Over the last fifteen years, Political Scientists have focused on the role of formal institutions - parties in particular -- in creating more durable authoritarian regimes. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), which led one of the most powerful and resilient authoritarian regimes in the 20th century, would seem to be an obvious example of an institution that played a central role in strengthening authoritarian rule. Yet, a closer examination of Soviet regime dynamics during periods of crisis suggest that the USSR's origins in violent revolutionary struggle played a much more central role in bolstering Soviet durability that party institutions as such.