GQ CSAC Monographs 14

Rower and Institutional Change

Post-Communist Eastern Europe

Edited by Birgit Müller

Centre for Social Anthropology and Computing University of Kent at Canterbury 1999

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5. Changes in the Local Power Structures In the Period of Society Transformation (St.Petersburg Case)¹

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The first free Russian local elections in 1990 pushed new persons to prove Power structures began to change and local elites were renewed the process differed in Leningrad/Petersburg from other regions of the many That is why the composition of the elite and its transformation make the ones shown in publications of researchers? working on discretions.

A positional approach was applied for identifying the elite³. It have elite membership by the status positions occupied. Our study has board chairmen and deputy chairmen of commissions and committees. I City Soviet (Lensovet or City Council) and City Administration of southive Committee and Mayor's Office). 50 in-depth interviews with the city were depth and many six of the dather was carried out.

After the first free local elections in 1990 the former Soviet system (local governance began to change, I would like to emphasize some toocurions of this transmutation.

that dimension: Balance of power.

Die balance of different power structures was changed through demotion fransformation. There were two power structures at all levels – an
the film a city belonged to the City Soviet (City Council) which formed
to be cutive Committee and determined many aspects of city life. This
femal position corresponded to the bolshevist slogan during the Octoto Prevolution 'All power to the Soviets!' The Communist Party could
theory only influence upon the activities of the Soviet through its
subcrs in the Soviet bodies.

The real power pyramid was another. The Communist party regional mountee was at the top and the Soviet was at the bottom. The Execu-

tive Committee of the party governed in fact the Soviet and the city. In the 1980-s, compared with the times of classical communist monocratic rule it is possible to say that dualism emerged. This change was connected with the development of the different interest groups that started to use various channels of influence.

When the opposition came to power it did so with the slogan 'All power to the Soviets!'. This also meant to struggle against the power connected with the Communist Party city administration. There were four stages of reconstructing the power structure in St Petersburg.

The *first one* (from April 1990 to September 1991) was a shift from Soviet and Communist party dualism to the old formal monocratic system without the Communist party 'Return to the Constitution' was the main motif of political rhetoric in this period. The Regional Committee of the Communist Party was forced out of official polity and its role in decision making processes was sharply reduced. But it remained a powerful shadow political actor. Characteristically, when US Ambassador J. Matlock was leaving Russia, he made a farewell visit to the first Secretary of Leningrad CPSU Regional Committee B.V. Gidaspov (Samoylis 1991:1).

That is why I would like to call this situation a dualism with dominance of the City Soviet or *Soviet dualism*⁵. But the City Soviet as the image and symbol of the democratic unity in the struggle against communist rule had internal sources of contradiction and conflict. It was connected with the idea of the all-mighty Soviets that englobed representative and executive functions.

In the *second stage* mayorship was established and two months later the Communist Party was banned as a result of the coup attempted in August 1991. A Sobchak, chairman of the City council, was elected in June 1991 as the first mayor of St.Petersburg. The mayor was elected by the city population and his duty was to be the chief executive official of the city. The main slogan in this period was 'From Soviet system to Democracy!' The democratic principle of local power was associated with a division of powers. But this division turned into confrontation. Although the struggle for institutional power was waged under the slogan 'The Separation of Powers', with all sides declaring to be anxious merely to ensure that power was not monopolized, both fighting sides – representative and executive bodies – were actually insisting that they should control policy-making.

Leating law could not regulate the new power relations that had many gold and the situation became complicated. One of the former character of the City Council commission wrote: 'The Creation of new legal ton, was subordinated to the rapid introduction of the separation of the activity of the local authority.' (Belkin 1993:79)

A fight between City Council and Mayor's Office for competence maximal two main issues: 1) the control over the municipal property; and 'the right of nominations. In this struggle reciprocal cancellations, and institutions were prevailing. For instance in 1992 more that to find the City Council resolutions were such cancellations.

In mass media members of the new power elite harshly criticized and megative appraisal of the activities of their opponents, 75% of the equition judged the activity of the bureaucrats as negative, and vice to the bureaucrats had a similarly negative judgement of the deputies

The life-and-death struggle between representative and executive t do all led to the dissolution of the city council. (This process was correspond with a similar one in the federal level and the end of the city Soviet one of the results of the coup d'etat in October 1993.) All this hap-to-ol under the slogan 'Victory of Democracy'.

The *third stage* can be characterized as civil monocratic. Nearly a partial the elimination of the city council, the mayor and his office to the only official political actors in St Petersburg.

The forth one has begun with the election of the new city representa-

Second dimension: Change in Personnel.

two was change in personnel in the city authority; new persons came two It is possible to distinguish two periods

In the *first one* as a result of the election: 90 former challengers in members of the polity. Many communists and Soviet bureautout lost their posts. Former personal power networks disappeared that changes were a consequence of democratic cleansing and of volving exodus. But these revolutionary changes had their natural limits problem of competence appeared. In the face of it, the presidium of the council (as, of course, the whole deputy corps) seems to posses a mitellectual capability (for detailed discussion see Protasenko

1992) At the same time, it was not sufficiently prepared to exercise its political functions (with a great deal of willingness shown before). Even on the verge of elections most of the prospective deputes had little knowledge of their titure responsibilities. Moreover, that not been depend on their involvement with political life in the city before the elections. The democratic election bloc had no program of actions they intended to realise in the case of coming to power. A Leningrad Popular Front leader who took no part in the elections described the situation in the Front leadership as follows: 'The consequences of obtaining the majority in Petrosovet [Petersburg city council = Lensovet] have not been discussed or expected. The inability to handle urban community problems were all too evident. There has been a hysterical fear of winning. The question of readiness has not been raised. The focus has only been on running away.' So the city has been faced with incompetence.

By the end of 1990 there was a shift in the democratic-bloc leadership in the city Soviet. The challenging style seeking confrontation of the first stage of the new city council activity no longer corresponded to the necessity of more routine in politics. The leaders of social movements, who had determined to a great extent the character of Lensovet's actions, were gradually replaced by less political-minded deputies – the 'professionals'. While formally the leadership in the city council was not altered, the role and significance of various deputies in decision-making changed. This victory of 'profies' called for a question of principle: can the ideologists (or revolutionaries/ideological idealists) keep themselves in the saddle? And then – who becomes the new elite in Soviet crisis society: those who have seized power and destroyed communist rule – the ideology oriented challengers with their negative attitudes towards the existing system or the coming second wave of moderate persons.

The *second period* connected with the creation of mayorship is characterized by the increasing role of former *nomenklatura* in the city administration.

The first step for the newly elected mayor in reorganizing the executive branch of the city was to put in place a team of trustworthy and competent administrators. Permanent conflicts between Sobchak and the City council, however, and his inability to work with the majority of the deputies in the Soviet excluded them as a possible source for recruitments. Another problem was the incompetence of the former challengers (see above). The mayor therefore turned to many of the administrators who had worked in the previous Communist nomenklatura.

He named the president of the Union of Associations of Leningrad Laterprises who was the general director of the largest electronic enterpose and also a member of the Regional Committee of the Communist Lory as chairman of the key committees in the Mayor's Office. (Later the person – G. Hizha – became the vice-premier of the Russian government.) The appointment of this nomenklatura insider to such an important post particularly upset observers critical of Sobehak, and it became monor to point out the continuity in personnel from the Communist of the Sobehak's new administration. Sobehak defended his appointee as real professional' who had the skills necessary for running the city on departments of the former Communist Party Regional Committee in inducted to the City Administration. Also the building of the CPRC as occupied by the new city administration. Former KGB structures are sources of fresh blood for the executive body too.

third dimension: Elite recruitment.

Die system of elite recruitment changed. The old clite was selectived by continent from above. On some occasions eligibles were even forced to the position in the City Council or the Executive Committee to the Communist Party Regional Committee and their will was not to the into consideration. In this sense it can be called recruitment by comption (Seligman 1961).

the old representative city elite was recruited from different social and professional strata according to the nomenklatura principle under the close scrutiny of the Communist party that intended to control the reposition of council bodies, its spheres of activity and the representation of classes. The convocation of the Leningrad City Council differed a fully from the routine Soviet pattern. Something resembling alternating was performed. But in general the recruitment did not change principle.

There was a specific procedure for the *confirmation* of appointments to the chairmen. First of all the city party committee selected canditive. Then these had to be confirmed by the City Executive Committee. In this step was the elections in the City Soviet session.

Continuity as the principle of the Soviet system was very important, a crude future chairmen had to be ordinary deputies and members of more sious and then when they were recognized they could become a minute.

The permanent Commissions of the City Council were constituted usually from two groups, representing *proportionally* experts and authorities (50:50). From one side, such composition provided competent observation of the questions under consideration. On the other side it gave the possibility to take the decisions, that could be implemented. As an obligatory condition, continuity in the composition of the Commissions was ensured.

There were four types of Chairmen of permanent commissions of the city council.

- 1. Politicians by vocation. They were Communist party top officials. They had to control the most important commissions. For instance, the very important Mandate commission with controlling functions had to be headed by the CP boss of the large industrial city district. Also five commissions were run by communist leaders: Industry, Trade, Registration and Distribution of Living-spaces, Exploitation and Repairing of Living-spaces and Inter-ethnic Relations in the City. By controlling the citizens through a system of residence permits and with only municipal or enterprises' property in housing meant controlling other questions too. So six out of twenty-two chairmen or 27,27% were CP bosses.
- 2 Politicians ex officio They were managers of big industrial and communal enterprises. For example, a very typical story: 'For a long time I was a deputy of the Moskovsky district Soviet. And when I became the chief of the Regional Agency for Civil Aircraft, my poste demanded improving the social and political status of mine. So I stood for election to the city Soviet. I was elected as Chairman of the Environment Protection Commission in the session of the city Soviet from where I was noted into a transfer of the city Soviet from where I was not even became in the arms of the city Soviet from where I was not even necessary to take part in the election procedure. Another director and chairman of the city Soviet from the city Soviet from where I was not even necessary to take part in the election procedure. Another director and chairman of the city Soviet from where I was not even necessary to take part in the election procedure.

These persons usually headed commissions that were connected with their professional activity. For instance the manager of the Baltic steamship line was the chairman of the Transport commission, the director of a building and construction firm ran a Building commission. The legal commission was reserved for the dean of the Faculty of law of the University and so on

3. 'Bit players'. Thrifling commissions such as Sport, Women's Affairs, Social Security were headed by ordinary persons two of them were doctors and one – a worker. Their cameo appearance was important for real power holders because it created the image of popular representation.

1 Soldiers of the communist party. Two chairmen were former minor functionaries of the Communist party and got their nonparty posts as a 10 ward. Of course more or less all chairmen were conscripts of the CPSU But 'soldiers' were specialists in all fields where the CPSU would send them to. They headed not so important commissions — Culture and Education.

The importance of commissions and their leaders was represented by whether they had a special telephone-exchange number or not. This indicated to which level of the *nomenklatura* a person belonged. Only live chairmen hadn't such telephones in their permanent working place. Of course only the two first categories could be described as a thre groups.

bottview materials show us the *motivation* for entering the political todes. First, Among the most important motives was the wish to acquire to her status, provided by the opening opportunities for the career-makeous Contacts that were created in the City Soviet allowed more effectively to do their professional work. But it concerned especially the bodders of top social positions, outsiders as a rule remained outsiders.

The second identified motive was the pressure by the CPSU bodies to enter the elite. In this case the wish of the candidate to enter (or not to enter) the political body was not taken into account

The third motive can be called pragmatism, caused by corporatist notes at As a result, in the City Council the corporatist system of depution belonging to the different districts of the city, was formed. Corporative at a terms gave this particular district or institution an indisputable of antage.

The City administration consisted of two parts: an elected one and an appointed one. The first one – the Presidium – had been elected in the non of the City Soviet and included the chairman of the Executive boundtee, his nine deputies, secretary and 12 members. All of them on city deputies. The second one was a set of departments, agencies, mountees, boards etc. Chiefs of the most important of them used to be appointed by the Presidium of the Executive committee, others got their to by the routine bureaucratic way. Heads of the most influential bound trative bodies were also members of the Presidium.

There were 4 main paths to the administrative elite:

- Homourcratic promotion (from inside the Executive Committee).

 Trong district administrations
- From the communist party structures.

 From the economic structures (especially for the specialized administrative elite).

Also there were 'bit players' in the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the City Soviet. They were recruited from ordinary but selected persons. So there were three workers among the members of the Presidium and the same number of white-colour employees.

The elections of 1990 were a turning point. Soviet society in 1990 was in a social and political crisis. That is why the local elite recruitment in that period could be described using S. Tarrow and L. Smith term as crisis recruitment (1976) The instability of the political institutions produced a multistage process of the new elite formation and this process is still uncompleted.

In the *first stage* politics was considered by the new actors of the political process as applied ideology. It was the time when challengers dominated. The activity in the social movement was important in order to be considered for candidacy and for pretenders to top posts in the City council.

The *second stage* was characterized by the replacement of the most part of the former challengers by more pragmatic persons – so called 'professionals'."

In spite of the changing social and political situation the social background of the old and the new city elite remained the same: most of them were from the middle strata – their parents were intellectuals, office employees, engineers.

The new political elite was recruited in the active electoral struggle of 1989-1990. These critical (or realigning) elections (King and Seligman 1976) were a significant turning point in the formation of the local authorities.

Many new political leaders of the City Council came from the democratic protest movement of *Perestroika* (Duka et al. 1995). As a result of local elections in 1990, the Presidium of the Lensoviet included 29 members. It was established on the principle of positions – in addition to the Chairman of the Soviet and the Vice-chairman, there were heads of the city council's standing commissions. Among them 13 deputies were activists of the protest movement, eleven of them identified themselves as adherents of the different protest groups; five were nominated as independent candidates. Simultaneously, 18 were CPSU members, with the number reduced to eight in a year. Nineteen were employed in research

In the her education. Only two held low status jobs. One of them was a former dissident, prisoner and active member of a radical anti-communic party and therefore had some problems with getting a job; and the therefore took the low status position because it allowed him to solve his four my problem. There was only one female member of the presidium.

Heads of the commissions were elected at the city Soviet session of all of the challenging leaders were able to obtain positions. Brilliant confeccited a struggle that prevented their becoming 'bosses'.

I very meeting of the first session of the new City council started on the election of the three co-chairmen. There is a description of our made by one of the deputies:

those who reached the top hoped that they would stay there longer than their predecessors, possibly forever. However, these were vain hope. As soon as the 'three' occupied their chairs, the rest of the deputies would immediately turn against them. They would bombard the three, often in a rude and uncivilised manner, with incessant complaints about alleged procedural violations, regulations, etc. The three would try to contain this elemental disarray, in some cases by the ing to recognise deputies who were particularly foud and disortions would only cause even greater discontent among the deputies. The intagonism between those who presided over the session and the cost of the deputies was so strong that the co-chairmen had to be find a find the deputies was so strong that the co-chairmen had to be find the deputies was so strong that the co-chairmen had to be

to mustion allowed second-echelon politicians to gain superior status, more The most striking example was the election of the Soviet somman in 1991, a compromising figure, convenient for everybody.

A common feature of the second presidium, elected a year later, is the greater activity in factions and stronger factional consolidation mower scatter of opinions in voting). This can be explained by the other the first presidium had been formed on positions (consisting of the distribution chairmen), whereas the second one was established on the distribution chairmen.

according to their background members of the presidium and the amount of the city council committees and commissions could be add in three groups:

- 1. Challengers. They were leaders or active members of the social protest movement.
- 2 Individual truth-seckers. Persons who had permanent conflicts with the administrations in the places where they worked or with the authorities in their place of residence. In the nomination for the electoral campaign two of them were supported by non-political organizations the 'Philatelists Society' and the 'Society of Librarians'. One was nominated by the residents and one was offered participation in the electoral campaign by protest organization because he was a strong opponent to a party top officer who stood for election in the same constituency.
- 3. 'Good hovs' Politicians 'by accident' They were never oriented towards politics. Colleagues liked and trusted them that was why they were nominated.

Motives for their nomination might differ. First, *protest nomination* s. One of the chairmen described the situation: I became deputy by accident. The enterprise personnel offered me to stand for election in protest against the official nomination of the second secretary of the Communist party regional committee on behalf of this enterprise. At first it seemed for fun, but soon it became the very serious thing.

Second, *corporate interests*. Enterprises considered the future deputies as their lobby. It was similar to the previous practice.

Third, I would like to call it 'The spirit of the time'. In the 1990 elections all enterprises and officially registered social organisations got the right to nominate candidates. A lot of them availed this opportunity. For some nominating was made under the following rethoric: 'All are nominating and why can't we?', 'We are not worse then others' and so on

Self-made elite, In the formation of the City Council (its Commissions and Committees) in this period certain novelties can be distinguished. One group of Commissions was formed on the traditional basis. These were the Commissions in the spheres, where duties of the new Lensoviet were similar to those of the previous one. Another group of Commissions was formed due to the development of new spheres of activities of the local City Council. Among them are the Commission of the Voluntary Social Organizations, the Commission of Human Rights, the Commission of Conversion, etc. The third group of Commissions was formed as occupation for the 'winners' in political struggle. Thus, the leaders of the social movements, who were elected in the City Council, secured their stable position in the power elite by the acquisition of the post of the Chairman of a Commission.

Personal motivation of new recruits for the entry of the political boddiffers to a great extent from the motivation of the old political elite. The very necessity of entering the polity was regarded by the candidates their urgent task. This decision was caused either by their life histoor by nonconformist attitudes. The main motives were as following:

1 Individual motives

- 1 self-realization in the sphere of professional politics:
- opportunities for acquisition of higher status and satisfaction of ambitions;
- 1 career-making and material improvement

II Political motives (anti-system motives)

- 1 keep Communist party bosses from the City Soviet:
- hange the Soviet system.

to ternation of the administrative city elite also changed. There were main stages of the reorganization of the executive authority. In the mining the city council and the challenging movement tried to influent the appointment of top bureaucrats. First, some reform oriented command challengers were inducted to the executive committee. Second to cial psychological tests were used for pretenders to some administrative posts. Third, some top bureaucrats were dismissed. But in spite the action of the administrative elite was formed mainly the old way. The over administrative corporation was divided over the issue of city the lopment. There were reformists in a liberal sense, reformist with all democratic orientations, pragmatic state enterprise managers, the metats of the old Soviet style.

the second stage was connected with establishing the Mayor's on St Petersburg. In June of 1991 the Mayor was elected by citia of the city. The influence of the City council on administrative latenty ended. Inclusion in the bureaucratic corporation since this time that acterised as follows:

- Induction of persons who had close connections to the Mayor. These connections were based on common activity in the City council and localty to the Mayor.
- Induction of some former Soviet and Communist party officials. Especially after August 1991 some apparatus officers of the prohibited communist party became city bureaucrats.
- Municipance of democrats/reformists who have support from above precially in the Russian government and who run under the Mayor's

rule. For example the Deputy Mayor has close ties with the Vice-Premier of the federal government Chubais.

- 4 Maintenance of administrative specialists. By 1993 about half of the city CEO have remained in their positions.
- 5 Induction of influential managers to the administrative body.

This set has become more homogeneous in its activity and orientations. The style of the administrative body got less democratic but more authoritarian

Forth dimension: Political practice.

The old 'rules of the game' were no longer valid with the destruction of the Soviet system and new ones were not created for a long time. In the activities of the old power elite along with formal procedures, 'unofficial rules' played a significant role. Most decisions were taken before their presentation at the City Council sessions. The coordination of the interests was done on the basis of personal informal networks. Also information in mass media about city authorities' activity had been sharply reduced and was censored to a great extent.

After the elections of 1990 there was a great striving of democratic winners for openess. Maybe it is possible to characterize this tendency as challenger democracy (democracy of triumphant outsiders). One of the first watchwords of *Perestroika – Glasnost –* meant also the possibility for citizens to know what social problems were discussed by authorities and how decisions were made. All questions discussed in the City Soviet sessions were on TV. The work of the first session of the new City council was transmitted by Leningrad TV. Entrance to the building of Lensoviet was free, but already a few months later there were militial men on duty requesting permits just like with the old city Soviet.

The political activity of city council leadership has not been confined to institutionalized political activity alone. In the first eighteen months there was a permanent striving for unconventional patterns of behaviour. The fighting parties made direct appeals to the public (electors). There were attempts at mobilizing various population groups. For examples, in July and September 1990, the Chairman of the city council, when fighting his opponents in the council, appealed to lorry drivers to come and picket the council house. Deputies were active participants of rallies and marches.

The institutionalization of the social movement resulted in a radical change in roles of its leaders and activists. Their participation in this political process as outside challengers was replaced by a role as participants in the political process. William Gamson wrote:

the central difference among political actors is captured by the idea of being inside or outside of the polity. Those who are inside are members whose interest is vested – that is, recognized as valid by other numbers. Those who are outside are challengers. They lack the basic prerogative of members – mutine access to decisions that affect them, common 1975:140)

Proceduately after the elections, according to the opinion of a number of the first activists who had taken part in the event, there occurred a radical form the behaviour and self-concepts of People's Front members who albert elected.

Already six months after the elections the majority of the city mass bettook a negative stand towards Lensoviet (see, for example, Belik-1990.35). Information on its work was considered most inadequate, that the common citizen had absolutely no knowledge of what the set and Mayor's Office were doing' (Belikova 1993:31). Hence a min distrust in government bodies.

The gulf between the leadership of social movements and the suption social audience after their coming to power has been evident in the fast European countries. In particular, Polish investigators main-

buring the institutionalization phase, the formal overlap between the new political leadership and the broader social audience will begin to be its supportive character as the substantive difference between the new leadership and various social groups becomes clear. (Cirtanias and Makryycki 1993; 796).

or hationship of the city council leaders with the social movements hadually reduced to nil. The political activity of new political efite of the was aftered and institutionally framed.

Mechanism of decision-making also changed. After the democratic in 1990 'shadow policy-making' was refused. But it was impossible to diminate it in the bureaucratic machine. Soon politicians had to informal networks for more effective activity too.

The shift in orientations and practices of new politicians was not the line. The political struggle between executive and representative the competition among various factions and interest groups creatile basic conditions for democratic openess.

1 melusion

that the process of change of the local power structures is still uplete. First of all, the balance of executive and representative pow-

ers has not been definitely established. There is no consensus between elite factions to distribute competence among the city authorities. Second, the changes in personnel in the political sector of the city elite are continuing; but the administrative staff is more or less stable. Third, the system of elite recruitment is not sustainable yet. Forth, in general political and social instability inside the clite can still change the rules of the game.

Nevertheless one can see a certain permanence in this changeable situation. It is connected with the tendency of including counterelite (challenge) groups into the old clite structures, and the tendency of preserving old cadres in the city administration.

Notes

- 1. The project has been funded by the Berghot Foundation and Soros Foundation. It has been carried out in the Center for Independent Research.
- 2. See, for example, very interesting Saratov (esults in Stykow (1995b).
- 3. We had taken into consideration the existing criticism of the positional approach and its limitations especially on investigation of local clites (see for example Domhoff (1978); Kurtz (1984). Wagstiffe and Moyer (1987); Lane (1993)). But we have applied this to limited research tasks.
- 4 Each interview lasted from 40 minutes to 3 hours. Vera Achkasova and Andrey Chugunov, members of the research team, conducted some interviews.
- Detailed description of relations between two power structures in this time see Ortung (1995), particularly § IV 'Dual Power in Leningrad, April 1990-August 1991
- 6 This conclusion follows from the analysis of deputies' election programmes made by city deputy and sociologist B Maksimov (partly results of this analysis were presented in Maksimov (1993:217-218), also from results of survey of city deputies conducted by Institute of Sociology before the first session (Keselman 1990:1); see also Gelman (1993:194). About the problem of competence of the city council committees that were formed in the first session see Slutskiy (1992:2). There is opinion about general incompetence in Soviet/Russian politics: 'As a result that country has been governing by persons without special training, the policy becomes more and more efroneous' (Zhuravlyov 1993:50).
- 7 Something was alike in the first months after the October 1917 revolution. For instance, publication of secret treatments of Tsar government and refusal to secret diplomacy.
- 8. Cirtautas and Mokrzycki (1993: 796). Here 'articulation' refers to the process whereby a given group develops and articulates a set of values around which action can be oriented, and institutionalization refers to the process whereby these values are concretized in authoritative patterns of behaviour' (p. 787).
- 9 About the role of corruption in assimilating new groups into the old elite see: Duka (1995: 113-114). Also about other changing societies see: Huntington (1968: 61)