Before we begin our in-depth analyses of the individual agencies engaged in foreign trade decision-making, it will serve us well to survey the landscape and take a preliminary reading of how the agencies are, as it might be said, organically related. The joint activity of these agencies that is most fully described in the Soviet literature is the preparation of a variety of plans, including those for foreign economic relations. Later in this chapter we shall review the composition of those plans and the participation of the various agencies in their compilation.

The Foreign Trade Bureaucracies

As indicated by figure 1–1, Soviet trade is administered not by a single bureaucracy but by a system of interconnected bureaucracies, most of which are engaged primarily in domestic affairs. Each agency that appears on the chart has a complex organization chart of its own, some of which will be sketched out in the following chapters.

At the top of the hierarchy, the leading role in Soviet foreign trade, as in many (though certainly not all) other aspects of Soviet society, is played by the Communist party leadership. Theirs is the task of setting the broad
Figure 1-1. The Foreign Trade Bureaucracy