Singapore. There the People’s Action Party (PAP) maintains a close grip despite permitting a modest, and perhaps increasing, level of opposition. Lee Kuan Yew, the island’s Prime Minister from 1959 to 1990, acknowledged that his party post, rather than his executive office, was the real source of his authority: ‘all I have to do is to stay Secretary-General of the PAP. I don’t have to be president’ (Tremewan, 1994, p. 184). Tremewan (p. 186) went on to refer to the ‘PAP-state’, in which the party uses its control of public resources to ensure citizen quiescence:

It is the party-state with its secretive, unaccountable party core under a dominating, often threatening personality which administers Singaporeans’ housing, property values, pensions, breeding, health, media, schooling and also the electoral process itself.

Parties may be mainly an instrument of power in most authoritarian states but they are, of course, the leading institution in communist regimes. Reforms notwithstanding, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) still illustrates the elaborate internal hierarchy of ruling communist parties. At its base stand 3.5 million primary party organizations, found not only in local areas such as villages, but also in factories and military units. As shown in Figure 10.4, these units have their own congresses, committees, and secretariats. At the top, at least in theory, is the sovereign National Party Congress, a body of around 2,200 people which meets infrequently and for short periods. In practice, the Congress delegates authority to its 370-member Central Committee and, through that body, to the 25-strong Politburo (‘political bureau’) and its Standing Committee. This intricate pyramid allows the seven men on the