The Politburos of Communist Eastern Europe:

Introducing New Individual-Level Data on Candidate and Full Members

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Abstract

Who comprised the political bureaus of the Eastern Bloc? There exists a wealth of literature on the former communist party elites, studying their personal biographies and group dynamics. However, we still lack an accessible resource cataloguing these individuals and documenting their personal and professional histories. This research note introduces new individual-level data on 787 candidate and full members from the ruling politburos of nine communist regimes across Eastern Europe. Along with compiling a centralized roster establishing who made up the politburos and at what times, I also code a range of descriptive variables for each elite, opening for better study of their comparative traits within and across space and time. These data are an important step toward more accessible documentation of the histories of ruling party elites in communist regimes, centralizing valuable information for future scholars to study, reference, and utilize.

Keywords: elites; dictatorship; communist party; purges

Introduction

Recent research on dictatorship has emphasized the importance of ruling elites, individuals who are co-opted to top regime positions in exchange for their support (Svolik 2012). The composition and dynamics between ruling elites have been linked to many consequential outcomes, including conflict initiation (Weeks 2008; White 2021), coups d'état (Chin et al. 2022; Frantz and Stein 2017), purges (Bokobza et al. 2022; Goldring and Matthews 2021; Sudduth 2017; 2021; Wong and Chan 2021), and regime survival (Levitsky and Way 2022; Meng and Paine 2022). These ruling elite are critical to the dictator's survival in office, acting as administrators keeping various arms of the state functioning, but can also be the biggest threat to their leaders by launching conspiracies and coups (Meng 2020; Svolik 2009).

The ruling elite in communist political bureaus (hereafter "politburos") have been the subject of much historical study in academia and policy outlets. Some literature has focused on qualitatively studying single groups of politburo elites, aiming to illuminate the dynamics of their personal interactions and with the dictator that they served under (Fitzpatrick 2015; Pirjevec 2018; Williams 1997). Other works have quantitatively analyzed the composition of politburo elites in single regimes, exploring various outcomes in their professional trajectories and entrenchments in power (Laird 1986; Ludz 1968; Mawdsley and White 2000). Whether it be historical study or comparative analysis, all of these manuscripts relied on a simple, yet critical question: who was in the politburo?

Unfortunately, this question has not yet been comparatively assessed, as the field lacks a full roster of politburo elites that is centralized and structured for comparative analysis. Most research on politburos have only utilized single-country rosters for their analysis, seeking to only explain internal dynamics during snapshots in time or across several decades. Of the elite data in

political science that is both cross-national and time-series, the most prominent have focused on the composition and personalities within the state's cabinet(Nyrup and Bramwell 2020).[1] In dictatorships where core power is signaled through membership in an institution that is extra-governmental (like in communist regimes or military juntas) proxying cabinet membership for "ruling elite" status can unfortunately miss many of the key players in the regime . This is because the "ruling elite" in a politburo or junta may only partially hold concurrent cabinet seats while in the ruling institution. Thus, to fully grasp the personalities of power in dictatorships, it is critical to supplement cabinet membership data with a full roster of those individuals who were also part of the actual ruling institution. Without this supplementary membership information, important elites like Erich Mückenberger of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany, DDR) (who never held a cabinet seat but was in the ruling communist party politburo for nearly fifty years), would be omitted from elite-focused analyses (Wilhelm 1966).

This article introduces new individual-level data on candidate and full members of the communist politburos in Eastern Europe between 1917-1991. Drawing on many hundreds of source materials, I compiled a roster of 787 individuals who for at least a day were formal members of the ruling politburos across nine former communist regimes that broadly comprised the "Eastern Bloc" after World War II: Albania (1944-1991), Bulgaria (1944-1989), Czechoslovakia (1948-1989), East Germany (1949-1989), Hungary (1947-1989), Poland (1944-

[1] For some states, the cited WhoGov dataset does include data on top party leaders (like a general secretary) and occasionally military junta members, although this coverage is limited due to the original source material.

1989), Romania (1945-1989), the Soviet Union (1917-1991), and Yugoslavia (1945-1974).[2] Data similar to these has been collected and analyzed for individual autocratic regimes, like China and North Korea (Kim 2021; Shih, Adolph, and Liu 2012; Shih 2022; Suh 1981), but to my knowledge this is the first that covers an entire region and is comparatively structured.

Using this roster of named politburo elites across the sample regimes, I compiled a novel dataset of comparatively-formatted personal and professional biographical information on each elite, linked to their tenures in each ruling institution. These details were structured into elite-level variables on birth dates, death dates, prior offices held, occupations, the political condition of their exits from the politburo, personal fates after leaving office, and more. My obejctives in developing these comparative elite data were two-fold. First, I desired to create a centralized and accessible record of the individual people who made up these ruling elite groups across communist Eastern Europe, helping to compile thousands of scattered data points into a single comprehensive resource. Second, I aimed to create quality elite data structured for quantitative comparative analysis in the field of autocratic politics, opening the door to future studies that explore the individual and collective characteristics of these groups. This helps scholars of comparative autocracies in particular to better quantify important regime characteristics and

[2] I am careful to qualify these dates as the "ruling eras" of these politburos, when they were in formal control of the state, rather than existing as underground or persecuted revolutionaries. Dates for these ruling eras were drawn from Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2018). I also note that these elites only cover the periods when the communist politburo had de facto power over the state, so Yugoslavia after the shift to the State Presidency and the period between communist party dissolution and multiparty elections in several other states are excluded.

outcomes like elite entrenchment, political purges, and civil-military balancing in the halls of power.

These elite data provide a critical resource to scholars interested in the elite politics of the communist bloc, whether they be historians, country and regional specialists, or social scientists. Below, I describe the process for collecting rosters of individuals and the production of the biographical dataset.

Data Scope and Collection

I began my data collection process by first identifying the periods in time when the countries of Central and Eastern Europe were de facto governed by communist party politburo, thus setting the spatial-temporal parameters for development of the full elite roster. The first step was to determine when the countries of this particular region were governed by autocratic regimes. I relied upon the regime spell start and end dates developed by Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2018). To exclude non-communist autocracies in the region (such as Belarus under Kyebich and Lukashenko), I then further limited the regime spell sample to only include those autocracies that were ruled by a communist party, relying on ruling party and regime identification datasets (Miller 2019; Svolik 2012).

With a sample of nine communist dictatorships across Central and Eastern Europe, I then shifted to establish the periods in these regimes when de facto policy-making powers were focused within an extra-governmental party political bureau. This limitation is critical for ensuring that institutional membership in my data are limited only to party ruling elites, rather than state elites that may have taken power after a shift away from party governance. For example, the communist dictatorship period for East Germany according to Geddes, Wright, and Frantz

terminates on 18 March 1990. However, the ruling politburo of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) dissolved itself on 6 December 1989, leaving a four month period when the "dictatorship" was effectively governed by another institution: the Council of Ministers under Hans Modrow (Fulbrook 1995). For my sample, I would only want to focus on membership in the SED politburo until 12/6/1989, as other datasets already focus on cabinet composition. Using a vast array of primary and secondary source materials, I worked to determine when these politburos were established and subsequently dissolved or handed over actual political power to a non-politburo institution (usually in the waning months of communist rule).

These limitations leave me with an institutional focus that meets the following criteria: 1) a state in Central and Eastern Europe; 2) a dictatorship; 3) communist-ruled; and 4) de facto governed by a party politburo. **Table 1** below depicts final sample of regime-spells that met these four qualifiers, along with the single or multiple names of the party politburo during those temporal periods. Full source materials used in developing this sample are listed in the supplementary codebook of the dataset, which is housed in a project page on the author's *Harvard Dataverse*.[3]

Table 1: Sample of ruling communist party politburos in Central and Eastern Europe.

State	Institution Name	Start Date	End Date
Albania	PPSh Political Bureau	11/29/1944	6/1/1991
Bulgaria	BKP Political Bureau	9/9/1944	1/30/1990
Bulgaria	BKP Presidium	1/30/1990	4/3/1990
Bulgaria	BSP Presidium	4/3/1990	8/1/1990
Czechoslovakia	KSC Presidium (I)	2/25/1948	6/15/1954
Czechoslovakia	KSC Political Bureau	6/15/1954	12/8/1962

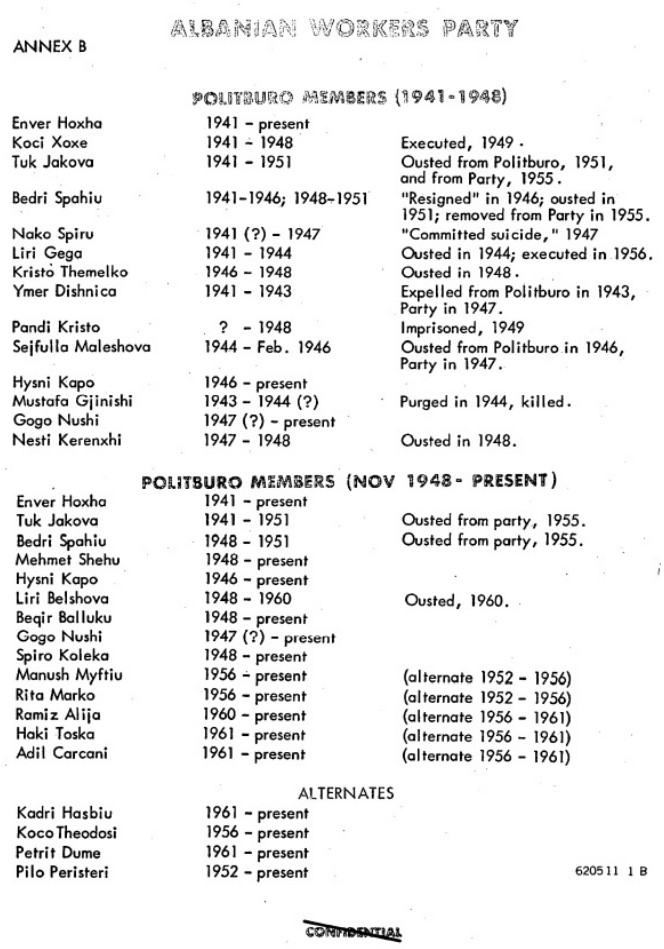
[3] A partial sub-sample of these data were previously used by the author in Goldring and Matthews (Goldring and Matthews 2021) and contributed to the cross-national time-series analyses in the author's dissertation (Matthews 2018).

Czechoslovakia	KSC Presidium (II)	12/8/1962	12/4/1989
East Germany	SED Political Bureau	10/7/1949	12/3/1989
Hungary	MDP Political Bureau	2/25/1947	11/4/1956
Hungary	MSzMP Political Bureau (I)	11/4/1956	11/7/1956
Hungary	MSzMP Provisional Executive Committee	11/7/1956	6/29/1957
Hungary	MSzMP Political Bureau (II)	6/29/1957	10/7/1989
Poland	PPR Political Bureau	12/31/1944	12/16/1948
Poland	PZPR Political Bureau	12/16/1948	6/18/1989
Romania	PCR Political Bureau	3/6/1945	2/23/1948
Romania	PMR Political Bureau	2/23/1948	7/23/1965
Romania	PCR Permanent Presidium	7/23/1965	11/28/1974
Romania	PCR Political Executive Committee	11/28/1974	12/22/1989
Soviet Union	CPSU Political Bureau (I)	11/7/1917	10/16/1952
Soviet Union	CPSU Presidium	10/16/1952	4/8/1966
Soviet Union	CPSU Political Bureau (II)	4/8/1966	12/22/1991
Yugoslavia	KPJ Political Bureau	3/7/1945	11/7/1952
Yugoslavia	SKJ Executive Committee	11/7/1952	7/1/1966
Yugoslavia	SKJ Presidium	7/1/1966	5/15/1974

I next began the research necessary to populate a full roster of the individuals who had formal membership in the ruling politburos listed in Table 1, which would qualify as the ruling elite for those temporal periods. For an individual to qualify for inclusion in this ruling elite roster, they must have formally been a full or candidate member of the ruling politburo of one of these states for at least a single day during their period as the institution of de facto policy-making authority. Developing a complete roster of these elites was a significant challenge, which I wish to detail. Data collection in autocracies can be a logistical challenge for many reasons. As Meng (2021, 529) notes: “Dictatorships are frequently closed off, and restrict or completely eliminate access to reliable and accurate information.” Records of institutional membership were often hidden or in some cases destroyed, making a public accounting more difficult during the lifetime of these regimes. These challenges of transparency and access have also endured, leading to few attempts by scholars to establish these elite rosters in a methodical way. Significant exceptions to this gap

in the literature have been *Membrii C.C. al P.C.R 1945-1989* (Dobre 2004) and *Biographisches Handbuch der DBZ/DDR 1945-1990* (Baumgartner and Hebig 1996), which respectively detail the biographical information of communist party elites across time in Romania and East Germany. However, I heavily emphasize that these works are rare exceptions, rather than the norm.

Thus, uncovering politburo member's identity was a puzzle that took many pieces to assemble, reflecting the challenging nature of data collection in autocratic research fields. Simply establishing a roster of membership for these regimes required the consultation of many hundreds of primary and secondary source materials, including native and translated documents from news media, intelligence cables, party propaganda, state records, radio reports, academic publications, and much more. **Figure 1** depicts the appendix of a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency report on Albanian-Soviet relations, which served as one source for compiling elite roster information on the Albanian politburo. Although a good start, clearly this information is incomplete and only presented a single snapshot in time of the institutional membership. The information also relied heavily in this case on intelligence assets, which occasionally created incorrect or incomplete reporting. This common hurdle required me to cross-verify all data points gathered from single documents with additional details from other sources materials, establishing a more robust baseline for data quality and confidence.



ALBANIAN WORKERS PARTY

ANNEX B

POLITBURO MEMBERS (1941-1948)

Enver Hoxha	1941 – present	
Koci Xoxe	1941 – 1948	Executed, 1949.
Tuk Jakova	1941 – 1951	Ousted from Politburo, 1951, and from Party, 1955.
Bedri Spahiu	1941–1946; 1948–1951	"Resigned" in 1946; ousted in 1951; removed from Party in 1955.
Nako Spiru	1941 (?) – 1947	"Committed suicide," 1947
Liri Gega	1941 – 1944	Ousted in 1944; executed in 1956.
Kristo Themelko	1946 – 1948	Ousted in 1948.
Ymer Dishnica	1941 – 1943	Expelled from Politburo in 1943, Party in 1947.
Pandi Kristo	? – 1948	Imprisoned, 1949
Sejfulla Maleshova	1944 – Feb. 1946	Ousted from Politburo in 1946, Party in 1947.
Hysni Kapo	1946 – present	
Mustafa Gjinishi	1943 – 1944 (?)	Purged in 1944, killed.
Gogo Nushi	1947 (?) – present	
Nesti Kerenxhi	1947 – 1948	Ousted in 1948.

POLITBURO MEMBERS (NOV 1948 - PRESENT)

Enver Hoxha	1941 – present	
Tuk Jakova	1941 – 1951	Ousted from party, 1955.
Bedri Spahiu	1948 – 1951	Ousted from party, 1955.
Mehmet Shehu	1948 – present	
Hysni Kapo	1946 – present	
Liri Belshova	1948 – 1960	Ousted, 1960.
Beqir Balluku	1948 – present	
Gogo Nushi	1947 (?) – present	
Spiro Koleka	1948 – present	
Manush Myftiu	1956 – present	(alternate 1952 – 1956)
Rita Marko	1956 – present	(alternate 1952 – 1956)
Ramiz Alija	1960 – present	(alternate 1956 – 1961)
Haki Toska	1961 – present	(alternate 1956 – 1961)
Adil Carcani	1961 – present	(alternate 1956 – 1961)

ALTERNATES

Kadri Hasbiu	1961 – present
Koco Theodosi	1956 – present
Petrit Dume	1961 – present
Pilo Peristeri	1952 – present

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Figure 1: Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Current Intelligence (1962).

The extensive membership roster compilation effort successfully identified a total of 787 unique candidate and full members of ruling communist party politburos across the nine sampled regimes of Central and Eastern Europe. As some elites may have served non-consecutive tenures in the ruling politburo, I elected to organize the individual roster into data structured at the elite-spell unit of observation.[4] I selected this elite-spell unit of observation to help provide nuanced

[4] Of the 787 elites, 49 had more than one non-consecutive spell as a candidate or full member in their respective ruling communist party politburos.

insights into their individual tenures, such as differentiating how their exit conditions varied across separate politburo tenures. In total, transforming the full individual roster of 787 politburo elites into elite-spell units based on continuous tenures led to a data framework of 836 total observations. Counts by country of the total elite-spells observed during the ruling communist politburo periods are presented below in **Figure 2**.

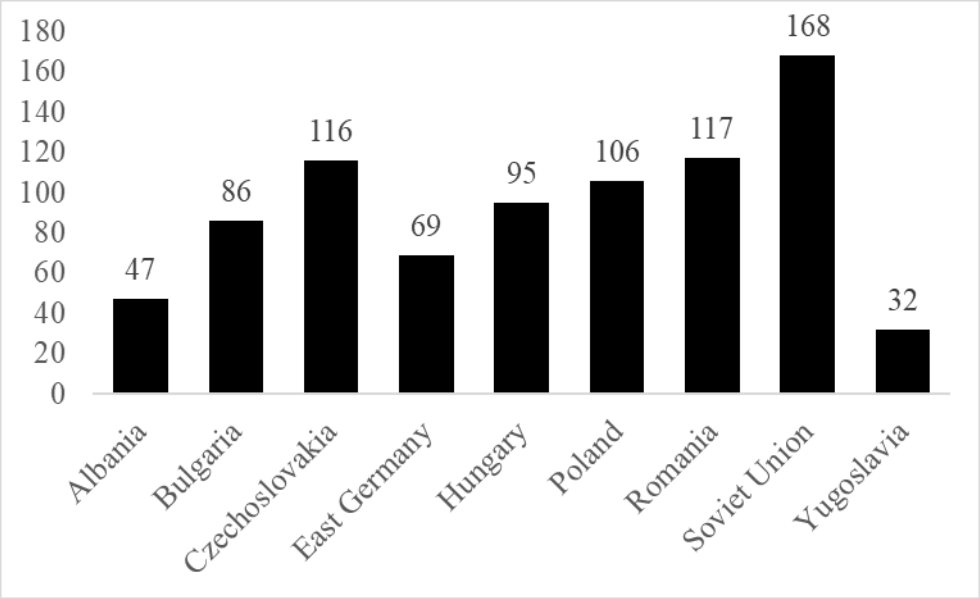

Figure 2: Counts of politburo elite-spell observations by sample regime.

As an example of why elite-spells are preferable to just elite units of observation, Soviet politburo member Otto Kuusinen served two non-consecutive terms in the institutional ruling elite during his lifetime.[5] Organizing his political experience in the politburo as two units of observation (one for his first tenure between 1952-53 and one for his second between 1957-64)

[5] For more information on Otto Vilgelmovich Kuusinen, see the following works that (in part) served as source material for his data entries: Brown (1990, 200), Khrushchev (2007, 3:937), and Linden (1966, 237).

allows richer description of the varying experiences he had across those spells in the top leadership. Thus, we can differentiate that his first tenure ended with his demotion from the politburo, but his second was ended by his eventual death while still in office. Very different outcomes for a single elite with multiple spells in the formal institutional ruling elite that can be best illustrated through this unit organization decision.

Descriptive Variables

Having established the full roster of 787 ruling communist politburo candidate and full members, organized into 836 elite-spells, I shifted to expanding each elite-spell observation with novel variables on the personal and professional biographies of each individual, structured for comparative analysis. This step greatly improves the utility of these data by moving the set beyond being a simple membership roster. Elite-level questions across regimes relating to exit types, tenures, and fates can be studied using just the standard data structure. Or researchers can transform these elite-spells into country-year variables for richer investigation of the structural causes and effects of the compositions of these bodies over time. Below I describe the variables created in this dataset for each unit of observation.

Each elite-spell in the dataset begins with their **state** and **name**, which set the baseline for unit organization**.** ***Enter*** is the calendar date (with all temporal variables structured in month/day/year format) when the elite entered the ruling politburo of the communist party. This variable captures the earliest entry date, regardless of whether they were elected as a candidate or full member of the communist party's politburo. ***Exit*** is the calendar date when the elite vacated the politburo entirely. Note that this date does not reflect instances where the elite was demoted from full to candidate member, as under those circumstances they did not fully exit the politburo, instead being demoted to a lower in-group rank. To illustrate these changes more clearly, I also include

candidate/member enter and **candidate/member exit** dates that reflect the respective dates that each elite was in the politburo at these specific ranks.

Exit type captures the situational conditions under which the elite exited the politburo at the conclusion of their respective elite-spell (regardless of candidate/member rank). This is a categorical variable with five possible outcomes for the elite, leaving the politburo through one of the following methods: 1) demotion (being dismissed or forced to resign from the politburo but retaining other state/party/military positions); 2) died in office (naturally, accidently, or suicide); 3) expulsion (being forcibly removed from all state/party/military offices in close temporal proximity); 4) resignation (both voluntary resignations and retirements); and 5) systemic change (the politburo ceased to be the ruling institution while the elite was still in office).[6] The distributions of these exit types for the full elite-spell sample are visualized below in **Figure 3**. The most common exit for politburo elites was demotion (38.5% of total spells), while the least common were elites who died in office while still an active candidate or full member of the party's leadership organ (9.1% of total spells).

[6] Note that these categorizations for *exit type* and *fate* were first introduced in Goldring and Matthews (2021).

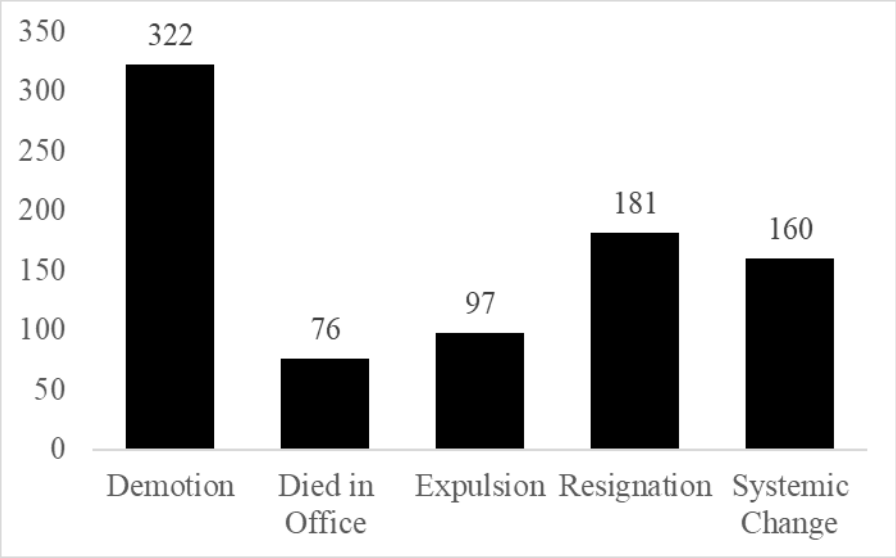

Figure 3: Graphical distribution of elite exit types.

Fate reflects the personal physical condition of the elite within a year of exiting the politburo. I opted for a calendar year window of observation due to some of the more severe fates not occurring immediately after their exit, but sometimes months later in connection to that exit event. There are six fates observed in the sample for this categorical variable: 1) died in office; 2) execution; 3) exile; 4) incarceration (including instances of house arrest); 5) OK (indicating they received no further punishment); and 6) systemic change (where their fate was up to the discretion of another regime).[7] Distribution of these *fate* outcomes for the full politburo sample are presented below in **Table 2**. The most common fate was "OK", signaling that most elites (66.5%) received no additional punishment and simply faded from the leadership safely. Violent

[7] Note that only one elite, Leon Trotsky of the USSR, was coded as exiled due to his series of forced relocations after his removal from the CPSU's Politburo in 1926. No other elite in the sample had conditions matching his initial treatment.

fates were fairly uncommon; execution, exile, and incarceration only affected just over 5% of all politburo elites.

Table 2: Tabular distribution of elite fates.

Fate	*N*
Died in Office	76
Execution	20
Exile	1
Incarceration	23
OK	556
Systemic Change	160
Total	836

Birth is the calendar date when the elite was recorded as having been born. A midway gap-filling process was utilized to estimate full dates when there was some uncertainty for an exact day or month.[8] ***Death*** is the date when the elite became deceased. A similar missingness estimation process was used for some death dates, as described in Footnote 5. ***Enter age*** was the elite's age in years when they entered the politburo, either as a candidate or full member. This age variable is calculated using individual spell *enter* and *exit* dates for each elite. ***Exit age*** is the age in years that an elite was when they exited the politburo, similarly calculated using *exit* and *birth* dates.

[8] Precise days and sometimes months were unable to be established for some elites. To allow for more inclusive analysis, I occasionally used a midpoint data-filling process to complete missing dates. If the day was unavailable, I used the 15th of the month. If month and day were both unavailable, I assigned 1 July. These uncertain dates are flagged in red in the dataset to allow these to be omitted by researchers, if desired. If the year could not be determined with reasonable confidence, the variable was assigned a value of "Unknown."

Tenure is the total length of time in years that an elite was a candidate and/or full member of their respective politburo for a complete spell in office.

First generation is a dichotomous indicator signaling whether the elite was in the initial cohort holding membership in the politburo when their respective regimes seized power over the state. This is coded 1 if the elite's initial *enter* date coincides with the regime's start date, identified for that temporal spell by Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2018). ***Occupation*** is the trained professional background of the elite prior to them entering full-time government or party positions. If they held multiple jobs, I identified the occupation that they maintained for the longest or that was most closely linked to their trade or university education.

Prior office is the top party, state, or military office that the elite held immediately prior to achieving entry into the politburo. ***Female*** is an indicator for whether the elite is historically presented as female in source materials and dossiers. Of 836 total politburo elites, 46 (5.5%) were coded as female. Finally, ***leader*** is a dichotomous indicator for whether the elite was the leader of the regime at the time of their exit from the politburo, using a cross-set identification process referencing the leader identifications and associated tenures from Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2018) and the *Archigos* leader dataset (Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza 2009).

Example Application of Data

Now I will provide an illustrative example demonstration of how these data can be used to investigate a theoretically motivated comparative research question on the strategies of elite management in dictatorships. Political purges are a powerful tool of intra-elite repression where the dictator attempts to remove other elites from their positions, thus reducing the risk they pose to the dictator's future survival (Kim 2021; Sudduth 2017; Wong and Chan 2021). Stemming

from the "Great Terror" literature (Conquest 1968; Whitewood 2015) and the assertion that the purge was a regional phenomenon in Eastern Europe (Brzezinski 1956), we can beg the question of whether there was something unique about the Stalinist era that lent itself to the use of elite purges? Was punitive violence targeting elites more permissible across the Eastern Bloc during the Stalinist era? After Stalin was gone, did the political climate change such that elite purges and punishments were no longer politically feasible for these communist dictators? These questions lend themselves to testing with the use of these new data on individual politburo members. I draw specifically on the variables that document the conditions of their *exits* from the politburo and subsequent *fates* to test the following hypothesis:

Elites exiting the politburo during the Stalinist era were more likely to be expelled and punished than those who left during prior or subsequent eras in the Eastern Bloc.

First, I shall describe the dependent variables and their modeling for testing this hypothesis. *Purged* is a dichotomous indicator, coded 1 if the elite's exit type was "expulsion" and 0 otherwise, drawing on the political purge definition established by Goldring and Matthews (2021). *Punished* is a dichotomous variable, coded 1 if the elite's post-office fate within a year was coded as jailed, exiled, or executed and 0 otherwise.

For the independent variable, I test the effect of the *Stalinist era* on elite purges and punishments by creating a dichotomous independent variable coded 1 if the elite's exit came between 4/3/22 and 3/5/53 (the temporal duration of Stalin's formal rule in the Soviet Union) and 0 if it occurred before or after this period. I control for the effects of additional variables found in the comparative literature to affect elite purges and punishments across dictatorships (Bokobza et al.

2022; Goldring and Matthews 2021; Sudduth 2017; Wong and Chan 2021).[9] To account for any unique spatial conditions that may affect the outcomes, I also include country fixed effects in each model. I further exclude from the sample any elites who were identified as the leader of the regime at the time of their exit, as their exit falls outside the scope of a dictator-initiated purge.[10]

I test the hypothesized relationships using a series of logistic regression model with country clustered standard errors. The unit of analysis is the elite-spell, covering the period of 1917-1991 for the nine communist dictatorships identified earlier. Incorporating all previous conditions and model limitations results in a testable data sample of 802 elite-spell units of observation. Summary statistics for all variables in the models are presented in the *Online Appendix*.

The results of four logistic regression models testing these relationships are depicted in **Table 3**. Model 1 tests the independent effect of the Stalinist era on elite purges, while Model 2 incorporates the full set of control variables. Models 3 and 4 are structured similarly, but test for all elite fates that qualify as punishments (execution, exile, and incarceration). The model results demonstrate robust support for the hypothesis that purges and subsequent punishments were significantly more likely if an individual elite exited the politburo during the Stalinist era. Findings across the models also demonstrate that elites who were older were less likely to be purged, but that age had no significant effect on punishment. They also indicate that politburo

[9] These controls include elite tenure, exit age, first generation status, gender, and whether they had a military/security apparatus background or were a civilian. The last variable is constructed using information from the elite's *occupation* and *prior office*.

[10] For the removal of dictators by insider coalitions of their own elites, see the recent work on reshuffle or "palace" coups in dictatorships (Chin et al. 2022; Kim and Sudduth 2021).

elites with military and state security backgrounds were more likely to be both purged and punished than elites with civilian backgrounds. This lends strong support to the previous research arguing that coercive sector elites are perceived as greater future threats to a dictator's rule than their civilian counterparts (Sudduth 2017).

Table 3: Purging and punishment of politburo elites.

	Model 1 Purged	**Model 2 Purged**	**Model 3 Punished**	**Model 4 Punished**
Stalinist era	2.379***	1.666***	3.468***	3.533***
	(0.297)	(0.305)	(0.643)	(0.502)
Tenure		0.005		0.015
		(0.038)		(0.044)
Exit age		-0.044**		0.008
		(0.018)		(0.024)
First generation		0.672		0.269
		(0.469)		(0.594)
Female		-0.068		1.034
		(0.447)		(0.722)
Military/security		1.281***		1.828***
		(0.293)		(0.281)
Constant	-1.906***	0.555	-4.602***	-5.619***
	(0.027)	(0.855)	(0.543)	(1.116)
Pseudo log likelihood	-248.191	-231.222	-108.493	-100.872
Pseudo-R^2	0.155	0.206	0.338	0.383
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	802	796	736	730

Notes: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Country clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Marginal effects (holding continuous variables at their mean and categorical at their mode) with 95% confidence intervals indicate that politburo elites exiting power during the Stalinist era had a 25.8% likelihood of being purged. The purge likelihood for elites sharply declined to only

6.5%% during the periods before and after Stalin's rule. There is a similar story for punitive fates, with elites during Stalinism having a 27.7 % likelihood of punishment after leaving power, versus only a 1.4% likelihood in pre- and post-Stalin years. The separation in confidence intervals and major changes in probabilities of purges and punishment for elites, depending on the Stalin era variable, suggests that these findings are not only statistically significant, but also substantively meaningful. Thus, the hypothesis is largely supported by the statistical findings: there was something uniquely conflictual and violent about elite Eastern Bloc politics during the Stalin years.

Conclusions

This article introduces new data on the individual candidate and full members of ruling communist party politburos from across Central and Eastern Europe between 1917-1991. These data build upon rosters of 787 elites to detail important individual-level characteristics like gender, prior offices, occupations, the types of exit from power, post-exit fates, and more. The utility of these data were demonstrated by testing a theory about the use of elite purges and punishment during the Stalinist era of the Eastern Bloc communist regimes. The robust results present new empirical support for a commonly held belief about the conflictual and violent nature of intra-elite politics during the Stalinist era in the Eastern Europe, demonstrating the utility of these data. Although purges (and even elite violence) did still occur prior to his rise and after Stalin's demise, it was more infrequent and less punitive, suggesting that these conflictual tools of hierarchy management had become taboo as political sentiments changed and elites became safer through regime institutionalization (Geddes, Wright, and Frantz 2018; Frantz and Stein 2017; Frantz et al. 2020).

These represent just two of the many historical and comparative questions that could be explored using this new individual-level politburo elites dataset. Elite exits and fates could be transformed into country-year variables to explore elite management, exploring questions related to structural drivers of change or leader motivations that may temporally vary. One could also examine the comparative social factors that contributed to gendered elite representation or violence over time. Or how collective ages or elite entrenchment affected comparative policy outcomes for issues like land reform or coup-proofing across the region during the Cold War. These data as qualitative and quantitative resource should be of great interest to historians, country and regional specialists, and social scientists alike by providing a unique look into the notables who operated on the power hierarchy directly below the dictator within these important Eastern Bloc regimes.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Additional tables.

Table A1: Summary statistics for variables in demonstration analysis.

Variable name	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Purged	802	0.12	0.325	0	1
Punished	802	0.054	0.225	0	1
Stalinist era	802	0.11	0.313	0	1
Tenure	802	7.494	7.852	0.006	39.71
Exit age	796	56.328	10.558	28.214	86.186
First generation	802	0.087	0.282	0	1
Female	802	0.057	0.233	0	1
Military/security	799	0.091	0.288	0	1

Table A2: Comparison between Nyrup and Bramwell (2020) cabinet data and politburo data for East Germany, 1973.

NAME	7/72 (WhoGov cabinet)	7/72 (Politburo elite)
Alfred Neumann	First Dep. Chmn Council Of Ministers	Politburo Member
Alfred Norden		Politburo Member
Erhard Krack	Min. For Bezirk Administered Industry & Food Industry	
Erich Honecker	General Secretary	General Secretary
Erich Mielke	Min. For St Security	Politburo Candidate
Erich Muckenberger		Politburo Member
Friedrich Dickel	Min. For Interior	
Friedrich Ebert Jr.		Politburo Member
Georg Ewald	Min. For Agriculture, Forestry & Foodstuffs	Politburo Candidate
Gerhard Gruneberg		Politburo Member
Gerhard Scharer	Dep. Chmn	
Gerhard Scharer	Chmn. St Planning Comn.	
Gerhard Weiss	Dep. Chmn	
Gerhard Zimmermann	Min. For Heavy Machine Building & Installation Building	
Guenter Prey	Min. For Science & Technology	
Guenter Sieber	Min. For Trade & Supply	
Guenther Kleiber	Dep. Chmn	Politburo Candidate
Guenther Wyschofsky	Min. For Chemical Industry	
Gunter Mittag		Politburo Member
Hans Reichelt	Dep. Chmn	
Hans Reichelt	Min. For Environmental Protection & Water Management	
Hans-Joachim Bahme	Min. For University & Technical School Affairs	
Harry Tisch		Politburo Candidate
Heinz Hoffmann	Min. For Natl. Defense	
Heinz Matthes	Chmn. Of Workers-Peasants Inspectorate	
Herbert Warnke		Politburo Member
Herbert Weiz	Dep. Chmn	
Hermann Axen		Politburo Member
Horst Sindermann	First Dep. Chmn Council Of Ministers	Politburo Member
Horst Soelle	Min. For Foreign Trade	
Johann Wittik	Min. For Light Industry	
Klaus Gysi	Min. For Culture	
Klaus Siebold	Min. For Coal & Energy	

Kurt Fichtner	Dep. Chmn	
Kurt Hager		Politburo Member
Kurt Singhuber	Min. For Ore Mining, Metallurgy & Potash	
Kurt Wuensche	Dep. Chmn	
Kurt Wuensche	Min. For Justice	
Ludwig Mecklinger	Min. For Health	
Manfred Flegel	Dep. Chmn	
Manfred Flegel	Min. For Material Management	
Margarete Muller		Politburo Candidate
Margot Honecker	Min. For Education	
Otfried Steger	Min. For Electrical Engineering & Electronics	
Otto Arndt	Min. For Transport	
Otto Winzer	Min. For Foreign Affairs	
Paul Verner		Politburo Member
Rudi Georgi	Min. For Processing Machines & Vehicle Construction	
Rudolph Schulze	Dep. Chmn	
Rudolph Schulze	Min. For Posts & Telecommunications	
Siegfried Boehm	Min. For Finance	
Walter Halbritter	Min. Chmn. Of Price Office	Politburo Candidate
Walter Ulbricht	Chmn. Council Of St	Politburo Member
Werner Greiner Better	Min. For Glass & Ceramics	
Werner Jarowinsky		Politburo Candidate
Werner Krolikowski		Politburo Member
Werner Lamberz		Politburo Member
Willi Stoph	Chmn. Council Of Ministers (Premier)	Politburo Member
Wolfgang Junker	Min. For Construction	
Wolfgang Rauchfuss	Dep. Chmn	

Appendix B: Variable Codebook.

State: Name of the country. Text variable.

Name: Name of the politburo elite. Text variable.

Enter: Date of entry to the politburo. MM/DD/YYYY. Temporal indicator.

Exit: Date of exit from the politburo. MM/DD/YYYY. Temporal indicator.

Exit type: Conditions under which the elite exited the politburo. Categorical variable.

- Demotion: The elite was demoted or forced to resign from the politburo but did not lose their position in other institutions.
- Died in Office: The elite died (accidently or naturally) while serving in the politburo.
- Expulsion: The elite was completely expelled from all party, state, or military offices coinciding with their removal from the politburo.
- Resignation: The elite voluntarily resigned or retired from the politburo.
- Systemic Change: The elite was still in office when the politburo was dissolved at the conclusion of the regime or the ruling institution shifted to a non-politburo body.

Fate: The personal fate of the elite within one calendar year of their exit from the politburo. Categorical variable.

- Died in Office: The elite died (accidently or naturally) while serving in the politburo.
- Execution: The elite was executed by the state within a year of leaving the politburo.
- Exile: The elite was forcibly expelled from the country within a year of leaving the politburo.
- Incarceration: The elite was incarcerated (either in penitentiary or house arrest) within a year of leaving the politburo.
- OK: The elite was not punished at all within a year of leaving the politburo.
- Systemic Change: The elite was still in office when the politburo was dissolved.

Birth: Date of birth of the politburo elite. MM/DD/YYYY. Temporal indicator.

Death: Date of death of the politburo elite. MM/DD/YYYY. Temporal indicator

Enter age: Age in years of the elite upon their entry into the politburo. Continuous variable.

Exit age: Age in years of the elite upon their exit from the politburo. Continuous variable.

Tenure: Time in years of the elite's spell in the ranks of the politburo. Continuous variable.

First generation: Indicator of whether the elite was a member of the initial cohort of elites in the politburo when the dictatorship started, according to Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2018). Coded 1 if first generation and 0 otherwise. Dichotomous variable.

Occupation: The trained occupation of the elite. Text variable.

Prior office: The party, state, or military office held by the elite prior to their entry into the politburo. Text variable.

Female: Indicator of gender as was best understood at the time. Coded 1 if female and 0 if male. Dichotomous variable.

Leader: Indicator for whether the elite was considered leader of the regime at the time of their exit from the politburo. Coded 1 if leader. Dichotomous variable.