numbers of decisions categorized as "Decisions of the Politburo". This category would also have included those instances when Stalin simply dictated a decision to his secretaries, which was then formally adopted.

Table 4.5 Politburo workload 1935–41

	<i>Number of sessions</i>	<i>Resolved in session</i>	<i>Average per session</i>	<i>Resolved by circulation</i>	<i>"Decisions of the Politburo"</i>	<i>Total decisions</i>
1935	16	105	7	3347	15	3467
1936	9	88	10	3279	0	3367
1937	7	23	3	1406	2169	3598
1938	5	15	3	460	1781	2256
1939	2	6	3	34	2727	2767
1940	2	13	7	0	3605	3618
1941	0	0	0	0	2637	2637

The data from Stalin's visitor's book does not allow us to count the number of meetings Stalin had in his office each year. We can, however, see the number of hours Stalin spent in such meetings, which should give us a sense of how large these bulked in his activities. The hours of meetings per year with Politburo members are as follows, with the earlier period as well for comparison (Table 4.6).⁷³

There is no clear pattern to these, although the levels of meetings in this period are generally higher than for the earlier (1930–34) period. Of course this does not exhaust the possibilities of meetings. Stalin also met with his colleagues at other venues: his dacha, at which he increasingly stayed after the death of his wife in 1932, in meeting rooms other than in formal sessions of the Politburo or some other body, in the corridors, at formal state dinners⁷⁴ and other social occasions, or in his colleagues' offices. There appear to be records of only few of these.⁷⁵ Nor are there records of meetings between Stalin's colleagues that did not include him, but these must clearly have been significant. As official meetings of the Politburo atrophied, the importance of these more informal meetings increased, but with the decisions often issued in the name of the Politburo.⁷⁶

The top five Politburo members and CC secretaries in terms of the hours spent each year in Stalin's office was as follows (Table 4.7).⁷⁷

A number of features of this table are important. The most striking factor is the continuing place of Molotov as Stalin's most frequent interlocutor. He was present far more often than anyone else, in some years more than twice as often as the second-placed figure, and was clearly Stalin's second-in-command. Voroshilov too was a constant, but

Table 4.6 Time spent in meetings in Stalin's office 1931–41

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total hours</i>	<i>Average hrs/week^a</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Total hours</i>	<i>Average hrs/week^a</i>
1931	407	9.5	1937	828	15.9
1932	478	12.2	1938	566	10.9
1933	589	14.2	1939	931	17.9
1934	501	13	1940	740	14.2
1935	398	9.9	1941	792	15.2
			(1/1–21/6)		
1936	343	8.3			

^aThis is the figure for Stalin's working week, i.e. excluding those weeks he was on holidays

Table 4.7 Main attendees at meetings in Stalin's office 1935 to 21 June 1941

	1	2	3	4	5
1935	Molotov	Kaganovich	Ordzhonikidze	Voroshilov	Yezhov
1936	Molotov	Voroshilov	Ordzhonikidze	Kaganovich	Yezhov
1937	Molotov	Yezhov	Voroshilov	Kaganovich	Zhdanov
1938	Molotov	Yezhov	Voroshilov	Kaganovich	Zhdanov
1939	Molotov	Voroshilov	Mikoyan	Kaganovich	Zhdanov
1940	Molotov	Voroshilov	Zhdanov	Beria	Mikoyan
1941	Molotov	Malenkov	Voroshilov	Zhdanov	Mikoyan

nowhere near at the level of Molotov. The second factor is the relative demise of Kaganovich. In 1931–34 he was the second longest visitor in Stalin's office, but in this period he clearly slipped, in 1940–41 not even appearing in the top five; indeed his move to become Peoples' Commissar of Transport in January 1935 may reflect Stalin's desire to weaken what had become a particularly powerful oligarch. He ceased to be one of Stalin's closest collaborators. Third, the rise to prominence of Yezhov,⁷⁸ and then his demise, reflecting his purge in early 1939. Fourth, the rise to prominence of new, younger members of the leading circle, Andrei Zhdanov and Georgii Malenkov, who had both been close to Stalin for some time before gaining formal Politburo membership. Fifth, all of those people with the exception of Zhdanov and Malenkov held simultaneous appointments in the state machine and therefore had strong policy responsibilities.⁷⁹

Throughout this period, the Soviet Union was being run by Stalin and a handful of his colleagues. While these were members of the Politburo and/or Secretariat, their involvement in Stalin's decision-making reflected their personal standing with the leader rather than their institutional position. There was some fluidity in membership of this group; according to Khlevniuk,⁸⁰ by 1937 the Politburo was totally dependent on Stalin and the country was being run by a group of "Five": Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Kaganovich and Yezhov, while in 1939 Yezhov was replaced by Mikoyan.⁸¹ This means there was effectively a two-tiered leadership system above the CC: an inner circle, the "Five", and an outer circle comprising the other Politburo members—from 1934 until March 1939: Andreev, Kalinin, Kosior (until 1938), Chubar (until June 1938), Ordzhonikidze (until February 1937),⁸² Petrovsky (until March 1939), Postyshev (until January

1938), Rudzutak (until May 1937), Eikhe (until April 1938), Nikita Khrushchev (from January 1938), Nikolai Shvernik and Lavrenty Beria (both from March 1939) and Nikolai Voznesensky, Malenkov and Aleksandr Shcherbakov (all from February 1941). All members interacted both with Stalin and among themselves, but the four members of the inner core interacted much more intensively with Stalin than the others. Indeed, of the fifteen people who composed the outer core over this period, six were purged (or committed suicide) and of the other nine, five (Khrushchev, Shvernik, Beria, Voznesensky and Shcherbakov) entered the group in the final stages of the period and when the worst of the Great Terror was over; Georgii Malenkov is the exception, having been in charge of the Secretariat department responsible for personnel since 1934. The main part of the outer core was therefore Andreev

Table 4.8 Leadership elected in March 1939^a

<i>Politburo full</i>	<i>Politburo candidate</i>	<i>Orgburo</i>	<i>Secretariat</i>
Andreev	Beria	Andreev	Andreev
Voroshilov	Shvernik	Zhdanov	Zhdanov
Zhdanov		Kaganovich	Malenkov
Kaganovich		Malenkov	Stalin
Kalinin		Mekhlis	
Mikoyan		Mikhailov	
Molotov		Stalin	
Stalin		Shvernik	
Khrushchev		Shcherbakov	

^aChanges before next Congress: Politburo: In: February 1941 Voznesensky, Malenkov and Shcherbakov as candidates; March 1946 Beria and Malenkov as full, Bulganin and Kosygin as candidate; February 1947 Voznesensky as full; February 1948 Bulganin as full; September 1948 Kosygin as full. Out: May 1945 Shcherbakov dies; June 1946 Kalinin dies; August 1948 Zhdanov dies; March 1949 Voznesensky dropped. Orgburo: In: March 1946 Aleksandrov, Andrianov, Bulganin, Zhdanov, A.A. Kuznetsov, V.V. Kuznetsov, Malenkov, Mekhlis, Mikhailov, Patolichev, Popov, Rodionov, Stalin, Suslov and Shatalin; March 1949 Chernousov. Out: May 1947 Patolichev removed; August 1948 Zhdanov dies; March 1949 A.A. Kuznetsov and Rodionov. Secretariat: In: May 1941 Shcherbakov; March 1946 Zhdanov, A.A. Kuznetsov, Malenkov, Popov, Stalin; May 1946 Patolichev; May 1947 Suslov; July 1948 Malenkov and Ponomarenko; December 1949 Khrushchev. Out: May 1946 Malenkov; May 1947 Patolichev; August 1948 Zhdanov dies; January 1949 A.A. Kuznetsov; December 1949 Popov

and Kalinin, plus Mikoyan before he entered the inner core. And Stalin ensured that close associates remained in control of the Orgburo and Secretariat as well as the personnel mechanism that gave him the power of appointment and dismissal; the head of the Organization-Instruction Department 1930–34 was Yezhov, while from 1934–46 its successors the Leading Party Organs Department (1934–39) and the Cadres Department (from 1939) were run by Malenkov.⁸³ Through the Special Sector, which continued to be headed by Poskrebyshev, Stalin also retained direct supervision over the security apparatus,⁸⁴ and this apparatus continued its oversight of party officials.

Following the XVIII Congress in March 1939, the party leadership comprised the following members (Table 4.8).

While the size of the elite overall had fallen compared with 1934, the weight of the organizational wing in the Politburo had increased.⁸⁵ Stalin was the only person to retain his position on all three bodies, although his lack of attendance at meetings of the Orgburo and Secretariat means that this was primarily symbolic; he could rely on his supporters. All four secretaries remained on the Orgburo, but only three were on the Politburo. Representatives of the state machine remained prominent in the Politburo.⁸⁶

The leadership elected in 1939 was the first renewal of the elite since the purges of the mid-late 1930s. The impact of this on the elite is shown in Table 4.9.

The 1939 Politburo had only two completely new members compared with 1934 Khrushchev and Beria, although Zhdanov, Mikoyan and Shvernik were all promoted from either candidate status or the Orgburo. In the Orgburo, only four (out of 12) retained their spots from 1934 alongside five new members, while in the Secretariat two new members joined the two (of seven) who retained their seats. Attrition levels were lowest among full members of the Politburo and the Secretariat, perhaps reflecting the increasing importance of the latter compared with the Orgburo. But the important point here is that the nucleus of the leadership that existed in 1934 was carried forward into 1939 (compare Tables 4.1 and 4.8).

Norms of Leadership Politics

Given the vulnerability members of both the inner and outer cores must have felt, it would be logical to assume that they feared Stalin and were

Table 4.9 Leadership turnover 1934–39

	<i>% not carried forward from 1934</i>	<i>% new in 1939</i>
Politburo full	40	33
Politburo candidate	80	100
Orgburo	66	55
Secretariat	25	50
Overall	58	40

unwilling to gainsay him. This is certainly the image Khrushchev conjured up in his Secret Speech of 1956,⁸⁷ and others have claimed that no one was willing to contradict Stalin.⁸⁸ But the picture is much more nuanced than this. Throughout this period, Stalin could have resolved whatever issues he wanted to resolve in whatever way he wished. His position and authority were sufficient that his leadership colleagues would have been likely to accept what he decided even had the fear element not been present. The introduction of the emergency measures immediately after Kirov's assassination was an instance of this; they were introduced unilaterally by Stalin and adopted by the Politburo without discussion two days later.⁸⁹ By 1936, often when Stalin decided something, it was accepted as a decision of the Politburo.⁹⁰ But this does not mean that the oligarchs always accepted such a decision without discussing, and even arguing about, it.⁹¹ Nor does it mean that there were not significant areas of decision-making which Stalin did not have personal involvement in and which were dominated by other oligarchs. Stalin's leadership colleagues were all men of substance within the party, some with distinguished revolutionary careers of their own and all with a substantial history of service to the party and Soviet state. None was a shrinking violet, and all were possessed of the sort of self-confidence essential to survive in such a regime. When they brought issues before the "Five" or whatever collective was relevant at the time, they usually came with a particular outcome in mind. They would present the question and the proposed outcome and would argue for it, usually with a wary eye on Stalin's reaction.⁹² But what was essential was that the discussion was framed in terms that did not call into question Stalin's authority. Those who did question his authority suffered the consequences. Those who discussed issues of policy without seeming to challenge Stalin and his authority, as Molotov⁹³ and other members of the

Five at times did, survived. And sometimes oligarchs combined together to seek common ends, even when these were at odds with Stalin's wishes.⁹⁴ Differences over policy did not inevitably equate to a desire to remove the leader, and Stalin's colleagues took care to ensure that this connection did not emerge.

Nevertheless, there was a changed relationship among the oligarchs from 1935, as reflected in the Stalin–Kaganovich correspondence. Politburo members were more reticent about asserting their rights as independent political actors, Stalin's letters became "more laconic and imperative, and Kaganovich's replies less independent and more flattering".⁹⁵ In institutional terms, Stalin's primacy was consolidated in 1941 with his adding the post of Sovnarkon Chairman (with Molotov remaining deputy chairman and foreign minister; this appointment made Molotov formally subordinate to Voznesensky, who was first deputy chairman) to the CC secretaryship. Stalin now combined leadership of both state and party. The Terror had a two-fold effect on this relationship between Stalin and the oligarchs: The demise of some members of the Politburo emphasized the vulnerability of all before Stalin's will, while the destruction of the CC membership and the purges in the state apparatus destroyed many of the supportive networks that the oligarchs had formerly enjoyed.

However, it is also important to note that the members of the leadership, both inner and outer core, still possessed significant autonomy within their own spheres. Although Stalin kept files of compromising material on his colleagues,⁹⁶ and since the Kirov assassination the bodyguards assigned to each Politburo member reported on that person's movements (they could, for example, report on who met whom but remained ignorant of what transpired in such meetings) through the head of the NKVD to Stalin,⁹⁷ his control and oversight was limited. Stalin could not be abreast of all the areas of work within which his colleagues were engaged and there were therefore limits to the extent to which he could direct affairs in their bailiwicks, especially given the close attention to detail he paid in those areas in which he took an interest, with no matter too small to escape his attention.⁹⁸ Much of the policy discussion that went on at the top of the Soviet regime would not even have involved Stalin, comprising as it did the continuing jockeying for position and resources on the part of the people's commissariats.⁹⁹ It would have occurred between the individual oligarchs and their subordinates and among the oligarchs, although sometimes Stalin was called

upon to adjudicate.¹⁰⁰ Certainly, they frequently sought Stalin's advice on issues and ultimately took it, but Stalin left them significant room to manage their own bureaucratic fiefdoms. By the same token, Stalin sought out the advice of his colleagues and frequently acted upon it. The practice identified by Bazhanov in the 1920s of Stalin speaking last in Politburo meetings, and therefore taking in the advice of his colleagues, seems still to have applied in this period.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, Stalin seems to have concentrated his attention on specific policy spheres—foreign policy, security and the military—and was involved in other areas on a more irregular, idiosyncratic, basis, often not reading the documents that were sent to him.¹⁰² During this period, Stalin's practice of taking three month holidays was moderated; he took no holidays in 1937–41, reflecting the importance of what was happening at this time, so he was around much more in Moscow to take part in the decision-making process. But in 1935 and 1936 when he did take holidays, and when Molotov and Kaganovich were in charge, Kaganovich continually sought Stalin's approval even for minor matters.¹⁰³

There was one area in which the oligarchs did not have any independence: protecting their clients or families from the activities of the NKVD.¹⁰⁴ Although Yenukidze's friends (principally Kalinin and Ordzhonikidze) in the Politburo appear to have been able to moderate the effect of the actions against him in early 1935,¹⁰⁵ a few years later they were unable to save their colleagues and friends who fell foul of the police, as Ordzhonikidze and Mikoyan among others found.¹⁰⁶ There is no evidence of the Politburo making a concerted attempt to stop the course on which Stalin was embarked even though they may have got some support from within the CC; they were more intent on ingratiating themselves with him than opposing him.¹⁰⁷

The erosion of the position of the Politburo was matched by that of the CC. This met neither on a regular basis—there were only 13 plena between February 1935 and February 1941 (excluding those surrounding the XVI Congress in 1939)—nor for a standard period of time, being called into session when it was felt necessary. Some important issues were discussed at these plena, but these seem to have been mainly of an economic nature. However, the Terror, and before it the campaign for the Verification of Party Documents, were discussed at some of the plena.¹⁰⁸ While these meetings were not characterized by the sort of vigorous exchange of different views as in the 1920s, it is clear that the oligarchs were aware that there were significant reservations among CC members

about the course of policy.¹⁰⁹ There was no widespread support within the CC for the former opposition leaders whose fates were discussed in December 1936 and February–March 1937 (Bukharin was allowed to address the plenum and received a hostile reception; the plenum expelled him from the party)¹¹⁰; the oligarchs remained united in their condemnation and the members of the CC supported them in this. But as the criticism of lower level laxness in combating enemies within the party plus the criticisms by regional leaders at the February–March 1937 plenum show, many party leaders at all levels had real reservations about Stalin's policies and dragged their feet in carrying them out. The reservations that this sort of action reflects are also likely to have been made known to individual oligarchs by their supporters at lower levels. But what this means is that the members of this leading political organ (the CC) could show their opposition to oligarch action only through their own actions at the local level and maybe by talking to their patrons privately, outside the halls of the plenum. The CC as a body was no longer either a court of appeal for the oligarchs or, at least in its plenary session, a vehicle for the exercise of lower level opinion. Nevertheless, the lack of trust in the CC is reflected in the fact that only 17.3% of its membership in 1934 was re-elected in 1939; this was a substantially new body, with post-revolutionary members in the majority.¹¹¹

So leadership and decision-making remained collective in nature, including the major decisions concerning the Great Terror,¹¹² but was less tied to the party's official organs and was dominated by Stalin. Also the nature and size of the collective had changed. It was more fluid, but also smaller, more informal and more dominated by Stalin. The only congress held during this period, the XVIII in 1939, was purely laudatory with no hint of opposition and the scene of much obsequious praise of Stalin,¹¹³ while among CC members there had been some disquiet about the Terror before that body was almost totally renewed in 1939, with 82.7% of the 1934 membership not there in 1939. And Stalin's authority had expanded; should he decide to, he could have ignored the views of his colleagues. But in most cases, he chose not to, involving them (especially the inner core) in the decision-making process and leaving large areas of policy concern entirely at their disposal; he did not seek to make every decision himself, meaning his colleagues continued to play a significant role in decision-making. The oligarchs were kept on edge by actions against their relatives and the fate of some of their colleagues, while the admission of younger people into the oligarchy—Zhdanov,

Malenkov, Khrushchev and later Voznesensky¹¹⁴—and the high profile some of them gained posed an implicit threat. And Stalin frequently sought to sow fear by implicitly threatening his colleagues.¹¹⁵ In addition, for the newer members, the norms of the leadership into which they had been ushered were changed; the oligarchical system that had emerged in the 1920s and been shaped by the predominant leader in the first half of the 1930s had now been replaced by an oligarchy within which a dominant leader exercised overweening power. For the newcomers, this was the norm.

In the second half of the 1930s, the dynamic of elite politics changed fundamentally as the members of the elite became totally dependent upon Stalin. Although they retained some room for autonomous action by virtue of the institutional resources they controlled individually, the unrolling of the Terror and the demise of some members of the elite emphasized their vulnerability. Under such circumstances, and with Stalin playing an active part in decision-making and exercising control over the security apparatus, there was little these people could do to protect themselves. While they continued to defend their institutional interests and to give voice to policy positions, and to seek to curry favour with Stalin, they took care not to arouse Stalin's suspicions. There seems to have been little overt opposition to the Terror,¹¹⁶ which had it been ended would have alleviated some of their sense of vulnerability, and no move against Stalin in any form. This appears somewhat paradoxical in that the removal of Stalin could have been seen as a means of removing their vulnerability. However, his authority within the party was already immense and would probably have given pause to any conspiracy against him, while his control over both the party and security apparatuses constituted a major barrier to any planning of a coup. And given that such a measure would have needed to be a collective effort, the prisoner's dilemma probably came into play. The best the members of the elite could hope for was to continue carrying out their roles, remain unobjectionable and cooperate insofar as possible to protect them all.

DOMINANT LEADER WITHIN THE COLLECTIVE, 1941–45

The outbreak of the war poses a puzzle regarding Stalin and his role in the leadership. According to his visitor's book,¹¹⁷ the week immediately after the German invasion was full of meetings (there were no visitors logged for 29 and 30 June) (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10 Meetings in Stalin's office during the first week of the war

<i>Date</i>	<i>No of visitors</i>	<i>Time of entry of 1st and exit of last visitor</i>	<i>Total hours of meetings</i>	<i>Comment</i>
22/6	29	5.45–16.45	11	
23/6	21	3.20–6.25 18.45–1.25	9.45	Twelve hours in the middle of the day with no visitors
24/6	20	16.20–21.30	5.10	Visitors only in the afternoon
25/6	29	1.00–5.50 19.40–1.00	10.10	Fourteen hours in the middle of the day with no visitors
26/6	28	12.10–23.20	11.10	No visitors in the morning
27/6	30	16.30–1.30	9.0	No visitors in the morning
28/6	21	19.35–0.50	5.15	No visitors in the morning

This is much heavier traffic of visitors than was normal and is not consistent with the view that Stalin suffered some sort of collapse on the Nazi invasion.¹¹⁸ According to Mikoyan's somewhat contradictory account,¹¹⁹ Stalin played a full part in the re-organization of the top military organs the day after the invasion. But at the same time, he says that Stalin was "in a depressed state", was not interested in anything and would not take any initiative. He says that in Stalin's absence (he was at his dacha), at a meeting involving Molotov, Malenkov, Voroshilov, Beria, Mikoyan and Voznesensky, on Beria's proposal they decided to create the State Defence Committee (GKO) to run the war effort. Mikoyan also reports that Voznesensky urged Molotov to take up the leadership, which Molotov refused. The group then travelled to Stalin's dacha where, upon entry, it was Mikoyan's view that Stalin thought they may have come to arrest him. When they instead said that they were establishing the GKO and wanted him to lead it, he revived and reverted to his former self.¹²⁰ The formal establishment of the GKO, comprising Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Malenkov and Beria, was announced on 1 July; Malenkov and Beria were only candidate members of the Politburo, showing how much that body had slipped.¹²¹

This image of a Stalin depressed and withdrawn does not sit well with the busyness reflected in his visitor's schedule in the first week after the invasion, even if the events Mikoyan recounts took place on the two days (29 and 30 June) when there were no visitors listed. Nevertheless, the fact that it was Molotov who addressed the Soviet people on 22 June rather than Stalin does suggest that Stalin had taken something of a step back. He was clearly affected by the attack and the early Soviet losses, and this may have taken some of the confidence out of him. In any event the outbreak of the war, which posed such a major threat to the country as a whole, could have helped to limit the sense of threat that the oligarchy and the broader elite had experienced during the Great Terror. The winding down of the Terror in 1939 and the removal of the person seen as its major exponent (Yezhov), combined with the seriousness of the threat posed by the war, seems to have given a greater sense of security to the oligarchs, so much so that Mikoyan writes of the first three years of the war that the operations of the oligarchy were characterized by real unity and an excellent, comradely attitude.¹²²

Although the GKO was formally the principal institution for running the war effort (the Politburo seems not to have held any meetings in 1941–44 and only one in 1945¹²³), in practice things were still run by Stalin and a handful of his colleagues, meeting mainly in his office. According to Mikoyan,¹²⁴ issues were usually decided at a meeting held without an agenda late in the day or the evening. He describes these meetings as involving himself, Malenkov, Voznesensky, Molotov and Voroshilov plus Stalin; those who had to present reports were either also present in the room or waited next door. Mikoyan's memory does not match the data from Stalin's visitors' book about who he saw most often (Table 4.11).¹²⁵

Table 4.11 Main attendees at meetings in Stalin's office 1941–45

1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Molotov	Malenkov	Molotov	Molotov	Molotov
Malenkov	Molotov	Malenkov	Malenkov	Malenkov
Beria	Beria	Beria	Antonov	Beria
Voroshilov	Vasil'evsky	Antonov	Beria	Shtemenko
Mikoyan	Voroshilov	Voroshilov	Shcherbakov	Bulganin

Molotov, Malenkov and Beria stand out as Stalin's most frequent interlocutors.

According to Mikoyan, in most meetings, Stalin was understanding, judicious and tolerant even when he disagreed with other speakers. He accepted their views as advisory and meant to help him reach the best decision, and he often changed his personal view as a result of this advice. In most cases, Stalin worked strictly according to the facts, at least after the initial stages of the war, and was not capricious or arbitrary. He had faith in the judgement of his colleagues. This image of a collective process of decision-making is confirmed in the reports of some people like Zhukov who attended some of these meetings.¹²⁶ Stalin was also fully involved in the discussion of military issues, with the military leaders frequently being called upon to report and advise him on this. After the initial setbacks, he generally took their advice.

But this picture of a collegially working group should not obscure the tensions that were present. All of the leaders enjoyed increased scope for autonomous action given the demands of winning the war, and this meant that there was more scope for them to rub up against each other. Kaganovich was absent from Moscow for much of the war, first moving to Kuibyshev with the government and then going to the front after being removed as people's commissar, and he clearly chafed at this.¹²⁷ Beria worked to undermine the dominance Voznesensky exercised in the economy and the role of Molotov in the production of tanks,¹²⁸ while along with Malenkov his relationship with Zhdanov remained one of rivalry and competition.¹²⁹ Voroshilov's status had been dealt a heavy blow by Soviet failures in the Finnish War,¹³⁰ and he seems effectively to have been marginal to elite decision-making even before being dropped from GKO in 1944.

When the tide turned in the war, so too did the dynamics of decision-making change. Stalin became more capricious and less appreciative of advice, especially when it contradicted his opinion.¹³¹ The increased arbitrariness is also reflected in the decline in the length of meetings in Stalin's office (Table 4.12).

Table 4.12 Average hours per week of meetings in Stalin's office 1941–45

<i>1941</i>	<i>1942</i>	<i>1943</i>	<i>1944</i>	<i>1945</i>
15.2	19.4	12.9	9.1	8.5

The Five, now said to be Stalin, Molotov, Malenkov, Mikoyan and Beria, were still at the heart of the decision-making process, and they along with their leadership colleagues, still enjoyed significant operational autonomy in their areas of responsibility, but they were increasingly subject to Stalin's autocratic intervention and demands for immediate action.¹³² This was a foretaste of what was to come after the war.

Thus during the war, at least until around 1944, elite members regained a more substantial role in decision-making. The vulnerability of the Terror was gone as everything was subsumed in the transcendent struggle to win the war. Clearly, tensions did remain within the elite as individuals jockeyed for position and influence, but politics no longer seemed to be life-threatening. Elite members enjoyed significant autonomy within the spheres of their institutional constituencies. However, when the tide of war turned, and Stalin's suspicions and capriciousness increased, this autonomy was compromised and a veiled sense of threat returned. But there was little the oligarchs could do about this except to keep at their work and hope not to arouse Stalin's ire or suspicion.

DOMINANT, BUT DISTANT, 1945–53

After the end of the war, the elite, like the country as a whole, felt the need for a release of the pressure under which they all had been working. However, this was not to be. Two distinct but related processes shaped oligarch dynamics at this time. The first was the question of succession, not only with regard to Stalin but to the elite as a whole. It is clear that as Stalin got older, his capacity for work decreased.¹³³ This is clear not just in the memoir literature and in the reduction of visitors to Stalin's office,¹³⁴ but also in the length of the meetings that did take place in his office (Table 4.13).

It is also evident in the length of the holidays he took (Table 4.14).

The previous highest number of days Stalin had taken on holidays was 94 and 90 in 1934 and 1932, respectively, so he was clearly out of direct

Table 4.13 Average hours per week of meetings in Stalin's office 1945–52

1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952
8.5	8.0	9.2	8.0	6.0	3.8	3.1	1.9

This is the figure for Stalin's working week, i.e. when he was not on holidays

control of events for much longer periods each year than had earlier been the practice. Of course with the establishment of more secure telephone lines between Moscow and the south, he was able to keep up with developments in the capital much easier than when he had to rely on letters or emissaries, but this was still the direction of affairs from afar. Stalin's reduced workload gave greater scope for autonomy on the part of his colleagues (although see below), and it enhanced the space for manoeuvring over the succession. There was a partial revival of the Politburo with it formally meeting on a number of occasions, but it was busiest in terms of "Decisions of the Politburo", thereby continuing the war-time trend (Table 4.15).

Central to the issue of succession was the threat that was posed to the older members of the leadership by Stalin's increasing distrust of his colleagues and the promotion of younger members. Stalin's longtime associates remained within the oligarchy: Molotov, Andreev, Voroshilov, Kaganovich and Mikoyan remained members of the circle around Stalin.¹³⁵ However, these were now outnumbered by newer members of the elite, who owed their careers to Stalin in a much more complete

Table 4.14 Stalin's holidays 1945–52 (in days)^a

<i>Year</i>	<i>Days</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Days</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Days</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Days</i>
1945	70	1946	104	1947	104	1948	90
1949	99	1950	143	1951	154	1952	101

^aWheatcroft (2004), p. 92

Table 4.15 Politburo workload 1945–October 1952^a

	<i>Number of sessions</i>	<i>Resolved in sessions</i>	<i>Average per session</i>	<i>Resolved by circulation</i>	<i>"Decisions of the Politburo"</i>	<i>Total decisions</i>
1945	1	6	6	0	959	965
1946	6	22	4	0	1105	1127
1947	1	3	3	0	1020	1023
1948	0	0	0	0	1141	1141
1949	1	3	3	0	2403	2406
1950	0	0	0	0	3012	3012
1951	0	0	0	0	3265	3265
1952	0	0	0	0	1786	1786

^aBased on Adibekov et al., Tom III (2001). Also see Wheatcroft

fashion than did the old guard. Malenkov, Khrushchev, Beria, Zhdanov, Voznesensky and Shvernik had come into some prominence before the war, but were of a different generation to Molotov et al. Promoted during and after the war were Shcherbakov, Nikolai Bulganin and Aleksei Kosygin. These second two groups, and especially the former, seemed to pose a threat to the prospects for succession by the older group. Generational shift was also evident in the replacement of the “five” by a post-war “seven” comprising Stalin, Molotov, Mikoyan, Beria, Zhdanov, Malenkov and Voznesensky.¹³⁶ This threat was given substance by the change introduced at the Congress in October 1952. At this congress, the Politburo was abolished and replaced by a Presidium comprising 25 full members and 11 candidate members see Table 4.16). Of the old guard, only Andreev was not a member of the new body. Apart from the other four (i.e. Kaganovich, Molotov, Mikoyan and Voroshilov) plus

Table 4.16 Leadership elected in October 1952

<i>Presidium full</i>	<i>Presidium candidate</i>	<i>Secretariat</i>
Andrianov	Brezhnev	Aristov
Aristov	Vyshinsky	Brezhnev
Beria	Zverev	Ignatov
Bulganin	Ignatov	Malenkov
Voroshilov	Kabanov	Mikhailov
Ignat'ev	Kosygin	Pegov
Kaganovich	Patolichev	Ponomarenko
Korotchenko	Pegov	Stalin
Kuznetsov	Puzanov	Suslov
Kuusinen	Tevosyan	Khrushchev
Malenkov	Yudin	
Malyshev		
Mel'nikov		
Mikoyan		
Mikhailov		
Molotov		
Pervukhin		
Ponomarenko		
Saburov		
Stalin		
Suslov		
Khrushchev		
Chesnokov		
Shvernik		
Shkiriakov		

Stalin, all of the others were newer, younger appointees.¹³⁷ A smaller Bureau was also named, comprising Stalin, Khrushchev, Malenkov, Beria, Bulganin, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Maxim Saburov and Mikhail Pervukhin. The Orgburo was abolished and the Secretariat experienced similar change to the Politburo: to the five existing secretaries—Stalin, Khrushchev, Malenkov, Mikhail Suslov and Panteleimon Ponomarenko—were added Averkii Aristov, Nikolai Mikhailov, Nikolai Ignatov, Leonid Brezhnev and Nikolai Pegov.¹³⁸ All CC Secretaries were members of the Politburo. The weight of state representation was slightly reduced, but remained substantial.¹³⁹ The intention was clear: The new generation was to displace the older generation within the foreseeable future.¹⁴⁰ This was also reflected in the most frequent visitors to the meetings in Stalin's office (see Table 4.17).

As well as the pending succession issue, the oligarchs were unsettled in the post-war period by Stalin's treatment of them and by a succession of campaigns searching for enemies which, in an eerie echo of the early 1930s, appeared to be building towards a full-scale purge. As noted above, Stalin's demeanour had changed around 1944, becoming more capricious and less trusting of his colleagues, more suspicious and inclined to see threats to his power in the actions of those colleagues when no such threat existed. This may reflect his conviction that his control was slipping and marked an attempt to restrict their autonomy and to restore the sort of dominance he had attained at the end of the 1930s. This continued in the post-war period, reflected most clearly in the bouts of criticism he directed at his colleagues.¹⁴¹ In 1945 Voroshilov came under criticism for decisions he had made regarding the situation in Hungary, in 1945–46, Molotov was criticized for mistakes in foreign policy, in 1946 criticism was directed at Mikoyan for the famine, Malenkov for the quality of fighter planes (he was also removed from the Secretariat) and Beria by proxy through criticism of his client, Minister of State Security Vsevolod Merkulov. In 1947 Khrushchev was replaced as First Secretary of the Ukrainian party. In 1948–49 Molotov was again criticized for foreign policy mistakes, and his wife was criticized for her links to Jewish figures, and ultimately arrested and sent into exile. Molotov was removed as Foreign Minister and Mikoyan as Foreign Trade Minister in March 1949. In 1951 Khrushchev was criticized for his position on agrotowns, Bulganin for shortcomings in the production of a particular type of anti-aircraft gun and in 1952 Molotov

Table 4.17 Main attendees at meetings in Stalin's office 1946–53

	1	2	3	4	5
1946	Molotov	Beria	Malenkov	Mikoyan	Zhdanov
1947	Molotov	Voznesensky	Beria	Malenkov	Mikoyan
1948	Molotov	Beria	Mikoyan	Malenkov	Voznesensky
1949	Malenkov	Bulganin	Beria	Mikoyan	Molotov
1950	Malenkov	Molotov	Beria	Mikoyan	Bulganin
1951	Malenkov	Beria	Molotov	Khrushchev	Kaganovich
1952	Malenkov	Molotov	Bulganin	Beria	Mikoyan
1953	Malenkov	Beria	Bulganin	Khrushchev	Vasil'evsky

and Mikoyan were again criticized for earlier mistakes. In practical terms, these criticisms by Stalin had little effect; no one was killed, and although Molotov, Mikoyan and Khrushchev all lost official positions, Khrushchev was reinstated within the year and Molotov and Mikoyan continued to play leading roles despite their downgrading. But such criticism did accentuate the vulnerability of the oligarchs. The criticism seemed designed to reinforce in the minds of the oligarchs the ultimate supremacy of Stalin and their continued vulnerability to his will. The expulsion from the party, arrest and exile of Molotov's wife Polina Zhemchuzhina, and the pressure brought to bear on Molotov to support this, suggests that an aim was also to convey the message that their highest loyalty was to Stalin. But even if the practical effects of the criticism were limited, it is difficult to underestimate the unsettling effects this would have had on the oligarchs.

Also unsettling would have been the series of campaigns Stalin launched during this period. As campaigns swept the country embracing nationalists in the Caucasus region (especially the Mingrelians; Beria was a Mingrelian), art and literature, Jews, the Leningrad apparatus, the security services and doctors, it was unclear which categories of people might be vulnerable. Certainly, the oligarchy could not rest secure. Voznesensky was arrested in 1949 and shot as part of the Leningrad and Gosplan affairs (as was CC Secretary Aleksei Kuznetsov).¹⁴² At the XIX Congress in October 1952, both Molotov and Mikoyan were criticized by Stalin and accused of various sins openly before the party as a whole (some of the other criticisms had been contained within the oligarchy) and both were omitted from the new Bureau of the Presidium announced by Stalin,¹⁴³ while Kaganovich was reported to have said that he never

felt secure given the outbreak of the Doctors' Plot and its anti-semitic character.¹⁴⁴ Beria seemed to be threatened by the Mingrelian Affair,¹⁴⁵ the Doctors' Plot¹⁴⁶ (because of perceived lack of vigilance) and by the promotion of Viktor Abakumov to head the Ministry of State Security (MGB) in 1946. And as noted above, in 1949 Zhemchuzina was arrested. There was considerable uncertainty within the elite in this last period of Stalin's life, and a real sense of vulnerability, fuelled by the belief that their phones were bugged and they were being reported on back to Stalin.¹⁴⁷ How did this affect the nature of collective leadership?

Institutional Contours

In terms of institutional arenas, full meetings of the Politburo¹⁴⁸ were rare; the Politburo met on six occasions in 1946, one in 1947, one in 1949, and none in 1948, 1950 and 1951.¹⁴⁹ The replacement for the Politburo, the Presidium and its Buro was more active. The full Presidium met on 18 October and 1–4 December 1952, while the Buro met once in October, twice in November, three times in December, once in January 1953 and five times in March on the eve of Stalin's death.¹⁵⁰ The increasing number of decisions attributed to the Politburo over the post-war period may reflect an attempt to strengthen the party structure vis-à-vis the state,¹⁵¹ which had become dominant during the war.¹⁵² The large number of decisions emanating under the Politburo's name (which ranged from an average of around 21 per week in 1946–47 to more than 50 per week in 1951; the average was even higher in the two months before Stalin's death) reflects decisions made in informal meetings of leaders, in the Orgburo and Secretariat, and perhaps in some cases by circulation, although this is not clear. In the two formal Presidium meetings, there were, respectively, nine and six agenda items; in the Buro, with the exception of the meetings held in the shadow of Stalin's death, the number of items ranged from three to twelve, numbers which were within the competence of a meeting to deal with. The Politburo remained totally within Stalin's organizational control.¹⁵³ The identity of the most frequent participants in the meetings in Stalin's office also changed (1 is most frequent).¹⁵⁴

This pattern clearly reflects the emergence of Malenkov, who effectively became Stalin's preferred successor,¹⁵⁵ and to a lesser extent Beria, as Stalin's chief interlocutor, but what is also striking is that

especially Molotov but also Mikoyan retained their places in Stalin's inner circle despite his criticism and apparent personal rejection of them. Kaganovich, who had fallen into disfavour in 1941, generally remained out of favour but not dismissed from the oligarchy¹⁵⁶; he remained a full member of the Politburo throughout and was named to the new Bureau in 1952. Although this grouping¹⁵⁷ remains a mix of the old and the newer, the balance (which Stalin appears to have been intent on retaining) was clearly shifting in favour of the latter. This would have been even further the case had Zhdanov not died of a heart attack in 1948 and Voznesensky not been purged in 1949. It was this group that constituted the core of the so-called "quintets", "sextets", "septets", etc., referred to by Khrushchev, and they were given a degree of official standing by a decision to call them "commissions" of the Politburo.¹⁵⁸ Most important was the Commission on External Affairs established in December 1945, which ten months later had its provenance widened to include matters of internal construction and domestic policy.¹⁵⁹ This seemed to vest the power of ultimate decision-making formally in these essentially informal meetings. This informality is reflected in Khrushchev's assertion that there were "no real" Politburo sessions; there were "simply episodic gatherings, held literally on the run, before dinner, although the questions decided there included both routine matters and major questions".¹⁶⁰

Another site of elite interaction of which we have a particularly vivid description is the meetings that took place late in the evening at Stalin's dacha, usually following a film show in the Kremlin.¹⁶¹ For an elite, social occasions are often opportunities to get some work done, and such events were no exception. Given the frequency with which they seem to have occurred at this time, they were clearly an arena within which political issues and questions of the day would have been discussed; Khrushchev refers to the way they would "watch movies and come to dinner, the dinners that actually took the place of meetings where governmental matters were discussed".¹⁶² When decisions were made in this forum, and in Stalin's office, they were generally presented as decisions of the Politburo, and often circulated to the other members of the Politburo for their assent. At the least, they alert us to the probability that significant interaction occurred in informal gatherings, both with Stalin present and when he was absent.

But while Stalin's office and dacha may have remained major sites of decision-making, most of the Soviet leaders also held leading positions in the state machine; seven of the nine members (who were mainly Stalin's intimates) of the smaller Bureau established in 1952 held government positions, with only Stalin and Khrushchev not holding such posts. This shift of emphasis from party to state had been going on since during the war, but the fact that it was maintained in peace-time seems to suggest that Stalin was content with this way of running the country, with the party as an appendage rather than the chief instrument.¹⁶³ Its effect in the short term was to shift much of the policy-making discussion, especially on economic issues, into state bodies, thereby aligning policy discussion and implementation in a far more direct way than before. It also seemed to emphasize the need for the leaders to work together while at the same time creating a situation in which they were automatically cast as the defenders of institutional interests. Bureaucratic politics was intrinsically part of their job description.¹⁶⁴ Stalin was not active in the leading state bodies (although he could intervene whenever he wished), and it is perhaps in part a function of this that state bodies operated with more regularity and routine than did those of the party.¹⁶⁵ But how did elite members conduct themselves, and how were decisions made, in this environment of an apparently increasingly arbitrary leader who spent a lot of the time away from Moscow?¹⁶⁶

The decline in Stalin's personal capacity for work added to his increased absence on holiday means that the meetings between the other oligarchs became even more important. In Stalin's last years the "septet" of Molotov, Malenkov, Mikoyan, Kaganovich, Beria, Bulganin and Khrushchev met regularly as a collective body with genuine debate and recording of decisions.¹⁶⁷ Such meetings would have discussed a wide range of issues, but all decisions were subject to Stalin's approval. Stalin frequently gave directions to his colleagues and overturned decisions they had made that he did not like.¹⁶⁸ Stalin thus sought to exercise control from afar, something facilitated by the fact that many such meetings continued to be supported administratively by the departments of the CC Secretariat (mainly the Special Sector then the General Department) that were still dominated by Stalin's people, mainly Poskrebyshev until 1952.¹⁶⁹ This gave him an avenue independent of the oligarchs to keep an eye on what transpired at these meetings. Despite this restriction on their autonomy, the oligarchs clearly played an important role in policy-making at this time. And this helped them to prepare for the coming Stalin succession.

The Norms of Leadership Politics

Issues had to be resolved and decisions made regardless of whether Stalin was in Moscow or not. Stalin's authority was now such that he could decide whatever he chose to decide and, generally, the others acceded to his will. According to Mikoyan,¹⁷⁰ everything had to be approved by Stalin, with all proposals sent to him for his approval. But Stalin had become increasingly capricious and driven by odd ideas.¹⁷¹ Sometimes Stalin would read a document, but sometimes he would simply sign it without reading it.¹⁷² When he was away, the other oligarchs clearly had more room for individual initiative, although they were always cognizant of the possibility that he would suspect them of plotting if they did not appear completely open with him. When he was present, despite Mikoyan's presentation of himself as standing up to and contradicting Stalin on occasion, in most cases the oligarchs seem to have bowed to his will.¹⁷³ For example, Mikoyan reports that although no one supported Stalin's views on the future of the sovkhozy in 1948, he was the only one to speak up against it; the others remained silent.¹⁷⁴ And the immediately unanimous decision to end the Doctors' Plot when Stalin died suggests that while the oligarchs did not oppose it while Stalin lived, nor did they positively support it. But although Stalin was in this dominant position, he did not always ignore the views of his colleagues, sometimes moderating his position or even setting the issue aside (sometimes temporarily).¹⁷⁵ Notwithstanding this, on issues where Stalin did not seem to have an active interest (and given his decreased work capacity and his advanced age, this category was expanding), and given that most consideration of economic matters took place in the state institutions where Stalin rarely attended¹⁷⁶ (although he did seek to keep an eye on this through his deputies on the Council of Ministers), his leadership colleagues had expanded autonomy and sought to work around him, all the time trying not to arouse his suspicions. The state organs in particular could be important in this; the Bureau of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers created in April 1950 was almost identical to the former Politburo (Stalin, Bulganin, Beria, Kaganovich, Malenkov, Mikoyan, Molotov and Khrushchev) and constituted an important arena for collective decision-making that Stalin never attended,¹⁷⁷ while the increased regularization of the operation of the Council of Ministers and its executive bodies provided an arena within which many of the oligarchs were heavily involved.¹⁷⁸ According to Molotov, at times some of

his colleagues “slipped things past” Stalin and influenced him through the strategic release of information to him.¹⁷⁹ There were also reports that when Stalin spoke, Malenkov took out a notebook and wrote down what he said,¹⁸⁰ while according to Mikoyan, Malenkov and Beria toadied to Stalin in relation to his last piece of writing, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*.¹⁸¹ Stalin could, if he wished, decide any question regardless of the institutional site in which it was being discussed,¹⁸² which means that not only was his policy-making untrammelled by institutional boundaries, but he could effectively redefine those boundaries at will. His age, health and absences, added to the fact that he seems to have been less decisive than he had been in the 1930s, meant that his involvement in policy-making was much more sporadic, but his increasingly suspicious nature often made that involvement more violent when it did come. The criticism of his colleagues noted above often occurred after he returned to Moscow from being away, the vigour of the critique reflecting his worries that his colleagues had not only made the wrong decision, but were trying to subvert his authority.

In the face of the threat posed by the unpredictable dominant leader, the oligarchs seem to have shared what one author has called “growing solidarity among Stalin’s courtiers”¹⁸³ When Stalin was absent, especially in the last years, the “Seven” (Molotov, Malenkov, Mikoyan, Kaganovich, Beria, Bulganin and Khrushchev; this replaced the “Five” that had been most central at the end of the war, comprising Stalin, Molotov, Malenkov, Mikoyan and Beria¹⁸⁴) met regularly and acted as a collective body,¹⁸⁵ with genuine debate and recording of decisions, but those decisions were always ultimately subject to Stalin’s approval.¹⁸⁶ The development of such procedures in these meetings may have been an attempt by the participants to protect themselves against Stalin’s wrath (they also constituted a sound basis for institutional development after Stalin had died). They sought safety in collectivism; Mikoyan reports that Molotov would always get someone else to countersign his papers so that nothing came from him alone.¹⁸⁷ The oligarchs consulted one another and talked to one another, seeking opinions about how best to handle Stalin and the situations that emerged.¹⁸⁸ They sought to reach agreement on issues before they went to Stalin, and may have sought to delay issues until Stalin was on holidays, although he seems to have been more suspicious and moody when he was outside Moscow.¹⁸⁹ Individuals were wary about expressing opinions contrary to Stalin, often tailoring their views (and their work patterns) to those of the *vozhd*.¹⁹⁰

They also seem on occasion to have protected one another. In late 1945 Molotov's colleagues had made some attempt to defend him against Stalin's criticisms,¹⁹¹ and when Molotov and Mikoyan were in Stalin's bad books late in this period, they continued to attend his informal soirees despite his apparent annoyance. They were able to do this because the other oligarchs alerted them to the time and place of such gatherings, and they simply turned up. That their colleagues would take this risk suggests that their fear of Stalin was not as acute as it has been painted. Unlike taking policy decisions that Stalin might not approve, which they could hope might simply disappear in the volume of work crossing his desk, the presence of the two outcasts was obvious and in Stalin's face. He must have interpreted this as a form of collective defiance, and finally scolded his colleagues for inviting them, at which point Molotov and Mikoyan were told they should no longer attend.¹⁹²

However, this sense of solidarity should not be exaggerated. There was a significant level of distrust among the oligarchs, and Stalin sought to play on this. In 1948 he promoted Bulganin and Kosygin into the Politburo and Khrushchev became a CC secretary, moves apparently designed to balance the Malenkov–Beria axis,¹⁹³ and in 1949 both Molotov and Mikoyan were demoted. Stalin received reports about what the oligarchs were doing, including meetings they held, through Poskrebyshev (until 1952 head of the Special Sector)¹⁹⁴ while individual oligarchs sometimes sought to feed stories to Stalin about their colleagues; sometimes they would also try to get Stalin's approval for measures without consulting their other colleagues.¹⁹⁵ Stalin apparently also baited the oligarchs to see how they would react; for example, in 1947 he instructed the oligarchs to prepare their subordinates to be their replacements, in 1948 Molotov and Mikoyan were told that Poskrebyshev had told Stalin that they were planning a coup against him (something which, according to Mikoyan, he denied but Molotov remained silent), and in 1952 Stalin accused Molotov of, *inter alia*, support for a right deviation in domestic policy and Mikoyan of being "inactive".¹⁹⁶ When Stalin came out in open criticism of one or more of the oligarchs, such as against Mikoyan and Molotov at the October 1952 plenum, the others sometimes leapt to their defence; although Beria and Malenkov have been accused of supporting Stalin in his charges against Molotov and Mikoyan.¹⁹⁷ There were also manoeuvrings among the oligarchs, with individuals sometimes reporting compromising material on their colleagues to Stalin.¹⁹⁸ Malenkov and Beria were both active in the

Leningrad affair,¹⁹⁹ which was in part directed against Voznesensky, and more generally seem to have established a close relationship; Mikoyan refers to Beria as “courting” Malenkov,²⁰⁰ and they were both opposed to Zhdanov, Voznesensky and Vasilii Kuznetsov, each of whom they saw as challengers to their positions.²⁰¹ Khrushchev also came close to Malenkov²⁰² and Beria in Stalin’s last years. There was also general concern among the oligarchs about Beria and his perceived ambitions. These personal differences, rivalries and alliances between the oligarchs co-existed with the continued need to placate Stalin and prevent his suspicions from enveloping them all. This meant that the oligarchs generally did not go all out in their rivalry with their colleagues. No one wanted to upset the delicate balance and cause Stalin to seek a wholesale reshuffle of the elite or to attract the same fate as Voznesensky.

Such oligarch rivalry was played out in three main ways. First, through the articulation of policy positions, individuals sought both to advance policy they (or their institutional bases) supported and either block or denigrate their rivals. During this period, differences occurred over a range of policy issues, including foreign policy, ideology and culture, agriculture, industry and the institutional disposition of power within the regime. Being responsible for a failed policy, or perhaps being vulnerable to being blamed for such a failure, could significantly diminish an individual’s standing within the oligarchy, as the rupture of relations with Yugoslavia did for Zhdanov. Similarly, support for a policy that Stalin did not support, such as Khrushchev and the agrotowns in 1951, was also a recipe for trouble. But the oligarchs could not afford not to promote policies. Not only did their jobs as leading politicians and managers require it, but Stalin too favoured it; their adoption of policy positions was one way of Stalin both keeping track of the views of his leadership colleagues and of giving him an opening to destabilize them if he wished, as well as being another source of input into decisions.

The need to avoid association with policy failure led to the second mode of oligarch struggle, the appointment of personnel. In the institutional and policy spheres they dominated, individual oligarchs sought to appoint clients to leading positions or recruit incumbents to their client networks. Such people had no real direct part to play in elite conflict, but they could be crucial to the success or otherwise of policies their patron advocated. If an oligarch’s institutional or policy constituency was not solidly behind what he sought to achieve, or worse if these were led by adherents of his opponents, the likelihood of policy success

was diminished and failure increased. Accordingly, oligarchs struggled to populate the institutional structures of party and state with their own people and remove those of their rivals. The Leningrad affair may be seen in this way.

The third mode of oligarch struggle was to appeal for support to Stalin. This sometimes took the form of secret denunciations of their rivals, a sort of back channel communication, in the hope that Stalin would act decisively against them. But more usually they sought to align their public policy positions with those of Stalin. This was not always easy because on many issues Stalin's views were unknown, and even when he had expressed an opinion on something, his meaning was not always unambiguous. It was easy to make a mistake, as Khrushchev found on the agrotowns issue. But as the oligarchs were also aware, a policy that was deemed to be too successful or popular could arouse Stalin's suspicion that it was evidence of the oligarch trying to inflate his own importance at the expense of the *vozhd*. Voznesensky seems to have suffered in this regard. Despite this uncertainty, the oligarchs had to play the game because victory in political struggle was dependent ultimately not on the logic of one's policy, but on the will of Stalin.

So the leadership in the post-war years was clearly one that was much more divided between the dominant leader and the oligarchs. The power of the former was overwhelming but not total. The oligarchs had significant freedom of operational action within their routine spheres of responsibility, but they were always subject to the whims of Stalin. Leadership remained collective, in the sense that there was collective involvement in decisions, but it was also heavily personalized. It was also hierarchized in the sense that normal routine and administrative questions (including issues of resources) were settled by the oligarchs and their bureaucratic staffs, generally without Stalin's involvement but subject to his approval if he wished. Major strategic questions were resolved with Stalin's participation and at his direction. This situation was not stable because Stalin could intervene in any routine business if he so wished, a capacity which injected a continuing sense of uncertainty into both the process and into the lives of the oligarchs. Khrushchev implied that the oligarchs were afraid of Stalin, citing Bulganin to the effect that an individual could be invited to visit Stalin as a friend but not know where he would be sent at the end, home or jail.²⁰³ According to Paul Gregory, "the few survivors from Stalin's inner circle (i.e. Kaganovich, Molotov and Mikoyan) shared the common characteristics of blind

obedience, loyalty, sycophantism, and lack of imagination and initiative".²⁰⁴ But this judgement needs to be more nuanced, by recognizing that there was a hierarchy of responses to Stalin that oligarchs could have adopted. Of course those around Stalin at times acted in a sycophantic manner, bowing to his wishes and trying to avoid upsetting him. They sought to ingratiate themselves and to remain in his good books, to do his bidding willingly (or at least appear to do so) and to present themselves as his loyal lieutenants. But they were also able to follow the path of subaltern resistance. They dragged their feet on implementation, sought to manage the information flow to Stalin, presented him with *faits accomplis*, got together to organize matters and resolve issues quietly, and they sought to get much done through the bureaucratic hierarchies most of them headed. None of these strategies could withstand a direct Stalinist assault, and all could have engendered suspicion in Stalin's mind about his colleagues. Nevertheless, they had to engage in such activity, to express views even if this brought Stalin's wrath down on their heads; if they had waited for everything to come from Stalin's initiative, the system would have ground to a stop. And they were themselves reacting to initiatives coming from within the bureaucracies that they headed.

Was Stalin aware of such activity by the other oligarchs? We cannot know for certain, although other leaders believed that they were continually under surveillance.²⁰⁵ But it would be a naïve leader who believed that everything depended upon his will alone, and Stalin was not naïve. Stalin accepted that his colleagues had some room for independent initiative, but only on the basis that the results of such initiative were always subject to his approval and did not challenge his position. Indeed, Stalin positively encouraged such initiative by appointing the oligarchs to high bureaucratic posts with their own range of powers and responsibilities. They worked for him in the sense that the decisions they made and the measures they implemented were both cast (or at least presented to Stalin as such) within the general framework articulated by Stalin and subject to his final approval. They were not just subordinates waiting for direction, but actors with some autonomy doing their best to both survive and carry out the functions of office.

Thus in this last, post-war, period, something approaching the sense of vulnerability the elite had experienced in the latter 1930s returned. There had been casualties among the oligarchs, the NKVD was always

led by someone who reported direct to Stalin, and various moves had been made that seemed to presage a purge of the leadership. Stalin seemed to be increasingly capricious and suspicious, something exacerbated by his increased distance from the other oligarchs and by his recognition that his grip on power may have appeared vulnerable owing to his age and health. Under such circumstances, the oligarchs reverted to the strategies they had used in the 1930s: acting as managers of the institutions they ran, participating in the activities of the official leadership principally in terms of their defence of those institutional constituencies' interests, and being publicly dutiful and loyal to Stalin. Performance of these roles could get them into trouble. The pursuit of institutional interests or particular policy lines could lead them into conflict with the position adopted by Stalin. In such instances, the wise procedure was to state one's case and then give way if Stalin reacted negatively. This was neither an exact science nor a sure solution, but it was probably the best they could hope for because it showed them as hardworking and willing to bring their own views to the fore, yet at the same time subservient to Stalin.

CONCLUSION

In this sense, there was a collective leadership operating throughout the entire Stalin period, even if from the mid-1930s it was a collective in which one person was dominant.²⁰⁶ The source of that dominance was multi-dimensional. Fear was one part of it, but it would be wrong to assume that all of the leaders were always operating in fear of their lives. The sort of fear that some have sought to attribute to the oligarchy as a whole (including at times oligarchs like Khrushchev) was not a numbing worry that the axe was about to fall at any moment. Such feelings would have been likely to produce the sort of Terror that was not consistent with either our reports of the social life of the elite at the time or the obvious fact that the leaders continued to carry out the responsibilities of their bureaucratic positions. There would have been a sense of uncertainty, in that the capricious and suspicious nature of Stalin made it unclear what sort of performance was necessary to avoid arousing the ire of the *vozhd*, or indeed whether performance could ever be a defence against that. In such conditions, the best course of action was to knuckle down and carry out one's job to the best of one's abilities. But as well

as the power over employment, and even life, Stalin had an authority which his colleagues recognized. His career had been associated with what many saw to be stunning successes—industrialization and the creation of a socialist superpower, and victory in the Second World War—and he had guided them through periods characterized by significant threats and dangers (even if he had played a major part in stoking the campaigns about external and internal enemies). For many of those around him, his leadership had stood the test of time. And for all members of the elite but particularly the newer ones, he had been their patron. Furthermore, his personal demeanour behind closed doors, and therefore leaving the cult of personality which was essentially a mass phenomenon to one side, was one of quiet strength, of wisdom and of decisiveness. These were all attributes of strong leadership, and they fed directly into the authority he enjoyed within oligarch circles. So Stalin's position rested on a combination of power and authority, and it was this combination that allowed him to dominate the collective leadership of the Soviet Union for so long. And it was this combination that constituted the defining principles of the arena within which his leadership colleagues had to play their parts and in which party norms were transformed: All opposition was rejected, effective collective party organs were replaced by mechanisms shaped to the leader's will and death as a punishment for opposition was extended to the oligarchy. These marked a dramatic change to the party's normative order. But there were also continuities: Policy remained an area of discussion among the oligarchs, bureaucratic politics considerations continued to exercise the elite and despite the fact of the leader's dominance, a culture of collectivism continued to prevail among the oligarchs. This culture was to be important in the post-Stalin era.

NOTES

1. Khlevnyuk (2010), pp. 32–44.
2. For a discussion of this, see Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 21–29.
3. Lih et al. (1995), p. 217.
4. Career details come from the entries in Goryachev (2005).
5. The closest to Stalin in terms of career at this stage were Lazar Kaganovich (party member since 1911) who had begun work in the Secretariat and Orgburo in June 1924, Kliment Voroshilov (party member since 1903) who had worked with Stalin during the civil war, joined

the Orgburo in June 1924 and the Politburo in 1926 and took over leadership of the Red Army on Mikhail Frunze's death in 1925, and Vyacheslav Molotov (party member since 1906) was a candidate member of the Politburo, a member of the Orgburo and CC Secretary from 1921, and a prominent activist in 1917. Also important were Mikhail Kalinin (who had been a founding member of the party) who had been a candidate member of the Politburo since 1919 and from 1919 was the titular head of state; Sergei Kirov (party member since 1904) had worked in the Caucasus region and became good friends with Stalin in the mid-1920s; Stanislav Kosior (joined party 1907) conducted party work mainly in Ukraine and Siberia and was party leader in Ukraine from 1928; Valerian Kuibyshev (party member since 1904) was briefly in the Orgburo and Secretariat April 1922 to April 1923, and then entered the Central Control Commission and from 1923 was Deputy Chair of the Council of People's Commissars; Yan Rudzutak (party member from 1905) became a candidate member of the Politburo in 1923 and worked in the Orgburo and Secretariat in 1923; Anastas Mikoyan (party member since 1915) worked in various regional postings following the civil war until becoming Minister of Foreign and Domestic Trade in 1926; Grigorii (Sergo) Ordzhonikidze (joined party in 1903) worked in a range of regional posts before becoming a candidate member of the Politburo briefly in 1926 before giving up that post to join the Central Control Commission; and Grigorii Petrovsky, who had worked in the social democratic movement since 1897, was a member of the CC from 1912 and became government head in Ukraine in 1919.

6. Profile of elite organs

	<i>1930</i>	<i>1934</i>
Total number of persons	29	24
Members of Orgburo in Politburo	3	3
% of Politburo	20.0	20.0
% of Orgburo in Politburo	20.0	25.0
Members of Secretariat in Politburo	3	3
% of Politburo	20.0	20.0
% of Secretariat in Politburo	42.8	75.0
Member of all 3 bodies	Stalin	Stalin
	Kaganovich	Kaganovich
	Molotov	Kirov

7. Representation at time of election was as follows:

	<i>July 1930</i>	<i>February 1934</i>
Central state machine	7	8
Central party apparatus	3	2
Member of both above	0	1
Regional state machine	3	2
Regional party apparatus	2	3
Other	1	0

The figures are as at the time of election, which means that Molotov appears in the guise of CC Secretary although he was soon to become Chairman of Sovnarkom. Ukraine and Leningrad are represented in both years, with Ukraine having three positions in 1930 and four in 1934 (two party and two state).

8. Montefiore (2003), p. 41 and Rees (2013), pp. 125, 212.
9. Mikoyan (2014), p. 381.
10. Fitzpatrick (2015), pp. 64–65 and Montefiore (2003), p. 41. On social relations between the oligarchs at the end of the 1920s, see Fitzpatrick (2015), pp. 66–67.
11. This also applied to family members. But wives generally did not become involved in political issues. Molotov’s wife Zhemchuzhina was a partial exception to this. Mikoyan (2014), p. 323.
12. On Stalin’s interference in the work of the Peoples Commissariat of Transport and his 1930 imposition of a deputy on Mikoyan so he could continue to monitor what was happening, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 317–318.
13. On Kaganovich, as the only one who could be seen as an “acolyte”, see Rees (2013), pp. 226–227. For disagreements among the oligarchs and Stalin’s role in the early 1930s, see Ennker (2004), pp. 172–181, 186–188. On Kalinin “occasionally” voting against Stalin in the Politburo, see Kotkin (2017), p. 49.
14. Stalin “Golovokruzheniya ot uspekhev”.
15. Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 64–66. Also the discussion in Gill (1990), p. 250. The apparent lack of discord may not be surprising given that this was a case of opposition from below that did not have a link with particular individuals in the leadership group. The same applies to the Smirnov–Eismont–Tolmachev affair.
16. See the discussion in Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 58–82. On the “reformist faction” argument, see Nicolaevsky (1975). For the argument that the differences over growth rates at the XVII Congress was a function of institutional locations rather than “moderate” versus “radical” positions,

- see Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 102–108. Also see Davies et al. (2014), pp. 4–14. All of this is not to deny that there were differing approaches to key issues and that these could be accumulated into definable trends. Gill (1990), pp. 249–250.
17. XVI s'ezd (1930), p. 261. For other comments showing no room for opposition, see pp. 110, 124–125, 148, 209–212, 261, 291, and 627–629.
 18. Gill (2011), pp. 116–122, Apor et al. (2004), and Plamper (2012).
 19. Mikoyan (2014), p. 344.
 20. For one argument about the role of the cult in intra-elite relations, see Ennker (2004).
 21. On differences of opinion over whether Molotov should become Chairman of Sovnarkom, see Kotkin (2017), pp. 55–56.
 22. For Ordzhonikidze defending some of his people and Stalin's response, see Montefiore (2003), pp. 108–109. For Kaganovich's claim that when he and Molotov "worked together in the [Politburo], we worked in a friendly manner, but when he became *prime* minister and I minister of transport, we argued", see Fortescue (2010), p. 30.
 23. For example, Khlevnyuk et al. (2001), p. 21.
 24. Khlevnyuk et al. (2001), pp. 50–51.
 25. During this time he kept in contact with what was happening in the Politburo through letters or telephone calls to Kaganovich or Molotov. These letters are in Khlevnyuk et al. (2001) and Lih et al. (1995). A secure high-frequency telephone line (but not one that could accommodate conference calls) had been established between Moscow and Sochi by summer 1933. A study of Politburo decisions while Stalin was away in 1934 shows that Stalin routinely confirmed 96% of the decisions made by those remaining in Moscow, including many issues of major importance. Getty (2005), pp. 95–97. In summer 1933, Stalin was involved in 11.5% of Politburo decisions while he was away. Kotkin (2017), p. 136.
 26. Khlevnyuk et al. (1995), p. 180. For figures see Wheatcroft (2004), p. 89. For some details about how the Politburo was meant to work, see Khlevnyuk et al. (1995), pp. 49–54 and Howlett et al. (1996), pp. 12–13.
 27. Wheatcroft (2004), p. 89. Also see Rees (2004b), p. 24.
 28. Khlevnyuk et al. (1995), pp. 23–25, 180.
 29. Khlevniuk (2009), p. 54. This was through the Secret Department which reported directly to Stalin or, in his absence, Kaganovich. On the handling of secret materials, see Khlevnyuk et al. (1995), pp. 26–27, 74–78. On Stalin simply dictating Politburo decisions to Poskrebyshev, see Kotkin (2017), p. 162.
 30. Wheatcroft (2004), p. 86. Actually between 1928 and 1933 there were also so-called "working sessions" of the Politburo attended only by

- Politburo members and devoted to discussing routine questions. Rees (2013), p. 126.
31. “Stenogramma...4 noyabr 1930g”. Also “Stenogramma (27 November 1932)”. The Kosheleva et al. (2007) volume gives other examples of important questions being discussed in the Politburo. On these two cases, see Khlevniuk (2008) and Wynn (2008).
 32. Rees (2004b), p. 29. On the decreased formal activity of the Orgburo and Secretariat at this time, see Rees (2004a), pp. 31–32.
 33. Cf. the argument in Rees (2004b), p. 29 where it is argued that this occurred in 1937 when two commissions were created to do the work of the Politburo (see below) and decisions were no longer made by circulation. According to Wheatcroft (2004), p. 88, circulation still occurred in 1938, 1939 and 1940. Rees (2004b), p. 27 does actually confirm that there were decisions resolved by circulation in 1938–40, but the number was relatively small.
 34. The expulsion of Syrtsov from the Politburo on 1 December 1930 was the first occasion on which such a decision was taken by circulation. Kotkin (2017), p. 64.
 35. Part of the stenographic report is reprinted in Khlevnyuk et al. (1995), pp. 99–100. For Stalin’s response, Kosheleva et al. (2007), pp. 178–179. It is also discussed in Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 25–28.
 36. Lih et al. (1995), p. 218. The actual meeting is discussed in Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 32–33. Also see Stalin’s acknowledgement of such meetings in his words to the Politburo meeting of 4 November 1930. Kosheleva et al. (2007), p. 178.
 37. Stalin’s visitors book shows who visited his office, when and for how long. Korotkov et al. (2008).
 38. Late night dinners became a venue for elite discussion, especially after the death of Stalin’s wife when such events became longer and more fuelled by alcohol as Stalin sought to loosen his comrades’ tongues and overcome their reticence. According to Mikoyan (2014), pp. 382–383, there was a “comradely” atmosphere at these dinners, although he also reports how Beria schemed to discredit Stalin’s brother-in-law, Aleksandr Svanidze (pp. 387–389). After the death of Stalin’s wife, Stalin sought to persuade initially Mikoyan and then Svanidze, to stay overnight at his dacha to keep him company, thereby providing a good opportunity to influence the *vozhd*. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 385–386. Both were reluctant house guests.
 39. Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 268–269. Slightly different figures are shown in Wheatcroft (2004), p. 96, but there is agreement that Molotov and Kaganovich head the list. The order in the text is based on the time spent in Stalin’s office; sometimes a slightly different ordering is present

if it is based on the number of visits, but even here the top two positions are filled by Molotov and Kaganovich.

40. Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 116–117.
41. See the analysis in Wheatcroft (2004), pp. 95, 98.
42. For an analysis, see Gill (1990), pp. 225–228.
43. There were plena in December 1930, June 1931, October 1931, September 1932, January 1933, June–July 1934 and November 1934.
44. Khlevniuk (2009), p. 28. Syrtsov and Lominadze both wanted to appeal to the CC as had been done in the 1920s, but this was blocked. Khlevniuk (2008), p. 88. Smirnov et al. were openly criticized at the January 1933 plenum, where Kaganovich called for harsher penalties for opposition. Barberowski (2016), pp. 191–193.
45. Gill (1990), p. 228.
46. For example, see the materials from the January 1933 plenum reproduced in Getty and Naumov (1999), pp. 74–102.
47. On this see “O dele tak nazyvaemogo ‘soyuza marksistov-lenintsev’”.
48. Khlevniuk (2008), pp. 86–87 and Wynn (2008), p. 98. It is rumoured that at the XVII Congress in January–February 1934, some 270 delegates (of 1225 voting delegates) voted against Stalin’s candidacy for the CC, the most of any member of the Politburo. Gill (1990), p. 404, fn. 123. Other figures have also been claimed. Some may have wanted to replace Stalin with Kirov, as some historians have argued, but there is no evidence that Kirov was involved in any such plan. Conquest (1989) pp. 27–29, Knight (1999), p. 172 and Khlevniuk (2015), p. 127.
49. One of the problems for such officials was that, owing to the fact that the main channels of communication within the party were vertical through the Secretariat and there were no horizontal channels apart from when they came together at CC plena, there was little scope for effective, organized oppositional activity by lower level officials.
50. According to Rees (2013), p. 133, the opposition from one member of the Politburo to Stalin’s draft law on the theft of state property in August 1932 “apparently was the last case when Politburo members defied his will”. This is exaggerated.
51. Khlevniuk (2009), p. 79.
52. An example of this was the discussion of military development and the procurement plan for the Commissariat of Military and Naval Affairs in a Politburo commission in November 1930 in the absence of Rykov, whose authority theoretically included these matters. Khlevniuk (2009), p. 35.
53. For example, Mikoyan and Kiubyshev in 1931. Khlevnyuk et al. (2001), pp. 35, 710 and Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 70–75.

54. Symbolic of this was the XVII Congress listing, for the first time, of membership of the Politburo, Orgburo and Secretariat out of alphabetical order with Stalin at the top, notwithstanding the fact that he was now referred to simply as CC Secretary, not General Secretary.
55. Khlevnyuk et al. (2001), pp. 37–128. At this stage, Kaganovich was Stalin's principal deputy.
56. For example, see his letter to Molotov earlier than June 1932, Lih et al. (1995) p. 231. Also see Khlevniuk (2009), p. 82.
57. For example, see his letter to Molotov of 1 September 1933 in which he criticizes action by Ordzhonikidze and a Politburo resolution that had supported Ordzhonikidze's position. As a result of this letter, the Politburo revoked its decision. Lih et al. (1995), pp. 233–234. Kaganovich apparently delayed discussion of this question until Ordzhonikidze had gone on vacation in order to avoid embarrassing him. Khlevnyuk et al. (2001), p. 303.
58. On Stalin trying to maintain peace within this group in September 1931, see Kotkin (2017), p. 82.
59. Among the categories to be purged from party membership was class alien and hostile elements who had entered the party by deceitful means and who sought to demoralize its ranks. For a description of the categories of members to be purged, see Gill (1990), p. 205.
60. This is not meant to imply that there was an inevitable progression from one stage to the next, but the cumulative effect of these was to embed the notion of hidden enemies in the common political discourse. But although the progression was not inevitable, these were linked. See Gill (1990), esp. chs. 6, 8. For the argument that they were not linked, see Getty (1985). On the central responsibility of Stalin for raising the political pressure through these campaigns, see Rees (2004a), pp. 47–49.
61. For the view that Stalin drove the Terror in order psychologically to break his inner circle, see Kotkin (2017), p. 489.
62. To paraphrase Harry Rigby. According to Rigby, “the closer you were to Stalin the better were your chances of surviving physically and continuing your political career”. Rigby (1986), p. 319. For information on the survival of Politburo members compared with CC members, see Mawdsley (2004), pp. 62–65. Of 36 full and candidate members of the Politburo between June 1924 and October 1952 (excluding Stalin), 14 or 38.9% were executed in and after 1936. For the figures, see Appendix 2, Rees (2004), pp. 243–244.
63. For the argument that this destroyed the trust Stalin had in his lieutenants, see Rees (2013), p. 190. For Ordzhonikidze arguing with Stalin immediately before his death, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 343, 354–360

- and Baberowski (2016), p. 233. The arrest of Ordzhonikidze's brother in October 1936, the first time a relative of a sitting Politburo member had been arrested, increased the tension between the two.
64. For the argument that Stalin may have moved against some of these—Ordzhonikidze, Chubar, Kosior and Rudzutak—because they had become unproductive and lost the energy for work, and therefore needed to be replaced by younger, more energetic cadres, see Khlevnyuk (1996), pp. 231–234.
 65. This was the first case of expulsion from the party of a prominent pre-revolutionary party member who had not joined an opposition group. Kotkin (2017), p. 254.
 66. The Politburo discussed her case on a number of occasions in 1939. Fitzpatrick (2015), p. 145 and Kotkin (2017), p. 692.
 67. Even some members of Stalin's family (relatives of his wives) were arrested. Fitzpatrick (2015), pp. 137–139.
 68. For example, on Voroshilov unsuccessfully arguing there were no saboteurs in the military and Molotov unable to protect his aides when they were arrested, see Kotkin (2017), pp. 396, 524.
 69. The decimation of people's commissars and consequent promotion of new, inexperienced, ones would have enhanced Stalin's, and Molotov's, capacity to intervene in departmental affairs.
 70. Adibekov et al., Tom II. (2001). For slightly different figures see Wheatcroft (2004), p. 88. According to Mikoyan (2014), p. 363 in 1938 only a "narrow" section of the Politburo met, without an agenda. For different figures, see Rees (2004b), p. 27. Getty (2013), pp. 111–112 also provides figures for the Orgburo and Secretariat. Also see the argument in Getty (2005). On the interlocking nature of the Politburo and Sovnarkom in the late 1930s, see Gornitzki (2002), pp. 703–704. State bodies were much more routinized in their operations at this time, meaning meetings were more frequent and effective than those of the Politburo.
 71. Adibekov et al., Tom II (2001), p. 22.
 72. Rees (2004b), p. 29. The economic commission comprised Molotov, Stalin, Chubar, Mikoyan and Kaganovich; the foreign affairs commission was Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Kaganovich and Yezhov. The decision was dated 14 April 1937. Khlevnyuk et al. (1995), p. 55. It is not clear that the practice of decision by circulation ceased at this time.
 73. Wheatcroft (2004), pp. 96–97.
 74. On the role of such ceremonial occasions, see Kotkin (2017), pp. 551, 1016, fn. 292.
 75. For partial transcripts of what Stalin said at some of these unofficial meetings, see Nevezhin (2003, 2011).

76. Resolutions were not drafted in the Politburo, but each agenda item was accompanied by a draft resolution prepared by the person or agency raising the question and then formalized in the Secretariat's Special Sector where the Politburo agendas were formed. Such draft resolutions often needed reworking, and this appears to have been done at the meetings in Stalin's office. For a discussion of the preparation of materials for Politburo meetings, see Howlett et al. (1996), pp. 16–17. For Stalin's justification of such small group meetings, see Kotkin (2017), p. 831.
77. Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 268–271. Wheatcroft (2004), pp. 96–97 produces slightly different figures.
78. Yezhov helped run the Orgburo and attended Politburo meetings. Kotkin (2017), p. 224.
79. Principal other appointments of Stalin's top five visitors

1935	Molotov	Chair Sovnarkom
	Kaganovich	PC Transport
	Ordzhonikidze	PC Heavy Industry
	Voroshilov	PC Defence
	Yezhov	CC Secretary, Chair Party Control Commission, PC Internal Affairs
1936	Molotov	Chair Sovnarkom
	Voroshilov	PC Defence
	Ordzhonikidze	PC Heavy Industry
	Kaganovich	PC Transport
	Yezhov	CC Secretary, Chair Party Control Commission, PC Internal Affairs
1937	Molotov	Chair Sovnarkom
	Yezhov	CC Secretary, Chair Party Control Commission, PC Internal Affairs
	Voroshilov	PC Defence
	Kaganovich	PC Transport, then Heavy Industry
	Zhdanov	CC Secretary and First Secretary Leningrad
1938	Molotov	Chair Sovnarkom
	Yezhov	CC Secretary, Chair Party Control Commission, PC Internal Affairs/Water Transport
	Voroshilov	PC Defence
	Kaganovich	Deputy Chair Sovnarkom, PC Heavy Industry
	Zhdanov	CC secretary and First Secretary Leningrad
1939	Molotov	Chair Sovnarkom and PC Foreign Affairs
	Voroshilov	PC Defence
	Mikoyan	Deputy Chair Sovnarkom and PC Foreign Trade
	Kaganovich	Deputy Chair Sovnarkom, PC Heavy Industry
	Zhdanov	CC Secretary and First Secretary Leningrad

1940	Molotov	Chair Sovnarkom and PC Foreign Affairs
	Zhdanov	CC Secretary and First Secretary Leningrad
	Beria	PC Internal Affairs
	Mikoyan	Deputy Chair Sovnarkom and PC Foreign Trade
1941	Molotov	Chair (May Deputy Chair) Sovnarkom and PC Foreign Affairs
	Malenkov	CC Secretary
	Voroshilov	Deputy Chair Sovnarkom, commander of forces in northwest
	Zhdanov	CC Secretary and First Secretary Leningrad
	Mikoyan	Deputy Chair Sovnarkom and PC Foreign Trade

80. Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 203, 231.
81. For Molotov's view that all of the most important issues went to this leading group in the Politburo before going to the body as a whole, see Chuev (1991), p. 424.
82. On Ordzhonikidze's suicide, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 354–360. He killed himself after his brother was arrested and shot, something that could occur only with Stalin's permission.
83. Important personnel changes were made in February–March 1935. Andreev was appointed a CC Secretary; Kaganovich replaced Andreev as People's Commissar for Transport while remaining a CC Secretary but ceasing to be chair of the Party Control Commission and the Moscow party organization (which Khrushchev took over); Yezhov, who had recently become a CC Secretary, was appointed to head the Party Control Commission; and Andreev and Yezhov were placed in charge of the Orgburo, formerly headed by Kaganovich. Khlevnyuk et al. (1995), pp. 142–143 and Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 139–141.
84. This control was strengthened with the replacement of Yagoda by Yezhov in September 1936.
85. Profile of elite organs

Total number of persons	17
Members of Orgburo in Politburo	3
% of Politburo	27.3
% of Orgburo in Politburo	33.3
Members of Secretariat in Politburo	3
% of Politburo	27.3
% of Secretariat in Politburo	75.0
Member of all 3 bodies	Stalin Zhdanov

86. Representation at time of election was as follows:

	<i>March 1939</i>
Central state machine	5
Central party apparatus	3
Member of both above	1
Regional party apparatus	1
Other	1

The Other refers to the head of the trade union organization.

87. Khrushchev (1989), pp. 162–165.
88. For example, see Baberowski (2016), p. 263.
89. Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 128–129 and Mikoyan (2014), p. 342. There is no evidence that Stalin organized the Kirov assassination. Khlevniuk (2015), pp. 128–134. On Stalin taking unilateral decisions about the situation in Spain, see Kotkin (2017), pp. 313–314.
90. Khlevniuk (2009), p. 147.
91. For Mikoyan’s view that during the Terror, Malenkov was afraid of Stalin and would carry out any of his instructions. Mikoyan (2014), p. 346.
92. For the suggestion that when Yezhov brought up material hostile to I.F. Tevosyan in 1939, Mikoyan and Beria argued there was no case to answer while Molotov refused to commit himself until he knew what Stalin thought, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 347–351.
93. For an example, see Kotkin (2017), pp. 625–626.
94. On Kaganovich and Ordzhonikidze combining in 1935–36 to protect people in their respective areas of railway and industry against attack, see Rees (2004b), p. 49.
95. Khlevnyuk et al. (2001), p. 23.
96. Khlevniuk (2009), p. 227.
97. Semichastny and Sniegon (1998), p. 184. Thanks to Tomas Sniegon for the information and its source. Republican and obkom first secretaries were also accorded guards at this time. Significantly, security in the Kremlin was transferred to the NKVD in February 1935 as part of the investigation of the so-called “Kremlin Affair”. Kotkin (2017), pp. 227–229, 254. The head of the NKVD was also able to eavesdrop on Stalin. Kotkin (2017), p. 392.
98. Kotkin (2017), pp. 308, 586.
99. On the way different bureaucratic constituencies dominated in different policy areas, see Rees (2004b), pp. 51–54, Rees (1997), and Watson (1996). On leaders’ “fiefdoms”, see Kotkin (2017), p. 508.
100. Kotkin (2017), p. 258.

101. Bazhanov (1982), p. 8 and Mikoyan (2014), p. 397. The Politburo was chaired not by Stalin but, following Lenin's death, by the prime minister, Rykov then Molotov.
102. Chuev (1991), p. 258.
103. Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 145–146.
104. For an argument about the way in which regional leaders defended themselves against the Party Control Commission but were helpless against the Terror of the NKVD in 1937, see Getty (1997).
105. Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 141–145.
106. Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 150–165 and Mikoyan (2014), pp. 343, 344–345. However, according to Mikoyan (2014, pp. 364–367), in 1938 when he asked Stalin for there to be no further arrests in the Commissariat of Foreign Trade without his knowledge, Stalin agreed. On Kaganovich trying to defend some of his people in the People's Commissariat of Transport in autumn 1936, see Rees (2013), pp. 186–187.
107. Khlevniuk (2015), p. 140.
108. For materials from some of the plena of this period, see Getty and Naumov (1999).
109. For an argument about conflict between the centre and regional leaders in the 1930s, see Getty (2013), chs. 6, 7 and 8.
110. For the stenographic reports of the meeting, see *Voprosy istorii* 2/3, 1992, pp. 3–45; 4/5, 1992, pp. 3–36; 6/7, 1992, pp. 3–29; 8/9, 1992, pp. 3–29; 10, 1992, pp. 3–36; 11/12, 1992, pp. 3–19; 2, 1993, pp. 3–33; 5, 1993, pp. 3–21; 6, 1993, pp. 3–30; 7, 1993, pp. 3–24; 8, 1993, pp. 3–26; 9, 1993, pp. 3–32; 1, 1994, pp. 12–28; 2, 1994, pp. 3–29; 6, 1994, pp. 3–23; 8, 1994, pp. 3–29; 10, 1994, pp. 3–27; 12, 1994, pp. 3–29; 2, 1995, pp. 3–26; 3, 1995, pp. 3–15; 4, 1995, pp. 3–18; 5/6, 1995, pp. 3–24; 7, 1995, pp. 3–25; 8, 1995, pp. 3–25; 10, 1995, pp. 3–28; 11/12, 1995, pp. 13–23.
111. For details of the changing profile, see Gill (1990), pp. 278–280.
112. For example, all Politburo members signed lists of names of those to be arrested and shot. For the numbers signed by each, see Rees (2013), p. 200. On the general point, see Khlevniuk (2009), p. 185, Fitzpatrick (2015), pp. 126–130, and Mikoyan (2014), p. 346. For Stalin's direct role and his use of the NKVD, see Khlevniuk (2015), pp. 39–41. On Kaganovich working out the details of the first show trial in 1936 under Stalin's direction, see Rees (2013), p. 184.
113. On claimed differences between Stalin and Zhdanov, see Getty (1985), pp. 191–194 and Gill (1990), pp. 416–417.
114. On resentment at the promotion of Voznesensky to the position of prime minister in May 1941, see Montefiore (2003), p. 310.

115. Fitzpatrick (2014), pp. 134–135. For Mikoyan’s view that Stalin’s attitude to him grew colder in 1938 because of his attitude to the Terror, see Mikoyan (2014), p. 363. For Stalin’s comments at the February–March 1937 plenum about the need to replace old blood with young in the leadership and his criticism of Ordzhonikidze for protecting his cadres, a criticism and threat that applied more widely, see “Materialy fevral’skogo-martovskogo plenuma TsK VKP(b) 1937 goda”, *Voprosy istorii* 11–12, 1995, pp. 11–22. Also Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 228–229. And for Stalin’s criticism of Molotov in 1940–41, see Khlevniuk (2009), pp. 238–240.
116. Although on opposition from within the inner circle to the expansion of the re-opened Kirov murder case in mid-1936, see Kotkin (2017), pp. 323–324.
117. Korotkov et al. (2008), pp. 337–341.
118. This view seems to have begun with Khrushchev’s “secret speech”, Khrushchev (1989), pp. 148–149.
119. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 420–423.
120. On his state, see Molotov’s comments where he says Stalin was agitated and not quite himself, but still in control. Chuev (1991), pp. 51–52, 330.
121. Mikoyan, Voznesensky and Kaganovich were added in February 1942, and Bulganin replaced Voroshilov in November 1944. At the time, Voznesensky was only a candidate member of the Politburo. A supreme military command, or Stavka, was also established on 23 June 1941 with Stalin as supreme commander.
122. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 501–502.
123. Adibekov et al., Tom III (2001) and Wheatcroft (2004), p. 88. The 1945 meeting was in December. Khlevnyuk et al. (2002), p. 421. The Politburo’s workload was as follows:

	<i>Number of sessions</i>	<i>Decisions in sessions</i>	<i>Decisions by circulation</i>	<i>“Decisions of the Politburo”</i>	<i>Total decisions</i>
1941	0	0	0	2637	2637
1942	0	0	0	1177	1177
1943	0	0	0	1160	1160
1944	0	0	0	903	903
1945	1	6	0	959	965

124. Mikoyan (2014), p. 424 says up until 1941 there was a “pyaterka” of Stalin, Molotov, Malenkov, Beria and Mikoyan. After the war Zhdanov then Voznesensky were included. Voroshilov had been included at the

beginning of the war and then excluded in 1944. On pp. 500–502 Mikoyan discusses the GKO and says that rather than meeting in official session, issues were resolved by a sub-group of the Politburo. Also see Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), p. 18.

125. Wheatcroft (2004), pp. 96–97.
 126. Montefiore (2003), pp. 387–388.
 127. On his role during the war, see Fitzpatrick (2015), pp. 159–160.
 128. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 456–459. On Beria and Voznesensky, see Fitzpatrick (2015), pp. 157–158.
 129. Harris (2008), chs. 4, 5 and Ra'anani (1983), ch. 2.
 130. On heated argument between Stalin and Voroshilov over this issue, see Khrushchev (2004), p. 256.
 131. Mikoyan dates this more capricious approach to 1944. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 502–504. For the general point, see Khrushchev (1989), p. 152.
 132. For example, see Mikoyan (2014), p. 523.
 133. It is reflected in the post-1949 decrease in the number of materials sent to Stalin from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. There were 11 volumes in 1945, 6 in 1946, 4 in each of 1947 and 1948, 3 in 1949 and one in each subsequent year. Gorlizki (1995), p. 11.
 134. The number of days on which Stalin received visitors in his office per year was as follows:

1930	103	1935	126	1940	214	1945	145	1950	62
1931	167	1936	116	1941	217	1946	102	1951	47
1932	161	1937	241	1942	231	1947	136	1952	37
1933	164	1938	178	1943	180	1948	125		
1934	140	1939	250	1944	151	1949	111		

He had visitors on nine days in January–February 1953. He took no holidays between 1937 and 1944, so there was greater scope for such meetings. Wheatcroft (2004), p. 92.

135. The fate of Politburo members from 1919–52 was as follows:
 Died of natural causes: Lenin, Dzerzhinsky, Kuibyshev, Frunze (under an operation he was directed to undergo), Kalinin, Shcherbakov and Zhdanov.
 Assassinated: Kirov and Trotsky.
 Suicide: Tomsy and Ordzhonikidze.
 Arrested and executed: Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Bukharin, Uglanov, Kosior, Bauman, Syrtsov, Chubar, Eikhe, Postyshev, Rudzutak, Yezhov and Voznesensky.
 Expelled but life spared: Petrovsky.
136. Mikoyan (2014), p. 424. According to Rees (2004c), p. 213, a quintet was established in August 1945 comprising Stalin, Molotov,

Mikoyan, Malenkov and Beria, with Zhdanov added in December 1945, Voznesensky in October 1946, and Bulganin and Kuznetsov in September 1947. Zhdanov died in 1948 (and was replaced by Aleksei Kosygin until late 1949, when Kaganovich joined), Voznesensky and Kuznetsov were removed in 1949 and shot, while Mikoyan and Molotov were in disgrace in 1949. When the Presidium Bureau was established in 1952, a group of five met regularly: Stalin, Malenkov, Beria, Bulganin and Khrushchev. Rees (2004c), p. 227. On this informal group being given a sense of formality by the December 1945 decision to call it the Politburo Commission on Foreign Affairs, see Gorlizki (2001), p. 293. Also the reference on pp. 293–294 to Kosygin’s and Kaganovich’s joining of the group.

137. The median year of birth of the new members (both full and candidate) of the Presidium was 1902 compared with 1892 for those who had been members in 1939.
138. On Aristov, Brezhnev and Ignatov being Khrushchev supporters, see Gorlizki (1995), p. 14.
139. Representation at time of election was as follows:

	<i>October 1952</i>
Central state machine	17
Central party apparatus	7
Member of both above	3
Regional state machine	2
Regional party apparatus	4
Others	3

Others refers to two magazine editors and the head of the trade unions.

140. On preparations for the mounting of a case against some of the oligarchs by the MGB, see Fitzpatrick (2015), pp. 219–220.
141. These are discussed in Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), pp. 18, 29, 75–79, 108–109, 150–151, and 181 (n. 60).
142. This was the only post-Terror killing of high officials under Stalin. See the discussion in Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), pp. 79–89.
143. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 578–579, 602, and 615–621 and Fitzpatrick (2015), pp. 211–215.
144. Mikoyan (2014), p. 579.
145. Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), pp. 109–113.
146. On this see Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), pp. 153–159.
147. Chuev (1991), p. 314, Fitzpatrick (2015), pp. 184–185, and Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), p. 114. This was probably more reliant on the security apparatus than the party apparatus at this time. On the

weakening of the Special Sector, which had been seen as central to Stalin's organizational power in the party, in the post-war period, see Gorlizki (1995), pp. 12–13. Poskrebyshev was removed as head of the Special Sector in 1952 and became secretary of the Presidium and the Bureau of the Presidium. Formally he also ceased to be head of the chancellery of the General Secretary.

148. The GKO was abolished on 4 September 1945 with the Politburo again appearing as the top formal leadership organ. Membership of these two bodies differed. Of the nine Politburo members, Zhdanov, Andreev, Khrushchev and Kalinin had not been on the GKO, while three of the GKO's key figures (Malenkov, Beria and Voznesensky) were initially only candidate members of the Politburo; Malenkov and Beria became full members in March 1946; Bulganin and Kosygin replaced them as candidates.
149. Wheatcroft (2004), p. 88.
150. Khlevnyuk et al. (2002), pp. 432–438.
151. For example, see Gorlizki (1995), pp. 1–22.
152. For the figures, see Rees (2004c), p. 214. Slightly different figures emerge from an analysis of the data in Khlevnyuk et al. (2002), pp. 421–431.
153. Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), pp. 8–9, 45–50, and 170.
154. Wheatcroft (2004), p. 97.
155. From July 1948 he was a CC secretary and chaired meetings of the Orgburo and Secretariat, and at the XIX Congress he delivered the political report.
156. Cf. Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), p. 102.
157. Gorlizki (2001), p. 293 considers this “ruling group” that met in Stalin's office the “second” or “de facto” Politburo.
158. Khrushchev (1989), p. 163. For the changing membership, see Gorlizki (2001), p. 293.
159. Khrushchev (1989), p. 163 and Gorlizki (2001), p. 293.
160. Khrushchev (2006), vol. 2, p. 85.
161. Djilas (1962), pp. 85–93, 115–125 and Khlevniuk (2015), pp. 1–7. According to Volkogonov (1989), *Kniga 1*, chast' 2, p. 108, such events actually began during the war. Also see Khrushchev (2006), p. 43.
162. Khrushchev (2006), vol. 2, pp. 117, 140.
163. Although note the above point about the increased number of Politburo decisions; also there were attempts to strengthen the party apparatus through a reorganization in 1948. Rees (2004c), pp. 214, 216.
164. For some examples of one oligarch being pressed by his lower level officials to resolve questions through direct approach to another oligarch, see Gorlizki (2002), pp. 726–727.

165. Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), pp. 45, 52–58, and 166. Also Gorlizki (2002). For an indication of those who attended the leading executive bodies of the state at this time, see Khlevnyuk et al. (2002), pp. 438–563.
166. According to Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), p. 10, after 1949 Stalin “became somewhat more lethargic and less assiduous in controlling his subordinates”.
167. Khlevniuk (2010), p. 459 and Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), pp. 105–108.
168. Gorlizki (2001), pp. 294–295.
169. On the Secretariat, see Gorlizki (2001), pp. 296, 299–301.
170. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 557–564. Also see pp. 535–537 for an example of this, and Stalin’s reaction when his view was not sought.
171. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 565–576.
172. Chuev (1991), pp. 258–259. This had been a feature of his style for some time, e.g. see his letter to Kaganovich of 4 September 1931. Khlevnyuk et al. (2001), p. 80.
173. For Mikoyan and Beria disagreeing with Stalin on whether the USSR should seek to join the Marshall Plan, see Fitzpatrick (2015), p. 183. On Molotov arguing with him and always telling him the truth, see Molotov’s claim in Chuev (1991), pp. 297, 298, 452–453. For Khrushchev disagreeing with Stalin at the time of the February 1947 plenum and in November 1952 on the economic basis of Ukraine, see, respectively, Hahn (1982), pp. 64–65 and Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), p. 135.
174. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 562–564.
175. Fitzpatrick (2015), p. 3.
176. Rees (2004c), p. 215. Stalin effectively delegated post-war economic management to his colleagues. For a February 1947 decision allocating “political” matters to the Politburo and “economic” questions to the Council of Ministers, see Gorlizki (2002), p. 705. For him intervening in the affairs of state organs at will, see Gorlizki (2002), pp. 720–723.
177. Khlevniuk (2005), pp. 118–119. On the routinization of operations within the state machine, see Gorlizki (2002), pp. 699–736.
178. On regularization and the re-organization of state bodies in the early 1950s, see Gorlizki (2002), pp. 705–715, 730–736.
179. Chuev (1991), pp. 271, 470.
180. Mikoyan (2014), p. 633 and Montefiore (2003), p. 226.
181. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 614–615.
182. For some examples, see Gorlizki (2002), pp. 721–725.
183. Montefiore (2003), p. 532.

184. Khlevniuk (2009), p. 258. This was also after the death of Zhdanov in 1948 and the removal of Voznesensky in 1949.
185. Khlevniuk (2009), p. 260 and Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), pp. 105–108. Despite the danger that private meetings could be interpreted by Stalin as evidence of plotting against him. For the argument that such meetings (except for those between Beria and Malenkov) were forbidden, see Volkogonov (1989) *Kniga 2*, chast' 2, p. 131.
186. For example, Gorlizki (2001), pp. 294–295.
187. Mikoyan (2014), p. 579.
188. Montefiore (2003), p. 532 for one example.
189. Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), p. 8.
190. Gorlizki (2002), pp. 720–721.
191. Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), p. 22 and Khrushchev (2006), vol. 2, pp. 88–89.
192. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 625–626 and Fitzpatrick (2015), pp. 214–215. For Khrushchev's account, including a discussion of Stalin's dissatisfaction with Molotov, see Khrushchev (2006), vol. 2, pp. 87–89, 113–114.
193. Rees (2004c), pp. 223–224 and Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), pp. 89–94.
194. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 578–579, Chuev (1991), pp. 313–314. The Special Sector was displaced by the General Department as the key CC department in late 1952. Gorlizki (1995), pp. 12–13.
195. Gorlizki (2001), pp. 296–297.
196. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 569–570, 578, and 620–621.
197. Mikoyan (2014), p. 621.
198. On the passing of compromising material on some oligarchs by other oligarchs, see Khlevniuk (2015), p. 282. On the other oligarchs deserting Voznesensky when Stalin cut him loose, see Mikoyan (2014), p. 606.
199. On this, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 604–612. Although this was actually directed by Stalin rather than by Malenkov and Beria. See Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004), pp. 79–89. For the argument that the Leningrad affair was an attempt by Malenkov and Beria to root out supporters of the now dead Zhdanov, who had been party boss in Leningrad from 1933 to 1944, see Hahn (1982), pp. 122–135.
200. Mikoyan (2014), p. 611.
201. Rees (c) (2004), p. 223. On the rivalry between Malenkov and Zhdanov, see Ra'anan (1983), Harris (2008), and Hahn (1982). For its antecedents, also see Harris (1976).
202. This is despite them resting on different institutional bases, respectively party and state, and the campaign from the late 1940s to strengthen the party at the state's expense. Gorlizki (1995).

203. Khrushchev (1989), p. 163.
204. Gregory (2004), p. 19.
205. See Kosygin's comment cited in Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (London: Doubleday, 1996), p. 97. For Molotov's view that his phone was always bugged, see Chuev (1991), p. 314. Also Baberowski (2016), pp. 410–411.
206. So Khrushchev exaggerates when he claims Stalin eschewed all collegiality in leadership. Khrushchev (1989).

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The Limits of the Predominant Leader, 1953–64

With Stalin's death, the dominant leader model of collective leadership disappeared, and although there was a commitment to the notion of collective leadership, it was not clear what form of collectivism individual oligarchs supported. For those like Khrushchev, Beria, Bulganin, Saburov and Pervukhin, the only model of collective leadership they had experienced at the centre was the dominant leader model. Malenkov had been around the oligarchy when Stalin was the predominant leader, but he was only part of the inner core when Stalin was dominant. The other oligarchs—Molotov, Voroshilov, Kaganovich and Mikoyan—had been oligarchs under all three models of collective leadership, although the dominant leader model had been the longest in duration. But with the dominant leader gone, how would his successors construct the collective leadership to which they all notionally adhered? None of them wanted a recurrence of a wrathful dominant leader in the Stalin mould. With none of them initially predominant, the pure collectivism model seemed the default position. This was consistent with the collective experience most of them had acquired through the regular meetings held when Stalin was not present, and this underpinned the transition to a different form of collectivism to that of the dominant leader model.

Throughout this whole period, but especially at its outset, the party's normative order therefore experienced significant flux. The notion of a dominant leader was rejected with renewed emphasis upon the collective, although over time and fired by personal ambition the shoots of pure collectivism gave way to the predominant leader model of collective

leadership. Opposition and factionalism re-emerged even though the general predisposition against them remained, while policy differences and bureaucratic politics remained as significant aspects of elite relations. The consequences of failed opposition were not clear, although after the Beria affair death ceased to be a potential outcome for members of the elite. The separation of the oligarchs from the elite and from the rank-and-file was, to a degree, called into question as the CC was called upon to resolve intra-oligarch differences, and on occasion, lower level officials were mobilized into policy discussion. Organizational manipulation through personnel appointment remained important, but it became clear at the end of the period that this required supplementation if it was to act as a reliable base for a would-be leader. And while the party retained a sense of ideological orthodoxy, the content of that shifted.

THE ELITE CONSENSUS

A broad consensus underpinned leadership dynamics, especially in the period immediately following Stalin's death. The roots of this consensus lay in the common experience of ruling shared by those oligarchs who succeeded Stalin.¹ This consensus focused upon agreement that the extremes of Stalinism should be moderated and in particular a sense of security for the elite generated, without at the same time rejecting Stalin and what he stood for. The system had to be changed to remove the centrality of personalism, in the sense that decision-making and elite politics more generally had been organized around Stalin's personal wishes and idiosyncrasies; the dominant leader model of collectivism had to be superseded. The key to this was seen to be strengthening of the institutions and a reversion to norms described as "Leninist". In practical terms for the oligarchs, this consensus meant collective rather than individual rule, abolition of the terror and a narrowing of the definition of political crimes, some reduction in the levels of centralization in administration, and greater attention to the needs of the Soviet consumer.² General agreement on these principles provided the context within which leadership debates were conducted, and although some aspects of this consensus were ultimately rejected (in particular the attitude to Stalin), such debate was in part about remodelling that consensus along lines the leaders could accept. This remodelling amounted to the reconstruction of the collective leadership. But within the consensus there was ample room for debate, especially over the means whereby the elements of that

consensus could be implemented and the reaction to changes that were introduced. And crucially, the elimination of terror significantly reduced the costs of opposition and facilitated the growth of multilateral communication within the leadership. With meetings and discussion less likely to be defined as conspiracy, the way was opened for individuals to gain awareness of common views, opinions and interests among their colleagues and for actual conspiracy to occur.

Central to this consensus was the restoration of “collective leadership”, which was seen in terms of both restoring regularity to work patterns and reviving the party’s decision-making institutions. An immediate practical change which brought about a greater sense of routinization of governmental process was the abolition of the demand that bureaucrats work in the evening and night rather than the day in order to comply with Stalin’s personal work habits. By regularizing the working day for government officials, the work patterns of the oligarchs were also regularized, something which made their work lives easier than they had been in the immediate post-war years. In terms of the party’s decision-making institutions, the Presidium was boosted, in the sense that its meetings became more regular and the practice of small groups meeting to decide issues and those decisions then simply being presented as Presidium decisions ceased. Meeting in small groups did not stop—according to Mikoyan,³ in the early period meetings of the Presidium were often preceded by discussions between Malenkov, Molotov, Beria and Khrushchev—but they were not seen as a substitute for official bodies. Similarly, meetings of the CC were convened more regularly, and in the 1953–64 period, three party congresses were held. So at the institutional level, the structures of collective rule were restored, but there was still some way to go to invest these with the sort of normative authority that could contain a headstrong leader.

THE POST-STALIN ELITE

Recognition of elite consensus should not obscure the structural differences within the initial leadership that succeeded Stalin. Immediately on Stalin’s death, the enlarged Presidium elected in 1952 was abolished, with 22 of its members apparently agreeing to step aside, while the smaller Bureau plus Molotov and Mikoyan came to constitute the new Presidium (compare Tables 4.16 and 5.3). All ten voting members of the Presidium (see Table 5.3) were “Stalinists”, because they would

not have been at the apex of Soviet power had they not been supporters of Stalin. However, four of them—Molotov (1926), Voroshilov (1926), Kaganovich (1930) and Mikoyan (1935)—had become full members of the Politburo considerably earlier and five of them—Malenkov (1946), Beria (1946), Bulganin (1948), Maksim Saburov (1952) and Mikhail Pervukhin (1952)—considerably later than Khrushchev (1939). This means the first four plus Malenkov (who had worked with Stalin in the 1930s before joining the Politburo) and Beria had been members of Stalin's circle at the time of the Terror while the other three had joined following the war and towards the end of the Stalin period. Malenkov had been projected as the heir presumptive by his being allocated the task of presenting the CC Report to the XIX Congress in 1952,⁴ while Beria had in the past been close to Stalin. Nevertheless, a cloud hung over the whole group (with the possible exception of the two most recent appointees) because of the rumour that Stalin was going to shake up the leadership and remove many of them, a development that was prevented by his death.⁵ When the new leadership was announced, it was in the following order: Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Kaganovich, Mikoyan, Saburov and Pervukhin. The first three were generally seen as the leading figures, reflected in the fact that they gave the addresses at Stalin's funeral; Voroshilov was seen as too old (born in 1881, he was nine years older than his closest colleague Molotov who was born in 1890) and Khrushchev as too junior to be considered part of this inner leadership core.⁶

None of the members of the Presidium (including the four candidate members, Nikolai Shvernik, Panteleimon Ponomarenko, Leonid Mel'nikov and Mir Bagirov) could be seen as Khrushchev's clients or allies, although he did have some long term career connections dating from the 1930s with Kaganovich, Malenkov and Bulganin (indeed, his career had been assisted by support from Kaganovich), but there appears to have been little in terms of close personal or political links between Khrushchev and at least Malenkov and Kaganovich; indeed, relations with Kaganovich appear to have been strained from at least the late 1940s.⁷ None of the CC secretaries at that time had career associations with Khrushchev.⁸ Although Khrushchev was not initially seen publicly as one of the senior group within the leadership, he along with Malenkov and Beria were made responsible for Stalin's personal papers,⁹ and in the early months following Stalin's death when Beria was a major proponent of liberal reform,¹⁰ these three seemed to be moving into alliance.¹¹ As

noted above, Malenkov, Molotov, Beria and Khrushchev would caucus before sessions of the Presidium to establish joint positions on issues, although this was clearly not always successful; as Mikoyan points out, in the discussion of attitudes towards the GDR, Beria and Malenkov were opposed by Khrushchev, Molotov, Mikoyan and Bulganin.¹²

But if Khrushchev's position within the collective leadership did not appear particularly strong in terms of supporters, his institutional position was unique. When the post-Stalin line up was announced on 5 March 1953 at a joint meeting of the CC, Council of Ministers and Presidium of the Supreme Soviet,¹³ Malenkov was named Chairman of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers and CC Secretary, Khrushchev remained a CC Secretary (but gave up his chairmanship of the Moscow party organization and was not a member of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers), Beria became Minister of Internal Affairs (in charge of the formerly separate state security and internal affairs ministries) and Molotov was restored as foreign minister; Beria and Molotov along with Bulganin and Kaganovich also became first deputies to Malenkov in the Presidium of the Council of Ministers. The other four members of the party Presidium were also government ministers, meaning Khrushchev was the only member of the leading party body not to also hold a government post. At a subsequent CC plenum on 14 March, Malenkov's request "to be released from the duties of Secretary of the party Central Committee" was granted, thereby leaving Khrushchev as the only CC Secretary in the Presidium. This meant that Khrushchev was the *de facto* head of the party while Malenkov was head of the state machine (the position of head of state, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet held since Stalin's death by Voroshilov, was purely ceremonial) and in practice as prime minister chaired sessions of the party Presidium.¹⁴ At the July 1953 plenum, Beria was formally removed and placed under arrest,¹⁵ and Khrushchev client Aleksei Kirichenko was appointed a candidate member of the Presidium. Khrushchev's primacy in the party was formally recognized with his appointment as First Secretary at the September 1953 CC plenum, but his position remained weak: all members of the Presidium except Kirichenko were at best allies of Khrushchev and in terms of standing as leading figures in the party's history, most remained senior to him. In March 1954, following a re-organization of Beria's former bailiwick, Khrushchev client Ivan Serov was named head of the new KGB. This was a significant appointment not only because Serov was a Khrushchev client, but because of the way

that the head of the security apparatus still reported directly to the party First Secretary, not to the Presidium as a whole.¹⁶ And in autumn 1954, Khrushchev took over chairing the Presidium from Malenkov, thereby gaining undivided control over the preparation of materials for Presidium meetings¹⁷ as well as overthrowing a tradition dating back to 1919.

The removal of Beria was motivated by a number of considerations (including for conservatives the liberal nature of some of the reforms he was championing), but one was clearly self-defence for the oligarchs. Although he had not been in charge of the NKVD at the time of the worst excesses of the Terror in the 1930s and had in fact led that organization while the Terror wound down, he was directly associated with the “organs” and the danger they could pose to the other members of the leadership, while his actions since Stalin’s death (including threatening at least one member of the Presidium, Bulganin, with dismissal if he did not agree with Beria on a particular issue¹⁸) plus his capacity to keep tabs on what his colleagues were doing,¹⁹ seemed to emphasize the danger he posed to his leadership colleagues. His removal thus seemed to give the oligarchy a greater sense of security than it otherwise would have had, and seems to have been unanimously supported within the Presidium. Aware of the potential danger posed by the security forces, his arrest was undertaken by the military, led by the commander of the Moscow Air Defence Region Kirill Moskalenko and deputy Defence Minister Georgii Zhukov. The military were involved in the plot from early in its life. Khrushchev, the main instigator of Beria’s removal, spoke to members of the Presidium as well as to Moskalenko in the period leading up to the CC plenum that formalized his removal, although Mikoyan claims that he was spoken to only on the day of the Presidium session.²⁰ Following his arrest in July, Beria was secretly tried and put to death in December. This was the last time an oligarch was put to death, in effect restoring the pre-1930s norm that oligarchs were immune from the death penalty for political activity.

The circumstances surrounding the stripping of Malenkov of his party secretaryship are less clear. It may be that he voluntarily gave up this position, believing that it was less powerful than the chairmanship of the Council of Ministers, but this is unlikely. It is more likely that the other members of the leadership saw the combination of these two posts as potentially creating the basis for someone to attain the sort of dominance that Stalin had gained, and that he was forced to surrender one. The fact that most did not see Khrushchev as a dominant leader as

a credible outcome would have facilitated this move.²¹ The best means of ensuring the maintenance of collective rule was to split these positions and thereby, it was hoped, prevent anyone from gaining a preponderance of power. But if this was the thinking, they clearly did not know their history of the 1920s.

UNDERMINING COLLECTIVISM

Over the next three years, leading up to the XX Congress of the party in February 1956, Khrushchev both undermined the basis of collectivism and strengthened his leadership position through a combination of patronage, policy and institutional design. None of the other oligarchs was able to combine these three elements into an effective strategy, and it was the implementation of that strategy that in large part shaped the development of the collective leadership during this period. It was the success of this strategy that was mainly responsible for the closing off of pure oligarchy as a possible path of development, instead leading to the restoration of the model of a predominant leader within the collective. While this strategy shaped the collective, it was also intrinsically part of the dynamic of that collective. Khrushchev's ability to wield the patronage weapon was directly related to his position as First Secretary, and therefore ultimately in charge of the party apparatus and the power over personnel disposition that this gave, and reaffirmed the earlier norm of the acceptability of organizational manipulation for political ends. Prior to the demise of the anti-party group in mid-1957, this power of appointment was restricted mainly to the party apparatus, with the state remaining dominated by other members of the leadership who thereby were able to limit his involvement in personnel decisions within this sphere. But in the party, he was able to appoint supporters and would-be supporters to leading positions throughout its structure.²² Relying principally upon his established networks from Ukraine and the Moscow region,²³ in both of which he had played leading roles under Stalin, Khrushchev moved clients and supporters into important positions throughout the party structure; in the Presidium Kirichenko and Suslov became full members in July 1955, while in the Secretariat in March 1955 Shatalin was removed and in July Aristov, Nikolai Belyaev and Dmitrii Shepilov became CC Secretaries. However, Khrushchev remained in the minority in the Presidium; although Kirichenko was a client from Khrushchev's Ukrainian period, Suslov, Aristov and Belyaev

seem to have had no former career associations with Khrushchev and were allies.²⁴ In the autumn and winter of 1953–54, two-thirds of provincial first secretaries in the Russian Republic were replaced,²⁵ between September 1953 and February 1956, 45 of 84 first secretaries of republican and regional party committees were replaced, while in the CC elected at the XX Congress, nearly two-thirds were supporters of Khrushchev.²⁶ However, this wave of appointments did not change the situation in the Presidium where Khrushchev still lacked a stable body of people tied to him (Table 5.1).

Of the 17 members of the Presidium (11 full and 6 candidate) elected following the XX Congress, there were only three clients of Khrushchev (Kirichenko was a full member while Brezhnev and Furtseva were candidates) and four allies (Suslov and candidate members Shepilov, Zhukov and Mukhitdinov). Among the eight CC secretaries, Brezhnev and Furtseva were clients while Suslov, Aristov, Belyaev and Shepilov were allies. The strength of Khrushchev's position clearly lay in the organizational rather than the legislative wing of the party, reflecting his position as First Secretary. While state and party representation in the Presidium was almost equal, that of the state continued to shade the party.²⁷ This balance of forces, in part, explains the other two elements of his strategy.

The earlier norm of the broad discussion of policy within the elite also re-emerged. Within the context of wide-ranging policy debate within the oligarchy, Khrushchev was able to manipulate the strands within the leadership consensus to generate policy positions that appealed to some significant constituencies, including some oligarchs, and, importantly,

Table 5.1 Leadership elected in February 1956

<i>Presidium full</i>	<i>Presidium candidate</i>	<i>Secretariat</i>
Bulganin	Brezhnev <i>C</i>	Khrushchev
Voroshilov	Zhukov <i>A</i>	Suslov <i>A</i>
Kaganovich	Mukhitdinov <i>A</i>	Brezhnev <i>C</i>
Kirichenko <i>C</i>	Furtseva <i>C</i>	Furtseva <i>C</i>
Malenkov	Shvernik	Shepilov <i>A</i>
Mikoyan	Shepilov <i>A</i>	Aristov <i>A</i>
Molotov		Belyaev <i>A</i>
Pervukhin		Pospelov
Saburov		
Khrushchev		
Suslov <i>A</i>		

Key: *C* = client; *A* = ally

sideline Malenkov. Four areas of policy were most significant: satisfaction of the populace's consumption needs, the international situation, administrative decentralization and the attitude to Stalin. In terms of popular consumption and the international situation, Khrushchev offered a clear alternative to the line taken by the prime minister.²⁸ Malenkov advocated major increases in the production of consumer goods and an easing of relations with the outside world, including acceptance that war between the capitalist and socialist worlds was not inevitable. These two positions were linked, because if there could be international easing of tension, resources could be directed away from defence and heavy industry into the light industry that would produce enhanced quantities of consumer goods. This would have involved a clear break with traditional priorities and was bound to upset the more conservative elements within the leadership. In contrast, Khrushchev emphasized improved agricultural performance and thereby enhanced food availability, and argued that this could be done without a major redirection of funding away from heavy industry, principally through the opening of new agricultural lands (the virgin lands scheme announced at the February-March 1954 plenum²⁹); indeed he reaffirmed the primacy of heavy over light industry. He also emphasized the continuing international danger posed by the capitalist powers, and therefore the need for continued military vigilance. Khrushchev was also a major exponent of what was called "Leninist norms" of party life. This was generally seen as involving collective leadership in contrast to the operation of the "cult of personality" under Stalin (oligarchical rather than dictatorial leadership) and the regularity of operation of party organs. For the traditionalists, the focus on "Leninist norms" was a welcome commitment to the collectivism of leadership, while for party officialdom it was both an implied guarantee of some security of tenure and an assertion of party primacy over the state.

This appeal to more conservative elements within the leadership was also evident in Khrushchev's attitude to decentralization compared with that of Malenkov. Both acknowledged the dangers posed by a continuation of the hyper-centralization of the Stalin era, but the solutions they suggested were quite different. Malenkov argued in favour of what was essentially a technocratic response, seeking to work with state officials to rationalize the bureaucracy and improve the way in which it worked. This appealed to his primary bureaucratic constituency, the state machine. In contrast, Khrushchev emphasized the initiative, enterprise and ability of local officials, calling upon them to increase their efforts

and commitment to the achievement of the tasks they were set. This sort of focus on the mobilization of human effort as the key to economic success was redolent of the rhetoric and symbolism of the building of socialism under Stalin and therefore likely to appeal to those conservatives nostalgic for the old order. Khrushchev combined this appeal for greater efforts with criticism of any shortcomings in this endeavour. Thus while lauding the initiative of lower level officials, he was also implicitly threatening them if their performance was found to be deficient. On the face of it, this sort of approach does not appear likely to generate significant lower level support for Khrushchev, but in fact it did. This is because this dual-pronged approach was calibrated to lock into the distinction between party and state. Effectively Khrushchev was calling on local party officials to exercise their initiative in this way while criticizing local state officials for deficiencies in performance. Ministerial officials and enterprise managers were blamed for poor agricultural results, and the solution was seen to lie in a greater role by party officials.³⁰ This line clearly appealed to Khrushchev's institutional constituency, the party apparatus, as well as to conservatives in the leadership, and Khrushchev now began to organize among members of the Presidium against Malenkov. Such efforts picked up in summer–autumn 1954. At the January 1955 CC plenum Malenkov came under concerted attack by other oligarchs critical of the policy positions he had been espousing, and at the February session of the Supreme Soviet he was replaced by Bulganin as Chairman of the Council of Ministers; he became a deputy chair of the Council of Ministers and the minister for electrification, but crucially retained his seat on the party Presidium. Khrushchev was not yet strong enough to remove him, while others may have found him useful as a balance against the First Secretary.

The role of policy and its articulation was clearly evident in the conflict between Khrushchev and Malenkov. Both leaders had adopted different policy stances and sought to articulate them in speeches, especially in official fora like CC plena and meetings of the Supreme Soviet, but particularly in the case of Khrushchev also when he was touring the country and visiting party organizations, factories and farms, which was a major exercise for him throughout his tenure as party leader. The delivery of such speeches to official gatherings was a major public activity of all members of the leadership, and in so doing they usually expressed their views on the leading issues of the day. Of course, when the Presidium was united on a particular question, the speeches of all

party leaders were likely to show little variation. But when there were differences within the Presidium, leaders often flagged those differences through the speeches they delivered. Sometimes those differences were exaggerated, especially in cases when at the CC plenum disciplinary action was being taken against one of their number (and therefore the numbers had been sorted out within the Presidium in advance of the meeting), but in most such speeches, the differences were more cases of nuance and emphasis as the speaker sought to signal his support or criticism of the prevailing line to his listeners. Those listeners were a combination of other oligarchs, party and state officials especially in the regions, and the mass of the populace. Among these constituencies, the oligarchs and officials were the most important groups. The projection of views in this way, the signalling of agreement and potential cooperation, was a means of constructing factional alliances that did not breach the party's rules on organizing factions. In this sense, policy advocacy through speeches was a significant constituent of political conflict, which is why the "conflict school" has focused so heavily upon such speeches.³¹ But it is important to acknowledge that policy was not an arbitrary weapon for Khrushchev. There is no evidence that he consistently took up policy positions simply to outflank his opponents. He may have sublimated his policy preferences at times to avoid the appearance of such conflict (e.g. on the relationship with Yugoslavia in 1953–54), but over the life of his tenure as First Secretary, his basic policy positions retained considerable coherence.³² So within elite politics, policy differences were a central issue, and their articulation a key mechanism for building support within both the oligarchy and, more broadly, the elite.

Following Malenkov's demotion, Khrushchev appeared as the *primus inter pares*, and turned his attention to the most prominent old Stalinist oligarch, Molotov. There had been growing tension between them for some time. Molotov had opposed Khrushchev's virgin lands and housing construction policies, but the most important differences were on foreign policy.³³ Molotov was foreign minister, but Khrushchev became increasingly active in this area. The main cause of contention was Khrushchev's drive to improve relations with Yugoslavia and Molotov's reluctance to accept this change to the Stalinist-era policy. At the July 1955 CC, plenum Molotov came under sustained attack by other members of the leadership, and although Molotov retained both his ministerial and Presidium positions, it is clear that his authority had slipped and that of Khrushchev had risen. The latter was reflected in the above-noted

election to the Presidium of two new voting members, both supporters of Khrushchev (Kirichenko from his Ukrainian base and Suslov, who had been an opponent of Malenkov) and three new CC secretaries (Aristov, Belyaev and Shepilov) whose promotion gave them reason to become Khrushchev supporters.³⁴

So despite the fact that none of his critics had been dismissed from the Presidium and he still lacked majority support in that body, Khrushchev seemed the clear leading figure³⁵ when the fourth policy area, the attitude to Stalin, became important. In the lead up to the XX Congress in February 1956, the leadership had been discussing whether they needed to address the question of Stalin and the repressions, and if so, how. They had been prompted in this in part by Khrushchev's discussions with some people returned from the camps (something that seems to have been arranged by Mikoyan who was a strong supporter of discussion of the Stalin question) and by the report of a commission set up to investigate the repressions (the Pospelov commission).³⁶ Ultimately, over the objections of Molotov, Voroshilov and Kaganovich,³⁷ it was decided that the Congress should receive a report. The final text Khrushchev delivered to a closed session of the congress was not confirmed by the CC beforehand,³⁸ clearly a breach of party norms but perhaps reflective of uncertainty about how that body (which had been elected in 1952) would react. It was not published in the USSR until 1989,³⁹ but copies of it were sent to party organizations to be read to party members and to fraternal parties elsewhere, from where the speech was leaked to the West. The XX Congress was also notable for strengthening Khrushchev's position within the leadership; although Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and Voroshilov along with all of the others retained their positions as full members of the Presidium, four supporters of Khrushchev (Brezhnev, Furtseva, Zhukov and Mukhitdinov; although only Brezhnev and Furtseva were clients) became candidate members of the Presidium, with Brezhnev and Furtseva also becoming CC secretaries; now half of the secretaries were also members of the Presidium but only Brezhnev and Furtseva were clients while Suslov, Shepilov, Aristov and Belyaev were allies.⁴⁰ However, this still meant that among the full members, only Kirichenko was a firm client of Khrushchev, meaning that the latter had to proceed by building alliances with the other oligarchs through concession and compromise. In addition, a new CC was elected resulting in the above-noted position of almost two-thirds of the members being associated with Khrushchev.

The leadership's attitude to the denunciation of Stalin remained publicly ambiguous, reflecting the continuing division within the Presidium on this issue. There was no public rejection of the stance outlined at the XX Congress, but there was at times what appeared to be a significant weakening of the position on Stalin.⁴¹ This ambiguity reflected the way most individual oligarchs were personally torn in their attitude to Stalin, not just factional positions within the oligarchy. However, as the member of the leadership who had pressed most for the speech to be given (although Mikoyan had been very insistent and influential),⁴² Khrushchev had to bear the brunt of whatever backlash was likely to come. And the backlash was significant, with risings in Poland and Hungary that had to be suppressed by force. Despite some downgrading of Molotov and Kaganovich in June 1956 as they were both shifted from their ministerial positions to new ones (Molotov from foreign affairs to Minister of State Control and Kaganovich from chairmanship of the State Committee on Labour and Wages to Minister of the Building Materials Industry⁴³) which seemed to strengthen Khrushchev, the east European events, plus a new rupture with Yugoslavia, eroded Khrushchev's authority. This seeming slippage of Khrushchev's authority encouraged his opponents to confront him on another policy issue. They persuaded the December 1956 CC plenum to introduce a new centralized planning mechanism that flew directly in the face of the decentralization measures Khrushchev had been championing. However, in February 1957, just after the Supreme Soviet had formally approved the re-organization pushed through by his opponents in the Presidium and following a whirlwind tour of the country during which he shored up his position with regional party leaders, Khrushchev called another CC plenum which adopted a measure establishing regional economic councils (sovnarkhozy) which would effectively displace the just-established Central Economic Commission and most of the industrial ministries and pass control to republican and regional officials. Khrushchev then took this proposal into the public arena, but he and Kirichenko were the only members of the leadership to speak in its support; seven of the full members of the Presidium held ministerial positions and therefore believed their power base was threatened by such decentralizing measures.⁴⁴ Khrushchev had outflanked his conservative opponents and majority in the Presidium by mobilizing support in the CC, and the measure was approved with some modifications in May.

This leads to the third leg of Khrushchev's strategy, institutional design. Two aspects of this were significant, one relating to the Presidium, the other to the CC. In terms of the Presidium, in November 1954 responsibility for the organization and support of the Presidium's work was transferred from under Malenkov's control to the General Department of the CC, which was answerable to Khrushchev as party First Secretary and run by a long-time Khrushchev associate.⁴⁵ This gave him an important lever of control over the Presidium and its working.⁴⁶ Turning to the CC, as noted in Chapter 3, the CC played an important role in the elite conflicts of the 1920s, and given that these conflicts were played out through policy debate, it was significant in the policy process also. But as noted above, during the 1930s the CC became more formulaic in its proceedings and after the war effectively ceased to exist as a parliamentary institution.⁴⁷ As party leader, Khrushchev set about reviving the institution as an important arena of elite politics and policy. The early leadership arrangements, including the removal of Beria, were all sanctioned through the CC, thereby acknowledging the Presidium's place as its executive organ. In addition, in the period of his struggle with Malenkov, Khrushchev used meetings of the CC (September 1953, February–March 1954, June 1954 and January 1955) to launch major innovations in agriculture, including the virgin lands scheme. This remained the case after Malenkov's downgrading, with the February 1957 meeting adopting his *sovnarkhoz* proposals particularly important. Furthermore, Khrushchev's treatment of CC members at these meetings was a sharp change with what had occurred before. Instead of treating the assembly as there simply for the pro-forma approval of the measures he was announcing, Khrushchev's approach was to treat the CC members as though they had real decision-making power. He appealed to their judgement (and interests), seeking to convince them of the worth of the measures he was championing. He explained the reasons for the changes he sought rather than appearing to present them with a fait accompli. Khrushchev seemed to be taking them into his confidence and appealing for their support, an approach which not only flattered their egos but which was adopted by no other member of the Presidium at this time.⁴⁸ Khrushchev appeared uniquely as their defender and champion. Khrushchev's use of the CC in this way enabled him to overcome his weakness in the Presidium and outflank his oligarch rivals in that body and get adopted policies that he supported but which did not have full Presidium support, including the virgin lands program in February

1954, the rapprochement with Yugoslavia in July 1955, and the sovnarkhoz decision in February 1957. It also supported Khrushchev when some of his Presidium colleagues moved against him in 1957.

The origins of what came to be known as the “anti-party group affair” lay in the breakdown of the original consensus, manifested in a combination of opposition to some of Khrushchev’s policies and to the way in which he was increasingly exercising his leadership role. Destalinization and the subsequent eruptions in eastern Europe, the rapprochement with Yugoslavia, and the sovnarkhoz decision seem to have particularly alarmed the more conservative members of the Presidium, especially Molotov, Kaganovich and Voroshilov, while Khrushchev’s propensity to circumvent the leadership by going over its head to the CC and to party officials more generally (Khrushchev’s practice of touring the country dispensing advice and talking to officials was an innovation and one which facilitated the development of lower level support) alarmed others within the collective; his unilateral announcement on 22 May 1957 that the USSR should surpass the US in the production of meat, milk and butter within three years was a recent case of the ignoring of his colleagues’ sensitivities in this regard. With Khrushchev acting in this way and opposition to him hardening within the Presidium, his opponents increasingly, but secretly, discussed what they could do to rein him in. They needed to be able to mobilize a majority in the Presidium against Khrushchev, just as he had been able to do earlier against Malenkov and Molotov. The core of the group comprised Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, Malenkov, Bulganin, Saburov, Pervukhin and Shepilov (who was a candidate member)⁴⁹; an attempt was made to recruit candidate members Zhukov and Furtseva, but this failed. This group constituted a majority of the voting members of the Presidium, and among the others, only Kirichenko seemed solidly in Khrushchev’s camp; Suslov and Mikoyan,⁵⁰ the other full members, seem initially to have vacillated. Despite worries about the plot being discovered—there were well-founded fears about their phones being bugged and their movements reported back by the security services⁵¹ who were headed by Khrushchev client Serov—they met secretly to plan their action. They seem to have made no attempt to extend the conspiracy into the CC membership, perhaps assuming that the past norms of collective leadership would apply: Khrushchev would accept a decision of the Presidium without challenge and the Presidium recommendation would be accepted by the CC.

Khrushchev was summoned to a meeting of the Presidium on 18 June 1957 where he was accused of a number of failings by his critics.⁵² The meeting ranged through a number of sessions over three days. Instead of meekly submitting to the Presidium majority as party norms seemed to mandate, Khrushchev fought back, supported, despite some wavering, by full members Suslov, Mikoyan and Kirichenko, and the candidates Brezhnev, Zhukov and Furtseva. The opposition to Khrushchev seems to have become dispirited, and on 20 June agreed to the demand mounted by Khrushchev supporters within the CC who had been ferried to Moscow, to convene a CC plenum. This opened on 22 June and lasted six days during which the anti-Khrushchev opposition was routed.⁵³ The meeting overwhelmingly rejected the majority position reached in the Presidium, confirmed Khrushchev as party leader, and criticized the anti-party group for factional activity. Molotov, Kaganovich, Malenkov, Saburov and Shepilov were removed from the Presidium,⁵⁴ and Pervukhin was reduced to candidate status. All retained their party membership. No public mention was made of the involvement of Bulganin and Voroshilov and they retained their full positions in the Presidium, perhaps to obscure the awkward truth that Khrushchev had been in a minority in that body.

The anti-party group affair was an important episode in the history of Soviet elite relations for a number of reasons. It confirmed the right of the CC to adjudicate differences within the Presidium, and thereby established a principle of the ability of the First Secretary (and possibly others) to appeal a majority decision within that executive body to the larger parent organ. In principle, this could mean that oligarch differences should no longer be contained behind the doors of the Presidium and seemed to be a significant strengthening of the earlier norm of collective leadership being vested in the major collective organs. But the anti-party group affair and how it unrolled also reflects a couple of other factors. First, that such a development could occur was a result of the ending of the terror that Khrushchev and his colleagues had brought about. While it was still not clear that force would not be used (indeed, the conspirators were worried that the security forces would be mobilized against them), the elimination of terror as it had existed under Stalin meant that the consequences of a failed conspiracy did not appear as great as they had earlier. This encouraged conspiracy and seemed to be a harking back to the earlier normative order and the acceptability of opposition. Second, the role Zhukov played⁵⁵ in using military aircraft to

ferry CC members to Moscow to support Khrushchev raised the prospect of military involvement in party affairs, something that had not occurred in the past and would have been a troubling precedent. Third, this was the first time that some members of the leadership (Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich) were publicly said to be personally responsible for the Terror of the 1930s.⁵⁶

The dynamics of collective leadership up until mid-1957 had some parallels with the period before Stalin had established his predominance. One member of the collective, Khrushchev, was using party norms, in this case, a combination of policy appeal, personnel appointment and mobilization of the CC, to outflank his major rivals and, by consolidating his personal authority, implicitly threaten the collective principle. Achievement of his aims meant that Khrushchev had to create alliances with other oligarchs because jointly those oligarchs were sufficiently powerful to prevent him from overwhelming them through the appointment of clients to the Presidium. The alliances Khrushchev was able to construct were facilitated by the way in which the removal of terror from political life facilitated the sorts of informal contacts among oligarchs that, under Stalin, could generate the leader's suspicions and make those oligarchs vulnerable to his wrath. With the terror gone, the normal processes of social and professional interaction among a group of men who worked closely together strengthened. While such informal contacts were often focused on immediate policy questions, they also provided the opportunity for the tactical coordination of action within the oligarchy and the elite, and Khrushchev took advantage of this to build up his alliances. Such alliances were facilitated by the suspicions some of his colleagues had about the motives of Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich, whose previous closeness to Stalin raised doubts about their real readiness to share power within the collective. The oligarchs, at least until 1957, appear not to have seen Khrushchev in the same light. They underestimated Khrushchev and believed they could control him. Thus in the normal give and take of the post-Stalin collective leadership consensus, they did not see Khrushchev's accumulation of power as a danger. Intent on carrying out their own responsibilities and captive to the broad consensus that enveloped the elite, they cooperated with a leadership dynamic that Khrushchev was able to shape to his own advantage. When they realized the danger, they too used their personal relations to construct an anti-Khrushchev alliance. They failed because Khrushchev was able to mobilize the elite based in the CC against the oligarchs in

the Presidium, relying upon the established party norm that vested authority in the larger body.

The defeat of the anti-party group and the wholesale changes to both the Presidium and the Secretariat marked a significant shift in the way elite politics was played out. The extensive leadership changes in 1957 was the first major change among Presidium full members (although changes had been greater among candidates and secretaries) since Stalin's death—only Beria had been missing from the group elected at the XX Congress in 1956—and this change removed the core of the established Stalinists upon whom the leadership consensus of 1953 had rested. Molotov, Kaganovich and Malenkov were gone, Voroshilov (and Bulganin) had been so compromised that he henceforth lacked authority, while the only other of the old Stalinists apart from Khrushchev, Mikoyan, was a Khrushchev supporter. The post-anti-party group Presidium and Secretariat were packed with Khrushchev's supporters, and most of them had not been part of the original post-Stalin consensus (see Table 5.2).

The anti-party group affair reflects the destruction of that oligarch consensus. As noted at the start of the chapter, the essence of that consensus had been a commitment to collective leadership, the elimination of terror both within the elite and society, some administrative decentralization and improving the lot of the Soviet consumer. The problem was that these were accompanied by an (probably unspoken) agreement not to question the basics of the Stalinist system. The hope, reflected in the immediate downgrading of the symbols of Stalin (most clearly the disappearance of public references to Stalin and of the citing of his works), was that this could simply be excluded from contemporary concerns. But ignoring the legacy was impossible, not just because recent history does not automatically disappear from a society's consciousness, but also because not only were some of the elements of the consensus discordant with high Stalinism, but also the course of the conflict between Khrushchev and first Malenkov and then Molotov called into question central aspects of that legacy. The conflict over policy with Malenkov cast Khrushchev's opponent in the guise of seeking to overturn essential elements of Stalinist policy: priority investment for heavy industry and the inevitability of war with the capitalist world. While Khrushchev's initial policies, especially on agriculture, were a departure from the Stalinist line, they did not seem to be inconsistent with the fundamental tenets of that line. Accordingly, the rest of the old guard supported Khrushchev

against Malenkov. In this sense, the consensus held and shaped the outcome of that conflict.

Similarly the conflict with Molotov over rapprochement with Yugoslavia was resolved with all members of the Presidium supporting Khrushchev.⁵⁷ Their support for Khrushchev was not because they supported the old Stalinist anti-Tito line, because Khrushchev's position was the direct antithesis of that, but because they realized that leadership consensus was essential, and the break with Tito was bad politics. Accordingly, they fell in behind Khrushchev and the new policy. Their recognition of the importance of the maintenance of that consensus and the continued application of party norms relating to opposition acceptability is reflected in the failure to remove either Malenkov or Molotov from the Presidium. But there was clearly tension here between the Stalinist consensus and the new policy lines Khrushchev was espousing. This came to the fore in 1956 in a way that crystallized the growing opposition to Khrushchev and led to the attempt to remove him.

As noted above, a central aspect of this was destalinization, which most of the old guard resisted, and the popular responses it evoked. But also important were Khrushchev's introduction of the notions of "peaceful coexistence" and a potential diversity of paths to socialism (i.e. the Soviet model was not the blueprint for all socialist parties) at the XX Congress, the *sovnarkhoz* decision, Khrushchev's commitment for the Soviet Union to outperform the US in the production of meat, milk and butter within three years, and a crisis over plan targets at the end of 1956. The popular response to destalinization, especially in Poland and Hungary, pushed some like Bulganin into the conservative camp of the old Stalinists. Such moderates would also have been opposed to the way in which the Presidium majority in favour of centralized economic management had been outflanked by Khrushchev's use of the CC to get his *sovnarkhoz* proposals, which he had radicalized in order to gain the support of regional party officials in the CC, introduced. By May 1957, the anti-Khrushchev coalition that came to be called the anti-party group had formed. However, this group was united only by opposition to Khrushchev rather than by any common commitment to an alternative program.

Thus in the years between Stalin's death and the denouement of the anti-party group, political conflict had been diffuse. The old Stalinists had constituted a loose group, but they were hardly a faction. Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, Mikoyan and Khrushchev were

united by a loose commitment to a Stalinist consensus stemming from their long periods of service with Stalin, while Bulganin, Saburov and Pervukhin had also bought into this. However, this consensus was sufficiently weak that it could not prevent Khrushchev from splitting from it and confronting Malenkov and Molotov, forcing the others to choose between them. Only when the Stalinist consensus was clearly and openly breached with destalinization on top of Khrushchev's mobilization of the CC to introduce policy and to overturn the earlier Presidium decision and introduce the *sovnarkhoz* reform, did the other oligarchs unite to confront Khrushchev. The role of this consensus in stabilizing post-Stalin rule should not be underestimated. It was within that general elite agreement that policy discussion took place and differences were aired. During this time, individual oligarchs were not always constrained to toe the leadership line; Khrushchev was not the only one to say what he thought in public. But all of them openly and vigorously expressed their views in the Presidium which, during this period, met frequently⁵⁸ and was a real arena of vigorous dispute.⁵⁹ Presidium members freely raised issues both individually and collectively and vigorously pursued their points of view, and also met outside that body with like-minded members to coordinate their activity; the oligarchs who lived in Moscow frequently bumped into one another as they went about their tasks, and such meetings clearly provided an opportunity for political discussion and plotting. Their institutional bases created the context for bureaucratic politics over resources and this also brought them into contact with one another.

THE ACHILLES HEEL OF LEADERSHIP PREDOMINANCE

The defeat of the anti-party group left Khrushchev seemingly predominant within the collective. The new Presidium consisted overwhelmingly of those who had supported him in 1957 or were newly promoted by him into that body (Table 5.2).

The full membership was increased from 11 in 1956 to 15 in 1957, with four people expelled (Kaganovich, Malenkov, Molotov and Saburov) and one dropped to candidate membership (Pervukhin). Of the nine new full members, three were clients and six allies; a majority of candidate members were also clients or allies. The level of change was much lower in the Secretariat, reflecting the more powerful position Khrushchev had had there compared with the Presidium; the only change was the replacement of Shepilov by Kuusinen. The members of

Table 5.2 Leadership after the “Anti-Party Group” affair, June 1957^a

<i>Presidium full</i>	<i>Presidium candidate</i>	<i>Secretaries</i>
Aristov <i>A</i>	Kalnberzin	Khrushchev
Belyaev <i>A</i>	Kirilenko <i>C</i>	Aristov <i>A</i>
Brezhnev <i>C</i>	Korotchenko <i>C</i>	Belyaev <i>A</i>
Bulganin	Kosygin <i>A</i>	Brezhnev <i>C</i>
Voroshilov	Mazurov	Pospelov <i>A</i>
Zhukov <i>A</i>	Mzhavanadze <i>C</i>	Suslov <i>A</i>
Ignatov <i>C</i>	Mukhitdinov <i>A</i>	Furtseva <i>C</i>
Kirichenko <i>C</i>	Pervukhin	Kuusinen <i>A</i>
Kozlov <i>A</i>	Pospelov <i>A</i>	
Kuusinen <i>A</i>		
Mikoyan <i>A</i>		
Suslov <i>A</i>		
Furtseva <i>C</i>		
Khrushchev		
Shvernik <i>A</i>		

Key: *C* = client; *A* = ally

^aChanges made between the anti-party group affair and the XXI Congress:

Politburo full: In: Mukhitdinov (December 1957), Podgorny, Polyansky and Kosygin (May 1960). Out: Zhukov (October 1957), Bulganin (September 1958), Belyaev and Kirichenko (May 1960), Voroshilov (July 1960)

Politburo candidate: In: Polyansky and Podgorny (June 1958), Gennady Voronov and Viktor Grishin (January 1961)

Secretariat: In: Ignatov, Kirichenko and Mukhitdinov (December 1957), Kozlov (May 1960). Out: Belyaev (November 1958), Aristov, Ignatov, Kirichenko, Pospelov and Furtseva (May 1960) Brezhnev (July 1960)

the anti-party group who retained their membership of the Presidium were soon excluded: Bulganin in September 1958, Voroshilov July 1960 and Pervukhin October 1961. Zhukov (who was promoted to full membership in June) was removed in October 1957,⁶⁰ thereby confirming party control over the military, and apparently reflecting the fear among the other oligarchs about his ambitions.⁶¹ Following the June 1957 plenum, a majority of full members of the Presidium were CC secretaries and all secretaries were members of the Presidium. Party officials for the first time outnumbered those from the state among Presidium members.⁶² And in April 1958, Khrushchev became Chairman of the Council of Ministers, or prime minister,⁶³ along with his position as party leader, the combination of positions that had been occupied by Stalin and stripped from Malenkov in 1953. Khrushchev later claimed he had opposed his appointment as prime minister.⁶⁴

From the time the anti-party group was defeated, the elements of pure collectivism in the leadership gave way to the predominant leader model as Khrushchev's *modus operandi* became increasingly personalized: he became more over-bearing, more convinced that his views were correct and that they applied in all policy areas (rather than the more restricted policy competence he had claimed earlier), and less conscious of the sensitivities of his colleagues.⁶⁵ He reduced his advisers to a minimum and relied more heavily on close acquaintances and relatives for advice and stopped consulting all members of the Presidium.⁶⁶ As a result, the nature of the Presidium changed. Rather than an arena in which important questions were discussed, divergent opinions taken into account and consensus sought,⁶⁷ its decision-making role atrophied. In the words of two students of this: "The active discussion of problems from different points of view, the open clash of interests of different groups in the leadership gradually disappeared from the practical work of the CC Presidium. It increasingly turned into a consultative organ for the new 'vozhd'".⁶⁸ The strategy Khrushchev had used from time to time before the anti-party group affair, mobilization of the CC and its members against the Presidium majority, now became almost his standard operating procedure. Symbolically, this change was reflected in the emergence of a cult of Khrushchev, expressed principally through the laudatory remarks of his colleagues⁶⁹ and the greater emphasis given to his activities by the press. Khrushchev's more personal *modus operandi* jarred with the pure collectivist norms that had seemed to be re-emerging immediately after Stalin's death, and was ultimately to contribute to his demise.

Over the following seven years, Khrushchev forced through a series of policies and measures, often over dissent within the Presidium, which were widely seen as being failures. This was particularly marked in the international sphere where the Berlin crises of 1958–59 and 1961, the collapse of the proposed summits in 1959 and 1960, the deterioration in the relationship with the Chinese and the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 were all seen within the leadership as setbacks for the USSR. Domestically, Khrushchev was associated with a series of changes that shook up the status quo: further waves of re-organization of the administration of agriculture in response to continuing disappointing agricultural performance,⁷⁰ continuing rounds of threats of and actual cuts to the military budget (including the drive to shift the focus from the established military forces to rocket-based military capacity), the ideological

shift of the basis of the state to the notion of the “all-people’s state” (and party) which seemed to deny the previous sacred cow of the class essence of state and party, the revival of destalinization at the XXII Congress⁷¹ (including the widening of the ranks of the anti-party group to include Voroshilov and Bulganin; Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich and Shepilov were expelled from the party during this campaign), the retail price rises in 1962 which gave rise to popular demonstrations and riots (the most serious in Novocherkassk⁷²), some liberalization in the cultural sphere, and the campaigns for fertilizer and chemical production (with the latter being presented as being even more important for the economy than steel production) as means of improving agricultural performance.

Many of these policies were opposed both within the Presidium by the oligarchs and in official (and military) ranks more broadly, including the CC, but this opposition was ignored. Although Khrushchev rode roughshod over the growing opposition, that opposition contented itself with grumbling about its lot and did not until 1964 seek to mobilize to defend pure collectivism and themselves. This was despite the fact that Khrushchev explicitly threatened many people in official positions. At the XXII Congress Khrushchev stated that leaders were accountable to the party and that the party could replace any leader when it deemed this necessary.⁷³ More pointedly, the new party Rules introduced at the XXII Congress imposed clear limits on how long officials could hold their positions; for leading party bodies, including the Presidium, officials could remain in office for only three terms, although there was provision for longer tenure for those with “acknowledged authority, and high political, organizational and other qualities”,⁷⁴ a description clearly intended to apply to Khrushchev. In association with prescribed turnover levels, and the promise that the same measures were to be extended to the state, this meant that office-holding ceased to have the security it had had in the past. In another blow to the positions of his supporters in the party apparatus, in autumn 1962 Khrushchev proposed the division of the party apparatus into industrial and agricultural wings, ostensibly to increase party control over the economy. Although none in the Presidium openly opposed this, it had little support there⁷⁵ and was widely resented at lower levels by those party officials whose bailiwicks (and accordingly power) were to be cut in half. This undercut much of Khrushchev’s support in the CC just when his support among the oligarchs was disintegrating.

This loss of support was hastened by the way in which Khrushchev now seemed to deny the special status he had given to the CC and its members up until 1957. There were three aspects of this. First, CC meetings began to be attended by large numbers of officials who were not members of the CC (some were not even party members), a so-called “democratic” change that effectively denied the institutional integrity of the CC and reduced the power, prestige and authority of its members. Second, as policy disappointments mounted, Khrushchev increased the pressure on lower level officials, including those in the CC. Attacks on their performance increased and threats about the consequences of their failure grew. Many felt they were being blamed for policy setbacks for which they were not responsible. Third, Khrushchev ceased treating the CC as a partner in policy development as he had in the initial years, and reverted to seeing it as a mechanism for legitimizing his policy measures. If he had earlier stroked the egos of CC members, now he trampled over them, disillusioning those upon whom he had relied to compensate for his earlier weakness in the Presidium.

The threats implicit in these measures were backed up by personnel changes. At the lower levels, sweeping changes of personnel occurred; nearly two-thirds of regional first secretaries appointed in the mid-1950s in the Russian Republic had been replaced by the early 1960s.⁷⁶ There was also significant turnover in the oligarchy (Table 5.3).

Of the fifteen full members of the Presidium in June 1957, only seven (Brezhnev, Kozlov, Kuusinen, Mikoyan, Suslov, Khrushchev and Shvernik) were carried forward into the Presidium of 1961. Five of the nine candidate members in 1957 were also dropped. The 1961 Presidium was virtually a new body compared with that at the time of Stalin’s death; of the ten full and four candidate members of the Presidium in March 1953 following Stalin’s death, by 1961 only Khrushchev and Mikoyan among the full members and the candidate Shvernik who had been promoted to full membership were still there. The greater representation of party officials over state established in 1957 was maintained in 1961.⁷⁷

The 1961 Presidium was substantially still in place in October 1964 when Khrushchev was removed.⁷⁸ The level of turnover between 1957 and 1961 contrasts greatly with that between 1961 and 1964. In part, this reflects the absence of a party congress during the latter period, but given that Khrushchev as First Secretary remained in charge of the CC Secretariat and therefore of the appointment mechanism, we must

Table 5.3 Leadership changes 1953–61

	<i>End March 1953</i>	<i>End June 1957</i>	<i>End October 1961</i>
Presidium full	Molotov	Khrushchev	Khrushchev
	Malenkov	Mikoyan <i>A</i>	Mikoyan <i>A</i>
	Beria	Voroshilov	Suslov <i>A</i>
	Voroshilov	Bulganin	Brezhnev <i>C</i>
	Bulganin	Kirichenko <i>C</i>	Kozlov <i>A</i>
	Kaganovich	Suslov <i>A</i>	Shvernik <i>A</i>
	Mikoyan	Aristov <i>A</i>	Kosygin <i>A</i>
	Khrushchev	Belyaev <i>A</i>	Podgorny <i>C</i>
	Saburov	Brezhnev <i>C</i>	Polyansky <i>C</i>
	Pervukhin	Furtseva <i>C</i>	Voronov <i>A</i>
		Ignatov <i>C</i>	Kuusinen <i>A</i>
	Kozlov <i>A</i>		
	Kuusinen <i>A</i>		
	Shvernik <i>A</i>		
	Zhukov <i>A</i>		
Presidium candidate	Shvernik	Kirilenko <i>C</i>	Shcherbitsky
	Ponomarenko	Korotchenko <i>C</i>	Grishin <i>C</i>
	Melnikov	Mzhavanadze <i>C</i>	Mzhavanadze <i>C</i>
	Bagirov	Kosygin <i>A</i>	Rashidov
		Pospelov <i>A</i>	Mazurov
		Mukhitdinov <i>A</i>	
		Kalnberzin	
Secretaries	Khrushchev	Khrushchev	Khrushchev
	Suslov	Suslov <i>A</i>	Suslov <i>A</i>
	Ignat'ev	Aristov <i>A</i>	Kozlov <i>A</i>
	Pospelov	Belyaev <i>A</i>	Kuusinen <i>A</i>
	Shatalin	Brezhnev <i>C</i>	Demichev
		Furtseva <i>C</i>	Il'ichev
		Kuusinen <i>A</i>	Ponomarev
		Pospelov <i>A</i>	Spiridonov
		Shelepin	

Key: *C* = client; *A* = ally

assume that he saw no pressing need for changes, especially as he had been the principal shaper of the Presidium elected at the time of the XXII Congress in October 1961.⁷⁹ Furthermore, at this time he actually dropped his client Furtseva and ally Mukhitdinov while his client Kirichenko had been dropped in May 1960. The Presidium following the XXII Congress contained among the 11 full members three clients

(Brezhnev, Podgorny and Polyansky) and seven allies (Mikoyan, Suslov, Shvernik, Kuusinen, Voronov, Kozlov and Kosygin); there were two clients (Grishin and Mzhavanadze) among the five candidate members. Among the eight members of the Secretariat excluding Khrushchev, there were only three allies with the other five newly promoted and lacking established links to Khrushchev. While Khrushchev's position still appeared strong, the reduction in the number of his clients and the entry of a significant number of people lacking established links with him meant that his position rested overwhelmingly on the support of those whose recent selection to office plus agreement on policy constituted the basis of any support for him they offered; they were more likely to evaluate their positions in terms of how they were treated by the leader and the policies he espoused than overwhelming gratitude for their promotion into the oligarchy. The addition of Kirilenko to the Presidium in April 1962 brought in another client (from Ukraine), while the December 1963 addition of Shelest brought in a client of Brezhnev's, who would have been likely to follow Brezhnev's lead in terms of his attitude to Khrushchev. The strong position Khrushchev had developed in the Presidium at the time of the anti-party group had thus been weakened by the end of 1961, by which time he was more reliant upon coalition politics than upon the mobilization of established, longer term, supporters. Despite this weakened support base, Khrushchev clearly believed that the predominant leader style of leadership was safe, sustained by the party norms as he saw them. There can be no other explanation for his threat to his colleagues in 1964 that he might use the scheduled November 1964 CC plenum to replace some of them with more energetic and effective workers.⁸⁰

Within the Presidium, there was growing unease, especially from 1962. That unease stemmed from both the policy setbacks that these oligarchs lay at the door of Khrushchev, and from the style of leadership that he was increasingly evincing. His propensity to go over their heads and appeal to the people, with the implicit threat that if the oligarchs did not agree, popular mobilization could occur, to ignore the established principles and rules of Soviet politics, especially that of collective leadership which had been seen as so important following the death of Stalin, and the threat his power seemed to pose to their positions, all combined to generate major concerns for their future. His earlier promotion of the party apparatus and its role in intervening in the work of non-party bodies (including government ministries) plus his own role once he became

prime minister, denied to his fellow oligarchs the unlimited powers they expected in the realm of bureaucratic politics; their own institutional constituencies were not immune from Khrushchev's intervention. But they remained scared of Khrushchev and afraid of upsetting him,⁸¹ so that criticism was more indirect and not personal.

Resistance to some of Khrushchev's policies had been evident for some time. On all of those domestic issues that were later seen as instrumental in the erosion of his support and his subsequent fall, leading figures had expressed their reservations and even opposition in a variety of ways. One was through speeches and articles in the press either by themselves or by associates or "experts" which, while not generally openly criticizing the course advocated by the First Secretary, discussed the issue in a way that registered less than whole-hearted support; they may have framed the issue in a different way, or pointed to difficulties in implementing the policy, or in discussing that particular area failed to mention Khrushchev's opinion.⁸² Opponents could also use the organizational resources they had at their disposal to express opposition. Where those resources were administrative structures, like a regional party organization, government ministry or functionally-focused organization (such as the union of writers), they could be used to hinder the implementation of policy. The inability of the centre to ensure that subordinate sections of the Soviet administrative apparatus carried out central instructions was a long-established problem, and it was often an effective political tactic. Many of these structures also possessed their own press outlets (e.g. *Leningradskaya Pravda* was controlled by the Leningrad party machine, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* by the writers' union), and these could be mobilized into oppositional activity. The development of opposition among the oligarchs was also facilitated by the informal interactions they had in the course of their professional activity. Their bureaucratic responsibilities gave them both the opportunity and the incentive to combine in defence of their interests. Through these means, Khrushchev's emergent opponents edged towards a consensus in favour of removing him.

Major critics of Khrushchev included his erstwhile ally Frol Kozlov,⁸³ who was a CC Secretary (1960–64, although a heart attack in April 1963 reduced his capacity) and a former party leader in Leningrad (1949–57) and was able to use his continuing political influence in that city to advance a more conservative line than that of Khrushchev. Kozlov was generally supported in this by CC Secretary Mikhail Suslov whose particular concern was ideology, something of special importance

for Khrushchev given the ideological changes with which he was associated (most importantly the redefinition of socialism in terms of material goods, the non-class notion of the party and state of the “whole people”, and the imminent achievement of communism). Nevertheless, despite their continuing opposition, leadership of the conspiracy to unseat Khrushchev was taken by Khrushchev’s client, CC Secretary⁸⁴ Brezhnev; Podgorny and Shelepin were also reported to have taken leading roles in the planning of the coup.⁸⁵ Planning seems to have begun early in 1964.⁸⁶ Unlike in the anti-party group case, the plotters did not restrict their activities to the Presidium, but sought to gain the support of regional party bosses who were on the CC and who had been the focus of Khrushchev’s increasing attacks on lower level officials for policy failures;⁸⁷ such officials also widely opposed his party bifurcation measure. Attempts to stitch together a coalition continued through the year, with the move against Khrushchev not being scheduled until the plotters were sure that they could carry the day in the CC.⁸⁸ The recruitment of CC members was a calculated risk by the plotters, because the more people who knew about the conspiracy, the greater the possibility that Khrushchev would hear of it and take preventive action.⁸⁹ Indeed, Khrushchev was warned about the coup beforehand, but besides asking one of the plotters (Podgorny) whether it was true and receiving a denial,⁹⁰ he did nothing. Crucially, the KGB head Vladimir Semichastny⁹¹ supported the plotters⁹² and provided logistical assistance in the form of monitoring of communications and replacement of Khrushchev’s personal security detail, while the military remained neutral.⁹³ When Khrushchev was summoned to the Presidium meeting on 13 October 1964,⁹⁴ he was criticized by his colleagues, who then voted unanimously for his removal. Even Mikoyan, who had been closest to him, and Voronov, who the plotters had suspected might support Khrushchev, threw in their lot with the plotters.⁹⁵ When the CC plenum met the following day (a meeting from which some who were suspected of supporting Khrushchev were prevented from attending), Suslov presented the report from the Presidium recommending the removal of Khrushchev as First Secretary. There was no debate and Khrushchev was removed by unanimous vote. The plenum decided that the posts of First Secretary and Chairman of the Council of Ministers should be split, and that the former would be occupied by Brezhnev and the latter by Kosygin. Brezhnev’s speech ending the plenum emphasized the importance and interests of the party apparatus.⁹⁶

The charges against Khrushchev⁹⁷ involved perceived serious mistakes in both domestic and international policy (with domestic the more important⁹⁸), but the main problem was his overriding of the principles of collective leadership, reflected in his own style of leadership. This was characterized as an attempt to create a cult of his own personality but was in effect a charge that he was seeking to put in place a dominant leader model of collective leadership. He was accused of making the normal work of the Presidium impossible by the way in which he concentrated unlimited power in his own hands and used it in an arbitrary fashion. He ignored collective leadership, worked behind the back of the Presidium, and relied upon a narrow group of “careerist” outsiders. He decided questions on his own initiative, cut off those who tried to speak at Presidium sessions, and was rude to and abused his colleagues. Cadre work was conducted on the basis of personal devotion and attachment rather than a person’s political qualities or a businesslike assessment, with the result that shady and even dangerous people (Serov was cited here) were promoted. He claimed responsibility for all policy successes, but was actually working in the interests of himself and his family, as shown by the excesses that he and his family enjoyed. Examples cited included luxurious fit-outs of dachas, numbers of cars and state awards. The image projected was of a willful leader trying to establish a personal dictatorship over the party. He appeared to have shifted from a supporter of the pre-1930 normative order to one aspiring to the norms of dominant leader collectivism.

Clearly, Khrushchev’s fall was due to a number of factors, but crucial in it was that he neglected to continue to develop and defend the interests of that constituency of which he was the head, the party officials. This was central to the stabilization of collective leadership. At the oligarch level, his overriding of the principles of collective leadership and propensity to act unilaterally and to ignore the views of the other oligarchs, added to perceived policy failures, eroded his support levels and left him vulnerable. But to make this a practical reality, his opponents had to act secretly, to conspire and plot and thereby confront him with a *fait accompli*, which meant peeling his supporters away from him. They could not act in the open until they were ready, and this took over six months of work. Central to this success was the KGB, because by involving Semichastny from the start, they had as much of a guarantee as possible of their personal security.⁹⁹ But recognizing the potential consequences of using the KGB in the way it had been used in the

1930s, they rejected the direct use of force; the strategy of arresting Khrushchev, when he came back from an overseas trip, was considered but rejected.¹⁰⁰ Rather they sought to act through the means that had saved Khrushchev in 1957: resolution through the CC. Only this time, the CC supported the Presidium majority. In the eyes of some, the CC's role in 1964 may have been thought to presage a more active part in oligarch politics in the future, but this was not to be. The new dynamic of oligarch relations under Brezhnev (see Chapter 6) did not give scope for concerted action by those beneath the level of the CC's executive organ.

The circumstances of Khrushchev's fall illuminate a number of aspects of collective leadership during this period. One relates to the strength of patron–client ties. Stalin's rise to power had been on the back of the support of clients, but with the entry of the security apparatus into intra-party life in the 1930s, such ties became less important. However, once terror was abjured as an acceptable weapon in party life, the dynamics of patron–client relations changed; instead of physical protection being at its heart, material benefit became paramount, and although this was always contingent upon the continued occupation of official position, this was a less compelling reason for loyalty than the prospect of physical liquidation. In such circumstances, patron–client ties were less secure than they had been. None of Khrushchev's clients or allies came to his defence in 1964 (although Mikoyan did half-heartedly suggest a compromise, but he gave way to this when the others opposed it), and the leadership group established after his fall comprised two Khrushchev clients, Leonid Brezhnev and Nikolai Podgorny, and one ally, Aleksei Kosygin.

The replacement of physical liquidation by demotion and political disgrace as the price of defeat in factional contest not only changed the dynamics of clientship, but altered the patterns of oligarch politics. Private caucusing and discussion among oligarchs had occurred throughout the whole Soviet period, facilitated by the conditions within which they worked: concentrated in Moscow, charged with professional responsibilities that often overlapped or at minimum required coordination to carry out successfully, with failure possibly having negative consequences. They were bound to interact frequently in the course of their professional lives, even if they rarely socialized together. Such contacts had on occasion led to the mounting of organizational measures against the leader. However, even under the more relaxed conditions of the Khrushchev period, would-be plotters had to be careful. If

they were discovered, or their plot failed, the likelihood was the end of their career, as the fate of the leading anti-party group plotters showed. Great care thus needed to be taken with individual oligarchs always concerned about the potential ways in which things could go wrong: would the security services and the military intervene, and if so, on whose side? Would the leader discover the plot and take pre-emptive action? Would the plotters remain loyal or would one/some of them seek personal security by denouncing the plot to the leader? There was clearly a high level of uncertainty for plotters to cope with, and this was reflected in their actions. Reference has already been made to Brezhnev's hesitancy leading up to October 1964. CC member Nikolai G. Ignatov tried to play both sides, participating in plot discussions with Brezhnev but at the same time leaking information to Khrushchev's son, while Presidium member and ally Kosygin apparently agreed to cooperate with the plot only after hearing that the KGB was on side.¹⁰¹

The most secure basis for patron-client ties had been shared service in the same region at an earlier time,¹⁰² reflected in the way that Khrushchev relied upon associates from his time heading the Ukrainian and then the Moscow party apparatus for his initial post-Stalin support base. Other sources of potential clients were the promotion of people to higher office, something that could be particularly telling when those promoted had earlier been the victims of one's opponents, as for example, members of the Leningrad party apparatus when it was targeted by Malenkov and Beria.¹⁰³ But Khrushchev made two crucial client-related mistakes that contributed to his fall. First, when he became clearly the most powerful individual in the leadership (but unlike Stalin, someone whose power did not exceed the collective power of his leadership colleagues; he was predominant, not dominant), he ceased to promote and rely upon clients connected to him through their earlier careers. The Presidium elected at the time of the XXII Congress in 1961¹⁰⁴ contained eleven voting members, including Khrushchev. Of the other ten, only three (Brezhnev, Podgorny and Polyansky) shared common career backgrounds; a further three (Kozlov, Kosygin and Suslov) had been Malenkov/Beria victims. Of the five candidate members, only Grishin and Mzhavanadze shared career backgrounds with Khrushchev. Of the three people who entered the Presidium between October 1961 and Khrushchev's fall, only Kirilenko shared Khrushchev's career background. This means that when Khrushchev's policy agenda was running into major difficulties, his core of clients within the Presidium

constituted a distinct minority. Even if we include the victims of others in this tally, Khrushchev's likely strong support would have been at best a bare majority. In such circumstances, a leader needs to be able to turn allies (for all of those selected in 1961 would have been seen as allies of Khrushchev) into the sort of rusted on supporters that clients were normally seen to be. Exacerbating the effect of this was Khrushchev's changes to the leadership of the KGB. In December 1958, Khrushchev client Serov was removed and replaced by Aleksandr Shelepin,¹⁰⁵ who in November 1961 was replaced by Vladimir Semichastny. Although Semichastny overlapped with Khrushchev in Ukraine (Semichastny was in charge of the Komsomol in 1947–50 when Khrushchev was party First Secretary), he was actually much closer to and a client of Shelepin. And Shelepin had no such career link with Khrushchev. The result was that after the departure of Serov, the KGB was headed by someone whose primary political ties were not with Khrushchev.¹⁰⁶

But this is where Khrushchev's second mistake was crucial. The sorts of policies that Khrushchev advocated, in particular his splitting of the party apparatus, his introduction of mandatory turnover levels which destroyed job security, and his blaming of policy failure on the inadequacies of lower level officials, added to his propensity to seek to override and ignore his leadership colleagues, only alienated those whose support he needed. Instead of locking the Presidium in behind his leadership, he gave them ample grounds for discontent as well as generating a broader support base for them among disillusioned party officialdom, especially the CC. Accordingly, it is little surprise that when his colleagues turned on him, the broader ranks of party officialdom did not come to his aid. In effect, as well as cutting himself off from the potential support of his clients, he alienated those who were in a position to help him. This shows the importance of policy when the potential consequences of dissent are reduced. People like Kozlov, who was more conservative than Khrushchev in ideological terms, and Kosygin, whose career was mainly technocratic and therefore less sympathetic to many of Khrushchev's plans, ultimately were driven away by opposition to the policies Khrushchev espoused.

The implication of this experience relates not only to the nature of patron–client ties but to the relationship between the leading institutions of the party, the Presidium and CC, and the relationship with the regional party apparatus. Both Stalin and Khrushchev were able to use the CC to build up and bolster their positions before that body was

dominated by established supporters. In both cases, much of the support they had there was generated by support for the policies they were espousing. Similarly, in the regional party apparatus, the support of first secretaries relied upon clientelist ties and policy positions. In Stalin's case, reliance on policy became less important as both his clientelist network expanded (something clearly facilitated by the disappearance of alternative leaders at the apex of the party) and the use of terror injected a new and threatening element into the relationship. For Khrushchev, in the absence of terror as a potential continuing feature of political life, the support of CC members and other regional party officials depended even more upon policy agreement. Where that agreement was lacking, as increasingly became the case in the last years of Khrushchev's rule, his support base was effectively eroded. Accordingly, the likelihood that the CC would over-rule the Presidium as it had done in 1957 had disappeared by 1964, at least in terms of its willingness to act to save the First Secretary.

This also reflects the role that institutions played in both the 1957 challenge and the 1964 overthrow of the leader: in both cases, these were conducted through the institutional structures and according to the institutional rules. Certainly, there was caucusing behind closed doors by the plotters, but their actions were carried out within the institutional arena and according to the institutional provisions. In this sense, the institutional structure did have an important impact upon the course of elite politics. It may be too far to argue that these instances were a clear expression of the normative authority possessed by the institutions, but they do suggest that those institutions were important in the structuring of elite politics.

This may also be suggested by the fact that it took so long to move against Khrushchev. There was considerable oligarch concern about Khrushchev at least three years before the mobilization against him in October 1964, and yet during this time, the oligarchs stayed their hands. Fear of either discovery in the course of a plot or the failure of such actions may have been instrumental here. But also important were party norms. The role of predominant party leader was prominent in party lore from before the revolution, and the implication of this was that, once in place, the party General/First Secretary had a right to lead and some individual discretion in doing this. Khrushchev could be seen as acting broadly consistently with this. But in the eyes of the other oligarchs, by 1964 the accumulation of his actions must have seemed to

have breached this understanding; the model of collective leadership with a predominant leader was seen in danger of morphing into that with a dominant leader, which would have overturned the consensus that had underpinned the post-Stalin transition and the norms of collectivism most common throughout the party's history. In this sense, both Khrushchev's longevity and his overthrow reflects the continued operation of party norms.

CONCLUSION

Collective leadership in this period saw a shift from a potential pure oligarchy reminiscent of the 1920s to one of a predominant leader, a trend shaped overwhelmingly by the ambitions and actions of the First Secretary. This shift does not mean the replacement of collective leadership by individual rule, but a shift in the rules whereby collective leadership was conducted. In the first phase, basic unity stemmed from the consensus that the oligarchs took with them into the post-Stalin era. This consensus frayed under the impact of the policy conflict that developed between Khrushchev and respectively Malenkov and Molotov. In these bouts of elite conflict, the other oligarchs divided, mainly on the basis of the respective policy positions, meaning that within the elite there were not firm factions but shifting coalitions. However, the longer this went on, the greater the crystallization of an "old guard" that came to be called the anti-party group. In this process of Khrushchev's policy activism and the increasing opposition it stimulated, discussion within the elite was free and far-ranging, with the formal institutions of the system, especially the Presidium, playing an important role in facilitating such debate. But almost from the outset, there was evidence of Khrushchev seeking to mobilize support from outside the oligarchy and its institutional base, both through appeals to the CC and to the populace more broadly. Indeed, this was part of the reason for the breakdown of the initial elite consensus.

Once the anti-party group had been defeated, Khrushchev's increasingly personalistic style of leadership continued to sideline the formal institutions and upset the other oligarchs, including those brought into the leadership by Khrushchev himself. As the predominant leader became more assertive, pressing the norms of the predominant leader collective model in the direction it had taken in the 1930s towards a dominant leader model, the other oligarchs sought self-protection by busying

themselves with the bureaucratic politics that stemmed from the offices they held and ultimately by banding together to get rid of the leader. This sort of conspiracy could only have taken place with the concurrence of the security apparatus and the neutrality of the military, but it was the former that was crucial. Through his actions, Khrushchev had alienated all of the major power groups in Soviet society, meaning that when his fellow oligarchs moved against him, he had nowhere to turn for support. One lesson from this is that, when terror is no longer there, a patron needs to continue to look after the interests of his clients. The simple act of promotion is not a secure means of welding clients to one's side in the absence of continuing benefits. Khrushchev's successor, Leonid Brezhnev, understood this lesson.

NOTES

1. For the notion of this group constituting a “team” which carried into the new era general agreement in many policy areas, see Fitzpatrick (2015), ch. 9.
2. For one discussion of this consensus, see Breslauer (1982), pp. 4–5. For an analysis of the working out of consensus on the developing situation in Eastern Europe, see Kramer (1999).
3. Mikoyan (2014), p. 628.
4. Although Khrushchev was foreshadowed as the partly leader by delivering the report on the new party Rules.
5. For an insider's view of Stalin's attitude to his leadership colleagues, see Shepilov (2007), pp. 13–14.
6. Although according to Shepilov, Khrushchev was Stalin's “favourite” at the time of Stalin's death. Shepilov (2007), pp. 13–14. For a profile of Presidium members, see Hough and Fainsod (1979), pp. 194–204.
7. For Khrushchev's account, see Khrushchev (2006), pp. 11–16.
8. Indeed, four people who ceased to be secretaries at that time—Leonid Brezhnev, Averkii Aristov, Nikolai Ignatov and Semyon Ignat'ev—all had links to Khrushchev, although only Brezhnev's was based on career association; the others were victims of rivals.
9. And the possible incriminating material on other leaders available there. Kramer (1999: 1), p. 8.
10. For one discussion, see Knight (1993), pp. 183–191.
11. Chuev (1991), p. 332 and Khrushchev (2006), pp. 183–184. On Khrushchev's earlier links with Malenkov, see Zubkova (2000), pp. 75–76. On early links between Malenkov and Beria, see Tompson

- (1997), pp. 117–118. On Khrushchev doing this as a ruse to undermine Beria, see Tompson (1997), p. 120.
12. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 628, 631. For discussion of this issue, see Chuev (1991), pp. 332–336.
 13. According to Khrushchev, the line up was designed principally by Malenkov and Beria. Khrushchev (2006), pp. 151–152. The agreement was actually sorted out on 4 March before Stalin died. Kramer (1999: 1), p. 7. A joint meeting of these institutions was unique in Soviet history.
 14. Chuev (1991), p. 334.
 15. He was actually arrested at a meeting of the Presidium on 26 June. For the plenum proceedings, see “Delo Beriia” (1991). For this episode, see Kramer (1999, Parts 2 and 3). Also Taubman (2003), pp. 249–257. For Molotov’s account, see Chuev (1991), pp. 343–346; for Mikoyan’s statement that Khrushchev took the lead in this, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 633–635.
 16. Semichastny (2002), pp. 178–179. According to Semichastny who became head of the KGB in October 1961, Khrushchev told him that all information had to go to the party leader and he would decide what to pass on to the Presidium; there were “no secrets” from the First Secretary. Under Khrushchev, the guards for republican and obkom first secretaries were removed; only Politburo members and candidates, but not CC secretaries, retained such guards. Semichastny and Sniegón (1998), p. 184. Thanks to Tomas Sniegón for the information and the reference.
 17. Gorlizki (1995), p. 21.
 18. Mikoyan (2014), p. 631, and Semichastny (2002), p. 631.
 19. On Beria having files on everyone, see Chuev (1991), p. 339. Tompson (1997), p. 118.
 20. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 633–635.
 21. On the others underestimating Khrushchev, see Taubman (2003), pp. 241, 245 and 258 and Barsukov (2000), p. 50.
 22. That the promotion of supporters may not have been as smooth as Khrushchev would have hoped may be suggested by the frequent changes in the head of the Party Organs Department responsible for appointments: Yevgeny Gromov February 1954–March 1957, Aleksandr Shelepin April 1958–1958, Vladimir Semichastny January–August 1959, Viktor Churaev October 1959–February 1961 and Vitalii Titov February 1961–April 1965. The careers of all of these people overlapped geographically with Khrushchev, but not all have been identified as clients. The list of heads comes from Wells and Miller (1993), p. 21.

23. For a list of former associates promoted into leading positions between Stalin's death and June 1957, see Rigby (1984), pp. 77–81. Also see Mitrokhin (2011).
24. Although Shepilov had worked in the Propaganda Department while Khrushchev was a CC Secretary.
25. Tompson (1997), p. 130. Not all would have been Khrushchev supporters, but he did have a major influence in deciding who was appointed.
26. Rigby (1959), pp. 174–175.
27. Representation at time of election was as follows:

<i>February 1956</i>	
Central state machine	9
Central party apparatus	6
Regional party apparatus	2

28. On this see Breslauer (1982), ch. 2.
29. "O dal'neishem uvelichenii...".
30. This had been encouraged by the September 1953 abolition of the agriculture departments of the district soviets and the transfer of control over the kolkhozy to district party officials within the Machine Tractor Stations.
31. Prominent proponents of this approach are Linden (1966), Ploss (1965), and Tatu (1968).
32. Breslauer (1982), pp. 68–69.
33. For a discussion of the differences, see Taubman (2003), pp. 266–269.
34. Rigby (1984), p. 62.
35. This was reflected in the above-noted fact that, in defiance of party tradition, Khrushchev had taken over chairing sessions of the Presidium. Chuev (1991), p. 354.
36. On the discussion see Taubman (2003), pp. 277–282 and Barsukov (2000), pp. 53–55. On the establishment of the commission and the leading role played in this by Mikoyan, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 635–641.
37. For one discussion, see the interview with Popov (2016); also Taubman (2003), pp. 278–280, Chuev (1991), pp. 350–351, and Mikoyan (2014), pp. 641–642, where it is claimed that delivery to a closed session of the congress was a compromise between those in favour and those opposed to the ventilation of this issue.
38. Cf. the claim in Mawdsley and White (2000), p. 154.
39. Khrushchev (1989).
40. Khrushchev and Suslov had crossed paths earlier. Suslov had been an instructor at the Industrial Academy when Khrushchev had studied

- there. Mitrokhin (2011), p. 33. Suslov had been a CC Secretary since 1947 and was promoted into the Presidium in July 1955 (having previously been a member between October 1952 and March 1953 when he apparently fell foul of Malenkov and Beria). Thus while his promotion to the Presidium in 1955 might qualify him as a supporter, his previous record of high office suggests he is better seen as an ally.
41. For example, see the CC decision of 30 June 1956 “O preodolenii kul'ta lichnosti i ego posledstviï”. It was originally published in *Pravda* 2 July 1956. A translation is in *The Anti-Stalin Campaign* (1956), pp. 275–306.
 42. There was actually some uncertainty about who should deliver the speech before it was given. Khrushchev had proposed that it be given by Petr Pospelov, who had headed the commission that investigated the Terror and produced the first draft report. The other oligarchs rejected this, saying it could send the signal that the leadership was divided. They insisted that Khrushchev should deliver it. Schechter with Luchkov (1990), p. 43. One scholar has suggested that their intent may have been to harm Khrushchev by making him responsible for bringing this up and for any consequences. Tompson (1997), pp. 155–156.
 43. Although both remained first deputy chairs of the Council of Ministers.
 44. Tompson (1997), pp. 175–176.
 45. The responsibility to serve the Presidium collectively distinguishes the General Department from its predecessor, the Special Sector, which only served Stalin, the First Secretary. The change was part of the moves taken when Stalin died to bolster collectivism and hinder the emergence of a single leader. Schapiro (1975), p. 65. The department was headed throughout the Khrushchev period by Vladimir Malin who had worked with Khrushchev in the war council of the South-West Army Group during the war. Mitrokhin (2011), p. 33.
 46. Barsukov (2000), pp. 51–52. Khrushchev seems to have discussed this with Mikoyan, Bulganin, and the heads of the Ukrainian, Moscow, Leningrad and Crimean party organizations (respectively A.I. Kirichenko, Ye.A. Furtseva, F.R. Kozlov and D.S. Polyansky) during his August–September 1954 holiday in Crimea.
 47. Throughout the period decisions continued to be issued in its name, but these emanated from the apparatus of the CC.
 48. Rigby (1984), pp. 59–60.
 49. For a discussion of why these individuals opposed Khrushchev, see Taubman (2003), pp. 310–314. Also, see Valenta (1979), p. 19.
 50. For Mikoyan’s claim that he supported Khrushchev, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 644–647.

51. Chuev (1991), p. 355. On the responsibility of the leaders' personal guards to report to the head of the KGB, although there clearly were torn loyalties here, see Semichastny (2002), p. 361.
52. For details of the meeting, see Taubman (2003), pp. 317–320.
53. “Poslednaya ‘antipartiinaya’ gruppa: Stenograficheskie otcheti iyun’skogo plenuma (1957g) TsK KPSS”, *Istoricheskiy arkhiv* 3, 1993, pp. 4–94; 4, 1993, pp. 4–82; 5, 1993, pp. 4–78; 6, 1993, pp. 4–74; 1, 1994, pp. 4–77; and 2, 1994, pp. 4–88. Also see Taubman (2003), pp. 320–324 and Tompson (1997), pp. 179–183.
54. Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich also lost their state positions and Molotov became ambassador to Mongolia, Kaganovich director of a potassium factory in the Ural Mountains, Malenkov director of a hydro-electric station in Ust'-Kamenogorsk, Shepilov director of the Kirghiz Institute of the Economy, and Saburov, after a short time as Chair of the State Economic Commission on Foreign Economic Links, became director of a machine-building factory.
55. On his role generally, see Abramova (2013).
56. For one discussion of the principle, see Naumov (2000).
57. All members criticized Molotov at the July 1955 CC plenum. Tompson (1997), p. 147.
58. Unlike in the early and late years of Soviet rule, the number of times the Presidium/Politburo met was not reported under Khrushchev. However, at the XX Congress Khrushchev referred to the Presidium having regularly acted as a collective organ in dealing with the most important questions of the party and country, a comment noticeably absent from the XXII Congress where he only referred to the Congress and CC plenum in this way. Respectively XX s'ezd (1956) vol. 1, p. 101, and XXII s'ezd (1962), vol. 1, p. 110.
59. The notes taken at Presidium sessions by the head of the General Department V.N. Malin show that all of the main political questions of the day were discussed here. Unfortunately such notes were not taken at all sessions and not all items discussed in a session have a dedicated note. Fursenko et al. (2015a, b).
60. For some of the speeches from the plenum that removed him, see “Khrushchev protiv Zhukova. Iz stenograficheskogo otcheta oktyabr'skogo (1957g) Plenuma TsK KPSS”, *Glasnost'* 40 (69), 3–9 October 1991, p. 7; 41 (70), 10–16 October 1991, pp. 6–7; 41 (71), 17–23 October 1991, pp. 6–7.
61. Khrushchev (2006), p. 239. There were some policy issues involved as well, including investment priorities, the sovnarkhoz reform, and the role of the party in the armed forces. Tompson (1997), pp. 185–186.

62. Representation at time of election was as follows:

	<i>June 1957</i>
Central state machine	6
Central party apparatus	9
Regional state machine	2
Regional party apparatus	7

Party representation now doubled that of the state, with a significant increase in regional representation.

63. After this appointment, Khrushchev strengthened the profile of the state vis-à-vis the party in the Presidium through the appointment of Podgorny, Polyansky and Kosygin.
64. Khrushchev (2006), p. 238.
65. Taubman (2003), pp. 365–367.
66. Semichastny (2002), p. 338. According to Semichastny (2002), p. 274, the decision to place missiles in Cuba was made by Khrushchev, Defence Minister Rodion Malinovsky and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, while Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Leonid Brezhnev and Deputy Chair of the Council of Ministers Dmitrii Ustinov were aware of it, but presumably not involved in taking the actual decision.
67. For example, for the way in which the decision to send troops into Hungary in 1956 was made, see Kramer (n.d.), pp. 16, 18–19, 22, 26–27 and 34.
68. Fursenko and Afyani (2015), p. 5. This is reflected in the documents published in this volume.
69. For example, see the proceedings of the XXI and XXII congresses. Vneocherednoi XXI s'ezd (1959) and XXII s'ezd (1962).
70. Following the bumper harvest in 1958, output in each of the following years was well below expectations. In the period 1960–64, agricultural output rose by 2.4% compared with 7.6% in 1955–59. Tompson (1997), p. 267.
71. Linden (1966), pp. 118–133. For Khrushchev's speech, see XXII s'ezd (1962), vol. 1, pp. 15–132. Voroshilov and Bulganin are included at p. 105 along with Molotov, Kaganovich, Malenkov, Pervukhin, Saburov and Shepilov as members of the anti-party group. Other speakers criticized the anti-party group, although as Linden shows these criticisms were of varying degrees of severity, and Khrushchev took up this refrain again in his concluding remarks, vol. 2, pp. 581–590.
72. Kozlov (2006), ch. 13 and Baron (2001).

73. XXII s'ezd (1962), vol. 2, p. 588.
 74. XXII s'ezd (1962), vol. 3, p. 344.
 75. Taubman (2003), p. 524. On feelings more generally within the party, see Barsukov (2000), p. 62.
 76. Rigby (1984), p. 69.
 77. Representation at time of election was as follows:

	<i>March 1953</i>	<i>October 1961</i>
Central state machine	10	3
Central party apparatus	1	6
Regional state machine	1	2
Regional party apparatus	1	4
Other	1	1

Other denotes the head of the trade union organization.

78. Of the 16 full and candidate members elected in 1961, only two disappeared before the move against Khrushchev (Kuusinen died and the candidate Shcherbitsky left to become Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Ukraine). One new full member (Andrei Kirilenko in April 1962) and two candidates (Leonid Yefremov in November 1962 and Petr Shelest in December 1963) were added. Six new CC Secretaries were elected (with their patrons in brackets)—Yuri Andropov (Kuusinen), Vasilii Polyakov (Khrushchev), Aleksandr Rudakov (Khrushchev) and Vitalii Titov (Podgorny) in November 1962, Nikolai Podgorny (Khrushchev) and Leonid Brezhnev (Khrushchev) in June 1963, while Ivan Spiridonov was dropped in April 1962 and Kuusinen died in May 1964.
79. Taubman (2003), p. 516.
 80. Taubman (2003), p. 5, citing Anastas Mikoyan. Also Tompson (1991), p. 1104.
 81. Taubman (2003), p. 609, citing Khrushchev's son. For Brezhnev's continuing hesitancy to commit up to the eve of the challenge, see Semichastny (2002), pp. 356–361.
 82. For arguments about indirect criticism of Khrushchev including in the leading newspaper *Pravda*, see Tatu (1968), pp. 63–68, 116–120, 151–164, 166–175, 276–280 and 298–311. On speakers at the XXI Congress criticizing the continuation of the anti-Stalin campaign, see Linden (1966), pp. 75–76.
 83. For some of his actions, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 657–661.
 84. Brezhnev had been replaced by Mikoyan as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (effectively Soviet president) in July 1964

- ostensibly in order to allow Brzhnev to concentrate on his work as a CC Secretary. Artizov et al. (2007), pp. 64–65.
85. Semichastny (2002), p. 350.
 86. Tompson (1991), pp. 1102–1103. Also see Barsukov (2000), pp. 64–65.
 87. Taubman (2003), pp. 516–519, 523.
 88. Tompson (1991), p. 1105.
 89. On Brezhnev being agitated and worried about whether they would be successful, see Semichastny (2002), pp. 356–360.
 90. Taubman (2003), pp. 6–7.
 91. Serov had been replaced as head of the KGB by Shelepin in December 1958 who was in turn replaced by Vladimir Semichastny in October 1961. Semichastny was a client of Shelepin but also had some career links with Khrushchev. See below.
 92. He was brought into the plot virtually at the outset of serious planning and remained involved throughout, although he claims that he was not one of the central principals. Semichastny (2002), pp. 349–370.
 93. Tompson (1991), pp. 1106–1107. Defence Minister Malinovsky was sounded out about the likely response early in the process. Semichastny (2002), p. 350.
 94. According to Semichastny, this was attended only by full and candidate members of the Presidium and CC secretaries. Semichastny (2002), p. 364. For Polyansky’s very critical speech, see “Takovy tovarishchi, fakty”, and for notes made at the meeting by the head of the General Department of the CC, see Malin (1998). For the draft protocol notes of the session, see Fursenko et al. (2015a), Tom 1, pp. 878–888.
 95. Mikoyan did seek a compromise of allowing Khrushchev to remain Chairman of the Council of Ministers, but this was rejected. Mikoyan (2014), p. 666.
 96. For material on the plenum, see Artizov et al. (2007), pp. 216–270. For the decision of the plenum, see Fursenko et al. (2015b), Tom 3, pp. 769–770.
 97. “Doklad prezidiuma TsK KPSS na oktyabr’skom plenumе TsK KPSS (variant)”, Artizov et al. (2007), pp. 182–216. The published report of his fall referred to “subjectivism and drift...hare-brained scheming, half-baked conclusions and hasty decisions and actions divorced from reality, bragging and bluster, attraction to rule by fiat, unwillingness to take into account what science and practical experience have already worked out”. *Pravda* 17 October 1964.
 98. Doklad prezidiuma... (2007), Semichastny (2002), p. 341, and Tompson (1991), pp. 1109–1110.
 99. According to Semichastny (2002), pp. 359–360, the task of the KGB in the coup was to ensure that events unrolled in an orderly fashion. But it

- was also to have been particularly concerned to look out for unscheduled military movements.
100. Semichastny (2002), pp. 351–353.
 101. Semichastny (2002), pp. 355, 358.
 102. Rigby (1984), p. 40.
 103. For a list of these people, see Rigby (1984), pp. 80–81.
 104. On the demotion of a significant number of Khrushchev’s clients at this time as a reflection of his failure to continue to protect and promote his support base, see Tompson (1997), pp. 221–222. For an alternative explanation, that it reflects the strength of conservative opposition within the leadership, see Tatu (1968), ch. 3 and Linden (1966), pp. 91–106.
 105. For the argument that Serov was replaced because Kirichenko had told Khrushchev that Serov had been conspiring with CC Secretary Ignatov against him, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 656–657.
 106. On the changes and the Shelepin–Semichastny relationship. See Semichastny (2002), pp. 161–170, 383–402.

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Predominant Leader Within the Collective, 1964–82

The overthrow of Khrushchev was the only time in party history that the leader of the party was removed. However this did little to clarify the party's normative order with regard to relations among the oligarchs. While the notion of a collective leadership with a dominant leader seemed to have been banished, did Khrushchev's fate also mean that the model of collective leadership with a predominant leader was off the table? If so, this would have left pure collectivism. But pure collectivism always runs up against personal ambition, and this makes it unstable in the long term. Perhaps what was off the table was not the model of collectivism with a predominant leader as such, but such a model with a leader who sought to play an activist role? As the years following Khrushchev's fall show, a predominant leader who did not try to assert his power in the way that Khrushchev did was acceptable to the oligarchs.

The party's normative order was thrown into question by Khrushchev's fate; this seemed to confirm the primacy of collectivism in leadership, but also seemed to contradict the principle that the party leader should actually lead and in order to do so possessed scope for individual initiative. These seemed to be reconciled in the way that the normative order developed during this period, retaining a very strong collective emphasis along with a predominant leader. But this leader adopted a different *modus operandi*, one that facilitated the strengthening of the party's institutional norms, especially collective leadership. The party's collective organs functioned more regularly, and the leader

sought to lead by creating a consensus around issues. His authority was respected as long as this was not wielded idiosyncratically, a principle that also applied to the other oligarchs. The emphasis was upon regular, routine functioning. Oligarchs continued to differ over policy and institutional interest, but this neither spilled over into the leadership question nor led to significant conflict. Factions existed, but these did not create a basis for opposition to the leader or the desire to remove him. Opposition remained illegal. Personnel appointment continued to be used for political ends, but this did not destabilize the oligarchy. The broader elite was incorporated into the decision-making process on many issues, but they were not called upon to resolve differences among the oligarchs.

The coalition that overthrew Khrushchev shared a consensus about the reasons for his removal and the way in which collective leadership should be exercised. This was reflected in the indictment of Khrushchev that appeared anonymously in the press referred to in Chapter 5 where he was accused of “voluntarism”, “subjectivism” and “hare-brained schemes”, and of “actions based on wishful thinking, boasting and empty words”. Essentially this amounted to a charge that he had violated the norms of collective leadership and rather than seeing himself as being bound by those norms, had set out on a course of individual leadership which ignored the views of his colleagues. He had concentrated too much power in his own hands and used it with little regard for the views of the other oligarchs. This was also the essence of the charge made against him at the CC meeting of 14 October 1964.¹ Khrushchev was criticized for ignoring and riding roughshod over the views of his colleagues, for taking decisions impulsively, for serious mistakes in internal policy (including “numerous reorganizations”), for mistakes in foreign policy and for the emergence of a new cult of personality. Accordingly, the leadership proposed to the CC plenum a series of measures designed to give structure to this consensus and to strengthen party leadership.²

1. To avoid the concentration of power in one person, the posts of party First Secretary and Chairman of the Council of Ministers should not be held by the same person.
2. A new post of Second Secretary should be introduced.
3. Enhancement of the CC plenum and, if necessary, the convening of party conferences between congresses.

4. The Presidium should present an annual report on its activities for discussion at the CC.
5. The role and responsibilities of Presidium members and CC secretaries should be strictly delimited and better defined.
6. The press must not glorify individuals.
7. Free, open and businesslike discussion and the collective review of all questions must occur in the Presidium.
8. The bifurcation of the party will be reversed.
9. The role of the party organization must be increased in all spheres of life.
10. The role of state organs, especially the Supreme Soviet and Council of Ministers, should be expanded.
11. There should be further democratization of life in party and state bodies.

However, in the event this attempt to design some rules for the structuring of elite politics was not particularly successful with few of the identified measures actually implemented.

DEVELOPMENT OF A BREZHNEV FACTION?

The consensus among the elite about the strengthening of collective leadership seems also to have involved an understanding about the appointment of personnel and the need to avoid this being used to build up the overwhelming power of one particular leader.³ One indication of this is the high level of carryover of personnel in elite organs from the first congress of the Brezhnev period, the XXIII in 1966, to the last, the XXVI in 1981. Of the 24 members elected in 1966 (11 full members of the Politburo, 8 candidates and 5 secretaries not members of the Politburo), 13, or 54.16%, were still in those bodies in 1981, although the positions of some had changed (e.g. promotion of candidate member to a full member or inclusion of a secretary in the Politburo). If we factor in the three office holders who died in office between the two congresses (Petr Masherov, Fedor Kulakov and Aleksandr Rudakov) plus Kosygin who retired two months before his death in December 1980, 65% or almost two-thirds of the initial population who were still alive remained in the oligarchy in the year before Brezhnev died. The details follow with those carried forward in bold (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Leadership 1966 cf. 1981

	<i>Elected following XXIII Congress, April 1966^a</i>	<i>Elected following XXVI Congress, March 1981</i>
Full members of Politburo	Brezhnev Kosygin Podgorny Suslov Voronov Kirilenko Shelepin Mazurov Polyansky Shelest Pel'she	Brezhnev Andropov Gorbachev Grishin Gromyko Kirilenko Kunaev Pel'she Romanov Suslov Tikhonov Chernenko Ustinov Shcherbitsky
Candidate members of Politburo	Demichev Grishin Mzhavanadze Rashidov Ustinov Shcherbitsky Kunaev Masherov	Aliiev Demichev Kiselev Kuznetsov Ponomarev Rashidov Solomentsev Shevardnadze
Secretaries not elected to Politburo	Brezhnev Suslov Kirilenko Shelepin Demichev Ustinov Andropov Ponomarev Kapitonov Kulakov Rudakov	Brezhnev Gorbachev Kirilenko Suslov Chernenko Kapitonov Dolgikh Zimyanin Rusakov

^aChanges between 1966 and Brezhnev's death other than at the XXVI Congress:

Politburo full: In: Grishin, Kulakov, Kunaev and Shcherbitsky (April 1971); Andropov, Grechko and Gromyko (April 1973); Ustinov and Romanov (March 1976); Chernenko (November 1978); Tikhonov (November 1979); Gorbachev (October 1980)
Politburo full: Out: Voronov and Shelest (April 1973); Shelepin (April 1975); Polyansky (March 1976); Grechko (April 1976); Podgorny (May 1977); Kulakov (July 1978); Mazurov (November 1978); Kosygin (October 1980)
Politburo candidate: In: Andropov (June 1967); Solomentsev (November 1971); Ponomarev (May 1972); Romanov (April 1973); Aliiev (March 1976); Kuznetsov and Chernenko (October 1977); Tikhonov and Shevardnadze (November 1978); Gorbachev (November 1979)

Politburo candidate: Out: Grishin, Kunaev and Shcherbitsky (April 1971); Mzhavanadze (December 1972); Andropov (April 1973); Romanov and Ustinov (March 1976); Chernenko (November 1978); Tikhonov (November 1979); Masherov (October 1980)

Secretariat: In: Solomentsev (December 1966); Katushev (April 1968); Dolgikh (December 1972); Chernenko and Zimyanin (March 1976); Ryabov (October 1976); Rusakov (May 1977); Gorbachev (November 1978); Andropov (May 1982)

Secretariat: Out: Rudakov (July 1966); Andropov (June 1967); Shelepin (September 1967); Solomentsev (November 1971); Demichev (December 1974); Ustinov (December 1976); Katushev (May 1977); Kulakov (July 1978); Ryabov (April 1979); Suslov (January 1982)

This means that the core of the Brezhnev era leadership was established at the end of the XXIII Congress, 18 months after Khrushchev had been toppled. Of that core of 13 people, four, Kirilenko, Kunaev, Shcherbitsky and Ustinov, were clients of Brezhnev.⁴ By 1981, there were eight Brezhnev clients in the Politburo and Secretariat: Konstantin Chernenko, Kirilenko, Dinmukhamed Kunaev, Shcherbitsky, Nikolai Tikhonov, Ustinov, Geidar Aliev and Konstantin Rusakov.⁵ While this represents a significant increase in the strength of the Brezhnev cohort compared with 1966, it is still well short of a majority; along with Brezhnev they constituted just over a third of the total membership of the Politburo and Secretariat. Within the Secretariat alone, the number of Brezhnev clients had risen from two to three and overall the proportion of CC Secretaries in the Politburo had dropped slightly (from 31.5% to 27.2%). The heavy representation of party officials compared with state established from 1957 was maintained throughout this period.⁶ Therefore there was significant stability at this level and Brezhnev did not rule through a stable client-based majority; he had to rely on coalitions with allies. This is reflected in the history of personnel appointments to these bodies over the entire period.

Those who had engineered Khrushchev's fall were all politicians of some standing in the party. Podgorny had joined the party in 1930 and had become a member of the CC in 1956, a candidate member of the Presidium in 1958, a full member of the Presidium in 1960 and a CC Secretary in 1963. He appears to have had no clients in the Presidium or Secretariat in 1964. Suslov was a more substantial figure. A party member since 1921, he had joined the CC in 1941, the Secretariat in 1947 (and the Orgburo 1946-52) and was a full member of the Presidium from 1952 until 1953 (he was not included in the reduced Presidium established after Stalin's death) and from 1955.⁷ In 1964, Suslov had one client in the top party organs, CC Secretary Boris Ponomarev. Kosygin was also a major figure. He had been a member of the party since 1927 and the CC from 1938, and he had been around the Presidium since 1946.⁸ But his main strength was in the state machine, where he had made his career and he was widely seen as a technocrat. Thus while Brezhnev was named First Secretary (from 1966 General Secretary), there were other substantial figures within the leading party organs. Moreover the November 1964 promotion from candidate to full member of the Presidium of Ukrainian party boss (and Podgorny associate) Petr Shelest and CC Secretary Aleksandr Shelepin seemed to

represent a weakening of Brezhnev's position within the elite, just at the time he had become leader.

While Brezhnev was the notional leader, his factional position did not appear all that secure.⁹ Not only was he surrounded by three senior colleagues who he may have believed coveted his position, but he also seems to have been concerned about the ambitions of some of the younger members of the elite, especially Shelepin. In 1965 he set about consolidating his position. In December 1965, Podgorny, whose position had been weakened by both earlier criticism of the state of work in his former political base Kharkov and by the removal of many of his protégés at lower levels,¹⁰ was removed from the Secretariat and transferred to the largely honorific post of Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the titular head of state. Podgorny retained his full membership of the Politburo until 1977, but his power position within the elite had been significantly eroded and he was a diminished figure. Brezhnev also moved to weaken Shelepin,¹¹ and a number of Brezhnev supporters were added to the party's leading organs.¹²

The XXIII Congress in April 1966 marked a further strengthening of Brezhnev's position within the leadership. At the CC following that Congress, two older leaders with strong standing in the party, Mikoyan and Shvernik, were dropped from the Politburo. The Suslov client Arvid Pel'she, who lasted until 1981, became a full member. Two new candidate members were elected at this time (Kunaev and Masherov). Thus of those who joined the Politburo in 1965 and April 1966 (XXIII Congress), three were Brezhnev clients (Ustinov, Shcherbitsky and Kunaev) who all remained within the top leadership into 1981, while the fourth, Masherov,¹³ supported Brezhnev and died in 1980. Also in April 1966 Brezhnev client and full Politburo member Andrei Kirilenko became a CC Secretary with responsibility for cadres policy (he supervised the earlier-appointed Kapitonov), thereby effectively giving Brezhnev direct control over personnel appointments. Overall these personnel moves represented a strengthening of the ranks of those who were supportive of Brezhnev.¹⁴ Symbolically it was also decided at this congress to restore the Stalin era names—Politburo and General Secretary—to these institutions.

Brezhnev further strengthened his position the following year. According to Mikoyan,¹⁵ in 1967 Shelepin approached him about mounting a coup against Brezhnev, saying that he had the support of a majority of members of the CC. Mikoyan rejected the approach, but

Brezhnev heard about it. Accordingly he moved against Shelepin¹⁶; while Shelepin retained his full membership of the Politburo, he surrendered his position as CC Secretary and became chairman of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, the official trade union organization. Also removed at this time was the head of the KGB, Vladimir Semichastny, who claims that Brezhnev had not trusted him from the outset and wanted to bring in his own man,¹⁷ and this gave him the opportunity. The new head of the KGB was Yuri Andropov, who retained his candidate membership of the Politburo but surrendered his position as CC Secretary. However in a move that may reflect Brezhnev's wariness about Andropov, in contrast to the situation in the KGB under both Shelepin and Semichastny when there were three deputy heads, under Andropov there were more than ten, many of whom were Brezhnev cronies¹⁸; the first deputy was Semen Tsvigun, who was Brezhnev's brother-in-law.¹⁹ According to Semichastny, this was an attempt by Brezhnev to keep an eye on what Andropov was doing, to bolster the control exercised by the General Secretary over the security apparatus. Brezhnev's suspicion seems to have been well-founded, because although Andropov was generally an ally of the General Secretary throughout most of this period, the corruption case that emerged against the Brezhnev family not long before Brezhnev died could not have occurred without Andropov's agreement. In April 1968, Brezhnev client Konstantin Katushev became a CC Secretary.

At the XXIV Congress in 1971, all full and candidate members going into that Congress were re-elected, with three candidate members promoted to full membership, including Brezhnev clients Kunaev and Shcherbitsky, and Kapitonov client Viktor Grishin.²⁰ A recasting of the nature of the Politburo occurred at the April 1973 CC plenum, with the election of three new full members: KGB head Andropov, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Defence Minister Andrei Grechko. This was the first time these three positions gained representation on the Politburo at the same time, and they were to retain it until the Soviet Union's fall. Their presence injected a strong policy element into the supreme decision-making organ, as well as promoting people who stood at the head of significant institutional structures. Given the importance of bureaucratic politics and the struggle for resources under Brezhnev (exacerbated by the economic slowdown in the 1970s), this was a significant development. At the same time in what was the first purge of Brezhnev's opponents from the party's leading organs, full members

Shelest and Voronov, and candidate member and Georgian party chief Mzhavanadze were removed. Both Shelest and Voronov had had differences with Brezhnev,²¹ although both had also acted in ways that seemed to contravene the collective's modus operandi (see below); Shelest's pursuit of the 1968 Czechoslovak invasion had been carried beyond the bounds of the oligarchy, while in 1971 Voronov had continued to openly criticize investment policy after it had been approved by the Politburo.²² Grigorii Romanov became a new candidate member; Vladimir Dolgikh had been appointed a CC Secretary in December 1972. This means that after a little less than a decade from Khrushchev's ouster, among the 26 members of the Politburo and Secretariat, Brezhnev's was by far the largest faction (Table 6.2).

But although it was the largest, the Brezhnev faction constituted only 27% of the membership of these bodies, with independents constituting the largest grouping²³; and two of those independents were the powerful Andropov and Gromyko. After a decade in power, Brezhnev still needed coalition support to rule.

Brezhnev's position in the leadership was strengthened in the second half of the 1970s, paradoxically when he was most affected by illness following strokes in 1974 and 1976, from which time his physical capacity significantly deteriorated. Some of those oligarchs not beholden to him disappeared from the leadership,²⁴ while two clients were promoted: Chernenko to CC Secretary and Nikolai Tikhonov replaced Kosygin as prime minister; Tikhonov's new first deputy chairman, Ivan Arkhipov, was also a long-time Brezhnev associate. Importantly Brezhnev had

Table 6.2 Factional alignment after the April 1973 plenum

<i>Brezhnev</i>	<i>Suslov</i>	<i>Kapitonov</i>	<i>Mazurov</i>	<i>Independent</i>
Kirilenko	Pel'she	Grishin	Masherov	Podgorny
Kunaev	Ponomarev	Demichev		Kosygin
Shcherbitsky				Polyansky
Grechko				Shelepin
Ustinov				Kulakov
Katushev				Gromyko
				Andropov
				Rashidov
				Solomentsev
				Romanov
				Dolgikh

become Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, or president, in 1977, thereby combining top party and state positions without breaking the letter of the 1964 decision relating to keeping the top posts in separate hands.²⁵ The factional alignment following the XXVI Congress in 1981 was as follows (Table 6.3).

There were a number of interesting changes here compared with the situation in 1973. The weight of the Brezhnev faction had increased, now constituting 34.6% of the total (and 40% of the Secretariat) and remained the largest faction, but was still short of a majority, even if the Brezhnev-ally Kapitonov's group was added to it. The Suslov faction was to lose its greatest strength and leader when Suslov died in January 1982. The Kapitonov, Moscow-based, faction remained significant, with Grishin probably outranking the eponymous Kapitonov, while Gorbachev has been allotted to a new Andropov faction because of the obvious support that Andropov was to give to his political career. The independents were equal in number to the Brezhnev group. If Brezhnev was to rule, he still had to have the support of allies from outside his faction, and this he clearly gained; all remaining members could be classed as allies, achieving and enjoying their posts during his supremacy.

However, Brezhnev's position within the collective seemed to weaken in the last year of his life. Not only did his age and illness retard his working capacity, but there seemed to be increased resistance to him from within the oligarchy. Andropov's transfer from the KGB into the

Table 6.3 Factional alignment after the XXVI Congress, February–March 1981

<i>Brezhnev</i>	<i>Suslov</i>	<i>Kapitonov</i>	<i>Andropov</i>	<i>Independent</i>
Kirilenko	Pel'she	Grishin	Gorbachev	Gromyko
Kunaev	Ponomarev	Demichev		Romanov
Tikhonov				Kiselev
Ustinov ^a				Kuznetsov ^b
Chernenko				Rashidov
Shcherbitsky				Solomentsev
Aliiev				Shevardnadze
Rusakov				Dolgikh
				Zimyanin ^c

^aUstinov was also close to Andropov

^bKuznetsov had recent career ties with both Brezhnev and Gromyko

^cZimyanin was the sole survivor of the former Mazurov, "Belorussian", faction

Secretariat as a CC secretary in May 1982, combined with Suslov's death, seemed to project Andropov as the second most important person in the leadership. This is despite Brezhnev's attempt to push Chernenko forward in this role,²⁶ action which clearly did not rest on a consensual basis within the oligarchy. Furthermore, the anti-corruption campaign that was enveloping Brezhnev's family had its origins within the KGB and seems to reflect the use by Andropov of the security apparatus to affect oligarch affairs by weakening Brezhnev. When he died in November 1982, Brezhnev's unwavering support within the Politburo had shrunk to a core of Chernenko, Tikhonov and Kunaev,²⁷ with established clients Ustinov and Shcherbitsky throwing their weight behind Andropov rather than the very ill leader; Kirilenko had also become estranged from Brezhnev, seemingly because of the latter's favouring of Chernenko over him.²⁸ Thus while Brezhnev's factional basis had always been smaller than a majority, by the time of his death it had narrowed considerably as many clients sought to distance themselves from him in the expectation of a coming leadership change.

The build up of Brezhnev's faction had occurred principally through the process of the appointment of his supporters in a studied way that did not appear as though they were flooding the elite organs.²⁹ The appointment and promotion of Brezhnev clients did not overwhelm the appointment or promotion of non-Brezhnev people; in only three years (1968, 1976 and 1977) were more Brezhnev clients raised to the Politburo than non-Brezhnev people, while the reverse situation applied in eight years (1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1982). Also on only three occasions (1974, 1975 and 1977) did the number of non-Brezhnev people removed exceed the number promoted. These figures suggest a general strategy of ensuring that there was a broad balance in the promotion of pro-Brezhnev and non-Brezhnev people. This was a pattern that seemed designed to reinforce the norms of collective leadership, and it was the first time in Soviet history that such a strategy had been maintained for so long.

This pattern of appointments shows a clear process of strengthening the representation in the Politburo and Secretariat of people with associations with Brezhnev. However this was exceeded by the number of people appointed lacking such ties, although over the period one more non-Brezhnev person was dismissed than was appointed. Over time, Brezhnev's position was, overall, strengthened, but this was a gradual process consistent with a principle of a broad balancing of appointments.

When the existing membership at the beginning of the period is taken into account, the real strength of Brezhnev becomes more apparent. Of the ten people carried forward from the 1966 Politburo to that of November 1982, seven had not been associated with Brezhnev in the past; among full Politburo members, the split was 3:3. What this means is that despite the strengthening of Brezhnev's position through the promotion of associates over this period, the consideration given to balancing appointments meant that he could never rely upon majority client support within the elite political organs. Like Khrushchev before him, he had to rely upon coalition arrangements. In doing so, he was faced with two major figures, Kosygin and Suslov, who seem not to have been ambitious and did not want to displace him; Kosygin remained a technocrat concerned with running the government and Suslov concentrated on ideology.

This catalogue of leadership changes shows that although Brezhnev's client base did expand over this period and became the single largest faction, it remained significant but not dominant in leadership councils. The Brezhnev group had a number of significant advantages over its putative rivals. One is the strategic location of long-term factional members.³⁰ Four of the members of the Politburo and Secretariat in 1966 who were still there in 1981 were members of the Brezhnev faction. Two of these people, Shcherbitsky and Kunaev, were the heads of the party organizations in two of the largest republics (Ukraine and Kazakhstan) and could use these positions to promote their own clients who could in turn support Brezhnev in the CC and party congresses.³¹ More importantly, Kirilenko remained a CC Secretary (and one charged with personnel matters) throughout, even if his standing slipped during the late 1970s,³² while before becoming Minister of Defence, Ustinov remained a Secretary from March 1965 until October 1976. These people were thus well placed to look after Brezhnev's interests in inner-party matters, especially given that there was an alliance operating between the Brezhnev group and the other Secretary who survived the whole period, Kapitonov.³³ Together Kapitonov and Kirilenko exercised overall control over party and personnel matters. Chernenko was also important here after he became head of the General Department in 1965 and then Secretary in 1976. More generally, Brezhnev's people had "a significant profile in the central party apparatus, especially in heading Central Committee departments".³⁴ In addition, a Brezhnev client, first Grechko (from 1967 when he replaced the deceased Khrushchev era Rodion

Malinovsky) then Ustinov, was in charge of the military, and although this did not compensate for the fact that the KGB was run by an independent (Andropov), it did give increased heft to the Brezhnev faction and strengthened his personal alliance with the military establishment. The faction was weaker in the state sphere led by Kosygin, although Tikhonov was from 1965 deputy chair and from 1976 first deputy chair of the Council of Ministers (and therefore deputy to and in a position to keep an eye on Kosygin) and he became prime minister on Kosygin's resignation and subsequent death. So the Brezhnev faction had real strength within the party apparatus as well as some spread across the main institutional structures of the Soviet political system.³⁵

NORMS OF ELITE POLITICS

Factional boundaries were not hard borders. The elimination of death as a punishment for dissent reduced the costs of opposing the leader, although these could still be significant, as Shelepin and Podgorny found out. Nevertheless as Khrushchev's experience showed, it also meant that on-going factional affiliation was best ensured by the continuing provision of rewards for loyalty. These could be in the form of job tenure and promotion, but they could also involve continuing access to material rewards. The levels of corruption evident during this period suggest that this remained a tangible consideration for many office holders.³⁶ But factional boundaries were also less constraining the longer a leader was in power. If the principal currency of factional membership was advancement of one's career, the longer a leader remained in power, the more people who were promoted under his rule, and therefore regardless of who specifically pushed a person forward, ultimately the leader could be seen as responsible. If he did not actively support a promotion, he did not oppose it. Accordingly the longer Brezhnev remained in power, the more others may have felt indebted to him for their longevity in office. This is particularly the case in instances like that of Kapitonov, who held a position formally directly responsible to Brezhnev; indeed, his career owed much to Brezhnev and although he has been cast here as an ally, he may be better seen as a client. But the reverse could also apply: the longer the leader remained in office and the greater the number of people promoted, the greater the possibility of resentment by established clients at the promotion of others; this seems to have been the case for Kirilenko. There is, therefore some uncertainty about factional

membership, who was in and who was out, especially where there was not continuing open factional dispute over policy to reinforce both factional identity and boundaries. But there were factional differences over policy and this was important for understanding how Brezhnev was able to exercise leadership despite his faction's minority position.

One of the rules of the new leadership that came to power in 1964 appears to have been restoration of the norm that had applied in the late 1930s–1953, that disputes and disagreements among the oligarchs in the Politburo should not be actively and openly pursued outside that body or once a decision was made. The vigorous criticism of policy and appeal to the CC that was evident during the Khrushchev years was largely absent under Brezhnev. This may reflect in part the different personalities of the two first/general secretaries as well as elite agreement on the rules of the game; it certainly does not mean that there was no policy disagreement during this period. From the outset, and lasting right through the period, there were significant differences over resources and spending priorities, and these were manifested in the different views of Brezhnev and Kosygin.³⁷ Brezhnev remained broadly consistent throughout in pressing for a higher level of resource flow into agriculture, although in the early 1970s he was forced temporarily to modify his position on investment priorities.³⁸ Following Khrushchev, he always linked agriculture to food supply, and hence to improved living standards, thereby shifting the traditional ground upon which consumer satisfaction was discussed away from light industry onto agricultural production. This placed him in direct conflict with Kosygin supported by Podgorny and Shelepin, who favoured the development of light industry as the principal path to consumer satisfaction. These were two different paths to the same end, but they seemed to involve significantly different types of investment policy. This was not too much of a problem while the Soviet economy was growing strongly in the 1960s,³⁹ but became increasingly an issue with the economic slowdown of the 1970s. Brezhnev's focus on agriculture also made him vulnerable to something over which he had no control: the weather. When unfavourable weather conditions led to disappointing crop returns, his policy seemed to be called into question, and this happened at frequent intervals. There were record harvests in 1966, 1973 and 1976, but there were widespread failures in 1967, 1969 (mainly in terms of a meat shortage), 1972 (which forced the import of grain), 1975, 1979 and 1980. This sort of pattern encouraged policy innovation, from minor tinkering to major initiatives

like the “Food Program” announced in May 1982. Brezhnev’s success in seeking to boost agriculture is reflected in the proposed increase of investment in agriculture from 19.6% of total investment in 1961–65 to 26.2% in 1976–80, nearly tripling in absolute terms.⁴⁰ However in the absence of the maintenance of high growth rates,⁴¹ this could occur only at the expense of other sectors of the economy, and this generated significant elite debate. Bureaucratic politics, in the sense of competitive struggle for power and resources on the part of state ministries, was a constant during this period, with individual oligarchs active in this. Informal interaction outside the bounds of official elite organs remained significant and an important occasion for oligarchs to discuss contemporary issues.

The importance of bureaucratic politics was highlighted by the way that Brezhnev pressed for increased investment into the military sector. With Khrushchev’s fall, the new leadership decided to expand military expenditure across the board rather than concentrating it in specific sectors as Khrushchev had done.⁴² This commitment, which seems to have been opposed at the time by Podgorny (which may thereby have given Brezhnev the opportunity to demote him⁴³) but supported by Shelepin, was broadly maintained by Brezhnev throughout this period. Kosygin was less enthusiastic about this, in part because although military expenditure was managed through the Ministry of Defence, this was generally conducted outside the bounds of the Council of Ministers and therefore outside of Kosygin’s bureaucratic constituency.⁴⁴ In addition, he (along with Podgorny) favoured greater resources being directed into light industry in order to enable it to produce consumer goods in increasing quantities. Brezhnev’s championing of increased military expenditure appears to have been motivated not only by his perception of the need to beef up Soviet defences in the face of the American build up that had begun in the 1960s, but of the way that this would lock the military to his side in elite circles. With the presence of his clients in central positions in the military-industrial establishment—Grechko as Defence Minister since 1967, Sergei Gorshkov as head of the navy and deputy Defence Minister since 1956, Aleksei Yepishev as head of the Main Political Administration of the Soviet Army and Navy (a department of the CC Secretariat embedded within the Ministry of Defence) since 1962, and Ustinov as CC Secretary with oversight of the defence industry and then Minister of Defence—Brezhnev was well placed not only to hear advice from the military sector but to strengthen his links with the military. While the introduction of *détente* may have seemed

to lessen the need for a continuing military build up, Brezhnev seems to have led a group in the leadership solidly behind the continued direction of resources into this area and worked at maintaining his ties to the military throughout.

Another cause of tension between Brezhnev and Kosygin was a replay of the earlier differences between Khrushchev and Malenkov: the role of party bodies in supervising the activities of government ministries. As prime minister and long-term technocrat, Kosygin emphasized the importance of the government ministries and, consistent with the emphasis on rational and technical decision-making that so marked this regime, the need to allow them to use their expertise to get on with the job of administering the country. Such a focus on a scientific and objective approach to decision-making implied greater autonomy from direct and intrusive party control and from the centralized administration of the economy. It could also imply the greater use of technical expertise found within the various institutes within Soviet society. However, such a stance was counter to the sort of position that one would expect the leader of the party to adopt, and which Brezhnev did take up. Brezhnev championed the party's continued exercise of close supervision over government ministries, a position which not only won the support of party officials at all levels but also potentially undermined the control Kosygin could exercise in his own bailiwick. But Brezhnev's position differed markedly from that of his predecessor. Rather than a reliance upon the enthusiasm and commitment of individuals to keep officials on their toes, Brezhnev (and his colleagues) emphasized regularization and routine, the adoption of working habits and patterns that were consistent with continued party oversight. At the apex of the government, Brezhnev's interests were looked after by Kosygin's long-term deputy and Brezhnev client, Tikhonov. Throughout the governmental structure, party bodies continued to exercise their monitoring functions. There was little Kosygin could do to offset this, despite the speeches he gave emphasizing the need for technical rationality in decision-making. His position was further undermined by two broader policy issues. The emergence of the dissident movement into full view in 1966 (the trial of Yulii Daniel and Andrei Sinyavsky) and the way events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 seemed to the Soviet leadership to escape control, appeared to call forth the same conclusion: there was danger in any relaxation of ideological boundaries, including those associated with the notion of objective rational advice. Continued party control was the antidote to this, a view

which could only strengthen the position of the General Secretary vis-à-vis his prime ministerial colleague.

The Brezhnev-Kosygin differences reflected the sorts of divisions evident in earlier periods between the representatives of institutional constituencies within the Soviet system and confirms the norm of bureaucratic politics as an important continuing dynamic of oligarch relations. But clearly not all conflict reflected institutional loyalties. At the outset both Podgorny and Shelepin saw themselves as alternative leaders to Brezhnev, but neither could carry the day against the General Secretary. Podgorny's opposition to increased military expenditures (which he maintained after Kosygin had given in) seems to have convinced a majority of his colleagues that he needed to be curbed, hence his December 1965 ousting from the Secretariat and appointment to the presidency. Similarly Shelepin, who seemed a much more potentially dangerous figure given his security background and connections, gave the opening to his opponents to move against him.⁴⁵ In 1965 his supporters spread rumours to the effect that he would soon replace Brezhnev, leading to his loss of his deputy prime ministership and headship of the Party Control Committee, and then two years later one of his supporters, Nikolai Yegorychev, openly criticized Brezhnev. Shelepin was then removed from the Secretariat. Podgorny and Shelepin were thus both brought down by their apparent challenge to the Politburo majority; both Podgorny and Yegorychev (seen as Shelepin's proxy) seemed to challenge a view collectively adopted by the Politburo, while Shelepin's security connections and obvious ambition are not likely to have endeared him to his colleagues. Although they both retained their Politburo seats for some time after, they ceased to be of crucial importance in oligarch life. Central to the fate of both was Brezhnev's ability to persuade the oligarchs of the gravity of their challenges, and important for this in both cases appears to have been the support he received from Suslov.

The Czechoslovak crisis of 1968 was a crucial event in the shaping of the collective leadership.⁴⁶ For the critics of Brezhnev, the unrolling of the crisis in Czechoslovakia could be seen as a failure on his part because he had refused to step in and support the Czechoslovak leader Antonin Novotny when he was under attack in late 1967. However such recriminations were pushed to the side in the face of the crisis, with the Politburo agreeing unanimously to send troops in.⁴⁷ But such unanimity hid real divisions within the Politburo on this issue. Generally Kosygin⁴⁸ and Suslov advocated caution while Shelest was a strong advocate of

military intervention, with the other members including Brezhnev more ambiguous and uncertain. Nevertheless all recognized that the events in Czechoslovakia posed a real danger, although perhaps for different reasons. Shelest and Masherov were worried about the possible infection effect from Czechoslovakia into their respective republics Ukraine and Belorussia, others like Arvid Pel'she and Petr Demichev were concerned about the likely demonstration effect it could have in Soviet society more generally, Kosygin, Ponomarev and Suslov (the latter two were responsible for relations with foreign communist parties), were worried about foreign policy implications, while Grechko (who was not a member of the Politburo but was involved in the discussions⁴⁹) had worries about the defence implications. For many of the members of the Politburo and Secretariat, the general concerns they all felt about the Czechoslovak situation were filtered through the bureaucratic constituencies for which they were responsible.

One effect of the Czechoslovak crisis was that it consolidated the conservative consensus within the top leadership, making it more difficult for anyone who may have wished to promote some sort of liberalization (as for example, in the aborted 1965 Liberman reforms championed by Kosygin) to make their arguments. The effect of this was seen in the continuing crackdown on the emergent dissident movement and the publication of an article in *Pravda* 21 December 1969 on the anniversary of Stalin's birth which was more positive about his role in history than had been evident at the height of Khrushchev's destalinization.⁵⁰ The Czechoslovak crisis also facilitated Brezhnev's emergence as the predominant leader, discussed below. But the strengthening of the conservative consensus did not eliminate differences among the leaders. The attitude to the West, and in particular the question of détente and the possible advantages it could bring, was a matter of debate at the end of the 1960s,⁵¹ and remained an issue through the 1970s. This question was significant because of the way in which the economic slowdown of that decade raised questions about Brezhnev's priorities of large-scale agricultural investment and the vigorous promotion of defence spending, and whether these could be maintained in increasingly straitened circumstances. And if they could not, what was to be done? The attitude to the West was central here. Those like Kosygin who, along with Gromyko, had had the lead in foreign affairs in the 1960s but lost this position in the 1970s to Brezhnev, saw the West as a possible source of technology and therefore as intrinsic to a technocratic response to the budgetary

difficulties, but such an approach met significant resistance from those who were more suspicious of the West and worried about how this might leave the Soviet Union vulnerable to Western pressure. As the economic crisis continued to deepen, with growth rates slowing and agriculture performing poorly, especially in the second half of the decade, Brezhnev's policies were often under attack. At the XXV Congress in 1976 Kosygin openly differed from him on the treatment of consumer goods production,⁵² with their differences apparently exacerbated by Brezhnev's desire to take over the premiership from Kosygin.⁵³ This latter cause of contention between Brezhnev and Kosygin was partly a manifestation of the continuing tension between the two based on their institutional constituencies: Brezhnev favoured expanded party oversight and monitoring of governmental ministries and departments (especially through the CC departments)⁵⁴ while Kosygin sought to maximize the room for action independent of close party oversight for those state structures under his control. Brezhnev's relative weakness within the Council of Ministers was reflective of this situation. But it also reflected Brezhnev's desire to take up a leading position in the state structure, both for what this brought in terms of domestic power considerations and also for the standing it gave him as he pursued his interest in leading the conduct of Soviet international relations. Nevertheless as Breslauer argues, despite controversy over and opposition to his budgetary priorities and direction of policy, "Brezhnev almost always won".⁵⁵

This is part of a broader puzzle. The policy lines advocated by Brezhnev were neither unambiguously successful nor universally accepted within the leadership. There was often significant dissent and criticism from among his colleagues, and this could be sufficiently strong to force him to compromise. Furthermore his health was clearly failing in the 1970s. He suffered a stroke in 1974 and another in 1976 that is reputed to have left him clinically dead and requiring resuscitation. He was henceforth reliant on medication. Throughout the second half of that decade and into the 1980s up until his death, he was much more detached from leadership politics and played a much more limited role in decision-making than he had earlier in his rule, at times delegating issues to oligarchs he trusted.⁵⁶ Given these two factors—the sometimes contentious nature of his policy positions and his ill health—it is surprising that there was no concerted move against him by a majority of his colleagues, particularly since even a year before his death, the leading organs of the party remained dominated by allies and independents rather than clients.

Part of the answer to this is the way in which Brezhnev generally continued to play by the rules of the consensus arrived at around the time of the overthrow of Khrushchev. Central to this was the mode of decision-making. Reference has already been made to the emphasis during this period on a scientific approach to decision-making within the context of what came to be called the “scientific-technological revolution”.⁵⁷ This involved decision-making informed by technical expertise and was the rationale for attempts to involve those with such expertise in a process of advising decision-makers about the issue under question. It led to a system whereby ministries, specialist institutes and other bodies with expertise and interest were incorporated into the discussion of issues in a far more systematic way than they had been before.⁵⁸ This sort of understanding of how decisions could be made was of necessity slow and usually incrementalist, but it did mean that all sides to a question could be taken into account. This general process was also applied to oligarch politics, where it took the form of the emphasis upon collectivism so prominent at the time of Khrushchev’s fall. It was clearly agreed among the oligarchs who overthrew Khrushchev that they needed a structure that ensured that no single individual could become dominant in the way that Khrushchev threatened to do and before him Stalin had done. The answer they came up with to avoid individual dominance was the same answer arrived at by the immediate post-Stalin leaders: strengthening the norms of collective leadership. But unlike in the immediate post-Stalin period, the commitment to collectivism was broadly retained throughout this period, including by the General Secretary. That principle was instrumental in the defeat of some of Brezhnev’s opponents as well as in the fact that Brezhnev largely remained within the confines of the collective rather than escaping it as Khrushchev had done; Brezhnev did not strain the boundaries of the predominant leader collective leadership model.

The principal focus of decision-making remained the collective elite organs of the party, mainly the Politburo but also the Secretariat. These generally met on an approximate weekly basis, although two meetings per week was not unusual.⁵⁹ This does not mean that every crucial decision was made in a full session of the Politburo (see below). But generally issues were dealt with in these collective bodies before decisions were announced, rather than the party leader publicly declaring something and effectively daring the others not to go along with him, as Khrushchev often had done. All decisions were presented as a result of the collective deliberations of the leadership, and therefore as reflective

of the views (and wisdom) of them all. Of course this claim had also been made earlier, but what was different was that Brezhnev did not reach the decision himself and then simply inform the others of it. Rather what Brezhnev did was to seek to construct a consensus around issues, with the circulation of draft speeches widely before delivery for feedback being one means of this. This approach has often been misinterpreted. For example, Mikoyan⁶⁰ has referred to Brezhnev as having a “lack of responsibility of command”, of failing to have an opinion of his own, and as being swayed by the opinion of others. But this is to misunderstand Brezhnev’s *modus operandi* in an organ in which at no time did his clients constitute a majority. He always sought to lead from the middle. On most issues he would start out with a view and try to get a broad consensus consistent with that view, but if he found that a consensus on that basis was unlikely, he was on most occasions willing to shift to get a consensus that was possible.⁶¹ According to Semichastny,⁶² discussion in the Politburo was calm, and involved a rational search for answers, with Brezhnev’s preference for a consensus rather than votes. A CC spokesman, Valentin Falin, reported in 1979 that there had to be a consensus in the Politburo, and if there was not, Brezhnev would sum up the differences and suggest the item be postponed for further work.⁶³ Brezhnev was courteous and collegial, and did not seek to impose his will on the others. He acted as one of the collective. Brezhnev himself said to a delegation from the Czech Communist Party in 1968 with regard to the invasion: “You thought that if you had power, you could do what you wanted. But this is a fundamental mistake. Not even I can do what I’d like; I can achieve only a third of what I would like to do. If I hadn’t voted in the Politburo for military intervention, what would have happened? You almost certainly would not be sitting here. And I probably wouldn’t be sitting here either”.⁶⁴ While allowing for some hyperbole here, this does accurately reflect the leadership style of this time: a search for consensus and the involvement of the collective in decisions.⁶⁵

This is perhaps best illustrated by the way in which the removal of his main competitors was brought about by Brezhnev through a collective process. Brezhnev was always intent on ensuring that he had not only a Politburo majority in favour of personnel changes (which sometimes required him to get a decision adopted when a potential opponent was absent, thereby confronting that opponent with the established consensus of the others⁶⁶), but in particular the principal figures in the Politburo, Kosygin, Suslov, Podgorny (as the president) and perhaps Kirilenko.⁶⁷

This sort of strategy was not unique to Brezhnev; both Stalin and Khrushchev had usually taken care to line up their support before moving against one of their colleagues. But there were two aspects of the way Brezhnev did it that contrasted with his predecessors. First, he expended effort on getting his victims to agree to leave their posts.⁶⁸ This was achieved not only by appeal to party discipline and by making it clear to them that the Politburo collectively supported such a move, but by clothing their dismissal in the garb of a shift to an important job or even a promotion. This is linked to the second difference: those removed were given a soft landing. Many were not, like Khrushchev, shuffled off into premature retirement, but given a continuing position somewhere. This is most clearly shown in the fact that the initial blows against Podgorny, Shelepin and Shelest saw them all retain their full Politburo membership, and Podgorny became head of state. Even when he was finally removed from the Politburo in 1975, Shelepin became deputy chair of the State Committee on Professional and Technical Education; Podgorny who was 74 when he retired from the Politburo and Shelest who was 65 went onto a pension. Others became ministers or deputy ministers, regional party secretaries or ambassadors. Furthermore when they retired, they were not humiliated in front of their peers, as had been all too common under Khrushchev. Brezhnev seemed solicitous for their interests,⁶⁹ so that their removal did not appear brutal in the way it often had in the past.

This reflected a basically respectful attitude that the General Secretary adopted towards his colleagues. Rather than haranguing them, he sought to work with them. Admittedly this was on his own terms, as he sought to define issues and persuade them around to his point of view. Importantly, this meant that they were being taken seriously, that their status had been recognized by the General Secretary and he was giving them the due owing to them. This reflected the application of the regime's slogan "trust in cadres", which Brezhnev had introduced in 1966,⁷⁰ to elite relations. The generation of the view that they were valued, something reinforced by his practice of socializing with some of his colleagues,⁷¹ not only strengthened the sense of collectivism in the leadership, but also made Brezhnev appear in a good light. Rather than being overbearing and dominating, which was the model inherited from the past, he appeared as collegial, democratic, and someone who not only listened but was sensitive to their interests, and concerns.⁷² The norm that the General Secretary had the right to lead and the scope to use individual initiative was not being denied, but realized in a different way.

This notion of trust was made concrete for his Politburo colleagues by the stability of membership of this body, noted above. One aspect of this is that there was no age provision under Brezhnev; older colleagues were not pushed out simply because of their age. Sometimes when older members did retire, they were replaced by someone as old as or even older than they were; for example, when the 76-year-old Kosygin retired in 1980, he was replaced by the 75-year-old Tikhonov. The result is that over time the average age of the Politburo rose considerably. The average age of full members of the Politburo after the XXIII Congress in 1966 was 58, the XXIV in 1971 61, the XXV in 1976 66 and the XXVI in 1981 70, with the last figure artificially low because of the presence of the 50-year-old Mikhail Gorbachev.⁷³ Those who did not challenge Brezhnev's position were likely to be able to remain at the top for a very long time. Such longevity reflected the quiet jettisoning of the mandatory limited tenure and turnover provisions introduced by Khrushchev in 1961; they were dropped from the party's Rules in 1966.

Trust was also demonstrated and collectivism emphasized by the way that Brezhnev's speeches were usually circulated to the Politburo and some in the Secretariat (and sometimes more widely) for comment before they were delivered. Brezhnev, and those around him who wrote the drafts, thus sought to engage his fellow oligarchs in preparing the regime's main statements, unlike the experience under Khrushchev. Sometimes amendments that were suggested were taken up and incorporated, sometimes not, but by the mere fact of seeming to consult in this way, Brezhnev was signalling that he valued the views of his colleagues. This also had the effect of locking them in behind his public statements. Similarly the way he handled the revision of proposed CC decisions, actively involving appointed commissions comprising CC members in the practical work of amending the documents,⁷⁴ reflected an openness to the opinions of others that could not help but strengthen the sense of collectivity in leadership. However this changed when he became ill; collegiality was strained as Brezhnev became increasingly detached and reliant on a narrow circle, and suspicious of his colleagues and what they were doing while he was incapacitated. He relied overwhelmingly on Chernenko as his line into the Politburo, and Chernenko acted dutifully to protect his patron's interests. According to Gorbachev while he had at times encouraged discussion in meetings of the Politburo and Secretariat, when he became ill "(d)iscussion was excluded, and any kind of self-critical comments on his part were out of the question".⁷⁵ And

trust had its limits; the movements of Politburo members were still likely to be reported back to the General Secretary, meaning that even social occasions were not common.⁷⁶

The absence of any move against Brezhnev when he was sick and manifestly not fulfilling all of the functions expected of him may thus be explained in part by the atmosphere that prevailed in the Politburo over most of his period as General Secretary. Other oligarchs did not feel threatened by him, even when he became more suspicious towards the end of his life, and when associated with the principle that the General Secretary was granted some slack in terms of his duty to lead, this may have been enough to deter possible moves for replacement. But also the age of most oligarchs meant that the ambition that may have burned brightly when they were young had become dulled by now. Except for Gorbachev, none of the other full members of the Politburo were of an age when they could have considered themselves anything but a short term, stop-gap leader had they achieved the top position, while Gorbachev's ambitions were held in check by his patron, Yuri Andropov.⁷⁷ Of course dulled ambition did not mean no ambition, but none of the older oligarchs could be sure that if they did make a move they would be supported by their colleagues. As it was, the oligarchs were at the top of the tree in Soviet society; they enjoyed position, privilege and power, and they must have feared that any change in General Secretary could place those in jeopardy. With little seemingly to gain in the long term, they were content to enjoy the fruits of their positions and not to jeopardize this by an unseemly grab for power. In any case, Brezhnev's illness and absence potentially expanded their room for independent activity, and thereby for the sort of informal interactions that had always been central to the functioning of an effective central leadership. The oligarchs continued to carry out the routine tasks with which they were charged, they continued to meet informally as the conduct of those tasks demanded, and the normal business of the oligarchy continued on unabated.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTOURS OF ELITE POLITICS

But despite this collectivism in leadership, Brezhnev did achieve a predominant position. As the above discussion indicates, over the period Brezhnev was able to build up the number of his clients in the leadership, remove major critics, and through his *modus operandi*, keep

allies supportive. He did not impose his views, but worked with others to arrive at a consensus that he was happy with. In part this reflects the institutional power he and his clients were able to wield. The chief decision-making institution remained the Politburo, and as General Secretary, he organized its business. Through his clients in the Secretariat, especially Kirilenko and Chernenko, he oversaw the preparation of materials for Politburo meetings and, given the prominence of his clients among the senior secretaries who shared membership of both the Politburo and Secretariat, this group could often work questions out before they went into the full Politburo. And once in the Politburo, Brezhnev seems (at least until he became sick) to have played a major part in presenting the issues that came up for discussion, and thereby defining the bounds of that discussion. Certainly other figures who were not Brezhnev clients, Kosygin, Podgorny, and after 1973 Andropov and Gromyko, also played key roles, but Brezhnev's part was central. Suslov's position was also crucial in the functioning of the Politburo. He acted as unofficial "second secretary", his standing in the party (and perhaps his lack of ambition to take the top job) giving him the capacity to have an often decisive say on all matters.⁷⁸ His influence was enhanced by the fact that during the second half of the 1970s he was in much better health than Brezhnev, but he generally supported the conservative course championed by the General Secretary. There is no doubt that the key decision-makers on a regular basis were all members of the Politburo, although as this period wore on and Brezhnev's health deteriorated, full Politburo meetings became shorter with fewer decisions made; it was not unusual for meetings to last only 30 minutes—one hour, purely ratifying decisions made by a smaller inner group,⁷⁹ while in some sessions of the Politburo Brezhnev played little active part.⁸⁰ Full Politburo meetings were also hindered by the presence of some members outside Moscow in the republican capitals who did not attend all meetings, especially if they considered them simply pro forma gatherings. Much of the decision-making occurred in Politburo commissions while security issues were concentrated in the Defence Council. This was a body that emerged to deal with such issues⁸¹ which brought together leading members of the political and military leaderships,⁸² and Brezhnev was central. While healthy, he chaired this body and given the strength of his clients' representation in it and the fact that many of his policies would have gained significant military support, this constituted an institutional arena for the discussion of strategic questions that was likely to be sympathetic to him.

The CC, which had seemingly flexed its muscles in 1957 and 1964 in terms of in the first instance overturning the Presidium's recommendation about ending the tenure of the First Secretary and in the second agreeing with it, and whose status had seemed to be boosted by the decisions made at the time of Khrushchev's fall, did not play the same sort of dramatic role under Brezhnev. Reflecting the "trust in cadres" policy, the CC, which met regularly throughout this period, was the site of broad policy discussion, but it was never called upon to resolve disputes in the Politburo.⁸³ It is not clear that the views of CC members ever changed established Politburo positions, but the simple fact that members were being listened to and not ignored by the party leader (including their role in the commissions formed to redraft CC decisions noted above) was likely to have made them favourably disposed towards Brezhnev. Such a reaction was strengthened by the way in which Brezhnev seemed to be associated with other policies that served the interests of CC members. The decision to reverse Khrushchev's bifurcation of the party apparatus, formalized at the November plenum immediately following Khrushchev's ouster,⁸⁴ was popular among party secretaries who filled the ranks of the CC. So too was the policy of "stability of cadres" which effectively gave them security of tenure of their posts instead of the regular turnover that Khrushchev had mandated.⁸⁵ The effect of this policy is reflected in the retention rates of CC members elected at each Congress and in the increasing size of that body (Table 6.4).

This increased security was widely attributed to Brezhnev. In addition, Brezhnev seems to have been assiduous in personally cultivating many party secretaries at lower levels of the party structure,⁸⁶ clearly appearing

Table 6.4 Retention rates of CC membership and size of CC, 1961–81^a

<i>Congress</i>	<i>Percentage of those elected at previous Congress carried forward to this one (%)</i>	<i>Size of CC elected at this Congress: full members</i>	<i>Size of CC elected at this Congress: total members</i>
XXII 1961	50	175	350
XXIII 1966	73	195	360
XXIV 1971	73	241	396
XXV 1976	80	287	426
XXVI 1981	78	319	470

^aMawdsley and White (2000), p. 171

as someone who had their interests at heart. Accordingly, within the CC, some members saw their task to be to provide solid support for the General Secretary at all times.⁸⁷ As a result, the CC was not likely to be an arena hostile to Brezhnev, or one that would have appeared likely to support a move against the General Secretary.

As in earlier times, informal meetings were also important aspects of decision-making, and again the oligarchs made use of these. In the early stage of the new regime, the chief conspirators against Khrushchev appear to have acted as a kind of “kitchen cabinet”. This is reflected in the way in which the dismissal of Semichastny was handled, with Brezhnev explicitly saying that he, Kosygin, Podgorny and Suslov proposed to dismiss him (Semichastny) from his post in charge of the KGB.⁸⁸ Membership of this informal group changed with Podgorny’s fall and the entry of Andropov, Grechko and Ustinov into the Politburo. The decision to intervene militarily in Afghanistan in December 1979 was taken by Brezhnev, Gromyko, Andropov and Ustinov, and later ratified by the full Politburo.⁸⁹ This was clearly an issue of national security, hence the presence of the Foreign, and Defence Ministers and head of the KGB was logical, but these three were unlikely to have been Brezhnev’s most frequent interlocutors. Kirilenko had been one of these, but on Afghanistan he had opposed intervention, and in any case by this time his star seemed to be falling. Suslov probably remained central for maintaining broad balance within the Politburo, but as Brezhnev aged, he came increasingly to rely upon Konstantin Chernenko (who he was able to get promoted into the Politburo despite resistance from some of his other colleagues). According to a former Chernenko aide,⁹⁰ in the late 1970s key decisions were taken by Brezhnev, Suslov, Gromyko, Ustinov, Andropov and Chernenko, with Brezhnev less involved in this than the others. This sort of reliance on a small group had been a feature of earlier party leaders, and in Khrushchev’s case had been a factor in the mobilization against him. In this case, where that group was mainly a subset of the leadership (although late in his life Brezhnev had also promoted relatives, with his son as first deputy foreign minister and his son-in-law first deputy interior minister⁹¹), and where key members of it (Suslov, Gromyko and Andropov and earlier Kosygin) were not clients of Brezhnev but established and powerful politicians in their own right,⁹² this might have seemed less offensive to those oligarchs who had been omitted. The fact that this did not result in policies that affected their collective interests may also have assuaged possible doubts they had, and

this certainly did not generate the sort of restiveness that could result in leadership challenge. There was also a sense that the office of General Secretary had authority and it was the responsibility of others to support the incumbent rather than continually question him.⁹³ Furthermore at both the elite level and among party first secretaries throughout the party structure, there was the realization that Brezhnev's illness left increased room for others to exercise power.⁹⁴ Informal meetings and consultation among oligarchs and the elite more broadly remained the norm.

Against this background, Brezhnev's public rise to predominance was clear. A major step occurred in the early 1970s when he effectively displaced Kosygin as the principal actor in Soviet foreign policy. In 1967 it was Kosygin who had negotiated with US President Lyndon Johnson in Glassboro and in 1969 in Beijing with the Chinese, but by 1972 (the Brezhnev-Nixon summit in Moscow) it was Brezhnev who was leading such negotiations, even though at this time he did not hold a formal position in the Soviet state. This was, of course, rectified in 1977 when he became Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, or head of state.⁹⁵ This was an interesting move, unprecedented in Soviet history, because it gave him a key position in the state apparatus without voiding the agreement of the anti-Khrushchev coalition about combining the posts of party leader and prime minister. It was also consistent with something that many observers have noted about Brezhnev, his liking for honours. During his leadership period, but especially in its later years, Brezhnev was the recipient of a large number of awards and honours. These included medals and new honorifics for his war service; he became a Hero of the Soviet Union four times, was awarded the Order of Victory, and became a Marshal of the Soviet Union. He was also awarded the Lenin Prize for Literature for his slim volumes about his war experiences as well as numerous local and international awards. This was all part of a burgeoning cult, which began in the mid-1970s⁹⁶ and which elevated Brezhnev far above his colleagues in terms of public projection. But while this cult had elements similar to its predecessors (of Stalin and Khrushchev), there was also a strong theme lauding Brezhnev for his practical and down-to-earth working style, his collegial approach to his colleagues, and his concern for their interests. It was almost as though the cult of the leader was a paeon to the collective leadership that they all enjoyed. Shelest even referred to it as an "impersonal cult".⁹⁷

CONCLUSION

In this sense, the cult was giving voice to a style of collective leadership never before seen for any long period in Soviet history, but one which, like its predecessors, was shaped substantially by the predominant leader and how he chose to perform his office: a predominant leader who sought to get his way through massaging the consensus of his colleagues and did not act to threaten their collective interests. Brezhnev sought to lead from the middle, not from the front, and in doing so created a style of leadership with which his colleagues felt comfortable. Brezhnev was a passive predominant leader rather than an activist one like Khrushchev, such that his ambition did not push the bounds of predominant collective leadership in the direction of a dominant leadership model. The oligarchs could operate within this sort of environment, generally without fear because of the collective commitment to do nothing that might compromise collective interests. This began to come under threat towards the end of this period, with Andropov's sponsoring of the anti-corruption campaign and the implications it held for Brezhnev and some other of the leaders. It may be that Brezhnev's advanced age and illness hindered his capacity to nip this in the bud, but it is also possible that his physical condition was encouraging all members of the elite to look more to their own interests. But this development, which could have upset the consensual balance, was forestalled by Brezhnev's death.

NOTES

1. Doklad prezidiuma (2007).
2. Doklad prezidiuma (2007), pp. 214–216.
3. For an early view that this involved a balancing of appointments, see Rigby (1970). Promotion from within an organization became more common of the practice of parachuting someone in from another organization. The latter had been favoured for the way it was thought to hinder the development of closed cliques.
4. The designation of particular factional affiliations of people is based on the careful work in Willerton (1987) and Willerton (1992), ch. 2. Willerton has strict criteria for designating people as “protégés”, “clients” or “allies”. The principal difference between “protégés” and “clients” is that a clear link existed between Brezhnev and the person involved (reflected in two coordinated career moves) respectively before 1964 and after 1964. I have used the one term, “clients” for both, while recognizing

that the longer the relationship, the stronger it is likely to have been. For another study, see Hodnett (1981), pp. 93–95, 114.

5. Willerton includes Rusakov and Aliev in his category as clients. After a career in light industry, Rusakov pursued a career in the CC apparatus from 1960–62 and 1964–77, and was personal assistant to Brezhnev from 1972 until he became CC Secretary in 1977. Aliev's career is less obviously associated with Brezhnev, having been in the Azeri KGB and then First Secretary in Azerbaijan (1969–82). Goryachev (2005), pp. 354, 125.
6. Representation was as follows:

	<i>April 1966</i>	<i>March 1981</i>
Central state machine	4	6
Central party apparatus	7	7
Regional state machine	1	1
Regional party apparatus	6	8
Other	1	

Other denotes the head of the trade unions.

7. Goryachev (2005), pp. 332, 387.
8. He had been a candidate member 1946–48, 1952–53 and 1957–60, and a full member 1948–52 and from 1960. Goryachev (2005), p. 256.
9. Brezhnev sought to consolidate his position by remaining head of the RSFSR Bureau of the party. Khrushchev had headed this since its foundation in 1956; it was abolished in April 1966 and actually had little effect on Brezhnev's accumulation of power. Tatu (1968), pp. 515–516. For one study of the consolidation of power by Brezhnev, see Rakowska-Harmstone (1976), pp. 61–68.
10. See Tompson (2003), p. 16.
11. A former head of the KGB (and patron of the current head Semichastny), Shelepin had been head of the Party-State Control Committee and a deputy prime minister, but in December 1965 the Committee was abolished and he lost his deputy prime ministerial post, although he retained his position as CC Secretary (at a reduced status) for the time being. Shelepin's close association with the security apparatus and his obvious ambition encouraged the oligarchs to unite behind Brezhnev in his demotion.
12. At the March 1965 plenum, his client Dmitrii Ustinov became a candidate member of the Presidium and replaced Leonid Il'ichev in the Secretariat; at the same meeting, Kirill Mazurov was promoted to full membership. At the September 1965 plenum, Podgorny's client Vitalii Titov was replaced in the Secretariat by Fedor Kulakov, who remained in office until

his death in July 1978. Titov's removal was important because he had been the junior secretary in the Organizational-Party Work department and had therefore had a part to play in personnel questions. In December 1965, Ivan Kapitonov was added to the Secretariat and was made head of the newly-renamed Organizational-Party Work Department (in charge of appointments); he was to remain in place and a Brezhnev ally until Brezhnev's death. The Brezhnev client Vladimir Shcherbitsky was elected a candidate member of the Presidium. During 1965 too, Brezhnev client and very close associate Konstantin Chernenko was appointed to head the General Department, that section of the Secretariat that prepared materials for Presidium/Politburo meetings; he held this post until December 1982.

13. Masherov has been identified as a client of Mazurov and part of the so-called Belorussian group. Willerton (1987), p. 183.
14. Another client, Nikolai Shchelokov, became Minister for the Preservation of Public Order, from 1968 Internal Affairs, an office he held until 1982. In December 1966, Mikhail Solomentsev became a CC Secretary.
15. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 677, 680–681. For a study casting doubt on the substance of Mikoyan's claim, see Sniegou (2016), esp. p. 245.
16. For an argument that the move against Shelepin was occasioned by the attack in the June 1967 CC plenum on aspects of the Politburo's policy by Shelepin client Nikolai Yegorychev, see Gelman (1984), pp. 96–98.
17. Semichastny (2002), pp. 377–378.
18. Semichastny (2002), p. 184.
19. On most of the deputy chairmen having strong patronage connections to Brezhnev, see Willerton (1987), p. 200, n. 12. Also Willerton (1992), pp. 58–59. Andropov may also have been hedged by the fact that the Ministry of Internal Affairs was headed by Brezhnev clients, Shchelokov and Papatin. Willerton (1992), p. 59.
20. CC Secretary Kulakov was also promoted directly to full membership. The only CC Secretaries not carried forward were Andropov (in connection with his shift to the KGB) and Rudakov who died. In November 1971, CC Secretary Solomentsev, who seems to have been an ally of Brezhnev, was promoted to candidate member, simultaneously ceasing to be a CC Secretary. In May 1972, Boris Ponomarev became a candidate member of the Politburo.
21. On Voronov, see Lowenhardt et al. (1992), p. 64. On Shelest, see his interview Shelest (1989a); also Shelest (1989b). Also Gelman (1984), p. 157. On Shelest earlier, see Mikoyan (2014), pp. 673–677.
22. Gelman (1984), p. 53.

23. For some figures on the size of Brezhnev's faction at different levels of the political structure at different points in the 1964–81 period, see Willerton (1987), p. 184.
24. At the time of the XXV Congress in 1976, 11 of the 15 full members of the Politburo from the XXIV Congress were re-elected; Shelepin had been removed in April 1975, and Polyansky at the plenum before the Congress in February 1976; Ustinov and Romanov were promoted to full membership of the Politburo, Aliev became a candidate, and two new secretaries were appointed, Chernenko (who was a long time client of Brezhnev) and the Mazurov client Mikhail Zimyanin. Five full members left the Politburo in the years between the XXV and XXVI Congresses: Grechko (in April 1976) and Kulakov (in July 1978) both died, while Podgorny (in May 1977) and Mazurov (in November 1978), who had both had their differences with Brezhnev, were removed; Kosygin was also removed, two months before his death in 1980.
25. There were also a number of new appointments between the congresses: in October 1977 Vasilii Kuznetsov and Chernenko became candidate members, in November 1978 Chernenko was promoted to full member and Tikhonov and Eduard Shevardnadze were elected candidate members, in November 1979 Tikhonov became a full member and Mikhail Gorbachev a candidate member, while in October 1980 Gorbachev became a full member and Tikhon Kiselev a candidate member of the Politburo. There were also changes to the Secretariat: in October 1976 Yakob Ryabov became a CC Secretary in place of Ustinov, in May 1977 Rusakov replaced Katushev, in November 1978 Gorbachev replaced the dead Kulakov, and in April 1979 Ryabov was removed.
26. Gelman (1984), p. 183. Although according to Gorbachev, Brezhnev had, after considerable thought, appointed Andropov as effectively his number two. Gorbachev (1996), p. 126. For the effect of Suslov's death, see Gorbachev (1996), pp. 124–126.
27. For some figures on the changing size of Brezhnev's network compared with the others, see Willerton (1992), p. 61.
28. Gelman (1984), pp. 175–178, 254, n. 2.
29. The figures in this table show appointments and removals and ignore promotion. This will give us a rough approximation of the way the balance within the oligarchy overall changed. The first two substantive columns give data on the appointment of Brezhnev and non-Brezhnev people, the third on the removal of non-Brezhnev people), and the fourth gives the net result for Brezhnev each year. The net result is arrived at by subtracting column three from column two and comparing the result with column one.

Affiliations of leadership changes 1

	<i>Brezhnev clients appointed</i>	<i>Non-Brezhnev people appointed</i>	<i>Non-Brezhnev people removed</i>	<i>Net gain/loss for Brezhnev</i>
October– December 1964	0	3 Shelepin, Shelest, Demichev	2 Kozlov, Polyakov	-1
1965	2 Ustinov, Shcherbitsky	2 Kulakov, Kapitonov	3 Titov, Podgorny, Il'ichev	+3
1966	1 Kunaev	3 Pel'she, Masherov, Solomentsev	2 Mikoyan, Shvernik	0
1967	0	0	0	0
1968	1 Katushev	0	0	+1
1971	0	0	0	0
1972	0	2 Dolgikh, Ponomarev	1 Mzhavanadze	-1
1973	1 Grechko	2 Gromyko, Romanov	2 Shelest, Voronov	+1
1974	0	0	1 Demichev	+1
1975	0	0	1 Shelepin	+1
1976	2 Chernenko, Aliev	1 Zimyanin	1 Polyansky	+2
1977	2 Rusakov, Kuznetsov	0	1 Podgorny	+3
1978	1 Tikhonov	2 Gorbachev Shevardnadze	1 Mazurov	0
1980	1 Kiselev	0	1 Kosygin	+2
1982	0	0	0	0
Total	11	15	16	+12

When promotions are included:
Affiliations of leadership changes 2 (Promotions in italics)

	<i>Brezhnev clients appointed/promoted</i>	<i>Non-Brezhnev people appointed/promoted</i>	<i>Non-Brezhnev people removed/ demoted</i>
October– December 1964		3 Shelepin, Shelest, <i>Demichev</i>	2 Kozlov, Polyakov
1965	2 Ustinov, Shcherbitsky	3 Mazurov, Kulakov, Kapitonov	3 Titov, Podgorny, Il'ichev
1966	2 Kunaev, <i>Kirilenko</i>	3 Pel'she, Masherov, Solomentsev	2 Mikoyan, Shvernik
1967	0	1 <i>Andropov</i>	2 Shelepin
1968	1 Katushev	0	0
1971	2 <i>Kunaev</i> , Shcherbitsky	3 <i>Grisbin</i> , <i>Kulakov</i> , Solomentsev	0
1972	0	2 Dolgikh, Ponomarev	1 Mzhavanadze
1973	1 Grechko	3 <i>Andropov</i> , Gromyko, Romanov	3 Shelest, Voronov
1974			1 Demichev
1975	0	0	1 Shelepin
1976	4 <i>Ustinov</i> , Aliev, Chernenko, Ryabov	2 <i>Romanov</i> , Zimyanin	1 Polyansky
1977	3 Rusakov, Kuznetsov, <i>Chernenko</i>	0	1 Podgorny
1978	2 <i>Chernenko</i> , Tikhonov	2 Gorbachev, Shevardnadze	1 Mazurov
1979	1 <i>Tikhonov</i>	1 <i>Gorbachev</i>	0

(continued)

	<i>Brezhnev clients appointed/promoted</i>	<i>Non-Brezhnev people appointed/promoted</i>	<i>Non-Brezhnev people removed/ demoted</i>
1980	1 Kiselev	1 <i>Gorbachev</i>	1 Kosygin
1982	0	2 <i>Andropov, Dolgikh</i>	0
Total	19	26	16

30. For a comparison with the other networks, see Willerton (1992), pp. 63–71.
31. On the numbers of clients of the top leaders' clients, see Willerton (1987), p. 181.
32. For this argument, see Gelman (1984), pp. 176, 254, n. 2.
33. On Kapitonov as a Brezhnev ally, see Willerton (1987), p. 185.
34. Willerton (1987), pp. 184–186. For the identity of department heads, see Wells and Miller (1993).
35. The same argument applies to the broader network, where that of Brezhnev was more organizationally extensive than the networks of other leading politicians. Kosygin's was limited to the state and in particular the economic ministries, Podgorny's to Ukraine (including Shelest), Mazurov/Masherov to Belorussia, Suslov to the central party apparatus, and Kapitonov to Moscow. Willerton (1987), pp. 192–196.
36. See Gill and Pitty (1997).
37. The argument about policy differences broadly follows that in Breslauer (1982). On policy and support for it by clients, see Willerton (1992), ch. 3. This discussion brings out the possible contradiction between the demands of clientage and those of institutional affiliation.
38. Willerton (1992), pp. 105–106.
39. Investment in light industry "nearly doubled in size over the late 1960s". Bunce (1983), p. 137.
40. Tompson (2003), pp. 70–71.
41. For various figures on this, see Tompson (2003), p. 76.
42. Gelman (1984), pp. 79–80.
43. Gelman (1984), pp. 81–82.
44. On the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, State Security and Interior being subject to the Politburo and Secretariat rather than the Council of Ministers, although formally being part of the state structure, see Gorbachev (1996), p. 112; also Ryzhkov (1992), p. 102.
45. See the discussion in Gelman (1984), pp. 76–78.
46. For studies of the decision-making process with regard to this issue, see Valenta (1979), Dawisha (1984), and Medvedev (1991), pp. 175–176.

47. On unanimity, see Dawisha (1984), p. 362. On consultations with others outside the immediate leadership, see Dawisha (1984), pp. 356–360.
48. On Kosygin being absent from some of the meetings, see Dawisha (1984), p. 362. The core people on this issue were Brezhnev, Kosygin, Podgorny, Suslov and Ukrainian party leader Shelest.
49. Dawisha (1984), p. 361.
50. On discussion of this in the Politburo session of 17 December 1969, see “V spokoinom tone dat’ stat’yu.” Also see Medvedev (1991), pp. 175–176.
51. Breslauer (1982), p. 183.
52. Compare Otchet tsentral’nogo komiteta XXV s’ezd (1976) and Osnovnyie napravleniia razvitiia, XXV s’ezd (1976). Also Breslauer (1982), pp. 221–229.
53. Tompson (2003), p. 21.
54. For example, see his speech of March 1968. *Pravda* 30 March 1968. This is discussed in Breslauer (1982) p. 166.
55. Breslauer (1982), p. 245. A summary of policy shifts is to be found in Breslauer (1982), ch. 15.
56. For one description of this, on the Food Program adopted in 1980, see Gorbachev (1996), pp. 128–131. Also more generally on pp. 133–136.
57. On this see Hoffman and Laird.
58. For some attempts to reconceptualize the Soviet system in these terms, see Hough (1983) and Bunce (1983).
59. Brown (1980), pp. 140–141. The average number of Politburo sessions per month was as follows: April 1971–February 1976 3.7; February 1976–February 1981 3.9. Lowenhardt et al. (1992), p. 108. The raw figures come from Brezhnev’s reports to the XXV and XXVI Congresses; no such figures were provided for the earlier period in the XXIV Congress speech.
60. Mikoyan (2014), pp. 678–680. For another critical view of Brezhnev and his work style, see Medvedev (1991), ch. 3.
61. For one case of him seeking to bring about a consensus, see the discussion of ideological education in the Politburo session of 10 November 1966 in *Istochnik. Vestnik Arkhiva Prezidenta RF* 2 (21), 1996, pp. 111–121.
62. Semichastny (2002), p. 371. Of course Semichastny’s direct experience of this would have ended in 1967 when he was removed as head of the KGB.
63. Cited in Brown (1980), p. 157, n. 54.
64. Cited in Dawisha (1984), p. 283.
65. For an extreme example of this involvement of everyone in decisions, see the episode reported by Mohamed Heikel, adviser to Egyptian President Nasser, in 1970 cited in Valenta (1979), p. 10.

66. For one example, see Schattenberg (2015), pp. 850–851. Both Shelepin and Podgorny were removed shortly after they returned from overseas trips, with their absence being an obvious time to organize the move against them. Similarly Khrushchev and Gorbachev were outside Moscow when the moves were made against them in 1957, 1964 and 1991.
67. Schattenberg (2015), pp. 850–851.
68. Shelest explicitly disputes this, but his actual description of his removal gives some weight to the claim. Shelest (1989b), p. 16.
69. Thatcher (2002), p. 31.
70. For an early discussion, see Otchetnyi doklad (1966), vol. 1, pp. 90–91.
71. On this see Schattenberg (2015), pp. 854–856.
72. This does not sit easily with Gorbachev’s view that Brezhnev was vindictive, but it is consistent with his view of Brezhnev as biding his time to wait for “an appropriate moment to replace the offender”. Gorbachev (1996), p. 113.
73. Tompson (2003), p. 24.
74. Schattenberg (2015), pp. 842–844.
75. Gorbachev (1996), p. 113.
76. Gorbachev (1996), p. 122. The concern that the domestic premises of Politburo members were bugged was still present at the time of Chernenko’s death. Gorbachev (1996), p. 165. For the same point about their offices, see Ligachev (1996), pp. 55–56. Interestingly, this does not appear in the abbreviated version of Ligachev’s memoirs published much later in Russian. Ligachev (2010), p. 53. For Ryzhkov’s view (relating to 1983) that non-work related relationships with colleagues could be seen as an attempted conspiracy, see Ryzhkov (1992), p. 40.
77. Gorbachev (1996), p. 114.
78. See the comments in Ryzhkov (1992), p. 36 and Gorbachev (1996), p. 124.
79. Brown (1996), p. 201.
80. Tompson (2003), p. 29. Also see Gorbachev (1996), pp. 133–136 for a discussion of how the Politburo functioned towards the end of Brezhnev’s life. On some occasions, Brezhnev was not aware of what was going on, either falling asleep or appearing to be mentally in another world.
81. On this see Gelman (1984), pp. 65–70.
82. In the early 1970s its membership included the party General Secretary, state Premier (Kosygin), president (Podgorny), CC Secretary in charge of defence production (Ustinov), Minister of Defence (Grechko) and a variety of military leaders called to discuss particular issues to which they were relevant. On the membership see, Garthoff (1975), p. 29. Andropov and Gromyko are likely to have joined this body following their elevation to the Politburo in 1973. For Gelman’s discussion see p. 66.

83. Cf. the comments in Valenta (1979), pp. 60–63. See the comments by Gelman (1984), p. 234, n. 4.
84. “Postanovleniya Plenuma”, Artizov et al. (2007), pp. 433–434. For the stenogram and protocols of the meeting, see pp. 362–433.
85. Although it is important to recognize that the principles “trust in cadres” and “stability of cadres” does not mean that Brezhnev did not at times criticize officials who, he said, were performing in a deficient fashion. For example, see his comments at the XXIV and XXV Congresses on the cadre question. *Otchetnyi doklad, XXIV s’ezd* (1972), vol. 1, pp. 117–126 and *Otchet XXV s’ezd* (1976), vol. 1, pp. 87–97. Also see Breslauer (1982), chs. 13, 14 and 15. There was also turnover of party officials. For some figures, see Willerton (1987), p. 180.
86. See Schattenberg (2015), p. 854 and Gorbachev (1996), p. 86, Thatcher (2002), p. 27. On support by party officials for Brezhnev, see Medvedev (1991), pp. 276–277.
87. On Gorbachev being told by his patron Fedor Kulakov when he joined the CC that he was joining a hard core of Brezhnev supporters, see Taubman (2017), p. 123.
88. Semichastny (2002), p. 408. Also see the discussion in Schattenberg (2015), pp. 850–851. For Gorbachev’s view that in January 1980 “the small group which in effect took all the major decisions affecting the fate of the country” comprised Brezhnev, Gromyko and Ustinov, see Gorbachev (1996), p. 116.
89. Suslov, Grishin, Kirilenko and Ponomarev may also have been involved in these discussions.
90. Brown (1996), p. 56. On the existence of a “narrow working cabinet” consisting of heads and deputy heads of some CC departments—Georgii Pavlov, Nikolai Petrovichev, Sergei Trapeznikov and Klavdii Bogolyubov—see Medvedev (2016), p. 11. He later refers to it as a “shadow working cabinet”, Medvedev (2016), p. 32.
91. Tompson (2003), p. 18.
92. For the argument that this is shown with regard to Andropov by his becoming a CC Secretary in May 1982, see the argument in Miller (1989), pp. 64–65.
93. For suggestions along these lines, see Gorbachev’s report of Andropov’s attitude to Brezhnev and his incapacity for work. Gorbachev (1996), p. 114. This is not the only construction that can be placed on this report. For Shelest’s similar view, see Shelest (1989b), p. 16.
94. On the way Politburo members simply went along with Brezhnev towards the end of his life, see Gorbachev (1996), pp. 133–134.
95. For a discussion of how this position may have expanded Brezhnev’s power, see Hodnett (1981), pp. 100–101.

96. For some details and a discussion, see Gill (1980). For one attempt to chart the rise and fall of the cult, see Alekseev (1982).
97. Shelest (1989b), p. 16.

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Collectivism Collapses, 1982–91

Following Brezhnev's death in November 1982, Soviet collective leadership went through two stages: an interregnum until March 1985, and then ultimately the supersession of collective leadership based in the leading party organs and the collapse of the Soviet state. The interregnum did nothing to resolve the dilemma around the most appropriate model of collective leadership emanating from the Brezhnev experience: if an activist predominant leader continued to be ruled out on the basis of the Khrushchev experience and a passive predominant leader like Brezhnev produced the accumulation of problems that the USSR now faced, what form of leadership should be tried now? Given the mounting problems and the age profile of the oligarchs in March 1985, logic suggested that they opt for a younger, more activist leader, and they did this in the hope that there would not be a repeat of the Khrushchev experience. Their choice led to the party's norms being once again reshaped. Both Brezhnev and Gorbachev sought to lead by constructing a consensus among the oligarchs, but because the policies Gorbachev sought to implement were highly contentious, not only was that consensus always under pressure, but he had to play a highly activist role. Within this context, the institutional norms of the party stood up well, with the formal organization of the party continuing to function broadly as expected until the transformation of the political system as a whole in 1990–91. The limits on open discussion that had applied earlier were burst asunder while both factionalism and opposition achieved some legitimacy. Policy questions remained central to politics while bureaucratic politics

continued to animate both oligarchs and elite more broadly, especially as economic conditions became more difficult. Ultimately the party's normative order could not contain the divisions within the oligarchy and the elite nor provide a defence against the popular mobilization that occurred from outside the oligarchy.

THE INTERREGNUM: ANDROPOV AND CHERNENKO

Following Brezhnev's death on 10 November 1982, there were two short-term incumbents of the post of General Secretary, Yuri Andropov (12 November 1982–9 February 1984) and Konstantin Chernenko (13 February 1984–10 March 1985). Both were elderly and in poor health; Andropov was born in 1914, suffered from heart problems and from February 1983 was undergoing regular kidney dialysis treatment, while Chernenko was even older having been born in 1911 and had for a long time suffered from emphysema. It was clear that these two could only be transitional, short-term leaders.

Nevertheless, Andropov seemed to consolidate his power within a very short time. In May 1983 his position at the head of the Defence Council was confirmed, and in June he was elected Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, thereby within seven months combining the posts it had taken Brezhnev 13 years to achieve. In addition, a number of changes were made to membership of the Politburo and Secretariat that strengthened his position.¹ He also made a number of key changes in personnel at the level of head and deputy head of CC departments.² In addition, despite his health, Andropov seems to have been able to continue to press policies he favoured. The anti-corruption campaign that had begun earlier was maintained, and a policy of increased discipline in the economy was instituted in an attempt to combat the economic slowdown. However, despite the fact that Andropov had been elected unanimously by the CC, there was some opposition to him within the Politburo (Table 7.1).

At the time of Andropov's choice by the Politburo, there had been some support for Chernenko. Some of Brezhnev's clients and allies were concerned about the choice of Andropov, principally because of the way in which the anti-corruption campaign had encompassed Brezhnev's own family through his daughter and her associations, and was approaching the Politburo itself. Evidence of corruption was mounting in some areas under the control of Politburo members—Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Kazakhstan,

Table 7.1 Leadership at end of November 1982³

<i>Politburo full members</i>	<i>Politburo candidate members</i>	<i>CC Secretaries</i>
Andropov	Demichev	Andropov
Grishin	Ponomarev	Chernenko
Gromyko	Rashidov	Gorbachev
Kunaev	Solomentsev	Ponomarev
Pel'she	Kuznetsov	Dolgikh
Romanov	Shevardnadze	Kapitonov
Ustinov	Dolgikh	Zimyanin
Shcherbitsky	Kiselev	Rusakov
Chernenko		Ryzhkov
Tikhonov		
Gorbachev		
Aliiev		

Georgia and Moscow—and in October the Uzbek party boss Sharaf Rashidov died, with rumours that it was by his own hand. The mounting corruption threat highlighted for these people the KGB connections possessed by the General Secretary. The support for Chernenko had clearly not been strong enough to enable him to defeat Andropov for the top job in November 1982, but was sufficient for him to be installed informally as second secretary, or Andropov's deputy, and when Andropov was absent (he was in hospital for the last seven months of his life), Chernenko took over those formal functions. However, even while absent, Andropov remained involved in elite politics, issuing statements and an address to the CC plenum that he was unable to attend. Throughout this period, Gorbachev acted as his go-between with the remainder of the Politburo and clearly emerged as his preference for the succession.⁴

When Andropov died, the already ill Chernenko was named to replace him. This was not a smooth process, with his “unanimous” nomination by the Politburo⁵ and election by the CC not taking place until four days after Andropov had died. This was because there was division within the leadership. Many of the older, Brezhnevite, members including Tikhonov, Kunaev and Grishin favoured Chernenko while some of the younger ones like Vorotnikov and Aliiev (and the older Ustinov) favoured Gorbachev; CC Secretaries Ligachev and Ryzhkov were also in the Gorbachev camp. Gorbachev clearly lacked the numbers to become General Secretary in the face of opposition from the old Brezhnev network; Andropov had been his strongest

supporter (although his initial patron had been Fedor Kulakov) along with Mikhail Suslov, and without them Gorbachev lacked the left to get to the top. However like Chernenko earlier, his support was sufficient to have him chosen as second secretary and putative successor. Chernenko himself was important in bringing this about, perhaps a recognition of the fact that his unanimous nomination required this concession to the Gorbachev supporters.⁶ Chernenko soon assumed the other two offices now associated with the position of General Secretary, Chairman of the Defence Council (in February 1984) and Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (in June). The only change to the leadership under Chernenko came about through Ustinov's death in December 1984, and there were no significant policy initiatives. When Chernenko was indisposed, Gorbachev took over his role, but it was Grishin who acted as Chernenko's go-between with the rest of the Politburo,⁷ and the more conservative elements tried to limit Gorbachev's influence, both by trying to poison Chernenko against him and by limiting his access to information.⁸

Thus during this period, with two weak general secretaries in office and an aged leadership many of whose members were reluctant to countenance either a major infusion of new and younger blood into the leadership or significant policy changes, a general stasis gripped the system. The formal institutions continued to operate with the required regularity and the party leadership continued to perform most of the functions required of them. But the collective organs at the top of the structure, especially during the Chernenko period, were effectively in a holding pattern. Neither conservative nor more "reformist" elements were in a position to be able to change this balance peacefully. They had to await the arrival of a new General Secretary, and this occurred when Chernenko died on 10 March 1985.

GORBACHEV AND THE COLLAPSE OF COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

When Chernenko died, the remaining oligarchs faced a quandary. They saw how collective leadership with a passive predominant leader could result in stasis (Brezhnev), but with an active one it could usher in perhaps threatening change (Khrushchev and possibly Andropov). At least

some of them realized that the country could ill afford another long period of stasis, but they were concerned about the potential implications for them personally of another activist leader. This contradiction was resolved in favour of avoiding stasis, and in that context, given that party norms dictated that the next General Secretary had to come from among the full members of the Politburo, Gorbachev was the obvious choice.

Gorbachev was unanimously elected General Secretary by the CC on 11 March 1985. Within the Politburo there may initially have been some support for Grishin⁹ and maybe for Romanov, but Gorbachev was formally nominated by the Politburo and elected by the CC on the very strong nomination of Andrei Gromyko.¹⁰ Gorbachev's choice may have been assisted by the fact that two of the leading Brezhnevites, Shcherbitsky and Kunaev, were not in Moscow for the Politburo meeting¹¹ (neither was Vorotnikov). Those in the Politburo who had not favoured his election did not openly oppose the majority, and although this may have been partly a result of their desire not to antagonize the new leader, it also reflected the strength of the norm of party and leadership unity. More broadly, regional party secretaries represented in the CC had made their views known to members of the Politburo about the need not to appoint another aged and ill leader, while Ligachev and Ryzhkov had been active in drumming up support for Gorbachev among party cadres and government ministers.¹²

A Gorbachev Faction?

The election of Gorbachev as General Secretary created a situation unique in the history of the party: the General Secretary was the youngest member of the Politburo. Gorbachev was born in 1931 and apart from Vorotnikov who was 59 was the only member of the Politburo in his fifties. Of the ten full members of the Politburo at the time of his election, one was almost 80, four were in their seventies, and three in their sixties, with the average age 67.5 years; of the six candidate members, two were in their eighties, three in their sixties, and only one (Shevardnadze) in his fifties, with the average age 68.5 years. Of the five CC Secretaries who were not members of the Politburo, three were in their seventies, one in his sixties, and one (Ryzhkov) in his fifties, with the average age 67.6 years. This meant that, potentially, there was significant scope for leadership renewal, especially given that the XXVII Congress of the party was scheduled for early 1986.

The scope for renewal seemed to be widened by the presence within both the party broadly and the society at large of the conviction that there was a need for policy change, that the sense of drift that had characterized the last decade needed to be reversed and the mounting problems faced. The stark contrast that Gorbachev constituted compared with his three elderly and ill predecessors symbolized the opportunity for change. But in seeking the renewal of the leadership, Gorbachev faced a major problem: he seems not to have used his time in the Secretariat to build up his tail of clients,¹³ so that when it came to choosing people to fill leadership positions, he had to rely much more on shared policy positions and on hoping that the act of promotion into the leadership would create ties of loyalty.¹⁴ These were uncertain bases upon which to rest a leadership, as history had demonstrated and was to be shown in subsequent years.

Gorbachev set about reworking the party leadership, even before the XXVII Congress.¹⁵ In 1985 a number of people who were to support him entered the Politburo and Secretariat while some of its older members were either removed or shifted sideways.¹⁶ Further changes were made at the XXVII Congress. The extent of the changes may be seen by comparing the leaderships in March 1985 and following the Congress in March 1986 (re-elected in 1986 in bold) (Table 7.2).

This was a significant recasting of the collective leadership. The best way of seeing this is to consider the proportion of the membership in 1986 that was new. Among full Politburo members, only one (Zaikov) was completely new while two were promoted from candidate status (Shevardnadze and Chebrikov) and two (Ryzhkov and Ligachev) from the Secretariat, which means that 41.5% were new as full members. Among candidate members 71.4% and among Secretaries 63.6% were completely new. Taking the group as a whole, 48% were wholly new to the leadership. Comparison with the line-up at the time of Brezhnev's death shows that a majority in both Politburo and Secretariat had been co-opted under either Andropov or Gorbachev. The new line-up also showed an increase in representation by government ministers compared with the Secretariat; the ratio of government to Secretariat positions increased from 1:5 in October 1982 to 3:4 in March 1986.¹⁷ There was significant turnover in the CC, with 45% of those full and candidate members elected at the XXVI Congress in 1981 not re-elected in 1986; 40.7% of full members were elected for the first time in 1986, the highest rate of turnover since 1961.¹⁸

Table 7.2 Leadership changes March 1985–March 1986

	<i>March 1985</i>	<i>March 1986</i>
Politburo full members	Gorbachev Aliev Vorotnikov Grishin Gromyko Kunaev Romanov Solomentsev Tikhonov Shcherbitsky	Gorbachev Aliev Vorotnikov Gromyko Zaikov Kunaev Ligachev Ryzhkov Solomentsev Chebrikov Shevardnadze Shcherbitsky
Politburo candidate members	Demichev Dolgikh Chebrikov Kuznetsov Ponomarev Shevardnadze	Demichev Dolgikh Yeltsin Slyun'kov Sokolov Solov'ev Talyzin
Secretariat	Gorbachev Dolgikh Kapitonov Rusakov Ryzhkov Zimyanin Romanov Ponomarev Ligachev	Gorbachev Biryukova Dobrynin Dolgikh Zaikov Zimyanin Ligachev Medvedev Nikonov Razumovsky Yakovlev

The changes introduced to the leadership in this first year brought into the oligarchy (or promoted) a couple of people who would be firm supporters of Gorbachev into 1990, Eduard Shevardnadze,¹⁹ Aleksandr Yakovlev²⁰ and Vadim Medvedev, and one who would ultimately come to espouse even more radical change than Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin,²¹ and the person who was initially a strong supporter of Gorbachev but then would become the prime opponent of the radicalization of Gorbachev's program, Yegor Ligachev. Gorbachev's problem was not only that he had few genuine clients to call upon, but the stability of

cadres policy meant that, although many members of Brezhnev's network had been removed under Andropov,²² the political structure, especially the CC even after its renewal at the XXVII Congress, remained staffed overwhelmingly by people who had been in office for some time and were committed to the established structure and many of the policies that had been in train. Accordingly although Gorbachev took the opportunity to refresh both the oligarchs and the broader elite during his first year in office, because of the pool from which he had to draw, there was no guarantee that the replacements would favour the sorts of policies that he was to espouse in the future. Furthermore, Ligachev took over control of the Secretariat as a whole and therefore was in charge of personnel matters (supervising Razumovsky and Lukyanov), and although Gorbachev had known him since at least the late sixties, his commitment to change was to prove to be less far reaching than that of Gorbachev. This was reflected in his appointment of people who were limited in the extent to which they sought to see significant change introduced into the system. Given the mores of the Soviet system, people could not be plucked from anywhere to fill official position; there were regularized pathways of career progression, and Gorbachev by-and-large had to observe those pathways. The nature of the pool remained a continuing problem, especially given that increasingly policy (and its impact on interests) became the key factor in coalition arrangements at the top rather than personal association, and as policy became radicalized, the strains in Gorbachev's coalition increased. Gorbachev's recognition of the problem is reflected in his increasing reliance upon an informal cabinet of advisers, initially including Yakovlev, Valerii Boldin, Nail' Bikkenin, Medvedev, often Anatolii Lukyanov and later Ivan Frolov, Georgii Shakhnazarov and Anatolii Chernyaev.²³

The Strategy of the Predominant Leader

Initially Gorbachev flagged little change in existing (Andropovite) policy. At the Politburo meeting at which he was chosen on 11 March 1985, he declared "There is no need to change our policy. It is a true, correct, genuine Leninist policy".²⁴ The main policy line pursued throughout 1985 and into 1986, called "acceleration" (*uskorenie*), was designed to boost economic growth by modernizing the economy on the basis of advanced science and technology, some decentralization and greater flexibility in the financial system. This sort of approach, reflected in

Gorbachev's speech to the XXVII Congress,²⁵ did not appear as a major challenge to the established policy status quo or to the oligarchs. Given Gorbachev's views about what was needed which had been sketched before and seemed to go far beyond this,²⁶ such a policy was a compromise, designed to bridge, or perhaps obscure, the very real differences in the Politburo over economic reform, and reflects his still tenuous position within the leadership.²⁷ However, during 1986 it became clear that Gorbachev was intent on radicalizing the agenda. The Chernobyl nuclear disaster in April 1986 was the trigger for the transformation of the notion of *glasnost*' into something very different from what it had been in the past. Under Brezhnev, *glasnost*' (or "openness") had been defined in terms of "publicity", of the state being open with its citizens about what it was doing. This conception (which was hardly realized in practice) cast the populace in a passive position, as the receivers of what the state agreed to tell them. Following the disaster, the meaning of this term was expanded; not only did it mean greater openness and frankness on the part of the authorities, but also that other actors in society should be able to openly express their views. And more pointedly, members of the populace were called on to keep an eye on how officials were acting and report deficient performance to their superiors. *Glasnost* suddenly became a means for the exercise of accountability, and thereby posed a potential threat to officials at all levels, including the CC. This threat was increased at the January 1987 CC plenum where Gorbachev proposed the introduction of competitive secret ballot elections of party secretaries, although the CC was not at this stage to be included.²⁸ The exclusion of the party's upper organs reflected both Gorbachev's attempt to mollify his elite critics, and his recognition that elected replacements in the CC would be unlikely to be any more favourably disposed to radical reform than those they replaced. Despite this limitation, this was a significant radicalization of the policy of "democratization", with some 120 secretaries being elected throughout the remainder of 1987 through a competitive ballot.²⁹

However, this radicalization of the agenda had not gone smoothly. Among the oligarchs there was significant coolness to the widening of the meaning of *glasnost*', while the level of opposition to the proposed democratization changes meant that the plenum had had to be postponed on three occasions in order to get "clarity on the main issues".³⁰ Although Gorbachev later wrote that "everyone supported the draft report",³¹ many oligarchs did so with misgivings (hence the

delays in convening the CC), and when the matter was discussed at the CC plenum, the final decision constituted a weakening of Gorbachev's proposals. The resolution supported his criticisms of party performance and endorsed the principle of democratization, but it failed explicitly to endorse secret ballot multi-candidate elections.³² It is not difficult to see why many party officials did not favour competitive elections to fill party posts; if implemented at all levels, it would have destroyed the existing system of appointment within the party controlled by the section of the CC apparatus headed by Ligachev, and thrown into doubt the continued tenure of their posts by party officials at all levels of the political structure. But at this stage, individual oligarchs, while willing to contradict and argue with Gorbachev in the Politburo, were ultimately unwilling to take their opposition to its logical end. Rather than fighting to the death and openly opposing him in the CC, they preferred openly to accede to his wishes while surreptitiously lining up opposition among only too ready CC members. This episode showed that while Gorbachev's authority as General Secretary was enormous and the oligarchs still accepted his right to lead, there were limits to this and he also could not take the CC for granted. Gorbachev's position in the oligarchy is reflected in his comment that in the lead up to the discussion of his ideas prior to the January 1987 plenum, he could count on the support in the Politburo only of Ryzhkov, Shevardnadze and maybe Vorotnikov.³³ The secrecy with which he and his supporters prepared for the Politburo discussion confirming the right of return to Moscow by the exiled dissident Andrei Sakharov in December 1986, a secret kept from both the KGB and most members of the Politburo, is illustrative of Gorbachev's relative isolation within the oligarchy.³⁴ He sought to bring this on surreptitiously in order to short circuit coordinated opposition within the Politburo and to force opponents into the open where they might have become vulnerable to party norms relating to leadership unity.

While Gorbachev's radical thrust had been blunted at the January plenum, changes to the leadership made at that time and over the following eighteen months seemed to improve his position in the leading organs of the party.³⁵ The leadership line-up on the eve of the XIX Conference in June 1988 was as follows (Table 7.3).

This leadership line-up seems to suggest that Gorbachev now occupied a very powerful position in the collective: nine of the twelve full members of the Politburo (excluding Gorbachev), five of the seven candidates, and ten of the twelve Secretaries (again excluding Gorbachev)

Table 7.3 Leadership on eve of XIX Conference, June 1988

<i>Politburo full members</i>	<i>Politburo candidate members</i>	<i>Secretariat</i>
Gorbachev	Demichev	Gorbachev
Vorotnikov	Dolgikh	Biryukova
Gromyko	Solov'ev	Dobrynin
Zaikov	Talyzin	Dolgikh
Ligachev	Yazov	Zaikov
Ryzhkov	Maslyukov	Ligachev
Solomentsev	Razumovsky	Medvedev
Chebrikov		Nikonov
Shevardnadze		Razumovsky
Shcherbitsky		Yakovlev
Slyun'kov		Lukyanov
Yakovlev		Slyunkov
Nikonov		Baklanov

had been promoted into the positions they now occupied since Gorbachev had been elected General Secretary; and five of the CC Secretaries were full members of the Politburo and another two candidates. Party and state officials' representation remained much as it had been in 1985–86.³⁶ On the assumption that appointment could generate loyalty, Gorbachev seemed in a powerful position. But as Khrushchev had shown, appointment alone was not enough. Only Nikonov and Lukyanov had longer term personal and career associations with Gorbachev. The others, including his strongest supporter Yakovlev, are best seen as allies, and the basis of their support remained conditional on policy. And there was very little general enthusiasm for radical reform.

This apparent strengthening of Gorbachev's position among the oligarchs was more apparent than real. The June 1987 plenum had adopted his call for radical economic reform, which effectively set the economy on the path towards marketization, despite significant reservations in the Politburo and CC over the implications of such measures. The support that had existed for economic reform under the banner of uskorenie imploded as the implications of this more radical vision became apparent; people like Ligachev who had supported initial economic reform measures did not support marketization while Ryzhkov, who also had supported uskorenie, was resistant to reforms that would weaken the central ministries.³⁷ Conservative concerns may have been further fuelled by the revised view of Stalin that was emerging as public

discussion of this question expanded and that Gorbachev was putting forward as something to be included in his speech on the sixtieth anniversary of the October revolution.³⁸ It was at the CC meeting to discuss this speech, a meeting at which there was unanimous approval of the speech despite many people's reservations (the speech had already been "corrected" by the Politburo when it had been circulated to them beforehand), that the Yeltsin affair blew up. At the October 1987 plenum, Yeltsin openly attacked Gorbachev and Ligachev.³⁹ While this sort of conflict was unusual in the CC, paradoxically the affair highlighted the continued strength of party norms: ultimately Yeltsin voted for his own censure, thereby affirming the principles of party discipline and unity. The dropping of Yeltsin from candidate membership of the Politburo in February 1988 and from his post as Moscow party boss⁴⁰ removed from the leadership someone who was to develop into a vigorous public proponent of radical reform and a virulent critic of Gorbachev. It may not have been clear at the time—Yeltsin had not come out as a strong supporter of change and seems to have been one of the quieter oligarchs up to this point⁴¹—but the loss of Yeltsin was a severe blow to the reform effort and a major complication for Gorbachev. One part of this was the appointment of conservative CC Secretary Lev Zaikov to run the most important regional party apparatus in the country, Moscow, which Yeltsin had formerly run. But more importantly, Yeltsin's critique of Gorbachev opened up a new line of attack upon the General Secretary, from a different direction to those criticisms coming from the more conservative elements within the leadership, and thereby complicated his ability to construct and maintain consensus among the oligarchs.

Such a conservative attack came, in a very public fashion, in March 1988, in the form of the so-called "Andreeva letter".⁴² This neo-stalinist epistle criticizing the course of Gorbachev's policy and effectively calling for a reversion to the situation before Gorbachev came to power, was purportedly written by an unknown chemistry teacher in Leningrad, Nina Andreeva, but was actually considerably amplified and shaped by Ligachev's people in the CC Secretariat.⁴³ This was a way for Gorbachev's critics within the leadership to openly criticize him without having to place their names to it and thereby place themselves in jeopardy. The letter appeared just as both Gorbachev and Yakovlev left the country. In their absence, no one in the Politburo attacked the letter and defended party policy, reflecting the uncertainty of the pro-reform (and pro-Gorbachev) forces in that body, while Ligachev warmly endorsed it

and called for its wide re-publication. Others who are reported to have endorsed the letter were Vorotnikov, Gromyko, Solomentsev, Nikonov and Baklanov.⁴⁴ When Gorbachev returned, the letter was discussed initially at an ad hoc meeting in the interval of the Congress of Collective Farm Workers addressed by Gorbachev on 23 March, and then at a Politburo meeting over two days. As well as the above supporters, at this meeting Chebrikov and Lukyanov were generally supportive of the Andreeva letter. Strongly opposed to and critical of the letter and its authors were Yakovlev, Ryzhkov, Shevardnadze and Medvedev, while Slyun'kov, Maslyukov and Yazov were opposed but less categorically so.⁴⁵ In the face of Gorbachev's strongly expressed opinion and this wave of support for Gorbachev and his position, the opposition bowed to the wish of the General Secretary. On the unanimous decision of the Politburo (again reflecting the norms of leadership unanimity and discipline) a vigorous rebuttal was published in the main party newspaper, and Ligachev's power was trimmed⁴⁶; Gorbachev chaired the next meeting of the Secretariat (a task normally undertaken by Ligachev), and the conflict between Ligachev and Yakovlev over control of ideology that had been running for some months⁴⁷ was now resolved with Ligachev surrendering his control over ideology in the Secretariat to Yakovlev. But although in the short term Gorbachev won this confrontation, in regard to the longer term, this showed the uncertain basis of his position within the leadership.⁴⁸ However, it also demonstrated the authority that still lay in the office of General Secretary: opponents only acted when Gorbachev was away, and when he returned and made his position clear, they capitulated. The predominant leader's authority was to be evident also at the XIX Conference of the party held in June 1988.

The XIX Conference marked the shift of Gorbachev's program from reform of the system to its transformation, and therefore sharply exacerbated tensions within the oligarchy.⁴⁹ On Gorbachev's part, the Conference initially had two aims: to bring about a change in the composition of the CC and make it more receptive to reformist proposals, and to introduce proposals to rework the basic structures of the political system. The measures introduced at the Conference set in train changes that would lead to competitive multi-candidate elections both within the party and for a new state legislature, the transfer of direct administrative power out of the party into revived state organs (i.e. the withdrawal of the party from its traditional management functions), and the dismantling of the party Secretariat through its replacement by commissions.

This involved the recasting of the institutions of collective leadership, with real power vested in state organs (including an enhanced presidency) and the party reduced to a general oversight role.⁵⁰ The revolutionary nature of the Conference was evident not only in its decisions, but in its atmospherics. Much of its proceedings were directly televised throughout the country, and viewers witnessed a process of vigorous debate in which nothing was beyond criticism, including party leaders, although criticism of Gorbachev was often more implicit than direct. This wide publicity opened the door for elite conflict to henceforth be played out much more openly than had been the case in the past. Also no longer was such a party gathering to be characterized by rank-and-file passivity and boring, highly ideological reports. Now the meeting was presented as a real decision-making venue, and one in which the party elite was to be held directly accountable. Not since the 1964 removal of Khrushchev had the principle of leadership accountability been so strongly asserted as it was at this Conference. The implications of more activist elite party organs as had existed in the 1920s and the Khrushchev period (in this case the CC and the conference) seemed to be coming true, and with it a return to the situation where oligarch disputes may be resolved by the broader elite.

The measures adopted by the Conference⁵¹ were designed by Gorbachev and his team of reformist advisers, and discussed within the collective leadership before the Conference. Given the implications that these were to have, and at least some of their implications were evident to people at the time, why did those oligarchs who were opposed to them go along with them? This is especially the case given that there was sufficient opposition in the Politburo to the proposal that the Conference should co-opt new members to the CC to ensure that this did not go ahead and Gorbachev's desire to make that body less conservative was thereby frustrated.⁵² One factor here is the continuing authority of the General Secretary. If the General Secretary really wanted something and was willing to press for it, the other members of the elite still tended to defer to him in recognition of his established right to lead. This sort of authority stemmed from the past and from the conviction that there were appropriate ways of acting within the party, and unless some unclear line was crossed, as in the case of Khrushchev, the General Secretary should be allowed to have his way. Also important was the practice whereby each member of the Politburo was responsible for a particular policy sector and traditionally others did not interfere

in anyone else's area. However, the General Secretary had oversight of all areas, placing him at a real advantage⁵³ compared with his more constrained colleagues. Such considerations also applied to the rank-and-file Conference delegates where the tradition of support for the leadership in such meetings was well-established, and this over-rode the opposition that many actually held.

It may also be that the full nature of what Gorbachev was going to propose was not realized by his fellow oligarchs. All of the decisions of the Conference were worked over in special Conference commissions led by a Politburo member, but it was from that led by Gorbachev that the most radical measures came; most of the others were more subdued with members of the commissions taking their lead from the commission leaders, some of whom sought to use their positions to place a drag on the pace of change. But also within those most radical of measures, there were what would have been seen as some safeguards for the conservatives: the positions of party first secretaries would be guaranteed by the provision that they should combine their party posts with leadership of the local soviets (where power was to be located); with members of the new legislature being directly elected in multi-candidate elections, 100 seats were to be reserved for party members (thereby ensuring that party leaders could enter the legislature without having to brave open competition); and the standing parliament (the Supreme Soviet) was to be elected by the new Congress of People's Deputies rather than directly by the people. These were all measures designed to shore up the conservative position, and therefore to make Gorbachev's changes more palatable. There may also have been some uncertainty over the timing, with opponents believing that the adopted measures could not be introduced quickly and that they would be able to stymie their introduction in the way that central measures in the past had often been undermined by officials at lower levels. This was certainly the case with the rank-and-file delegates to the Conference, who had a very rapid timetable imposed on them by surprise when Gorbachev introduced it at the end of the speech in which he closed the Conference.⁵⁴ Ligachev, who was chairing the session, could do little but put Gorbachev's motion, which was accepted.

As work began on implementation of the Conference decisions, Gorbachev brought about more changes in the leadership. At the September 1988 plenum, Gromyko⁵⁵ and Solomentsev retired as full members of the Politburo and were replaced by Gorbachev's supporter Vadim Medvedev while at the candidate level, Demichev and

Dolgikh were removed and Aleksandra Biryukova, Aleksandr Vlasov and Lukyanov (despite his support of the Andreeva letter) were introduced. In the Secretariat, Lukyanov, Biryukova, Dobrynin and Dolgikh were removed and Chebrikov was shifted from the KGB (he was replaced by his deputy Vladimir Kryuchkov) to become a CC Secretary.⁵⁶ Only Shcherbitsky remained in the position he had held when Gorbachev became General Secretary, and he lost that post (full membership of the Politburo) in September 1989; three months later he was replaced by Vladimir Ivashko. Now everybody, at least formally, owed their elevation to Gorbachev. But despite this complete renovation of the leadership, Gorbachev's agenda still lacked solid oligarch support; in 1989, Gorbachev confessed to US ambassador Jack Matlock, that his reforms had only three votes in the Politburo,⁵⁷ presumably Yakovlev, Shevardnadze and Medvedev (assuming he was not including himself in that figure). The problem remained that although Gorbachev would have wanted to appoint people who would support his increasingly radical reforms, he was unable to do so. A number of factors were important here. One was that he did not wield the appointment weapon alone. For much of this period Ligachev had had formal powers over appointment, and while he had recognized the need for change in 1985, the dimensions of that change soon exceeded the bounds of what he thought was appropriate. Gorbachev's limitations in the matter of personnel appointment are shown by the fact that in 1990, only five of 25 members of the CC Commission on Party Organization and Cadres Policy belonged to Gorbachev's network or an allied network.⁵⁸

Furthermore, Gorbachev made a number of serious miscalculations with regard to leading appointments. His continued support for Lukyanov despite the latter's position on the Andreeva letter is a good instance of this. And of course the chief plotters who sought to overthrow Gorbachev in mid-1991 were all his appointees. But Gorbachev's view of his own abilities seems also to be relevant here. He seems to have believed that he could persuade anyone of anything. Even if people who were of a conservative disposition entered the elite, he believed that he would be able to persuade them of the validity of his views. Important also was the fact that the reservoir from which new members of the elite were chosen comprised people with significant careers in the party-state apparatus where, in order to progress, a conservative outlook had been an advantage. This does not mean that people with radical reformist ideas could not come through this system, as the people around

Gorbachev show, but they were in a distinct minority. The scope for the appointment of people who would be supportive of Gorbachev's radicalization of the agenda was thus limited by the nature of the population from which he had to choose. But finally the general dynamics of the situation undermined him. While he could appoint people who supported his position in 1985 or 1986, the radicalization of his program left most of these people behind. It is one true measure of Gorbachev's quality as a leader that he was sufficiently open minded to embrace increasingly radical ideas. Unfortunately, many of those he appointed were not thus able to grow, so that as his program became more radicalized, they got left behind and were turned from supporters into opponents.

One way of attempting to deal with the conservative nature of the official institutions was by utilizing the long-established practice of meeting informally with a group of advisers/colleagues. As indicated above, Gorbachev had been doing this since he came to power, but this became more important the longer he remained in office. By 1990, this group comprised a combination of Politburo members—Yakovlev and Medvedev—and aides, including Chernyaev, Shakhnazarov, Frolov, Boldin, and Politburo candidate member Yevgeny Primakov.⁵⁹ Others could sometimes be called on for advice on specific issues. This informal group met as regularly as Gorbachev wished, and was a source of advice that reinforced the radical direction in which his policies were headed.⁶⁰ The problem is they did not constitute a Politburo majority.

Mode of Opposing the Predominant Leader

How did those members of the elite who opposed the course Gorbachev's policies were taking react? At various stages of the process, mainly in 1990 and 1991, some got dispirited and effectively gave up. But others continued on, perhaps protesting individual measures, discussing with their colleagues what they should do, encouraging those at lower levels to undermine their implementation in the old Soviet tradition, and battling on to carry out the functions of the offices they occupied. There seems to have been no concerted attempt to remove Gorbachev until the middle of 1991, even though an appeal to the CC along the lines of 1964 may have been successful given the conservative tenor of the body and the increasingly hostile attitude many of its members had towards his policies. In this, his critics appear to have been bound by the norms of intra-party life as they understood them.

The General Secretary was elected to do a job and he should be allowed to do it. This reflects, in part, the enormous prestige and authority which attached to that office, and which was recognized throughout the party. A clear illustration of this was at the April 1989 CC plenum. Prior to this, Gorbachev and his supporters had spent considerable behind-the-scenes efforts to persuade 110 Brezhnev era members of the CC and the Central Auditing Commission to submit formal requests to retire.⁶¹ Accordingly at the CC session those members retired. The votes to accept their requests, and to elect some replacements from among the candidates, were unanimous, but the speeches that some of the retiring members gave made it clear that they were going reluctantly.⁶² But they were acting in accord with traditional party norms: party bodies acted as the General Secretary directed them to act, and this applied as much to Politburo members as it did to members of the CC. Politburo members may be entitled to air their views more directly with the General Secretary, but when he insisted, they felt obliged to comply.

Gorbachev's opponents also sought to use the institutions of the party to put a brake on his policies. In the Politburo, discussion was vigorous and often prolonged as those opposed to what Gorbachev proposed sought to rally those with reservations to their side, and thereby prevent the emergence of the consensus upon which this body had relied. If they could prevent the General Secretary from engineering such a consensus, given Gorbachev's reluctance to provoke a split in the leadership, they could hope to postpone his measures. His opponents also used the positions they occupied in the Secretariat. There were two aspects of this. First, as the principal official source of information for the Politburo, the Secretariat could be used to feed into that body information supportive of the views of department heads and secretaries, and some of that was clearly not consistent with Gorbachev's program.⁶³ Second, the main channels of official contact between the party centre and regional officials were those of the Secretariat, and whoever controlled those channels shaped that information flow. A similar situation applied in the CC. Both Gorbachev's opponents and his supporters sought to get CC members on side.⁶⁴ As the issues became more contentious, CC plena became more common, and publicly they became venues for criticism of Gorbachev and his policies. Much of this criticism was spontaneous from the more conservative members of the CC, but much of it was also fostered by oligarchs seeking to use the CC to put a brake on Gorbachev. Plena from 1989 were characterized by considerable criticism

of Gorbachev and his policies, but like the Politburo, ultimately they gave their formal support to the General Secretary, even if on two occasions (December 1989 and April 1991) Gorbachev had to threaten to resign to get his way. The norms regarding the authority of the General Secretary and the duty to obey him reinforced Gorbachev's position. Nevertheless this potential vulnerability was a powerful issue for Gorbachev while his formal post remained dependent on the CC.

The position was becoming increasingly difficult for Gorbachev's opponents as time passed because of the changes that were taking place in the political system as a whole. The widening scope of glasnost' as it unrolled from 1986 meant that by 1989 there was very little that was not now subject to discussion in the public sphere.⁶⁵ Parallel with this was the massive growth in the number and range of actors who participated in the widening public debate. Emergent political parties, initially referred to as "informals", began to enter the political debate, in some of the republics national front movements began to press on national issues, and individuals and groups of citizens were beginning to become politically active. But what gave these sorts of bodies the room to operate was the increasingly open atmosphere within which the press and media functioned. By 1989 many of the established media and press outlets had cast off their stolid official personae and, under the guidance of editors with widely differing political outlooks,⁶⁶ effectively became independent sites of discussion, debate and analysis. The effect of this was the emergence of a kind of public opinion that the Soviet leaders had never had to deal with before. Of course even at the height of the Stalinist period, leaders were conscious that their decisions had social effects, but there was little scope for popular opposition to enter into their calculations. Now, leaders could not ignore the fact that Soviet citizens had found their voice, and that voice was not always as supportive or uncritical as they might have hoped. The norms of party life had nothing to say about an independent public sphere and how it should be handled.

For the Soviet elite, including Gorbachev, life had also become much more complicated as a result of the implementation of the decisions of the XIX Conference. In March 1989, semi-competitive elections were held for the new legislature, the Congress of People's Deputies. The overwhelming majority of deputies elected to this body were members of the party; 87.6% were members or candidate members of the CPSU.⁶⁷ However, a number of leading party figures failed to gain election, including the party first secretaries in Kiev, Minsk, Kishinev, Alma-Ata

and Frunze, almost the entire party leadership in Leningrad (including candidate Politburo member Solov'ev), 38 regional and district party secretaries, the mayors of Moscow and Kiev, and the prime ministers of Latvia and Lithuania, and the Lithuanian president. But there was a strong group whose policy positions were, or were to become, more radical than those of Gorbachev: deputies from the Baltic republics which included representatives of the respective national front organizations, Boris Yeltsin was elected in a Moscow constituency despite the party's best efforts to ensure his defeat, and a number of other liberal/critical voices, like former dissident Andrei Sakharov, were elected. There was also a very strong conservative bloc, including many of those who were members of the party, that was at best wary of and at worst opposed to Gorbachev's policies. The result was that unlike its Soviet predecessors, the Congress of People's Deputies was not a passive instrument of the party. With Gorbachev as the chair giving the floor to critical deputies on a more regular basis than their proportional presence warranted, and with those deputies taking the opportunity to voice their concerns and criticisms, this was a vigorous assembly that was effectively outside party control and, with the Supreme Soviet, was able virtually to take over the agenda-setting function in the system.

The Congress of People's Deputies established a new-style Supreme Soviet which, unlike the Congress, was meant to remain in session throughout most of the year. The Supreme Soviet (of which Gorbachev was elected Chairman) established a whole range of committees and commissions devoted to different policy areas, something which gave the body the capacity to monitor and investigate policy across the entire spectrum. One of the tasks of the Supreme Soviet was to approve of the prime minister's choice of ministers. This was a lengthy process occurring in June 1989, and resulted in the rejection of six of Ryzhkov's nominees, an unprecedented exercise of accountability in Soviet politics.

It was clear from the outset that neither of these legislative bodies saw its task to be to toe the party line nor to be bound by the constraints of party lore.⁶⁸ They were intent on playing an independent role, and they provided a platform from which the party's, and Gorbachev's, critics could voice their views in an authoritative setting. They took the opportunity to raise issues that effectively radicalized the political agenda still further: the party's continuing illegal monopoly of power, the malign role of the KGB, the darker aspects of Soviet history, the national independence of the union republics, and many other issues were aired in

these fora. What this did was to create a mechanism for the raising of issues which the party oligarchs did not control, and thereby generated an imperative for the party leadership to react to these. Simply ignoring the questions that were raised was not always a viable strategy. And while certainly a broad range of perspectives was raised in the legislative arena, with conservative speakers as willing as radicals to make use of this forum to press their views, it was the more radical views that tended to set the political agenda. This created problems both for Gorbachev's opponents within the leadership and for Gorbachev himself. For his opponents, the radicalization of the agenda stemming from the legislatures forced them even further on the back foot. Arguments about how it was better before 1985 carried no force with the radical deputies and much of the public who were reading and listening to them, while any calls for moderation because of the potential destabilizing effects current proposals could have seemed lame and designed purely to protect their own personal interests. For Gorbachev, the positions adopted by the more radical deputies meant that the agenda was accelerating out of his control, and made him more vulnerable to attacks from within than was the case before the XIX Conference. As the more conservative elements saw the increasingly chaotic situation in the USSR, their antipathy to Gorbachev for having brought this about escalated, both within the leadership⁶⁹ and outside. Furthermore, Gorbachev was under pressure to move with the agenda if he hoped to maintain the support of the less conservative elements in society. Any earlier strategy of hiding his real intent behind the uttering of moderate positions was no longer viable; after the XIX Conference the conservatives probably no longer believed him, while for the radicals this would have been seen as a betrayal of the cause. But for the opposition within the oligarchy, the growing danger was that they would become irrelevant as politics increasingly came to be played outside the party.

Destruction of the Institutions of Collective Leadership

At the end of 1989, Gorbachev undertook another reshuffle of the leadership.⁷⁰ But it is not clear that these changes had any effect because of the massive reworking of the Politburo and CC that was undertaken around this time. In February and March 1990, the party's "leading and guiding role" was officially rescinded with the Constitution changed to remove it and a new executive presidency was established, with Gorbachev elected to that post by the Congress of People's Deputies

on 15 March 1990. These changes, which undermined the position of the party in the political system, were widely opposed in both the Politburo and CC, but ultimately both bodies adhered to party norms and approved the General Secretary's proposals.⁷¹ The party was now formally barred from exercising the broad administrative-political role it had formerly played, while the chief executive office was now found in the state, not the party, structure. Changes consistent with the altered role envisaged for the party were made to the party's two elite organs.

The Secretariat had actually been changed soon after the XIX Conference, in line with the decision of that body. In September 1988 the Secretariat had been replaced by six commissions, concentrating respectively on party affairs, ideology, social and economic policy, agriculture, international affairs, and law reform, with each headed by a senior party figure. They were designed to involve CC members more broadly in policy formation. At the same time the CC apparatus was reduced from twenty departments to nine and their total staff by about 30%.⁷² These changes effectively undermined the Secretariat as a body, which did not meet for twelve months after the change and could not give clear direction to lower level party bodies⁷³ nor effectively service the Politburo. At the XXVIII Congress in July 1990, the Secretariat was reworked to comprise the General Secretary and a new position of Deputy General Secretary, 11 other secretaries (of whom five were in the Politburo), and five rank-and-file members who seem to have had no directly appointed tasks but were there as a symbol of democratic intent. The task of the Secretariat was declared to be to organize the fulfilment of party decisions and direct the work of the CC apparatus. The former commissions were disbanded, and the Secretariat called upon to form new ones as needed.⁷⁴ The chairing of the Secretariat by the Deputy General Secretary was designed to free Gorbachev to fulfil his presidential functions, while the new provision that the General Secretary and the Deputy be directly elected by the Congress rather than the CC significantly strengthened the position of party leader vis-à-vis his leadership colleagues and removed the possibility of Gorbachev experiencing Khrushchev's fate.⁷⁵ The Congress also effectively allowed Gorbachev to select his deputy by electing the Ukrainian Ivashko rather than Ligachev, who had also stood. Ivashko was chosen by Gorbachev in part because he was inexperienced at the national level (and could therefore have been presumed to be more reliant on Gorbachev) and his nationality prevented his being seen as a successor/replacement for Gorbachev.

At the same Congress, the Politburo was completely transformed. Instead of comprising the leading politicians, it was now to consist of the General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary, the first secretaries of the republican parties, and others the CC may appoint. Taking the Politburo and Secretariat together, 28 of the 35 members who took up office after the XXVIII Congress had not held national party office before (Table 7.4).

This was an almost complete change from the membership of the Politburo prior to the XXVIII Congress, with only Gorbachev and Ivashko being members both before and after the Congress.⁷⁶ This change in membership line-up, with the elimination from Politburo membership of all of those who also held government positions (except for Gorbachev and Yanaev) was consistent with the changed view of the party's role that was confirmed at the Congress; it was no longer to be involved directly

Table 7.4 Leadership elected in July 1990^a

<i>Politburo</i>	<i>Secretariat</i>
Gorbachev, General Secretary	Gorbachev
Ivashko, Deputy General Secretary	Ivashko
Burokevicius (Lithuania)	Dzasokhov
Gumbaridze (Georgia)	Shenin
Gurenko (Ukraine)	Manaenkov
Karimov (Uzbekistan)	Semenova
Luchinsky (Moldavia)	Stroev
Makhkamov (Tajikistan)	Yanaev
Masaliev (Kirgizstan)	Falin
Movsisyan (Armenia)	Gidaspov
Mutalibov (Azerbaijan)	Girenko
Nazarbaev (Kazakhstan)	Kuptsov
Niyazov (Turkmenistan)	Baklanov
Polozkov (Russia)	Aniskin
Rubiks (Latvia)	Gaivoronsky
Sillari (Estonia)	Mel'nikov
Sokolov (Belorussia)	Teplenichev
Dzasokhov (CC Secretary)	Turgonova
Semenova (CC Secretary)	
Shenin (CC Secretary)	
Stroev (CC Secretary)	
Yanaev (CC Secretary)	
Prokof'ev (Moscow gorkom)	
Frolov (Pravda editor)	

^aSostav (1990)

in administration but was to act as the vanguard of society, providing its overall direction through the authority that it (believed it) enjoyed in society. Its capacity to act as a true leadership body even within the party was also undermined by the provision that union republican parties could challenge Politburo decisions that affected them. The Politburo was transformed into a backwater, effectively out of the leadership loop.

At the XXVIII Congress, the nature of the CC was also changed. Membership was now to be based on a quota system, with republican party bodies and the security sector having specific quotas of representatives,⁷⁷ and the others coming from public bodies and specific sectors of life.⁷⁸ The CC was thereby turned into a sort of parliamentary organ in which mass representatives were now a much larger group than officials from central party and state organs. The level of turnover was the highest in Soviet history, with only 14.1% of those elected in 1990 having been members in 1986, and only 4% in 1981.⁷⁹ But it was just at this time when the membership of these bodies had been so substantially reworked, and when Gorbachev may have hoped to have been able to enjoy significantly more support in them than he had earlier, their capacity to play a decisive role in the political system was undermined.

Prior to the XXVIII Congress, the Politburo had been a real working organ of oligarch politics. Between 7 March 1985 and 28 June 1990, it had met on 187 occasions, an average of about once every ten days.⁸⁰ At these meetings, 1829 questions were decided, with another 9625 resolved by circulation.⁸¹ It was a real working organ, with contentious issues thrashed out, opinions vigorously exchanged, and Gorbachev placed under often considerable criticism.⁸² Some meetings went for 10–12 hours as Gorbachev and his critics thrashed out the issues confronting them. Generally Gorbachev sought to achieve a consensus among the leadership, even if this involved his critics subordinating their true feelings and allowing the General Secretary to have his way.⁸³ According to Ligachev, the atmosphere in the Politburo was democratic, with Gorbachev sometimes having to retract proposals he had made,⁸⁴ although at times, Gorbachev would simply ignore the suggestions made by other members.⁸⁵ Meetings were often framed by the continuing struggle among Gorbachev's colleagues to win him over to their point of view on particular issues and the general course of policy.⁸⁶ The Politburo also often met in "working sessions" if there was something urgent to discuss (no minutes were kept and they could only make recommendations for later confirmation) and when the members went to

the airport to greet a returning General Secretary after he had been on an overseas trip, it was normal to gather in order to have a discussion of the results of that trip and any other pressing issues that had come up.⁸⁷ Some matters were sent to specially-organized commissions to work through before bringing a resolution back to the Politburo.⁸⁸ However, once Gorbachev became President in March 1990, the Politburo met less frequently, around once a month,⁸⁹ and its discussions did not carry the same weight that they had before.⁹⁰

The Secretariat had met less frequently than the Politburo, with 97 sessions between 7 March 1986 and 20 June 1988. It adopted 1348 decisions as well as confirming 16,080 decisions made in the CC departments.⁹¹ However, the Secretariat seemed to cease to function following the reforms of September 1988, after which the Secretariat did not meet for about a year.⁹² Weekly meetings were restored after the XXVIII Congress,⁹³ reflecting recognition that the party organization was paralyzed and in crisis, that this body was no longer led by Ligachev, and that Gorbachev's reluctance to convene Politburo meetings meant there was no organ for collective deliberation by party leaders.⁹⁴ But the Secretariat effectively ceased to have much of a role to play in elite affairs.

The Central Committee had been an important arena of elite politics, with Gorbachev using plena as fora in which he sought, and frequently was able, to radicalize the political agenda. As indicated above, this was also an arena in which his opponents sought to blunt his proposals.⁹⁵ The frequency of plena increased as the issues became more contentious. The number of plena in 1985 was four (including that occasioned by the death of Chernenko), 1986 two, 1987 three, 1988 five, 1989 eight, 1990 five, and in eight months of 1991 three. This was a real venue for debate and discussion, and as Gorbachev's program became more radical, the sessions became characterized much more by vigorous criticism of that program and its chief author/s. Nevertheless despite the levels of opposition and criticism, the CC generally acceded to the General Secretary's demands. But as with the other leading party organs, the CC became less relevant to elite relations after Gorbachev's accession to the presidency.

The collective organs of the party seemed to be acting in a way consistent with party norms from the early 1920s: the Politburo, CC, XIX Conference and XXVIII Congress were all venues of vigorous discussion of policy, with the principle of leadership accountability in the air. Similarly the General Secretary was playing the sort of activist role that

had been adopted by Lenin and was thereby embedded in party norms. However, the capacity of the party's leading collective institutions to continue to play the sort of dominant role they had played in the past was destroyed by the reworking of the Politburo, Secretariat and to a lesser extent CC noted above, and by the transfer of the main site of political activity outside the bounds of the party.

Gorbachev tried to move with this shift. He was elected to the executive presidency in March 1990. Formerly the head of state had been the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. This position had been held by Brezhnev from 1977 and then by Andropov and Chernenko while they were General Secretary. Rather than Gorbachev taking this on at the time he became General Secretary, the post was taken up by Andrei Gromyko, principally as a means of rendering the foreign minister's role vacant for Eduard Shevardnadze. Gorbachev took over this post in 1988, and then with the new parliamentary arrangements in 1989, he became Chairman of the Supreme Soviet. When the executive presidency was established in March 1990, he became President of the USSR, thereby gaining a position which made him formally invulnerable to removal by the party and giving him an institutional base independent of the party. In line with this shift of authority away from the party towards the state, some new advisory bodies were created in March 1990,⁹⁶ but they were largely ineffective. Similarly, the government structure was recast, a security council appointed,⁹⁷ and a vice-presidency created, but none of these constituted an effective vehicle within which Gorbachev could establish a stable leadership structure.⁹⁸

This whole period from the beginning of 1990 through until spring 1991 thus saw the reworking of the institutional arena of the political elite, and the effective destruction of the institutions of collective leadership. The effect of glasnost' and democratization had been to open the way for the entry of new actors into political life and the opening up of new arenas of political activity. In 1990–91, these processes exploded. Nascent political parties and social movements became more active, with the national front organizations in the non-Russian union republics particularly important in this regard. The press had become even more independent and fiercer in the drive to express opinion not restrained by official diktat; the conflict of ideas was vigorous and relatively unrestrained. But importantly too the elections of new republican legislatures in early 1990 effectively led to the segmentation of the Soviet state. As nationalist forces took control of the legislatures and

governments in some of the republics, they became increasingly vocal critics of Gorbachev and his policies and sought to drive those policies in ways that raised the ire of Gorbachev's conservative opponents in the centre and sometimes of Gorbachev himself; Yeltsin was particularly important in this regard. In Russia, while Yeltsin pressed for ever more radical change, the first secretary of the newly-established Russian Communist Party Ivan Polozkov pressed a conservative agenda.⁹⁹ The public policy arena was thus a cacophony of discordant voices pushing in different directions and creating an unprecedented level of uncertainty in Soviet politics. And in this context, the institutions through which the oligarchy had historically run the country were destroyed with the new state bodies unable to replace them.

Party oligarchs had to navigate their way in this sea of debate, using whatever instruments came to hand. Although the official Soviet elite organizations (Politburo, Secretariat and CC) were seemingly being pushed to the side as irrelevant, and opposition by the oligarchs was being overwhelmed by the diversity of voices from outside the elite, the old institutions and norms still retained some currency for the collective leadership. Gorbachev's opponents in the party continued to use party organs to criticize him. Such criticism became particularly intense in late 1989–90 because of the institutional changes engineered at this time. The XXVIII Congress in mid-1990¹⁰⁰ was the scene of a high level of criticism (much of it organized) of current policy and of Gorbachev himself, but ultimately his opponents could not defeat him. Gorbachev was re-elected by the Congress to the post of General Secretary, although some 25% of delegates voted against him, and his nominee for deputy (Ivashko) easily defeated Ligachev. The institutional innovations Gorbachev championed were passed, although he could not get sufficient support to have a new, social democratic rather than communist, party Program adopted, except as a draft working document. But again Gorbachev's victories at the Congress (including Ligachev's retirement from politics) owed more to party norms and the authority of the General Secretary than they did to delegates' commitment to the policies themselves.¹⁰¹ Similarly CC plena at this time were the scene of vigorous attacks on Gorbachev.¹⁰² At the April 1991 joint CC-CCC plenum the attacks, which had the appearance of being planned, were so severe that Gorbachev sought to cauterize them by threatening to resign. The problem for the intra-party opposition was that they had no viable alternative, while for those in the Politburo, the possibility of an open split in the leadership was still not

something they wanted to contemplate. An emergency meeting of the Politburo then resolved to recommend to the plenum that the issue of Gorbachev leaving the post of General Secretary be taken off the agenda, and with more than seventy members of the CC having signed a declaration of support for Gorbachev, the issue was dropped.¹⁰³ This highlights the way that institutional structures could remain important for shaping the conflict between elements in the leadership. This was the only forum within which party leaders outside the oligarchy could directly confront Gorbachev, and it was the opportunity for his elite opponents to seek to consolidate their support against the General Secretary. Such opposition was evident at all CC meetings in this period.

The new political institutions Gorbachev had introduced at the end of 1990 also provided a means for the expression of opposition. The role members of these bodies played in the attempt to remove Gorbachev in August 1991 will be discussed below. But before that, CC member and Prime Minister Pavlov sought to use constitutional arrangements to substantially constrain Gorbachev's power, in what has been seen as an attempted state coup. In June 1991, Pavlov, without consulting Gorbachev, persuaded the Supreme Soviet to expand the powers of the Cabinet of Ministers, including giving them the power of legislative initiative. His rationale was that Gorbachev had too heavy a workload and this needed to be eased. This was clearly a challenge to Gorbachev, but he was able to reverse it by going before the Supreme Soviet himself and persuading them to reverse their earlier decision.

The opposition to Gorbachev within the party elite also sought to use other institutions to prosecute their struggle. For the conservatives, the main one was the Russian Communist Party (RCP). There had been pressure (of fluctuating strength) for the creation of such a body since the Khrushchev period, but as the situation seemed, from a conservative perspective, to unravel following the decisions of 1988, such pressure mounted. Finally Gorbachev gave way, and the founding congress of the new Russian Communist Party was held just prior to the XXVIII Congress of the CPSU in June 1990. The Russian party was meant to be a constituent part of the CPSU, just like the parties in the other republics, but because of the conservative disposition that this party adopted, many party organizations within Russia refused to associate themselves with it.¹⁰⁴ Headed by Ivan Polozkov, the RCP adopted a more conservative position compared with the Soviet party, although there was a clear lack of unity of outlook within the ranks of the leadership of the new party.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless despite the lack of programmatic unity, the

RCP did act as a refuge for some of those conservatives who opposed Gorbachev, but ultimately it was able to achieve little except to complicate the life of Gorbachev and those around him.

Some of those who were critical of Gorbachev because they believed that he was too conservative found an institutional base in the government of the Russian Republic. From the time of the republican elections in early 1990, the new Russian administration, as the head of the largest republic and located in Moscow alongside the Soviet government, was an important player in elite politics. The new administration was not strongly united. In a foretaste of the conflict that was to be so tragically played out in 1993, there was a clear split between conservative and more radical elements within the legislative organs of the republic. However, once Yeltsin had been elected President of Russia in June 1990, he began to attract many seeking a more radical course than that offered by Gorbachev. They began to construct an alternative, more radical, economic and political program, which placed much more pressure upon Gorbachev and those at the centre than did the RCP. Both of these bodies located in the Russian Republic, the RCP and the Yeltsin-led Russian government, may be seen as instruments which the opposition to Gorbachev sought to use to frustrate his policies and advance their own.

But because of the greatly expanded arena of politics, elite institutions were not the only venue for conflict between Gorbachev and his opponents. The broad public arena offered support for all sides in elite conflict. Those favouring market reform, a revised federal system, increased democracy and openness, and a pacific foreign policy were countered by supporters of the opposite persuasion, with a wide variety of views falling in between. All sides of the elite discussion sought to mobilize support from within this environment.¹⁰⁶ The public expression of different opinions by leaders, their projection through friendly mass media outlets, the organization of demonstrations in favour of or opposed to issues, and the attempts to win over parliamentarians and other political actors were all part of the complex dynamic of elite relations that unrolled during this period. What this was about was seeking to create an environment in which elite decision-makers would make decisions in line with the wishes of those attempting to influence them, so there was a kind of feedback loop. Elites sought to generate support to strengthen their position within elite councils, while non-elites sought to mobilize to influence those councils. In this sort of competition, the institutions of the society—government ministries, republican governments, social movements, nascent political parties—were both primary actors seeking to

influence and secondary actors others sought to influence. Republican leaders caucused, parliamentarians liaised with like-minded people in such institutions as the KGB, government ministries, national fronts, social movements and among liberal and conservative intellectuals. With so many diverse groupings, all sides in elite conflict could find support. This was a major stimulus to the broad public discussion of issues that characterized the last twelve months of the Soviet era. And people in those institutions used the resources they had to further their aims. The KGB bugged the phones of those they considered to be a threat (including Gorbachev and those involved in the Novo-Ogarevo negotiations) and used their operatives to mobilize support among sympathetic sections of the population. Those within government ministries could use the resources of those ministries to facilitate or to hinder policy, and to assist in (or hinder) the emergence of political organization (e.g. providing premises to meet, or printing facilities). Politics was no longer the preserve of the oligarchy.

One of Gorbachev's real virtues is that in this chaotic environment, despite some temporary reversals, he kept pushing forward on the transformation of the system that had been at the heart of his efforts since 1988. Although he did not control the agenda, he was able to maintain some influence on its direction, and through his position in the party (which he did not relinquish until after the August coup attempt) and the changes that he was able to introduce into it, he was able to ensure that it did not derail the course of change. Of course many in the party, including in its apparatus, did try to block many of his reform efforts, and in this they were aided and often led by elements within the leadership. But by not surrendering the party as he was urged by many to do,¹⁰⁷ he ensured that it did not become an insuperable block to change. Certainly when his opponents struck in August 1991, all the leaders were party members and some of them had held leading positions in the party. But their primary base of support lay in the state/security sector. The so-called State Committee for the State of Emergency comprised the following (Table 7.5).

They were clearly supported by others in high positions, including Politburo member and CC Secretary Oleg Shenin and long-time Gorbachev close associates Valerii Boldin and Anatolii Lukyanov. However, their attempt to either seize power in their own right or bend Gorbachev to their will and make him reverse his radical trajectory¹⁰⁸ failed, chiefly as a result of Gorbachev's refusal to accede to their demands and Yeltsin's ability to rally popular and other forces in opposition to them. But also none of the coup plotters headed institutions that were

Table 7.5 State committee for the state of emergency

<i>Person</i>	<i>Position at the time</i>
Vladimir Kryuchkov	Chairman of the KGB
Gennadii Yanaev	Vice-President
Oleg Baklanov	Deputy Chair of Security Council & CC Secretary
Dmitrii Yazov	Minister of Defence
Valentin Pavlov	Prime Minister
Boris Pugo	Minister of the Interior
Vasilii Starodubtsev	Head of the Peasants' Union
Aleksandr Tizyakov	Head of a group of defence-related plants

united behind them and what they were seeking to do. Just as the society at large was split along many lines, so too were the institutions that dominated it. So while Gorbachev may have been relatively isolated within both oligarchy and elite by mid-1991, his opponents were too divided, weak, and in many cases demoralized, to act effectively against him.

When Gorbachev returned to Moscow after the failure of the coup, it was to a new world. While Gorbachev remained President of the Soviet Union until 25 December 1991 and he did reconstitute the Soviet government, and while many of his more radical advisers continued to work with him,¹⁰⁹ his attempts to retain the union were no match for the drive to break it asunder emanating from some of the republics, chiefly the Baltic states and Russia under Yeltsin. This period saw a continued struggle with Yeltsin, in which the latter was able to use the machinery of the Russian state in a way which, in retrospect, seemed to lead inexorably to the breakup of the union and the end of the USSR.

CONCLUSION

In the end, the model of collective leadership with a predominant leader failed again. Gorbachev's method of managing the collective leadership sowed the seeds for continuing conflict. He sought to work through consensus, keeping within the leadership even people who had shown either firm opposition or disloyalty, or both, with the result that despite a public appearance of unity, the oligarchy was divided throughout the 1985-91 period. When reliance upon policy was the chief basis upon which coalitions rested, lack of agreement meant disunity, or at best a reliance upon authority and norms. Gorbachev relied on the authority of the office he held plus the norms of party life mandating unity and obedience to the

General Secretary to keep the oligarchs in line. However, because of the radical trajectory of the policy he espoused and the way the reformist credentials of most of those he appointed to leading posts were outdistanced by events, these were not sufficient to maintain leadership unity. But as the party got pushed even further to the sidelines and the institutional arenas within which collective leadership had functioned were destroyed as central components of political life, such party-based authority and norms became less relevant than they had been, with the result that these buttresses of Gorbachev's position were stripped away. And with them went the collective leadership that had dominated Soviet politics for 70 years. Gorbachev's inability to build up the sort of personal authority that might have compensated for the erosion of institutional authority meant that he lacked popular legitimacy to throw into the scales when the relevant arena of leadership shifted from the apex of the party to society at large. With that development, collectivism was dead, along with the system of which it had been a part for more than 70 years.

NOTES

1. Geidar Aliev (who had formerly worked in the KGB while Andropov was its chairman) was promoted from candidate to full membership of the Politburo, and Kirilenko retired on pension from the Politburo and Secretariat in November 1982; he was replaced by Aliev in the Politburo and Nikolai Ryzhkov as CC Secretary. Vitalii Vorotnikov became a candidate member of the Politburo in June 1983 and, along with Mikhail Solomentsev, a full member in December 1983, and Viktor Chebrikov became a candidate in December 1983. Three members of the Politburo—Pel'she (full), Kiselev and Rashidov (candidates)—died in 1983. In June 1983 Grigorii Romanov, already a full member of the Politburo, was made a CC Secretary, becoming the only Secretary apart from Gorbachev and Chernenko (and Andropov) to combine this position with full membership of the Politburo, and in December 1983 Yegor Ligachev became a CC Secretary. Ligachev had actually been brought to Moscow in April 1983 to become head of the Organizational-Party Work Department of the CC, which was in charge of personnel/cadres. He replaced Kapitonov in this position. Chebrikov was also made chairman of the KGB, replacing Vitalii Fedorchuk who had been put into that position against Andropov's wishes when Andropov was moved to the Secretariat in May 1982. Fedorchuk was not completely dismissed, but made Minister of the Interior in place of the Brezhnevite Nikolai Shchelokov. This reshuffling of the security

apparatus clearly strengthened Andropov's hand. For Ryzhkov's discussion, where he notes the unusual nature of his appointment to the party apparatus given his lack of experience working in the party as opposed to the state, see Ryzhkov (1992), pp. 36–38. For Ligachev's account of this, see Ligachev (1996), pp. 4–21.

2. Medvedev (2016), pp. 11–14. In December 1982 Bogolyubov replaced Chernenko in the General Department. In April 1983 Ligachev replaced Kapitonov in the Organizational-Party Work Department. Wells and Miller (1993), pp. 14, 21.
3. In terms of representation of other institutions, the situation was at the time of election as follows:

<i>November 1982</i>	
Central state machine	6
Central party apparatus	6
Regional state machine	1
Regional party apparatus	7

4. On the rumour that while in hospital, in his draft speech to the CC Andropov had called for Gorbachev to chair sessions of the Politburo in his absence, but that this call was eliminated from the text of the speech before it was distributed to members of the Politburo, see Gorbachev (1996), p. 152. On Andropov encouraging Gorbachev in 1983 to broaden his concerns beyond agriculture, for which he was formally responsible, see Ryzhkov (1992), p. 41. On the reliance on Gorbachev, see the comments of Andropov's aide Arkady Volsky and Ligachev in Grachev (2008), pp. 44–45.
5. In discussing this, Gorbachev said: "Raising one's voice 'against' was not in the tradition of that Politburo." Gorbachev (1996), p. 155.
6. This is the explanation in Medvedev (1983), pp. 226–227. On Chernenko's role, see Ligachev (1996), pp. 30–31 and Medvedev (2016), pp. 19–20. On Tikhonov trying to prevent this, see Medvedev (2016), pp. 19–20.
7. Medvedev (1986), p. 9.
8. Brown (1996), pp. 73–74 and Gorbachev (1996), pp. 156–158. On attempts to prevent Gorbachev from giving a major speech on ideology at the end of 1984, see Medvedev (2016), pp. 25–26.
9. Medvedev (1986), p. 15. For Ligachev's account, see Ligachev (1996), pp. 66–79. Chernyaev reports Gorbachev as saying that the candidacy of Grishin and Romanov were not considered. Chernyaev (2000), p. 19.
10. "Rech' tovarishcha A.A. Gromyko na Plenum TsK KPSS 11 marta 1985 goda", *Kommunist* 5, marta 1985, pp. 6–7.

11. For Ryzhkov's comments, see Ryzhkov (1992), p. 79.
12. Gorbachev (1996), p. 166. On the role of first secretaries and the CC, see Yeltsin (1990), pp. 62–63; also Ligachev (1996), pp. 74–75 and (2010), pp. 66–67.
13. According to Willerton (1992), p. 131, by 1990 Gorbachev still only had 15 clients in leading positions. For a comparison of leaders' networks in party and state bodies as at January 1990, see Willerton (1992), pp. 132–133, 150. For the networks of Ligachev, Ryzhkov and Slyun'kov, see Willerton (1992), pp. 144–147.
14. On the greater importance of his time in Moscow (from 1978) than in Stavropol (1955–78) for attracting supporters, see Willerton (1992), pp. 136–139.
15. He also brought into the Kremlin a number of new advisers, most of whom were to remain with him throughout most of this period: Anatolii Chernyaev, Georgii Smirnov, Ivan Frolov, Georgii Shakhnazarov and Valerii Boldin. They are discussed in Brown (1996), pp. 98–103. For later, see Brown (1996), pp. 202, 212–214.
16. At the CC plenum in April 1985, he brought in as full members of the Politburo Ligachev, Ryzhkov and Chebrikov, a new candidate Sergei Sokolov and a new CC Secretary Viktor Nikonov, changes which according to Chernyaev (2000), p. 29, gave Gorbachev a “strong majority of eight faithful friends” in the Politburo against Tikhonov, Kunaev, Shcherbitsky, Grishin and Romanov. In July Shevardnadze was promoted to full membership, while Boris Yeltsin and Lev Zaikov became CC Secretaries; in addition, two supporters Aleksandr Yakovlev and Anatolii Lukyanov were made head, respectively, of the CC Department of Propaganda and the General Department. Gorbachev was also able to remove some of the older guard: Romanov (July), Tikhonov (October) and Grishin (February 1986) all ceased to be full members, while Romanov (in July 1985) and Rusakov (in February 1986) ceased to be CC Secretaries; at the same time, Yeltsin became a candidate member of the Politburo. In July 1985 Georgii Razumovsky (who was to hold the post until July 1990) replaced Ligachev as head of the Organizational-Party Work Department. Importantly too in July, Gromyko was moved from Minister of Foreign Affairs to Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and was replaced in the Foreign Ministry by Shevardnadze, thereby ensuring one of Gorbachev's allies was in charge of the important area of foreign affairs, while the more conservative Gromyko was given an honorific post. In October 1985, when Tikhonov retired from the Politburo and from the prime ministerial post, he was replaced in the latter by Nikolai Ryzhkov (who ceased to be a CC Secretary) while Nikolai Talyzin became a candidate member of the Politburo.

17. Rigby (1989), p. 45. Institutional representation was as follows:

	<i>March 1985</i>	<i>March 1986</i>
Central state machine	6	8
Central party apparatus	5	5
Regional state machine	1	1
Regional party apparatus	4	5

18. Figures are from Mawdsley and White (2000), p. 279 and Gill (1994), p. 24. For comparative figures on turnover, see Willerton (1992), pp. 122–127. For an analysis that applies the argument about job-slot appointments in the context of generational change, see Daniels (1989).
19. For Shevardnadze’s thoughts, mainly about foreign affairs, see Shevardnadze (1991).
20. For Yakovlev’s views in 1990–91, see the collection of articles, interviews and speeches reproduced in Yakovlev (1991). For his more considered philosophical thoughts, see Yakovlev (1992).
21. On Yeltsin’s appointment, including to head the Moscow party in December 1985, and the reservations of both Gorbachev and Ryzhkov which were allayed by Ligachev, see Gorbachev (1996), pp. 183–184.
22. According to Willerton (1992), pp. 124–125, some 50% of his network had been ousted under Andropov, before Chernenko halted this process.
23. Medvedev (2016), pp. 38–39. For a discussion of how they worked on his speech for the XXVII Congress, see Medvedev (2016), pp. 39–42. For Chernyaev’s view of who constituted the “the new ‘center of power’ among those closest to Gorbachev.... (who) run the country” in the period before the Congress—Yakovlev, Georgii Razumovsky (head of the Organizational-Party Work Department), Medvedev and Lukyanov—see Chernyaev (2000), p. 46.
24. Gorbachev, “Iz vystupleniya”, Gorbachev (2008–2017a), vol. 2, p. 156. This is also published in *Istochnik* 0 (sic), 1993, p. 74.
25. Gorbachev, “Politicheskii doklad”.
26. See his “Zhivoe tvorchestvo naroda”, and the discussion in Brown (1996), pp. 79–81.
27. That there remained real reservations about acceleration and what it could achieve is reflected in the fact that the more ambitious targets Gorbachev espoused for the Five Year Plan to be adopted in 1986 were rejected at a Politburo meeting in November 1985. Brown (1996), pp. 147–148.
28. Gorbachev, “O perestroike”. The resolution adopted was vaguer and less radical than Gorbachev’s speech, reflecting the resistance to those

- proposals he met in preliminary soundings with regional leaders in the CC. Gill (1994), pp. 38–39.
29. *Partiinaya zhizn'* 11, 1988, p. 15.
 30. Gorbachev, “Perestroika—krovnoe delo naroda”, Gorbachev (2008–2017d), vol. 6, p. 103. cf. Gorbachev (1996), p. 196 where he says it was postponed twice.
 31. Gorbachev (1996), p. 197. This is confirmed in Medvedev (2016), p. 54.
 32. Gorbachev, “O perestroike”.
 33. Gorbachev (1996), p. 197.
 34. For details of this, see Brown (1996), p. 165. For the sceptical response of some members of the leadership to this proposal, see Chernyaev (2000), p. 94.
 35. Two of the old guard were removed, Kunaev from full membership and Zimyanin from a secretaryship, while Yakovlev became a candidate member and Lukyanov and Nikolai Slyun'kov became CC Secretaries. Lukyanov was a long-time Gorbachev associate and Yakovlev was to be a solid supporter of Gorbachev's program in 1990. In June 1987, Yakovlev, Slyun'kov and Gorbachev client Viktor Nikonov were made full members of the Politburo, while Defence Minister Dmitrii Yazov replaced Sokolov as a candidate member, and in October 1987 long-time incumbent Aliev was dropped from full membership of the Politburo. At the February 1988 plenum, Yeltsin was dropped as a candidate member, replaced by Georgii Razumovsky and Yuri Maslyukov, and Oleg Baklanov became a CC Secretary.
 36. Institutional representation was as follows:

<i>June 1988</i>	
Central state machine	8
Central party apparatus	9
Regional state machine	1
Regional party apparatus	2

37. On the presence of significant reservations within the leadership (Gorbachev refers to Ryzhkov, Ligachev, Talyzin and Vorotnikov) about the ideas for economic reform, see Gorbachev (1996), pp. 226–236. For Ryzhkov's discussion, which shows differences on aspects of economic reform at this time, see Ryzhkov (1992), ch. 8. Two working groups were responsible for working out the measures for the plenum: Aleksandr Anchishkin, Abel Aganbegyan, Leonid Abalkin, Stepan Sitaryan, Vladimir Mozhin, Nail Bikkenin and Oleg Ozherel'ev; and Medvedev, Valentin Pavlov, Gavriil Popov and Rem Belousov.

- Gorbachev aide Nikolai Petrakov was invited to participate in the work of the former. Medvedev (2016), p. 59.
38. For Gorbachev's speech, see "Oktyabr' i perestroika". For the historical section of the speech, much of which deals with Stalin both directly and indirectly, see pp. 407–431. For the Politburo generally having a positive view of the speech, see Medvedev (2016), p. 73.
 39. For the proceedings of the plenum, see "Stenogrammy". For Yeltsin's discussion of the plenum, see Yeltsin (1990), pp. 79–90.
 40. For the suggestion that the vitriolic attack on Yeltsin at the meeting of the Moscow city committee in mid-November was "orchestrated by Yegor Ligachev", see Palazchenko (1997), p. 75.
 41. Brown (1996), p. 162. Although there had been vigorous exchanges in the Politburo between Yeltsin and Ligachev.
 42. For the letter, entitled "Ne mogu postupat'sya printsipami", see *Sovetskaya Rossiya* 13 March 1988. For the official response, penned principally by Yakovlev, see "Printsipy perestroika: revoliutsionnost' myshlenniya i deistvii", *Pravda* 5 April 1988.
 43. For Ligachev's argument that he had nothing to do with it but was the victim of an attempt by Yakovlev to make him responsible for it, see Ligachev (1996), pp. 298–311. He also suggests that this was when it became clear that Gorbachev did not trust him. For Chernyaev's recounting, see Chernyaev (2000), pp. 153–156.
 44. See the comments in Medvedev (2016), pp. 80–84 and Chernyaev (2000), p. 153.
 45. Chernyaev (2000), p. 154, Gorbachev (1996), p. 252, Brown (1996), pp. 173–174, and Medvedev (2016), pp. 80–84. For some of the speeches from this Politburo meeting, see Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev (2008–17), vol. 10, pp. 131–137, 460–524.
 46. For the view that following the Andreeva incident, "Ligachev no longer acted with his old assurance at Politburo meetings. Now he mostly kept quiet", and when he did offer a view, he was frequently rebuffed by others, see Chernyaev (2000), p. 156.
 47. Gorbachev's refusal to act earlier to resolve this was a factor in sustaining the conflict and division in the Politburo.
 48. There is also a hint of this in the fact that Gorbachev showed the text of his forthcoming book (*Perestroika i novoe myshlenie*) to some of his colleagues, and although there was no criticism, nor was there enthusiastic approval. Taubman (2017), p. 320.
 49. Gorbachev said that in the lead into the Conference, as well as himself the reformers were Yakovlev, Medvedev, Shevardnadze, Ryzhkov, Slyun'kov, and perhaps Zaikov and Razumovsky. Gorbachev (1996), p. 254. According to Medvedev (2016), pp. 85–86, the preparatory

- materials were the work of Yakovlev, Lukyanov, Shakhnazarov, Frolov, Chernyaev, Boldin, Sitaryan, Mozhin, Bikkenin and Medvedev. For a description of a meeting of these advisers, see Chernyaev (2000), pp. 160–161.
50. For a fuller discussion of the Conference and its decisions, see Gill (1994), ch. 4.
 51. The resolutions are to be found in XIX vsesoyuznaya konferentsiya (1988), vol. 2, pp. 105–186.
 52. Brown (1996), pp. 176–177.
 53. Both in terms of authority and the difficulties this created for the others in establishing an anti-General Secretary coalition.
 54. XIX vsesoyuznaya (1988), vol. 2, pp. 185–186.
 55. Gromyko also stepped down as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, to be replaced by Gorbachev. Lukyanov became first deputy chairman.
 56. There was also a shuffling of portfolios here, with Ligachev taking over agriculture, Medvedev ideology and Yakovlev international affairs. This was a means of sidelining Ligachev. The plenum was the scene of vigorous criticism of Yakovlev.
 57. Matlock (2016), p. 58.
 58. Willerton (1992), p. 150.
 59. Brown (1996), p. 202. For suggestions about a different set of advisers, see Willerton (1992), pp. 140–141, 268, n. 46. Medvedev (2016), p. 140 lists himself, Yakovlev, Shakhnazarov, Frolov and Boldin as preparing for the September 1989 plenum.
 60. Although on Boldin feeding Gorbachev information that was slanted in a conservative direction, see Brown (1996), pp. 279, 284. For the suggestion that “Gorbachev was, of course, deliberately fed a lot of compromising information and even misinformation about the democrats...”, see Palazchenko (1997), p. 208.
 61. For Medvedev’s view that the discussions between Gorbachev and those who retired were “maximally open and honest”, see Medvedev (2016), p. 111.
 62. See some of the speeches in *Pravda* 27 April 1989. Seventy four full members, 24 candidate members and 12 members of the Central Auditing Commission retired. Most of these were pensioners, having already retired from the substantive positions which had given them CC membership.
 63. See the general comments by Palazchenko (1997), p. 208.
 64. For example, see the April 1988 conference of obkom secretaries designed to get their support over the Andreeva letter and preparations

- for the Conference, Chernyaev (2000), pp. 157–160. Also see p. 225 for a meeting in May 1989.
65. For a good overview of the range of issues that came under discussion, see White (1991), ch. 3.
 66. On the importance of editors and their appointment, see Ligachev (1996), pp. 99–101. For a debate in the Politburo between Medvedev on the one hand and Ligachev and Ryzhkov on the other over the dismissal of editors, see Chernyaev (2000), p. 176.
 67. *Izvestiya* 6 May 1989. Some 65.2% were paid administrators. White (1991), p. 48.
 68. For a vivid description of the operation of the Congress, see the memoir by a former Leningrad mayor, Sobchak (1992).
 69. For Gorbachev's view that after the first session of the Congress of People's Deputies, Ryzhkov and Ligachev had moved closer together because of the way in which the former had moved "to the right", see Gorbachev (1996), pp. 300–301.
 70. In September, three full members of the Politburo were removed—Nikonov, Chebrikov and Shcherbitsky—and replaced by Kryuchkov and Yuri Maslyukov, joined in December by Ivashko. At the level of candidate membership, Solov'ev and Talyzin were replaced by Primakov and Boris Pugo. More substantial changes were made among the CC Secretaries in September, with the dropping of Chebrikov and Nikonov and their replacement by Andrei Girenko, Yuri Manaenkov, Yegor Strov, Gumer Usmanov and, in December, Frolov.
 71. Materialy 5–7 fevralya (1990) and Materialy 11, 14, 16 marta (1990).
 72. *Pravda* 1 October 1988 and *Izvestiya TsK KPSS* 1, (1989), pp. 81–91.
 73. Ligachev (1996), pp. 109–111.
 74. In September–October, commissions were established in the following fields: ideology, socio-political, socio-economic, agrarian policy, women and the family, nationalities, the party's internal activity, renewal of primary party organizations, culture, education and science, youth policy, military policy, privileges, and the new party program.
 75. His removal as General Secretary could now only be brought about through the regular party congress or the calling of an extraordinary congress, something that would have required widespread support throughout the party structure. And in any case this would not automatically have led to his being stripped of the presidency.
 76. Six former full members of the Politburo—Ligachev, Medvedev, Yakovlev, Vorotnikov, Zaikov and Slyun'kov—and four former candidates—Biryukova, Primakov, Pugo and Razumovsky—were not even re-elected to the CC.
 77. The quota for each of these is listed in Gill (1994), p. 224, fn. 143.

78. For a list of these see *Izvestiya TsK KPSS* 8, 1990, pp. 3–4.
79. Gill (1994), p. 140.
80. This is an average. There were fewer meetings during the summer holidays and more around the time of CC plena, Congresses, and when there were contentious issues.
81. *Izvestiya TsK KPSS* 9, 1990, p. 19. By comparison, between 4 March 1981 and 6 March 1986, it met on 238 occasions, resolved 2492 questions directly and 17,539 by circulation. *Izvestiya TsK KPSS* 9, 1990, p. 21.
82. For the flavour of some of the meetings, see V Politbyuro. Although for Ligachev's view that many issues were not discussed properly, see his discussion of the conflict between himself and Yakovlev, who he refers to as the "eminence grise" who exercised too much influence on Gorbachev, Ligachev (1996), pp. 94–122.
83. For an example, see Ligachev's comment about the discussion in the Politburo on the decline of the Secretariat. Ligachev (1996), p. 110. For Yeltsin's description of how the Politburo worked, see Yeltsin (1990), pp. 64–65.
84. Ligachev (1996), pp. 167–168; Medvedev (2016), p. 155.
85. For an example, see Chernyaev (2000), pp. 112–113.
86. For example, on the struggle between Ligachev and Yakovlev in 1987–88 over the Stalin question, see Chernyaev (2000), pp. 150–151.
87. Ligachev (1996), ch. 4, esp. pp. 151, 161. Also Ryzhkov (1992), p. 214.
88. For example, the draft platform for presentation to the XXVIII Congress. Medvedev (2016), pp. 156–158. In this case, the commission was divided into eight working groups to handle the task. For the work of a commission in the foreign affairs field, see the comments of Gorbachev's foreign policy adviser Andrei Grachev in Grachev (2008), pp. 90–92.
89. Brown (1996), pp. 199–200.
90. A reflection of its lack of importance may be that one of its members, Yuri Prokof'ev, barely mentions it in his memoirs. Prokof'ev (2005).
91. *Izvestiya TsK KPSS* 9, 1990, p. 21.
92. Ligachev (1996), p. 110.
93. For reports on its activity, see successive issues of *Izvestiya TsK KPSS* beginning 11, 1990. Although it seems to have been re-activated prior to the Congress in order to facilitate development of the materials needed for the Congress. Medvedev (2016), p. 159.
94. Brown (1996), p. 200.
95. Ligachev clearly saw this as an arena within which real debate could take place, and one which he was often prevented from using to defend

himself against attack from both outside the party and within. Ligachev (1996).

96. The Presidential Council, wholly appointed by the President, comprised seven members who were dropped from the Politburo in 1990—Ryzhkov, Yazov, Kryuchkov, Shevardnadze, Primakov, Yakovlev and Medvedev—as well as Lukyanov, Bakatin, Maslyukov, Boldin (presidential chief of staff), the writers Valentin Rasputin and Chingiz Aitmatov, the economist Stanislav Shatalin and political activist Veniamin Yarin. This was a disparate group, but it was only consultative, not executive, and it was not a major venue within which Gorbachev was active. The Council was abolished in November 1990. The other body, the Federation Council, comprised the 15 presidents or parliamentary chairmen of the union republics, and therefore all ex officio over whom Gorbachev had no formal power of appointment. This body too was only consultative, but it had its brief expanded in November 1990 when the Presidential Council was abolished.
97. The members were Vadim Bakatin, Aleksandr Bessmertnykh, Kryuchkov, Pavlov, Pugo, Yevgeny Primakov, Yazov and Yanaev. Boldin had also been nominated by Gorbachev, but the Supreme Soviet had voted down the recommendation. This may also have been an attempt to assert control over the KGB which clearly had significant reservations about the course Gorbachev was pursuing.
98. The new government structure might have developed in this direction, but by appointing the conservative Valentin Pavlov as prime minister, Gorbachev virtually ensured that his relationship with the government would be strained.
99. According to Gorbachev, Polozkov had been urged to stand by Ligachev. Gorbachev (1996), pp. 358–359. On the conservative, anti-Gorbachev, nature of the Russian party, see Gorbachev (1996), pp. 356–359 and Chernyaev (2000), pp. 275–276, 336–337.
100. The “working group” preparing materials for the Congress comprised Yakovlev, Medvedev, Shakhnazarov, Petrakov, Frolov, Binnenin and Chernyaev. Chernyaev (2000), p. 277.
101. For two accounts of the Congress, including the strong push by conservatives against Gorbachev’s policies, see Gorbachev (1996), pp. 359–371 and Chernyaev (2000), pp. 279–280.
102. It may be, given the wholesale changes that had been made at regional level since 1985 and their percolation into the CC, that by this time the sorts of constraints on criticizing the leadership that had held throughout Soviet times had eroded. The newcomers, encouraged by five years of glasnost, may have been less inclined to give their leaders an easy ride than their predecessors.

103. Medvedev (2016), pp. 216–217, and “Ob’edinennyi plenum TsK i TsKK KPSS”, *Izvestiya TsK KPSS* 6, 1991, p. 10.
104. For example, see the figures given by Moscow party boss Yuri Prokof’ev in *Moskovskaya Pravda* 24 July 1990.
105. For a discussion of the RCP and the difficulties it had in getting a common policy outlook, see Gill (1994), pp. 148–153.
106. On Gorbachev appealing directly to news editors, see Ligachev (1996), pp. 100–101.
107. From at least 1990 he was being urged to split the party into a social democratic and another wing, but he continually refused to do so.
108. Their intentions are not completely clear. For discussions of this episode, see, for Gorbachev’s initial response, Gorbachev (1991). Also see Sixsmith (1991), Sakwa (1993), and Dunlop (1993). For Medvedev’s account, see Medvedev (2016), pp. 224–251.
109. According to Palazchenko (1997), p. 324, the group included Eduard Shevardnadze, Aleksandr Yakovlev, Yegor Yakovlev (editor of *Moscow News*), Gavrili Popov (Moscow mayor), Anatolii Sobchak (St Petersburg mayor), Vadim Bakatin and radical economist Grigorii Yavlinsky.

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CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

Over the 74-year life of the Soviet regime, the collective leadership has been remarkably stable. Despite the widespread assumption by scholars that there were no rules governing the succession and that therefore leadership change was bound to result in crisis, in no case did crisis occur. The Khrushchev–Brezhnev, Brezhnev–Andropov, Andropov–Chernenko and Chernenko–Gorbachev successions were all achieved with a minimum of fuss. Even though the overthrow of Khrushchev was involuntary on his part, his actual removal observed the “rules” of institutional functioning that were in place: a decision of the Presidium was affirmed by the Central Committee. In the other two cases, Lenin–Stalin and Stalin–Khrushchev, the process was more complicated with competition within the oligarchy for primacy, but even this was carried out formally through the existing institutions. In none of these cases was the leadership unable to function and what conflict did occur took place broadly within the institutional framework within which oligarch politics was meant to be conducted. Where it occurred, oligarch conflict did not lead to destabilization, either of the oligarchy itself or more broadly of the regime. How do we account for this lack of a succession crisis?

Part of the answer lies in the dynamics of the oligarchy as they unrolled over the life of the regime. The framing of the collective leadership as a continual struggle for power in which there were no (or very few) rules is clearly wrong. Individual oligarchs were not always either struggling to consolidate or expand their power, or to prevent someone else from doing this. This was not a Hobbesian “war of all against all”, or even of one man

against the others. Certainly members of the elite were ambitious; they would not have reached the pinnacle of Soviet politics had they not been. But not all sought the top job, and even some of those who may have aspired to it were not willing to invest in a no-holds-barred struggle to achieve it. Rather than an eternal struggle for power, oligarch life was for the most part characterized by a substantial degree of consensus, agreement and routine. Every member of the Politburo and Secretariat had their own particular tasks to fulfil linked to the institutional positions they occupied, and although job competence was rarely the highest valued criterion for leadership, satisfactory performance (or at least the appearance of it) was usually an element in individual survival. Most members of the elite aspired to carry out policies that were in the interests of the country and the regime as they saw it, and they saw their occupation of office in that light. This had two implications for the oligarchs.

First, policy was an important dimension of politics, including in those instances when there was a succession struggle. In the 1920s, Stalin consolidated his power and position through organizational manipulation, but also important was policy argument. His policy zig-zags during this decade were related to his attempts to confront successive opposition groups, but it is also the case that those policy changes he supported could have been justified as responses to the changing situation in the country, and in particular the economy, independent of immediate political considerations. But even if he did not believe in the substance of those changes and adopted new policies for purely power politics reasons as weapons in political conflict, his opponents do appear to have been committed to the policy lines they espoused. At each change point, the policies Stalin espoused elicited support from lower levels in the party and thereby added strength in his battle with his opponents. Similarly in the 1950s when Khrushchev confronted Malenkov, policy was a key aspect of their struggle. The policies that each supported were most popular in the bureaucratic constituencies which they headed, for Khrushchev party officials and for Malenkov state officials. Again, both probably believed in the rightness of the policies they espoused, but this was not central to the fact that policy was a major axis upon which the succession struggle turned.

Second, it is a mistake to confuse conflict over policy with competition for the top job. At all times during the Soviet period, including when Stalin was dominant, there were different views over policy questions among the oligarchs. And for much of the time, those differences were

aired within the oligarchy. While at various times those differences invaded the public sphere, for the most part they have been kept behind closed doors, within the confines of the oligarchy itself. This was partly driven by a desire not to open up that oligarchy to potential challenge from below, particularly after the end of the 1920s when the former practice of the CC actually resolving issues was ended. Also important was the desire to project that leadership as essentially united on policy and working to implement measures designed to further the interests of the country. So the public absence of conflict does not mean that there were not differences behind closed doors. Debate over policy occurred all of the time. Sometimes this may not have involved the leader, as when discussion occurred among Stalin's colleagues in his absence or when Brezhnev was sick, but even when the dominant Stalin was present his colleagues at times presented alternatives that may have differed from what he espoused; Khrushchev and the agrotowns proposal in 1951 is an instance of this. So policy difference was normal. But this did not automatically turn into conflict over the leadership. Of course an accumulation of policy differences could lead some to believe that the leader was no longer fit to lead, as was part of the situation regarding Khrushchev in the early-1960s, but this was not inevitable. Policy difference and the resolution of such differences behind closed doors was the norm in Soviet politics, and not necessarily a sign of incipient leadership problems.

In understanding the role of policy in leadership dynamics, it is important to recognize that the oligarchs were individually at the head of the leading bureaucratic hierarchies in the Soviet system. The General Secretary headed the party apparatus, the CC Secretaries headed sections of that apparatus, some Politburo members headed regional party organizations, others were at the head of government ministries, state committees or the government itself. All of these institutional affiliations provided their leaders with both organizational resources and particular sets of interests that could be mobilized in the course of oligarch politics. Some of these organizational resources were more powerful than others, with control over the CC Secretariat proving to be the most important resource in the course of political struggles. This raises the question of the role political institutions played in oligarch politics.

The assumption often made about politics in authoritarian regimes is that political institutions play little part in this. As the Soviet experience suggests, this is not necessarily true. Political institutions were clearly important weapons in elite conflict. Control over the Secretariat

delivered the capacity both to shape personnel decisions and to structure the flow of information into the principal decision-making arenas, especially the Politburo. A dominant position in the Politburo gave enhanced decision-making power in the most important institution in the political structure. Leadership of a regional party organization gave some powers over personnel disposition in one's region, which could in turn feed into the "circular flow of power", while leading important regions (especially Ukraine) could give one extra heft in both oligarch and elite councils. Heading a government ministry or state committee gave access to particular expertise which could be crucial in the policy debate, while leadership of the security organs gave a type of potential power no one else could match (at least while the norm of military non-involvement in politics remained in operation). Furthermore policies were for the most part announced in the name of particular institutions, not individuals, and leadership changes were all processed through the formal institutions. In this sense, political institutions were important for the structuring of elite politics.

But did those institutions possess normative authority? The best way of understanding this is to ask whether the institutions placed real constraints upon the behaviour of individual oligarchs. Was the leader constrained to act within the bounds laid down by the institutions? Were his colleagues able to ignore institutional rules and principles to pursue their interests? It is impossible to give a single clear answer that applies to the entire period. Nevertheless as T.H. Rigby contends, generally the oligarchy was little constrained from below by rules, assemblies or other power centres.¹ While decisions of the Congress and CC were held to have binding authority in the party, for the most part those assemblies adopted the decisions passed down to them by the oligarchs. Even on those occasions when the CC was asked to resolve questions that were dividing the oligarchy—during much of the 1920s and in 1957 and 1964—in each case the CC followed advice emanating from within the oligarchy. In these instances the CC did have some freedom of choice, for example between Stalin and successively the Left, United and Right oppositions, Khrushchev and the anti-party group, and Khrushchev and the Brezhnev-led plotters, but the CC did not initiate the part it played. However in each case, the oligarchs recognized that any decisions they made would not be considered legitimate unless affirmed by the CC. So in this sense, the institutional rights of the CC were recognized and the oligarchs abided by them.

After the late 1920s and until the late Gorbachev period the CC was mostly a passive organ, in the sense that its plena were largely pro forma rather than being vigorous arenas of policy debate. However, the role of CC members outside the plenum may have been of more importance for the shaping of oligarch politics than the plenum itself. Whenever a plenum was held, and its members came to Moscow, the opportunity existed for widespread consultation on the part of the oligarchs. Individual networks facilitated meetings at which central politicians could consult with those at lower levels of the party and those members could press their views on their leaders. Similarly, CC members used the internal communications channels of the party to correspond with their superiors (and patrons) in Moscow, so that the latter were not as isolated from the bulk of party officials as may appear. The use of commissions of the CC to work on draft decisions during plena, especially in the Brezhnev and later years, also gave such members a say in policy not reflected in the normal proceedings of the plenum. In this sense, membership of the CC gave these officials access to the oligarchy which enabled them to inform the oligarchs in ways that were not available to others in the system. This means that although as a collective body the CC may not have been able to exercise much power, membership of it and the location in the system this implied, did give CC members potentially more influence than the classic model of the Soviet system implies. CC members remained a potentially influential force that the oligarchs were usually reluctant to upset.

The Politburo was the most important formal decision-making body and appears to have met on a regular basis throughout most of the Soviet period, with the exception of the latter half of the Stalin era. Such a pattern created a sense of regularity, of it being normal that the Politburo meets weekly and that its members (or at least those located in Moscow) attend and discuss the leading issues of the day. The longer the practice continued, the more imperative such meetings appeared. This provided some structure to the political and decision-making processes. Such a development would have been welcome to many oligarchs because this constituted a forum within which they could hope to be kept informed about and influence what was going on. Not only was this important for their ability to remain active in the policy process, but it also provided the means for each one of them to keep an eye on what the others, including the leader, were doing. This was an important informational function that helped to ensure the stability of the

oligarchy; the more they knew about what was going on, the less likely destabilization was as a result of unexpected actions by their colleagues.² Scholars of authoritarian systems have identified such meetings as the vehicle for members of the elite to hold a leader to the promises he made in order to reach power,³ but there is no evidence of the Politburo acting in this way. It has, however, on occasion under Khrushchev been the place where a leader's colleagues called him to account, while under all leaders it has been a vehicle within which policy could be discussed, and therefore a leader's preferences called into question. While this may have been in part a function of the truly collective nature of relations within the leadership at that time, it also reflects the normative authority of the Politburo as an institution; if it did not have that authority, the oligarchs would have been able simply to ignore it. However, generally the Politburo has not been an institution that has been able to prevent a leader from attaining personal dominance when that leader has gathered to himself the resources to be able to overcome his colleagues, as the experience with Stalin in the 1930s shows. At this time, all of the decision-making bodies were substantially devoid of autonomy and reduced to subservience to the leader. Under the dominant leader, institutions had little normative authority, but could have greater authority under a predominant leader.

The question of whether the leading institutions possessed normative authority or not is not the same as asking whether a dominant or predominant leader existed. A dominant leader may be one whose actions are not constrained by the institutional norms and processes of the leading institutions, and Stalin from the late 1930s was an example of this. But that dominance might just as easily rest in a leader's ability to disregard the views of his colleagues while acting through the institutional norms and processes that had become embedded in the patterns of institutional functioning. In this latter case, personal dominance and powerful institutions could co-exist, with the former working substantially through the latter. In this case, if institutions constrain the actions of a leader, those institutions possess a high level of normative authority. Where institutions cannot constrain the leader, their normative authority is low and they may be seen in a more instrumental sense.

From the outset of Soviet rule, the institutions were under pressure. Under Lenin, the institutional fluidity at the top, propelled in part by the prolonged period of crisis conditions associated with the civil war but also by Lenin's clear preference for such fluidity to remain, prevented the

institutions from falling into a regular pattern of functioning, and it is such regularity that is important for new institutions to develop normative authority. Once the war was won and Lenin was removed from the political scene, power and authority became more concentrated in party organs. This opened the possibility for those organs to develop in a more regular fashion and to thereby generate the sorts of patterns that could lead to increasing normative authority. However, this process was undermined by the way in which the institutions came to be used primarily as political weapons. This was a result of two things: the political conflicts of the 1920s in which all sides sought to use the institutions in an instrumental fashion, and the growth in the importance of the personnel appointment mechanism. This latter development enabled the General Secretary to consolidate his support within the leading party organs, which in turn enabled him not only to defeat his opponents but, potentially, to erode any normative authority the institutions had developed. This occurred to its greatest degree in the mid-late 1930s and lasted until Stalin's death in 1953. It was also occurring under Khrushchev and even Brezhnev appeared to possess the capacity to make this happen, but in practice Khrushchev failed in his attempt and Brezhnev did not exert his efforts to achieve this. The central issues here are: how was a leader able to establish such a dominant position for himself? And how did the other members of the leadership act in this situation?

As argued in earlier chapters, the notion of the "circular flow of power" has been used to explain the emergence of powerful individual leaders. However, this notion is characterized by an overly simplistic understanding of the nature of personal relationships: it seems to assume that relationships of lower level support for higher level patrons are locked in and continuing, when in practice they have proved to be more nuanced and much more variable. The essence of the traditional explanation, as outlined in earlier chapters, is that patron-client relationships are based on the exchange of benefits: patrons give clients promotion, job security and material benefits in exchange for support in party fora. The most likely context for such relationships to develop is common career experience: the patron and client worked in the same region (usually defined in geographical terms, but it could also be functional, i.e. they worked in the same organization), this is where they began to associate, and as the putative patron rose up the ranks, he dragged the client with him. This sort of explanation has much merit, but this does not encompass the full range of relationship types evident within the oligarchy.

The assumption is that the client in the patron-client relationship is tied to the leader (patron). But there have been other oligarchs who did not possess such long-term ties to individual leaders, but nevertheless they offered him support. These were people whose careers had been autonomous from the leader, having made it to the top without the active sponsorship of that leader.⁴ These are referred to in the above argument as allies. The difference is important, because the support of clients for a leader is assumed to be much more certain and rusted on because they owed their careers to him while that of allies is more problematic. The dominant leader was said to have been able to achieve his dominance through the continuing support of his clients. But in practice the situation has been more nuanced.

As the Khrushchev experience showed, with his clients turning on and overthrowing him, the support of clients is not guaranteed. While they may have been more constant in their support for the leader than allies, clients nevertheless were not usually solely the creatures of the leader. The closest approximation to this position of "client as creature" was achieved under Stalin from the mid-late 1930s, but here the personal association was buttressed by fear of the Terror. Usually clients retained some autonomy of judgement from the leader, something reflected in the way that even under Stalin different members of the leadership adopted contradictory positions on policy issues even if ultimately they acceded to Stalin's opinion. The fact that they did not always automatically fall in behind the leader on all issues and that they could exercise autonomous judgement means that their positions were very similar to those of the allies: their continued support for the leader depended upon their continued receipt of personal benefits (especially job security and material perks) as well as agreement with policy lines. The support stemming from the legacy of gratitude for earlier career advancement needed to be buttressed by continuing benefits and policy accord. When these coincided, client support was most secure; when they did not, it was more problematic. The same situation applied with regard to the allies, albeit without the intensity that may have stemmed from the earlier relationship. Even in those cases when the alliance emerged principally on the basis of policy accord, over time considerations about job security and promotion would also have become relevant. Given the powers a leader had to hire and fire, the longer an ally remained in the top leadership, the higher the likelihood they would be transformed from ally into client. But this did not necessarily make their support for the leader

significantly more secure. Thus for most of the life of the Soviet regime, there was no dominant leader, but a predominant one who ultimately had to rely on winning and retaining the support of his colleagues. In this sort of situation, how did a would-be leader try to build up and consolidate his position?

The heart of the standard explanation is through personnel appointment. The Soviet oligarchy was co-opted, in that entry into it was determined by the existing members, with some of those members having considerably more say about this than others. Individual members appear to have had most power within their own particular areas of responsibility (for example, Mikoyan in the Ministry of Foreign Trade), generally the senior CC Secretaries both individually and as a group (meeting with the other CC Secretaries as the Secretariat or in a smaller group without the other secretaries) could exercise some discretionary powers over appointments, and some recommendations went to the Politburo as a whole. But the focus of the appointment process was the General Secretary. As the head of the party apparatus, all of the CC Secretaries effectively reported to him. If, as was normally the case, he could ensure that a supporter filled the office of CC Secretary responsible for personnel, and that a supporter was the head of the department that made personnel appointments, the General Secretary was in a position to shape appointments throughout the Soviet system. This would feed into the “circular flow of power” and give him the capacity to shape who was co-opted into the elite. This power was not always untrammelled—for example Suslov was a significant constraint on Brezhnev—but provided the General Secretary used this power judiciously, his room for manoeuvre tended to increase over time.⁵ So a central aspect of the consolidation of power by the General Secretary was his ability to use the appointment mechanism to build up his support especially in elite organs.

But having created a support base in this way, the General Secretary had to lock that support in. There were two central ways of doing this. First, the pursuit of policies likely to gain assent from his colleagues. This was evident, at least initially, in all cases of General Secretaries, with the possible exception of Andropov whose tenure was so brief. The faction fights of the 1920s saw Stalin victorious, and on each occasion he espoused policies that won the support of a majority within the leading organs, including the CC. Similarly Khrushchev began by supporting policies that appealed to particular interests in Soviet society that were well-represented in the elite, and this was important for his victory over both Malenkov and the anti-party group. Brezhnev’s policies too reflected

the broad consensus that had formed around Khrushchev's overthrow, while Gorbachev sponsored policies of change that, in the early years, captured majority assent in elite circles. Of course this situation did not always endure. In the 1930s Stalin favoured policies that, despite formal support, were unlikely to have had real support within the elite, but he was protected from the consequences of this by that elite's concern about the way in which they could get caught up in the Terror. After the anti-party group affair Khrushchev ceased following policies that had widespread support within the elite and suffered the consequences, while when Gorbachev's policies outstripped the leadership consensus, that leadership disintegrated. Policy consensus remained an important element in elite stability and in the position of the General Secretary.

Second, a concern to look after and protect their interests. This was most evident in the case of Brezhnev whose policy of stability of cadres seemed to give a guarantee of a significant level of security of tenure for his colleagues, while the lax approach to corruption enabled many officials to line their pockets more effectively than had been possible before.⁶ Also the way he conducted elite politics involved respect for the rules of the political game and for his colleagues, with decision-making being inclusive and the political process regular. Khrushchev did exactly the reverse, guaranteeing only limited security of tenure through his compulsory turnover provisions introduced in 1961 and through his idiosyncratic operating style preventing the development of regularity in elite political life. Stalin's approach was a combination of looking after his colleagues' interests as well as threatening them. By being General Secretary he was ultimately responsible for the establishment and operation of the nomenklatura system. As well as being at the heart of the personnel system in the party, it was through this that the association between office (or rank) and material welfare was created. In this sense, he was responsible for the system whereby members of the elite lived in a much better style than everyone else. Furthermore as the longevity of some of his colleagues demonstrated, at least for some he seemed to provide a security of tenure that was clearly not enjoyed by all. But he also threatened his colleagues (see below). Gorbachev seemed to have evinced little concern for the personal welfare or job security of his colleagues, but he did continue the basic decency in elite interactions that had begun under Brezhnev.

Another way in which a General Secretary sought to consolidate his power and position was through his use of the party's central organizational machinery. As with the personnel appointment mechanism,

the General Secretary was in the position to ensure that his supporters filled the posts that controlled how the central institutions functioned. This involved the relevant CC Secretaries and department heads—principally what finally became the General Department—who ran that part of the apparatus that prepared the meetings of the Politburo and the Orgburo/Secretariat. Stalin achieved this through the merger of his personal secretariat with the Secret Department/Special Sector which was run by his assistant Aleksandr Poskrebyshev, while subsequent General Secretaries ensured supporters filled these roles. This gave the General Secretary the capacity to structure the way in which the leading organs worked. Most importantly, it enabled him to determine the agenda of meetings and the preparatory materials accompanying agenda items, and given that as time went on the formalization of the way the Politburo worked discouraged the raising of issues at the meeting that had not been prepared through the Secretariat (crisis issues excepted), this gave him enormous power to structure elite discussion. This was, of course, no guarantee that he would get his way, but it did give him control over the policy agenda that was difficult to shake.

Another factor that enhanced his authority in the policy sphere is that for most of the life of the Soviet regime, individual members of the leadership had responsibility for particular policy areas or institutions. Their formal concerns were generally quite narrow; for example, Gromyko as Minister of Foreign Affairs rarely had anything much to do with internal party matters, Kirilenko as CC Secretary overseeing personnel had little to do with industry policy. The effect of this narrow concentration is that individual members of the Politburo usually did not interfere in the spheres of responsibility of their colleagues. This tradition of narrow specialization would have inhibited meaningful discussion on many issues, but it also elevated the General Secretary above his colleagues: he was the only one without such a narrow compass, instead having the responsibility to range across the whole spectrum of policy and political life. This gave him an authority and a responsibility that his colleagues lacked, and thereby elevated him above their level in the course of political life. Allied to his ability to control the agenda, this gave him a potentially dominating place in policy discussion.

As well as these means of strengthening his position, the General Secretary also had the potential weapon of threat. This was most clearly evident under Stalin, when the unrolling of the Terror encapsulated some members of the elite, thereby illustrating to the others what was possible.

But it was not only physical liquidation that posed the threat; the way Molotov and Mikoyan were ostracized in 1949, the arrest of Kalinin's and Molotov's wives, the criticism of individual oligarchs (for example, Khrushchev over the agrotowns proposal in 1951), and the demotion of individuals (for example, Kaganovich's despatch from Moscow to head the Political Administration of the Caucasus Front in 1942) were all means of projecting a threat to which the oligarchs were sensitive. But potential threat was also there under other General Secretaries. This was less because of the possibility of the resort to coercion than because of the power over appointment the General Secretary possessed. Depending upon how powerful the General Secretary was within the leadership, he potentially could use his power to remove opponents from the leadership. This was a regular event throughout the life of the regime, and it did represent a real threat; if someone opposed the General Secretary, a posting far from Moscow was a possibility, as the anti-party group members discovered in 1957. Even under Brezhnev, this was used and, until Gorbachev, this sort of demotion usually meant the end of one's political career.⁷ Nevertheless it is striking that the only case of a dominant (as opposed to predominant) leader emerging and consolidating his position occurred when Terror was mobilized against the elite.

A General Secretary could also rely upon the authority of the office to stabilize and strengthen his personal position. Although the office was not highly institutionalized—the means of selection of the General Secretary emerged from party practice⁸ but there was no clear statement of the powers or tenure of the office—and initially was seen as being a purely administrative, and therefore humdrum and relatively unimportant, post, its power soon became apparent to all. Not only that, but it soon acquired significant authority; speeches and reports delivered by the General Secretary were greeted enthusiastically and were publicly unchallenged, and he was generally recognized as the leader of the party. By the early 1930s it seems to have been accepted that the General Secretary enjoyed significant personal discretion and that having been elevated to that post, he should be supported and allowed substantial autonomy in carrying out his role. Even when they disagreed with what the General Secretary wanted, others frequently went along with him because they acknowledged that he had the authority to act as he was doing; the April 1989 CC meeting when 110 members of the CC and Central Auditing Commission retired despite the opposition of many of them to this is a clear example of the way people accepted the authority of the office. This was a recognition of institutional authority.

General Secretaries also sought to buttress this authority by taking on other offices. Stalin became prime minister as well as military leader (Generalissimo) during the war, Khrushchev added the prime minister-ship to his party position, while Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko also became Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and head of the Defence Council. Gorbachev took on the new position of President while retaining his party leadership post. This accumulation of posts was designed to add authority and lustre to the General Secretary, while it also gave him an institutional base in the state machine, and therefore the right to claim expanded responsibility in this sphere.

The accumulation of offices was also part of another means the General Secretary could use in an attempt to bolster his authority: the generation of a leader cult. This was an attempt to develop personal authority. All of the General Secretaries from Stalin to Chernenko inclusive enjoyed a cult of their leadership of varying degrees of intensity. Regardless of how intense the cult was and extreme or moderate the claims were (and the claims made for individual leaders differed considerably), they were all designed to emphasize how important the leader was both for decision-making and for the future of the regime. Correct leadership flowed from the person of the General Secretary, and he was therefore indispensable. The most extreme example of this was the cult of Stalin. The cult was in part an attempt to generate a charismatic relationship between the leader and the people, and therefore to create a direct link between Stalin and populace which was not mediated by the party or by any of the other institutional structures of the Soviet system. As such, it constituted an ideological basis upon which dominance could rest that none of his colleagues could gainsay and which was much more dominant and extreme in its claims than that of any of his successors; the cult of the dominant leader was much more substantial and powerful as an ideological and organizational weapon than the more moderate cults of any of the predominant leaders. The General Secretary's colleagues did not believe the claims made by the different leader cults, even if they did much to fuel them. They knew the leader from close personal association and realized that the cult was a gross exaggeration; the immediate reaction of Stalin's colleagues to his death and the overthrow of Khrushchev shows how the cult's claims rested very lightly on the oligarchs. The cult is therefore unlikely to have increased the leader's authority in the eyes of his immediate collaborators. However as Weber noted,⁹ the potency of charisma is increased by distance from the leader. The claims of the cult were therefore much more likely to have had more currency among those

lower down in the political system who may have seen the leader in person only at a distance at party congresses¹⁰ and by the populace at large; the preparations made to prevent popular unrest at the time of Stalin's death and Khrushchev's overthrow show that this was certainly a concern among the leaders. If the cult did build up a form of popular authority in the leader, especially among party officials in the CC, this may have been seen by that leader as a factor inhibiting a move against him by his colleagues.¹¹ This attempt to generate a sense of personal authority through the cult would explain its ubiquity in Soviet politics.

The difference between a dominant and a predominant leader is important here. While dominance rests on support just as predominance does, achievement of a dominant position usually requires more than simply the regular support of clients and allies, control over the organizational machinery of the party and legitimation via a cult; it requires the knitting together of reliance upon such support with another power base altogether. In the only case when a leader achieved such dominance, Stalin 1935–53, as well as resting on personnel support, organizational control and the cult, that dominance rested on Stalin's relationship with the security apparatus. The point has already been made that all General Secretaries had a special relationship with the security apparatus because of the way that the latter reported directly to them. However, it was different for Stalin because of the role that that apparatus played in the 1930s. The way that former party leaders were caught up in the web of terror following the assassination of Kirov showed the vulnerability of the oligarchs, and given the control that Stalin was able to exercise through successive heads of the security apparatus, this gave him an added buttress to his position and was the most important factor enabling him to dominate the leadership rather than being just a predominant leader. The Terror was crucial for the transition from predominant to dominant leader.

The relationship between the dominant leader and his colleagues is also different to that of the predominant leader. The latter remains more reliant upon the continuing support of clients and allies than the dominant leader does. This means that the predominant leader must work much more at both consolidating his support base within the leadership and keeping it happy than the dominant leader needs to do. As dominant leader, Stalin could treat his colleagues with contempt, as he sometimes did especially in the post-war period. He could belittle them, ignore them and threaten them (although he did not until the end

threaten their collective position) without endangering his own position. When the predominant Khrushchev acted in ways that threatened his colleagues' interests and treated them with disdain, he paid the price and was toppled. Gorbachev also did not seek to defend his colleagues' interests, even if he did reduce the costs of failed opposition, and his collective became dysfunctional. Thus the predominant leader must work harder at both promoting his supporters and looking after their interests than his dominant counterpart. Part of this involves the according to all members of the right to participate in the decision-making process. Important here too is the removal of politics as a blood sport which meant that losers in political conflict did not lose their lives. Brezhnev did the best job of creating such a sense of inclusiveness, even if this did not apply to all individual oligarchs at all times. This applied even more strongly for the would-be leader in a situation of pure oligarchy, when he had to confront challengers who were trying to build up their bases in exactly the same way he was seeking to do.

If the leader had these means of attempting to elevate himself above his colleagues to achieve predominance and in the case of Stalin dominance, how did the other oligarchs cope with this? How did they seek to defend themselves against a leader becoming either predominant or dominant or, once the leader achieved that, of limiting his actions and protecting themselves against the arbitrary exercise of his will?

There were three basic strategies or orientations and a number of tactics that the oligarchs could follow. The first strategy comprised seeking to align themselves with the leader, or if it was not yet certain who the predominant individual was to be, with an aspirational leader. If a person could correctly pick who was going to come out on top, or if there was already a predominant/dominant leader, they could promote their allegiance to that person and hope to benefit from it. This was the strategy adopted by many of those who entered the Politburo in the late 1920s-early 1930s who lacked established ties with Stalin but aligned themselves with him and consolidated themselves in the oligarchy. People like Kalinin and Molotov, who had party careers independent of Stalin before allying with him, are examples of this. This essentially involved joining the leader's faction.

The second strategy was the building up of a support group within the leadership autonomous from the predominant leader. This involved the effective creation of a faction, designed in part to balance against the predominant leader and place limits on what he could do. This strategy was

not without its dangers because creation of a faction left the way clear for the leader to invoke the anti-factional rule and thereby purge them from the leadership. But this was not inevitable, as the Brezhnev experience shows when a number of factional alignments—such as those associated with Suslov and Kapitonov—remained throughout his tenure. This sort of factionalization of the elite does not therefore mean that that elite was split and in perpetual conflict. For much of the time when there was a predominant leader, factions could co-exist as long as the leader did not feel threatened by the other faction and that faction did not overtly seek to challenge the leader's position. As long as both recognized that differences over policy did not assume a challenge for the leadership itself, this sort of factional division did not have to destabilize the leadership. But this was potentially an unstable mix: leadership paranoia could develop, as it did under Stalin, factional activity could be misinterpreted or a misjudgement could be made, all of which could destabilize a factional balance and plunge the leadership into conflict. Unless victory could be assured, such an outcome was likely to harm both sides. A faction's strength and influence was greatest when it was not put to the final test but could be exercised through the regular provisions of the oligarchy's functioning and when there remained some doubt in the leader's mind about exactly how powerful it was. Brezhnev's hesitancy in the lead up to the overthrow of Khrushchev is an instance of uncertainty about how powerful the group (in this case the supporters of the coup) actually was.

The creation of a faction in this way was less possible under the dominant Stalin than under either a predominant leader or a situation of pure oligarchy, because of the way that such a development rendered one vulnerable to the application of the anti-factional rule and the associated possibility of Stalin's use of the security apparatus. This was a more viable strategy under a pure oligarchy and a predominant leader. Under the conditions of pure oligarchy, faction formation was the norm as different individuals struggled for power, but the 1920s also showed the danger of this because it showed how the anti-factional rule could be used to destroy opposition. Under the predominant leader too this could be a practical mode of operating. Given that by definition the predominant leader does not monopolize support within the elite organs of the party, it is possible for non-members of his faction to set up a faction that effectively balances against the leader's faction. This does not require both to be the same size, but if the non-leader faction is sufficiently large, it will be very difficult for the leader to destroy it quickly. And providing the

leader does not harbour ambitions to complete dominance, such a faction could be long-lasting. The Brezhnev experience, where a number of factions, plus a substantial number of independents, existed shows how such factions can survive. But crucial to the stability of the leadership as a whole is that direct conflict is avoided. The best chance for the non-leader faction to survive is that it does not take a conflictual attitude to the leader and does not challenge his position or authority. This was the situation under Brezhnev, where all sides cooperated in a collective leadership, albeit perhaps at the expense of policy dynamism. Under the late Khrushchev there was little such cooperation between the leader and his colleagues, and ultimately they overthrew him.

The third strategy involved an attempt to maintain one's position as an independent, tied to no faction. This was a strategy that relied upon the possession of resources that were not immediately able to be subverted by the General Secretary. In principle, there were two types of such resources: organizational and expertise. Although ultimately no organizational structure was immune from the appointment power of the CC Secretariat and therefore the General Secretary, in those spheres where a member of the leadership had responsibility, they also had a role in the appointment of people into "their" organization. This enabled them to build up a support base in those organizations which, in the absence of a direct assault by the General Secretary, could be stable and effective. The second type of resource was expertise. Where an individual had particular expertise that was highly valued, this could enable them to play an independent role in policy deliberations. Often they confined their efforts to a narrow range of questions concerning their particular expertise, a strategy that made them appear as technocrats and therefore no real challenge to the General Secretary. Their narrow horizons also meant there was less scope for them to come into conflict with the General Secretary or other members of the leadership. Generally these two types of resources, organizational and expertise, went together. The most common cases of independents were successful prime ministers, with Kosygin and Ryzhkov being good examples; they took an independent line while generally giving support to the respective General Secretary. Other government ministers, and Andropov as Chairman of the KGB, were also suited to this strategy.

Within these three broad strategies, there were a number of specific tactics that oligarchs used in an attempt to limit the leader and protect themselves:

1. The formation of factions has been noted above as a basic strategy, but more limited forms of association could also be used on a less than leadership-wide basis as members sought to coordinate action. Such groupings usually involved a small number of members and were focused on specific and limited aims, often of a policy nature. The understandings between those responsible for particular policy areas (e.g. heavy industry or agriculture) and the CC Secretaries with oversight of those areas is an example of this sort of organization. Another example was the Malenkov–Beria alliance after the war. The principal aim of these was usually to get agreement on policy issues to hopefully prevent those issues from becoming contentious in the leadership and thereby potentially making them exposed to criticism.

However, this sort of activity had its dangers because unless played with discretion, it could arouse the suspicion of the General Secretary. Given the General Secretary's access to a continuing stream of intelligence about the activities of his Politburo and Secretariat colleagues through his special relationship with the security service, the other members of the leadership were concerned not to do anything that might provoke his suspicions. One means of doing this was to minimize contacts that excluded the leader, although paradoxically this may have been less relevant under Stalin because of many of his colleagues' long term close personal associations and because Stalin himself frequently convened such social meetings, so they may have attained a sense of normalcy. The minimization of contact does not mean that oligarchs did not speak outside official meetings; clearly government could not continue without the grease provided to the wheels of administration by informal discussions among individual leaders. But care had always to be taken to try to ensure that this could not be interpreted the wrong way by the General Secretary.

2. For those who are clients of the leader, and therefore have an established, historical working relationship with the leader before his coming to power, continued performance as a client is central. This involves supporting the patron and his policies, especially if they should come under attack from within the leadership. The same imperative applies to those who are allied with the leader; if they wish to keep the alliance intact, they need to work at it by providing the support that the leader demands. This is not always simple. Given that leaders are expected not only to act purely as

politicians but to carry out administrative tasks associated with the positions they hold as well, there may well be times when institutional demands clash with political imperatives and they must choose between fulfilling their administrative responsibilities and supporting the leader. If the leader is secure and a choice of favouring the administrative demands does not appear as a challenge to the leader's position, there may be scope for the subordinate to act as the administrator without calling into question his role as a politician. This would seem to be most evident in the late Stalin period when much of the actual decision-making fell onto the shoulders of Stalin's lieutenants because of his long absences on holiday in the south. However, if actions a subordinate takes may be seen potentially to threaten the position of the leader, the former may suffer as a result, or at the least he may find the decision he made revoked. The winding back of the Kosygin-sponsored economic reforms in the mid-1960s may be seen in this light. Continuing support for the leader is essential, and may be sufficient to keep someone in office even when their competence has been called into question. The way Voroshilov was retained in the leadership circle until 1960 is perhaps an instance of this. So demonstrated loyalty to the leader is one rule subordinates are wise to follow.

The way oligarchs conducted themselves could therefore be important for how they were perceived by the General Secretary. Self-aggrandizement, such as through claiming personal responsibility for collective decisions or the generation of a local personality cult as occurred in some of the Central Asian republics during the Brezhnev period, was the sort of activity likely to raise questions in the mind of the General Secretary. Suspicions of personal ambition on the part of subordinates could lead to action, as in the sacking of Zhukov in 1957 and the sidelining of Podgorny in 1965. In order to avoid this, ostentatious recognition of the General Secretary's authority was a common response, with leaders engaging in exaggerated praise of the General Secretary and his wisdom in party gatherings. This was particularly evident under Stalin, but also occurred under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, while being largely absent throughout most of the Gorbachev period. Similarly the public subservience to the leader, such as that reflected in the claim that Malenkov wrote down whatever Stalin said,¹² was another way of signalling that one accepted the leadership of the particular individual. So too the ostentatious carrying

out of the leader's instructions, or even what has been called in the German context, "working toward the fuhler".¹³ This meant that people did things because they believed that it accorded with the leader's will, a practice that could lead to excesses as people tried to outbid one another in the leader's eyes. This may have been a factor in the actions of middle-ranking officials during the Terror, but it could also apply in elite circles. Members of the leadership sought to demonstrate their devotion to the leader through the pre-emptive and ostentatious meeting of his wishes.

3. Members could emphasize the formal rules and seek to use these as a form of constraint on the leader. The emphasis upon regularized meeting schedules and procedures after Stalin's death is an instance of this.
4. Along with this, members could attempt to use the formal institutions as means of constraining the leader. The use of the CC to remove Khrushchev is the best case of this, but the attempts to regularize the functioning of the Politburo after both 1953 and 1964 are also important. By strengthening the Politburo, they hoped to create an arena within which the leader was forced to interact with his colleagues, to listen to them and to take note of their concerns.

Another way in which the formal institutions could be used was to switch the consideration of issues out of one body and into another. This is where the other non-Politburo jobs performed by Politburo members could become important. If issues could be presented as the sorts of matters that were regularly handled by, for example, a government ministry headed by a Politburo member, they could be depoliticized and resolved without the involvement of the predominant or dominant leader. The capacity to do this depended upon that leader's management style—highly interventionist or hands off—and his ability to realize that style in practice. But given the vast number of issues to be resolved, there were clearly many that escaped his gaze, and it was not impossible that some important measures could be included in them. The shifting of consideration of most economic issues away from party organs and into the government machine during and after the war was a way of limiting Stalin's day-to-day involvement in such issues (he did not participate in government meetings) and thereby giving others scope to act autonomously.

5. The beefing up of informal norms and rules to try to structure political activity in a way that was non-threatening to the participants. Agreements about the balancing of appointments like that apparently reached at the time of the overthrow of Khrushchev is an example of this sort of tactic. So too is the way in which leaders continued to support Mikoyan and Molotov when they were in Stalin's bad books at the end of the 1940s. But the most important of these was an emphasis on collective leadership. This has been a common refrain after each succession but was particularly acute in 1953 and 1964 as the survivors emphasized their commitment to collectivism in an attempt to prevent the drift into one-man dominance/predominance that they had just left behind. This emphasis reflects the way in which the party's historical commitment to collectivism has never been squared with the reality of one-man predominance that has prevailed throughout most of the regime's life. Although there has never been a formal definition of "collective leadership", this has been implicit through the vesting of supreme authority in collective organs (Congress, CC and Politburo) and has been explicitly said to exclude "the cult of personality".¹⁴ Given that the term "cult of personality" was used explicitly to describe Stalin's personal dictatorship and was also directed against Khrushchev, the sort of individual primacy that seemed to be excluded from the notion of collective leadership was that which saw the individual able to override and ignore the will of his collective peers. This means that the Soviet conception of collective leadership does not necessarily mean that all are equal; there can be a predominant leader, but he must act within the constraints his colleagues accept and he must treat them with the respect and deference that they believe they deserve. So by emphasizing collectivism, the subordinate members of the leadership are sending a message that personal dominance will not be accepted. Of course the extent to which they can back this up by preventing personal dominance from emerging will differ from situation to situation—they could not with Stalin but seemingly could with Brezhnev and could only enforce it *ex post facto* with Khrushchev—but simply by making this a prime point of emphasis and by getting all of the oligarchs to sign on to it, they hope it will provide a barrier to the emergence of a dominant leader.

The extent to which this focus on collectivism can be an effective barrier to individual dominance depends upon both the strength of the respective forces within the leadership and the intent of any would-be dictator. In principle, the emergence of a dominant leader must involve a reworking of the terms of the institutionalization of the collective leadership. Even when there was a dominant leader, decisions were issued in the name of the collective. The cult of personality was essentially an attempt to institutionalize personal authority, to establish that authority in the political system was vested in the individual leader, and that the collective gained its authority through association with that leader. In this way, collectivism was not formally rejected even when a dominant leader like Stalin was present. But the way in which the leader cult framed authority transformed collectivism from the dominant principle of legitimation into a conjunctural element of personal rule. This means that, despite the hopes of many of the leadership group, the emphasis upon collectivism was not a powerful buttress against individual dominance because it could easily be subverted by the latter.

6. The signalling of policy dissent, mainly through speeches. This was a very common tactic throughout the whole period, whereby individuals when they came to give an address, might emphasize different parts of an issue or slightly rework the way that issue was discussed. There were very few cases of direct contradiction, at least between 1929 and about 1987, but nuances of meaning could highlight differences over the particular policy under discussion. This sort of activity could be seen as a means of signalling to potential supporters in the CC that there were differences in the leadership and seeking to recruit them to the cause. This could be an important factor in the role the CC could play in the course of policy determination; if critics of the leader's policy could generate sufficient support among CC members during the informal meetings surrounding the CC, they could potentially have an impact on the course of policy. Such speeches could also be a means of signalling to the leader that there was not unanimity among the oligarchy about the particular policy without having to confront him directly.

The traditions of collective leadership and of debate within the leadership constituted a potential threat to members of the elite. How they handled themselves in this context could shape the likelihood of their survival at the top of the Soviet political tree. In principle,

as noted above, dissent was possible as long as it did not appear to challenge the position of the leader, as opposed to policy preferences he may have expressed. As we have seen, on occasions people did disagree with Stalin without suffering severe consequences. Similarly with Gorbachev. What was important was how that disagreement was expressed and on what matter. Disagreement had to take place behind closed doors or if in public or semi-public fora, indirectly and by implication. In part this was to protect the dignity of the leader, but it was also meant to prevent policy conflict from cascading into the open and down the party structure; the anti-fractional decision of 1921 was designed explicitly to combat this. But disagreement was also least unacceptable when it occurred within the narrow confines of the person's particular responsibilities. So, for example, if the CC Secretary for agriculture adopted a position different to the leader on some agricultural issue, it was much less serious than if he had opposed policy in some other area of life, like culture, or opposed the leader on a wide range of issues. The segmentation of responsibilities thus provided a basis from which "acceptable" dissent could emerge. But of course what was acceptable and what was not depended ultimately upon the view of one man, the General Secretary.

7. An established way of restraining the effect of policy decisions at the top was through the white-anting of their implementation at lower levels. Those leaders responsible for institutions involved in the implementation of decisions may soft-pedal the carrying out of decisions, mobilizing their supporters in those institutions to achieve this aim.
8. It was also acceptable within the prevailing norms for members of the leadership to build up and maintain their own institutional power bases as long as these were not used as means to foster conflict over the leadership at the top. Many oligarchs were already in possession of institutional bases when they ascended into the leadership, and most were in that leadership precisely because of the institutional bases they had; the regular presence of the Ukrainian party leader in the Politburo is an instance of this. Such people were not expected to surrender such control upon entering the leadership, and some were even allowed to install clients in their place (a classic example is the way Semichastny followed in the footsteps of Shelepin through the Komsomol and the KGB), but they should not seek to use it politically, or at least against the interests of the

General Secretary. For example, the attack on Podgorny's former power base of Kharkov in 1965 preceding his transfer to the post of Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet was clearly an attempt to weaken his position in the leadership as Brezhnev sought to consolidate his own position. If an oligarch sought to mobilize his client network within the CC to oppose the General Secretary, this would be likely to be seen as a sacking offence. This was because the leadership sought to make itself immune from the sort of CC involvement in elite politics that had been evident in the 1920s, and any attempt to drum up lower level support for one's positions threatened that aim. Thus the norm was to refrain from politicking within the sub-oligarch levels of the party, except of course if this was at the General Secretary's behest, and he was successful.

But these subordinate oligarchs could also seek to safeguard their positions by the elite equivalent of attempting to make themselves invisible. What this involved is doing their jobs to the best of their ability, without fuss and, hopefully, with no major setbacks. Given that all members of the elite had particular jobs to do, be it running government ministries or parts of the party apparatus, if they kept their heads down and there were no major problems arising in their areas of responsibility, the image of competence, or in some cases even technocratic expertise, could act as a protective shell. Providing someone was not a political challenge, it could be that their expertise in managing their particular area of responsibility provided them with some protection. Kosygin was a good instance of this.

9. Common also was the attempt by oligarchs to get around the predominant/dominant leader rather than directly confront him. Towards the end of the Stalin period, we know that leaders used to get together to agree on the framing of issues so that they could present to Stalin an issue framed in a certain way plus a suggested course of action. As a general principle, such a tactic was complicated by the way in which the General Secretary effectively controlled the agenda of Politburo meetings, but Stalin's frequent absences on holiday and his practice of keeping in touch through letters and telephone calls facilitated this approach. It was more difficult under his successors; even when Brezhnev was sick, the tight control exercised by Chernenko over the preparation of Politburo meetings (including the materials to be considered) complicated this strategy. Nevertheless seeking to coordinate their positions and

to present a united front on issues was one way of attempting to limit a leader's power. However, this did have to be done carefully so as not to arouse the leader's suspicion that this was not just a question of the specific policy, but a challenge to his position.

Such tactics are more viable under predominant than dominant leaders. Once a leader has attained the sort of position that Stalin had reached by the late 1930s, the likelihood that these tactics would be successful was lower, but even so they were attempted by his subordinates in an endeavour to retain their positions within the leadership.

As noted above, one of the striking things about Soviet leadership politics has been the absence of crises surrounding the succession. The succession has been relatively smooth in most cases, and even in those when there was sustained leadership tension, 1923–29 and 1953–57, this did not generate a crisis and was not destabilizing. In both cases, leadership manoeuvring was kept within sustainable bounds and did not lead to either policy paralysis or regime stasis. Despite the arguments of many scholars, succession crisis has not been the norm. Nor has there been a history of major challenges to the position of the General Secretary; only Khrushchev faced such a challenge (on two occasions), while the failure of Gorbachev was less one of removal by internal coup than of developments outside the elite (albeit promoted from within the oligarchy by Gorbachev himself). An important factor in this was recognition of the principle that the General Secretary had been put in office to do a job and he should be allowed to do that job. This belief was effectively a norm of elite party life, reflecting the way in which the authority of the office invested in the incumbent the authority to act in the name of them all (within limits). There was an acceptance that the General Secretary had rights and responsibilities, and that these should not be revoked except in the most extreme circumstances, like those of Khrushchev in the 1960s.

This principle would apply in normal circumstances, but what about when the situation was not "normal"? In the second half of the 1930s, with the Terror wracking the society, why did no oligarch seek to remove, or even kill, Stalin? After all, most authoritarian leaders are removed by people from within their own entourage rather than the populace at large, and many of the oligarchs would appear to have had good reason to consider such a move given the personal uncertainty generated by the Terror. Many dictators who unleash mass violence had to face attempts on their lives, but as far as we know, no such attempts were

made on Stalin.¹⁵ Assassination attempts on leaders had occurred in the Soviet past: Lenin had been shot in August 1918¹⁶ and Kirov's death in December 1934 were the two most prominent, but there seems to have been no attempt on Stalin. One reason is fear and the role of the security services in protecting him. With the protection of leaders beefed up following the Kirov killing and the close relationship between the General Secretary and head of the security service, the planning and execution of such an action would not have been easy. Under such circumstances, keeping any plot secret was one issue, while the uncertainties of the collective action problem (how can one be certain that one of the plotters is not going to forewarn the intended victim in order to save himself and thereby condemn the others?) was another major concern. And even if a plot had been successful and Stalin had been killed, it was by no means certain that others in the party and the security services would accept this as a *fait accompli* and not see those plotters as criminals. So the logistics of mounting such an action were significant in the context of widespread security surveillance. But also important was the elite's attitude to Stalin. Despite concerns about collectivization and some other aspects of policy in the early 1930s, Stalin was seen as the one who had driven through the changes that had the Soviet Union marching strongly toward communism. The successes of the regime had been associated with his name, and this vested in him a certain authority which may have encouraged any would-be plotters to stay their hands. In this way, there were not just logistical barriers to any move against Stalin, but ideological ones as well.

What all of this means is that while the Soviet collective leadership may appear to have lacked a high level of formal institutionalization, there were both formal and informal norms that structured elite relations and thereby imposed some limits on the fluidity of politics. The formal norms remained relatively stable throughout the life of the Soviet regime while the informal norms fluctuated over time.

FORMAL NORMS

The formal norms were for the most part embedded in the party's basic constitutional principles found in the Rules, supplemented by decisions made by the leading party organs. A number of editions of the Rules were introduced over the life of the regime,¹⁷ but the formal norms relating to the elite party organs remained substantially unchanged. The principal such norms were:

- (a) The principle of democratic centralism was meant to inject a democratic procedure into the decision-making process, but the way it worked in practice was that it consolidated the power of the leadership to make decisions and impelled the rest of the party to follow those decisions without dissent. This was the basis for the high levels of centralization within the party.
- (b) Leadership should be collective, with this defined principally in terms of the vesting of leadership functions in collective bodies.
- (c) Sovereignty was vested in the Congress, between congresses the Central Committee, and between CC plena, the Politburo. The Politburo was responsible to the CC and the CC to the Congress.
- (d) Regulations existed governing the regularity and frequency of congresses and plena. No such regulation existed for the Politburo, but the convention throughout much of the life of the regime was weekly meetings. The same applied to the Secretariat (and before 1952 the Orgburo).
- (e) There were procedures specified for the preparation of Politburo meetings, emphasizing the role of the Secretariat in preparing documentation and organizing the actual meetings.
- (f) The Politburo was led (but for much of the period not chaired) by the General Secretary who, along with the other CC Secretaries, also led the Secretariat.
- (g) There was a hierarchy in the leadership: senior secretaries, full members of the Politburo, secretaries not in the Politburo probably best seen as equal with candidate members of the Politburo, and CC department heads; at the apex was the General Secretary. He had broad responsibilities ranging across the whole field while everyone else had more narrow functional responsibilities. His authority was therefore greater than that of the others.
- (h) Membership of these elite bodies was by co-option with the General Secretary having primary but not sole responsibility for this. Such a mode of filling high office was the apex of the nomenklatura structure whereby responsible positions throughout the political system were filled by appointment, with this power being focused in the Secretariat and the hierarchy of secretaries throughout the party, at the top of which was the General Secretary.
- (i) Fractions were forbidden. This principle was generally deployed to prevent the mobilization of supporters in the CC and throughout the party into political divisions within the oligarchy, although it was

also applied to groups in the leadership lacking any organized lower level support.¹⁸ It was a mechanism both for containing conflict within the oligarchy as well as a means of stabilizing that oligarchy.

- (j) Politics remained a civilian affair. The military was never an autonomous actor in elite affairs (although it was mobilized to arrest Beria and to help defeat the anti-party group) while the security service was directly important only under late Stalin and more indirectly so at other times. The men with guns remained out of politics.
- (k) Political office could not be inherited, but the material advantages that accrued as a result of holding high office could be passed on to one's heirs.¹⁹ Until about the middle of the Brezhnev period in the early to mid-1970s, while it was acceptable for responsible officials to enjoy material living standards and perks of office unavailable to others (indeed, the nomenklatura system routinized this from the 1920s²⁰), such enjoyment had to be muted and behind closed doors. The ostentatious display of privilege was prohibited, and it was only under Brezhnev that this prohibition was relaxed. That this infringement of the norm was opposed, at least in some quarters, is reflected in the anti-corruption campaign launched by Andropov in the last years of Brezhnev's rule. The enjoyment of elite personal privilege was acceptable as long as it was private.

These formal norms, or rules, were meant to have normative authority. This means that they were meant to be mandatory, that political actors were obliged to follow them and that they could thereby structure and constrain those actors. Such authority fluctuated over the life of the regime; some were operative far more than others. Nevertheless, their very existence was an important factor in the structuring of elite politics during the Soviet period.

INFORMAL NORMS

Informal norms relate to the practices that emerged to structure oligarch politics. In one sense they may be seen as strategies for political success. But in another, they may be seen as rules of behaviour. However, if the formal norms may be seen as normative rules, the informal norms may be seen as prudential rules. These are the principles and practices followed by members of the elite in their quest to survive and prosper in the leadership. There were a number of overarching prudential rules:

- (a) Establishment of a stable, and preferably supportive, relationship with the General Secretary.
- (b) Acknowledgement of the leadership role of the General Secretary and accordingly recognition of a limited right to act autonomously.
- (c) Effective administration of the area of one's responsibility.
- (d) Advocacy of policy positions in one's area of responsibility.
- (e) Consolidation of one's position through the appointment of supporters to responsible positions within one's area of responsibility.
- (f) Conduct oneself in a way that did not project the person in a fashion that may appear threatening to the General Secretary.

The working out of these prudential rules in practice through the strategies and tactics outlined above involved the operation of informal norms. Those norms varied depending upon the type of collective leadership.²¹

Predominant Leader and the Collective I

During this initial 1917–22 period, norms for the structuring of political life were only just emerging, and there remained significant fluidity in their application. Institutional fluidity was particularly marked, although as the period wore on power was increasingly becoming concentrated in the leading party organs at the expense of state bodies. But even then the institutions had weak normative authority; they were much more arenas within which leading political figures played out their politics than bodies that closely structured the course of political life by imposing normative constraints upon it. The growth of the practice of manipulating election procedures to achieve a particular profile in the CC is indicative of the weakness of the institution's normative authority. The reverse side of this was the personalization of politics, reflected most clearly in the predominance of Lenin. His position rested on his authority stemming from his strong personality and his history in the movement, such that both elite and rank-and-file, even though they might disagree with him, were generally amenable to being persuaded around to his point of view. Such policy victories were based on argument and the generation of support both through that argument and manipulation of personnel, not fiat. This was in a context where elite factions had not yet crystallized and where the open discussion of questions within the party was the norm. This principle of open discussion rested on the acceptance that

opposition was normal in party life, that party Congress and CC were appropriate venues for the resolution of policy questions, but that debate should be kept within the bounds of the party. However, these norms around discussion, debate and opposition were undergoing change as the demands for party unity strengthened, a sense of elite identity separate from the rank-and-file developed, and the way that political conflict tended to pit the oligarchs in the elite against opposition based in the lower ranks of the party, all contributed to growing centralization and reduction of room for opposition forces. But this trend does not gainsay the fact that the norms in this period remained very flexible. The principal informal norms during this period were:

- (a) Weak institutional norms were associated with a high level of personalization of politics reflected in the predominance of Lenin.
- (b) The predominant leader sought to work through the emergent institutions and was usually victorious.
- (c) The Congress and CC had important roles to play in discussion of policy.
- (d) Organizational manipulation for partisan advantage was acceptable.
- (e) The open discussion of policy questions in the party was generally acceptable.
- (f) Opposition to individual policies was acceptable, opposition to the regime was not.
- (g) Debate was to be restricted to the party.
- (h) There were no stable factions within the oligarchy, but a looser whirlpool of oligarchs within which there were established associations and friendships that fed into the structuring of political life.
- (i) Bureaucratic politics, with individual oligarchs representing “their” institutions’ interests in leading circles, was acceptable.
- (j) The oligarchs were developing an identity separate from the rank-and-file, although the latter’s role in policy discussion was still accepted.
- (k) Growing emphasis on unity and discipline was accompanied by measures designed to limit rank-and-file involvement in conflict among the oligarchs.

Pure Oligarchy

The only period of pure oligarchy (the initial years of the Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods could be seen as cases of pure oligarchy, but these were soon transformed into cases of a predominant leader) occurred in the 1920s, between the two predominant leaders, Lenin and Stalin. Despite the absence of a predominant leader, politics remained personalized in the sense that although elite political institutions became more regularized in their procedures, the imperative of factional conflict increasingly turned these bodies into political weapons rather than deliberative organs. The transformation of the Congress and CC from venues for discussion into weapons of condemnation was well under way, the use of the personnel appointment mechanism and the organizational power vested mainly in the Secretariat for factional ends became well-established, and discussion in the Politburo was shaped by factional considerations. The oligarchy was riven by factional conflict, and in practice this was extended into the party as a whole, although this was increasingly cast as being illegitimate (at least when conducted by the losers in the factional conflict) the longer the period wore on. Similarly factions increasingly came to be seen as illegitimate, but again only insofar as it related to the losers; the winners did not constitute a faction but “the leadership” while the losers were factionalists. This was part of the growth of the sentiment that intra-party opposition was no longer acceptable, a hardening of attitude that accompanied the application of significant sanctions to opponents, although these did not yet generally include incarceration or death. The strong emphasis on unity also saw the entry of the security services into the factional conflict, mobilized on a limited basis by the Stalin group against the opposition. Factional conflict was the driver of a high level of elite turnover, with the character of the elite shifting from party notables who had played significant roles in the movement’s history in the direction of newer members for whom immediate political links of clientage and support were more important. It also propelled “Leninism” into the position of touchstone of orthodoxy, and highlighted the way that policy and policy differences were a key element in elite politics. The informal norms emerging at this time were:

- (a) Party institutions could be used for personal/factional ends, a practice that undercut the development of powerful institutional norms and rested upon organizational power and manipulation. This applied to both the legislative and organizational wings of the party.

- (b) Although factions focused on the question of leadership were the chief structuring devices of oligarch politics, they were becoming increasingly less acceptable, and their perceived formation was used as a weapon against successive opposition groups.
- (c) Factions must not turn into fractions, although this was acceptable for “the leadership” but not for “the opposition”.
- (d) Opposition became no longer acceptable.
- (e) The acceptance of open policy debate became increasingly narrowed as the period wore on, and by the end of the period the Congress and CC as collective bodies had lost any meaningful role in policy determination.
- (f) Policy questions remained important issues of division, as did the sometimes reinforcing and sometimes cross-cutting conflicts arising from bureaucratic interest. And these conflicts became linked with the leadership question.
- (g) The security services could be mobilized into factional conflict, although this would be judged acceptable only when done by “the leadership”.
- (h) A distinguished career in and contributions to the party was neither a defence against being accused of misdemeanours nor a guarantee of continued presence among the party oligarchs.
- (i) Further consolidation of the division between elite and lower ranks as the latter were increasingly seen as potential weapons to be used in elite conflict rather than partners in policy discussion.
- (j) Unity and obedience to the centre were becoming the overwhelming imperative of party life.
- (k) A party orthodoxy emerged in the form of the developing notion of “Leninism”.

Predominant Leader and the Collective 2

The period in which Stalin was predominant leader (1930–34) saw a strengthening of the personalization of politics, reflected most clearly in the decline in the formal institutions and their partial replacement by unofficial forms of organization based on Stalin—personal meetings and his personal secretariat. While both Politburo and CC were being sidelined as major decision-making organs, both remained arenas within which individual oligarchs fought out conflicts based upon the

institutional interests they represented. This bureaucratic conflict could lead to the emergence of faction-like groupings, but in contrast to the factions of the 1920s, their interests were more focused, they did not compete over the leadership, and Stalin generally stood above them. The institutions upon which these rested gave individual oligarchs a basis from which they could exercise a degree of autonomy, especially within their own spheres of policy responsibility. As the period wore on, such action became increasingly hostage to Stalin's will, in that by the end he could override their decisions if he wished, but this did not prevent them from disagreeing with him if they believed it necessary. So policy remained an important aspect of oligarch affairs, but much of this was no longer the subject of open debate within the party; it was increasingly concentrated within the oligarchy. Certainly, the CC was the venue for the discussion of some policy issues, but increasingly this body's role as a disciplinary weapon against opposition was coming to overshadow its other functions. Opposition was no longer accepted as the demand for total adherence to the party line became firmly established. And increasingly that party line was coming to be expressed through the narrative of the building Stalin cult. The informal norms that were significant in this period were:

- (a) A further weakening of institutional norms in association with the rise of the predominant leader's power. Informal groups begin to supplant rather than complement official bodies.
- (b) Organizational manipulation for partisan ends remained acceptable.
- (c) Disagreement among oligarchs, and faction-like association, was acceptable when concentrated on issues of bureaucratic politics, which remained a feature of elite life, but organization was unacceptable on questions related to the leadership.
- (d) Oligarchs had some autonomy based upon their role as institutional representatives of bureaucratic hierarchies.
- (e) Opposition was not acceptable, and there was to be no attempt to mobilize opinion among the lower ranks of the party into oligarch discussion.
- (f) No open policy debate was allowed and therefore there was no effective role for lower level institutions in policy discussion.
- (g) Total adherence to the party line, increasingly coming to be expressed through the leader cult, which was becoming the chief narrative of legitimation. Unity and discipline were central.

- (h) Policy remained an important oligarch focus, but this was becoming disarticulated from the question of leadership.
- (i) The security services could be used to enforce party discipline.

Dominant Leader and the Collective

In the dominant leader collective system (1935–53), politics was structured around the preferences and idiosyncrasies of the leader. While the individual oligarchs retained significant autonomy stemming from their institutional posts and they decided many questions both individually and collectively, especially while Stalin was out of Moscow and particularly towards the end of this period, the leader could decide any issue he liked and could overturn decisions taken by his colleagues. Institutional prerogatives and boundaries meant little; it was the personal relations within the elite and in particular with Stalin that was central in structuring political life. The formal institutions of rule ceased to play a major part in the political process, losing their capacity to function as effective organizations. They did not meet regularly and lacked institutional integrity and coherence, although this judgement applies less to the functioning of the Secretarial apparatus than to the Politburo. Decision-making was oriented around the idiosyncrasies of the leader rather than the institutional demands of the structure, and other members of the elite had to fit into this. But during this time, individual oligarchs often felt vulnerable and under threat, during the 1930s by the Terror and in the post-war period as a result of both the campaigns that were mounted at that time and the leader's increasingly suspicious nature. They knew their continued tenure of office, even their lives, were dependent upon the will of the leader. This meant that although they could adopt contrary positions to the leader on particular issues, if they were challenged they would give way, and they sought to ensure that such differences could not be cast as a challenge to power. There could be no questioning of the leader's authority. There were rivalries among the oligarchs both over policy and, especially after the war, power as some tried to position themselves to succeed Stalin, but without seeming to pose a threat to him. Crucially under the dominant leader, his subordinates sought to act in ways that would not arouse his suspicions. This involved narrow concentration on areas of personal responsibility, the curbing of enthusiasm for personal initiatives, and the ostentatious participation in the promotion of the cult of the leader. Public subservience was extreme, reflecting the greater threat levels that applied to the oligarchs at this time. Thus leadership remained collective under the dominant leader,

but the prudential rules counselled a much more careful carrying out of one's tasks than applied at other times. The Terror had transformed the nature of oligarch politics. Informal norms from this period were:

- (a) The leader could decide whatever issues he wished.
- (b) In practice, the oligarchs had significant autonomy in the conduct of bureaucratic conflicts, but their decisions were always subject to the will of the leader. They could promote their views until they reached the limit of his tolerance.
- (c) Institutional structures lacked integrity and coherence, being superseded by the informal structures that suited the leader's preferences. Personalism was more important than institutional rules.
- (d) Organizational manipulation remained acceptable.
- (e) Personal relations with the leader was the chief currency of oligarch life.
- (f) It was imperative not to arouse the leader's suspicion.
- (g) Death was a possible consequence of perceived oppositional activity.
- (h) Opposition was unacceptable; narrow, technical differences with the leader were possible as long as they did not challenge his authority.
- (i) Policy remained an important issue of elite concern, with bureaucratic politics continuing as an axis of oligarch difference.
- (j) The most appropriate frames for the casting of policy were that the regime was under attack by internal and external enemies, and the leader cult. This fed into the continuing emphasis on unity.
- (k) Conflict within the oligarchy should be conducted in such a way as not to provoke intervention by the leader. Safest was narrow debate over institutional interests and prerogatives.
- (l) There were no clear factions, at least until very late in the post-war period, but there was bureaucratic politics and individuals did get together in informal groups.

Predominant Leader and the Collective 3

The 1953–64 period saw the emergence of a predominant leader despite the attempt by the oligarchs to strengthen the norms of pure collective leadership. This development saw the leading organs of the party initially develop greater institutional integrity, reflected in meeting schedules and role in decision-making, and then the erosion of this as the leader's

personal power increased. The rejection of terror created a freer political atmosphere and greater oligarch security, reduced the consequences of failed political opposition, and expanded opportunities for horizontal networking that facilitated conspiracy. The result was two major plots against the leader. In the playing out of these plots, the CC had a major role, with its decision in both cases reflecting its members' responses to the leader's policies. In the first case, Khrushchev had appeared as the protector of their interests and they supported him, in the second as the attacker of those interests and they opposed him. Policy was therefore central to elite politics at this time. But this also showed the frailty of support based solely on appointment; where this was not reinforced by the leader's continuing support for their interests, they were likely to desert him if a better prospect arose. The informal norms of this period were:

- (a) Initial strengthening of institutional norms was counteracted when the leader sought to supersede the principles of collective leadership and override or ignore the formal institutions and the other oligarchs. The leader sought to exercise power over both elite and institutions.
- (b) Opposition remained formally unacceptable, but in practice differences did emerge among the oligarchs, but they tended to be expressed indirectly rather than openly.
- (c) Factional divisions developed within the oligarchy, but did not extend organizationally into the party as a whole.
- (d) Bureaucratic politics was the source of constant division as well as providing a basis for oligarch autonomy.
- (e) Fractions were not allowed, but individual oligarchs did mobilize party officials at levels below the elite, especially in the CC, in order to help shape elite politics and policy debate.
- (f) Personnel appointment was important, but for continuing power consolidation, this had to be reinforced by servicing the interests of the clients.
- (g) Terror was rejected and the level of fear within the oligarchy dropped, but the security services continued to be a factor in decisive episodes, although not as a primary actor.
- (h) Policy remained important as a factor both dividing oligarchs and as a means of mobilizing lower level support.
- (i) "Leninism" was emphasized as a mode of legitimation, with its attempted decoupling from Stalin and his legacy.

Predominant Leader and the Collective 4

The Brezhnev period (1964–82) saw a predominant leader seemingly content to remain within the collective and to operate through it. Brezhnev's modus operandi was to work within the collective leadership and not to challenge the rights and prerogatives of his leadership colleagues, but to guarantee them security of tenure and a relative absence of pressure to perform. He functioned through the regular political institutions, which worked with greater regularity than they had at any time in Soviet history, and sought to work with his colleagues through the construction of a consensus rather than striking out on his own and calling upon them to follow. The leader was assiduous in seeking to include members of the CC (and therefore the wider party secretariat) in the policy process, massaging their egos and presenting himself as the defender of their interests, thereby heading off the sort of discontent that had been fatal to his predecessor. His colleagues enjoyed substantial autonomy both in a policy and a political sense, while bureaucratic conflicts were generally worked out through compromise and regular political channels; policy questions remained central to political life, but were not divisive, were not fought out in the public arena, and seem to have been decoupled from the question of leadership (at least after 1968). This was the collective acting in a way that gave some of its members virtually an effective veto over decisions, and which enabled many of them to enjoy the fruits of high office in a relatively uninhibited fashion. In response, they supported the leader both in public and private, and even though most were not considered his clients, his position from the late 1960s was not under threat. Personnel questions remained important, but in contrast to earlier periods, were used to stabilize the collective rather than to undermine it. Despite the leader's predominance, collective leadership was maintained and worked, even if it was at the cost of policy drift. The informal norms that applied were:

- (a) There were strengthened institutional norms, most importantly collective leadership, which operated on the basis of a broad consensus within which significant figures other than the leader retained an effective veto on some issues.
- (b) The personnel appointment mechanism was used to stabilize collective leadership by ensuring a continued broad balance within the oligarchy.

- (c) Factions existed, but they acted within the elite consensus.
- (d) Policy remained central, but it was generally incremental and not allowed to upset the elite consensus.
- (e) Oligarchs retained significant autonomy, especially in the areas defined by their bureaucratic constituencies.
- (f) Opposition remained illegal; differences within the elite were either resolved through regular processes or were sidelined so they did not upset the leadership balance.
- (g) No open conflict within the elite, although bureaucratically-based differences did occur. Major discussion remained behind closed doors.
- (h) The leader's primacy was acknowledged, as long as he did not seek to push his power too far.
- (i) Institutions generally operated on the basis of their rules rather than personal idiosyncrasy; they were more regular and routine.
- (j) CC members were brought into the leadership environment, principally through the efforts of the leader in seeking their views.
- (k) Political actors should be treated with respect.

Predominant Leader and the Collective 5

In the final period of predominant leadership (1985–91), Gorbachev sought to lead his colleagues on an increasingly radical course of systemic change. By seeking to work through consensus, which in his view meant persuading his colleagues of the rightness of the policies he favoured, by retaining people within the leadership who opposed what he was seeking to achieve, and by continually fostering the radicalization of the agenda, Gorbachev shaped the contours of collective leadership and ensured that it remained continually fractious. Despite the opposition of many of the oligarchs to the leader's policies, they did not move against him until mid-1991. They accepted the authority of the position of General Secretary and the norm of party unity, and all continued to work through the regularly functioning elite party organs, at least until they were dismantled in 1989–90. Even with the heightened threat confronting party officials as a result of the radicalization of policy, they mainly continued to work through party organizations. However, the coalition arrangement within the oligarchy fell apart as policy became more radical and the established institutions and processes became sidelined.

Collective leadership disappeared, and nothing could be put in its place before the system as a whole was superseded. The informal norms operating at this time were:

- (a) The leader sought to lead through the construction of an elite consensus, but this was continually placed under strain by the radicalization of policy.
- (b) Institutional norms remained strong, with elite institutions operating regularly until they were recast and effectively dismantled in their existing form in 1989–90.
- (c) The importance of control over the personnel appointment mechanism was blunted by the effect of the radicalization of policy.
- (d) The CC and its members and the Congress/Conference played important roles as vehicles for discussion and debate.
- (e) Widespread acceptance of the authority of the office of General Secretary, but less acceptance of the personal authority of the incumbent.
- (f) Oligarch autonomy expanded over the period.
- (g) Policy questions shaped oligarch politics, resulting in conflict that increasingly entered the public realm as the period wore on. Bureaucratic politics remained significant, although it was ultimately superseded by the issue of regime survival.
- (h) Discussion became open and free, both within and outside the party, and thereby ultimately escaped central control.
- (i) Prohibition on opposition disappeared.
- (j) Factions existed, and generally stayed within the established norms until 1991.
- (k) Unity and discipline were redefined to mean no splitting of the party rather than obedience to the leadership.
- (l) Collective leadership became overwhelmed by the mobilization of political forces in the society at large.

Along with the formal norms, the informal norms structured elite life, working in different ways under different patterns of collective leadership. But there was significant continuity in those norms across all patterns of leadership. At all times policy, and differences over policy, remained central to the dynamics of oligarchic politics. How those differences were worked out—open conflict that spilled over into the party at large, behind closed doors among the oligarchs, with or without the involvement of the

leader—differed from period to period (as well as within periods), but one essential source of those differences remained. This was the rooting of individual oligarchs' positions in different bureaucratic hierarchies, which gave them both an institutional base and a set of interests to represent. Inevitably this built conflict into the oligarch dynamic, over and above issues related to power or the succession. This means that at all times, the leadership was collective in nature; what differed was the role particular dominant or predominant leaders played. But in any event, the leadership was not a continual war of all against all and did not take place in the absence of rules. Leadership was as much cooperative as it was conflictual with those episodes of extreme conflict few and far between, even if one was instrumental in the collapse of the system as a whole. Violence was not a continuing feature of oligarch politics, personal ambition did not run uninhibited and drive politics, and that politics was not inherently antagonistic. Because there were some rules, the system was remarkably stable, and this constitutes a lesson for all authoritarian regimes.

NOTES

1. Rigby (1989), p. 5.
2. On Stalin using the Politburo as a means of control over and manipulation of his colleagues, see Gorlizki (2001), p. 297.
3. For example, see Brownlee (2007).
4. Although of course their rise may have been facilitated by the support of another leader acting as patron.
5. This is consistent with Archie Brown's point that the General Secretary's power over his colleagues has grown the longer he has remained in office. Brown (1980), p. 136.
6. Gill and Pitty (1997).
7. Kosygin was one instance where demotion proved not to be fatal to future career prospects.
8. The position was not mentioned in the party's Rules until 1966 when it was declared that the General Secretary was elected by the CC. In practice, he was recommended by the Politburo and confirmed by the CC.
9. The classic statement remains Weber (1978), vol. 1, pp. 241–255 and vol. 2, pp. 1111–1158.
10. For the argument that the cult was in part a way of appealing to lower level officials, see Gill (1980).
11. For an argument that the decline in popular support can be a factor in the overthrow of so-called "patronal presidents" in the post-Soviet world, see Hale (2015).

12. See Mikoyan (2014), p. 633.
13. See Ascherson (2016). This is a review of Ullrich (2016). It is discussed at length in Kershaw (1998), vol. 1, ch. 13. For the argument that this did not occur but rather lower leaders played a “cat and mouse” game (circumventions, prevarications, concealment), see Kotkin (2017), p. 587. In practice both occurred; an official seeking to rely on only one strategy was very unwise.
14. For example, see the Rules adopted in 1961. “Ustav”, XXII s’ezd (1962), vol. 3, p. 345.
15. For a report that in October 1932 someone (not a member of the elite) had intended to assassinate Stalin but was unable to do so because of Stalin’s bodyguards, see Baberowski, p. 464, n. 25.
16. Head of the Petrograd Cheka, Moisei Uritskii, was killed on the same day.
17. All editions, with the exception of those introduced in 1990, are translated in Gill (1988).
18. It was explicitly referred to in the condemnation of the anti-party group in 1957 even though they were not accused of seeking to mobilize lower level support. “Ob antipartiinnoi gruppe”, KPSS v rez (1986), vol. 9, p. 188.
19. For Molotov’s comment that they became used to privilege, see Chuev (1991), p. 315. On Stalin’s dislike of privilege, see Getty (2013), p. 47.
20. On the nomenklatura and privilege, see Voslenskii (1985) and Matthews (1978).
21. This is recognized in the only study that sets out explicitly to identify such rules, albeit without acknowledging the normative/prudential dimension elaborated here. Rigby (1984), pp. 39–42.

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