

Grand Ducal Role and Identity as a Reflection on the Interaction of State and
Dynasty in Imperial Russia

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Grand Ducal Role and Identity as a Reflection on the Interaction of State and Dynasty in Imperial Russia

This study seeks to illuminate the historical significance of non-ruling male Romanovs within the life of the Russian Empire. Crucial to this work are the issues of state-centred versus tsar-centred ideology and the evolution of the service ethos. Thus we begin with a brief overview of seventeenth-century Muscovy, the reign of Peter I, and the post-Petrine eighteenth-century. The 'thread' of Petrine heritage, as interpreted by successive rulers and their servitors, runs through every chapter, sometimes obliquely, sometimes to the fore.

Our examination of the grand dukes themselves is divided between the objective issue of role, and the subjective one of identity. With regard to the former, it is our hope to present a more thorough picture of the range and nature of grand ducal duties, honours, appointments, etc., than has hitherto been available in a single work. With regard to the latter, it is here that we seek to identify patterns of behaviour, the power dynamics within the imperial family, and the grand dukes' position in relation to the public at large, service colleagues, and disaffected portions of society. Important questions emerge concerning the consequences of grand ducal independence and/or non-conformity, the way behaviour was perceived and represented (e.g., as patriotic, Petrine, treasonous, etc.), the effects of modernization and family growth (upon both role and identity), and grand ducal response to conflict between state and crown.

Our study focuses upon the nineteenth-century, encompassing the maturation of the first generation of adult grand dukes, the emergence of several junior branches of the imperial family, the evolution of the service establishment into a more modern, state-centred entity, and the origins of both revolution and reaction. Inevitably, certain individuals demand more attention than others. In this instance, grand dukes Konstantin Pavlovich and Konstantin Nikolaevich -- men who have already been written about at some length -- emerge as figures of particular note, but only insofar as they reveal patterns of behaviour with enduring relevance to our

central theme, that of evolving relations between state and dynasty, and grand ducal allegiance to both entities. We conclude with a brief overview of relevant developments in the twentieth century.

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A Note on Transliteration, Dates, and Abbreviations

The names of Rulers and heirs have been Anglicised. All others are presented in their Russian form. To avoid confusion between Alexander II and the future Alexander III, however, the latter is referred to as Aleksandr in chapters dealing with his father's reign.

Transliteration follows the Library of Congress model, though names ending in "ii" have been given the more common "y" ending.

Dates adhere to the Julian (i.e., "old style") calendar, except where otherwise specified.

Common abbreviations found in the text and footnotes are B.L. for British Library, LG for Life Guards, SIRIO for *Sbornik Imperatorskago Russkago Istoricheskago Obshchestva*, and MERSH for the *Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*.

PREFACE

This project began as an investigation into the role of the last generation of Romanov grand dukes, during the reign of Nicholas II. For a number of reasons, an extended study visit to Russia proved impossible during the completion of this work, a fact which, ultimately, produced some positive consequences insofar as it forced the author to scrutinise the rich and varied materials available in the West, with an eye toward finding hitherto unremarked upon patterns of grand ducal development.

Particularly intriguing were the views expressed in post-revolutionary exile by men such as Grand Duke Dmitry Pavlovich (1891-1942). Dmitry, like his cousin, Nikolai Nikolaevich, Jr. (1856-1929), refused to view his link to his fatherland and its service solely, or even primarily, in a dynastic context. He embraced the Provisional Government until it rejected him, and rejoiced in perceived Russian advances during the Stalinist period. This provocative viewpoint awakened the author's thirst to gain a deeper understanding of Russia's grand dukes, so often simply dismissed as one-dimensional figures. The key to achieving this aim, however, lay not in an examination of Nicholas II's reign itself, but in a careful scrutiny of the development of the grand ducal experience over the course of several centuries, with particular emphasis upon the nineteenth-century as the most intensive period of this development.

With the single exception of the autobiography of Grand Duke Aleksandr Mikhailovich (1866-1933; *Once a Grand Duke*, Garden City, 1932), grand ducal memoirs, both published and unpublished, fail to touch upon our primary period of focus, the nineteenth-century, to any significant degree. Fortunately, we do have a portion of the diaries of Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich (1827-1892; *1857-1861, Dnevnik velikogo kniaz'ia Konstantina Nikolaevicha*, L. Zakharova, ed., Moscow, 1994). Also available are collections of correspondence exchanged between members of the imperial family and such notable persons as Frédéric-César

La Harpe (*Correspondence de Frédéric-César la Harpe et Alexandre Ier*, Neuchatel, 1978), Napoleon I (*Alexandre Ier et Napoléon d'après leur correspondance inédite, 1801-1812*, Serge Tatistcheff, ed., Paris, 1891), and Prince Adam Czartoryski (*Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski and his Correspondence with Alexander I*, Adam Gielgud, ed., London, 1888). Equally valuable are the correspondence of Grand Duchess Anna Pavlovna and her brothers Konstantin Pavlovich (1779-1831) and Nicholas I (*Romanov Relations: The Private Correspondence of Tsars Alexander I and Nicholas I and the Grand Dukes Constantine and Michael with Their Sister, Queen Anna Paulovna, 1817-1855*, Sydney Jackman, ed., London, 1969), and the vast collection of letters exchanged between Konstantin Pavlovich and Nicholas I, published by the Imperial Russian Historical Society (*Sbornik Imperatorskago Russkago Istoricheskago Obshchestva*, St. Petersburg). These latter have certainly been cited by historians, but the same quotations, drawn from a small quantity of letters, appear repeatedly, and the complexity of Konstantin and Nicholas's relationship, as revealed by a thorough reading of the letters, has not been adequately portrayed to date. The correspondence of Konstantin Nikolaevich and Alexander II (1857-1861, *Perepiska imperatora Aleksandra s velikim kniazem Konstantinom Nikolaevichem*, L. Zakharova, ed., Moscow, 1994) is also enormously valuable and little used, having only recently been singled out from among the thousands of confiscated Romanov documents in the State Archive of the Russian Federation, Moscow, and published, along with the Konstantin diary.

The chronological span of this work perhaps represents an overambitious undertaking. Dealing only with published sources, the author was nonetheless faced with a huge body of primary works, many of which are unindexed. The challenge was to "troll" through thousands of pages, in search of scattered references to the non-ruling members of the imperial family -- that poorly defined grand ducal collective. Concrete data on such basic subjects as rate of grand ducal service promotion, type and distribution of appointments, type and distribution of decorations, etc., has simply never been compiled, and details such as these can

speak volumes about the interaction of time, status, and identity. There are several secondary works which focus on individual grand dukes, though not many of these are scholarly. The chief exception cited in this work is Angela Pienkos's book on Konstantin Pavlovich's activities in Poland (*The Imperfect Autocrat: Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich and the Polish Congress Kingdom*, Boulder, 1987). Pienkos delved into Polish archives and primary works, thus providing invaluable information, otherwise inaccessible to this author.

E.P. Karnovich's biography of Konstantin (*Tsesarevich Konstantin Pavlovich: Biograficheskii ocherk*, N.K. Shil'der, ed., St. Petersburg, 1899), published thirty-eight years after the grand duke's death, presents both useful background data, and credible analysis, in addition to which it includes full reproductions of some of Konstantin's otherwise unpublished correspondence. I.N. Bozherianov's biography of Mikhail Nikolaevich (*Pervyi tsarstvennyi general-fel'dtseikhmeister velikii kniaz' Mikhail Pavlovich, 1798-1849: Biograficheskii ocherk*, St. Petersburg, 1898) and V.V. Zherve's biography of Nikolai Nikolaevich, Sr. (*General-fel'dmarshal velikii kniaz' Nikolai Nikolaevich starshii: Istoricheskii ocherk ego zhizni i deiatel'nosti, 1831-1891*, St. Petersburg, 1911) are similar works. All three were clearly approved by the imperial government, but none of them are panegyrics. The authors appear to have given much thought to their analyses, and their sympathy for their subjects is tempered with just criticism. The same can be said of Yu.N. Danilov, a General Staff general and aide to Nikolai Nikolaevich, Jr., whose biography of the latter (*Veliky kniaz' Nikolai Nikolaevich*, Paris, 1930) was published in France but never translated from the Russian, and has failed to gain much notice. Such works, devoted to the lives of individual grand dukes, are truly invaluable, but one thing they do not do is to place their subjects in the larger context of grand ducal role as it developed over the course of many years (included in this assessment are the two existing grand ducal Ph.d. dissertations: Jacob Kipp's "The Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich and the Epoch of the Great Reforms, 1855-1866", Penn State, 1970,

and Angela Pienkos's "Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich: A Short Study in Early Nineteenth Century Russo-Polish Relations, 1815-1831", Wisconsin, 1971).

There exist three noteworthy popular works on the dynasty which include grand dukes as a prominent part of the overall picture: Sidney Harcave's *The Years of the Golden Cockerel: The Last Romanov Tsars, 1814-1917* (New York, 1978), David Chavchavadze's *The Grand Dukes* (New York, 1990), and *Dom Romanovy: Biograficheskie svedeniia o chlenakh tsarstvovavshego doma, ikh predkakh i rodstvennikakh* (P.Kh. Grebel'sky and A.B. Mirvis, eds., St. Petersburg, 1992)

The latter two are particularly useful as reference works. None of the three, however, manages (or even tries) to analyse the evolution of grand ducal role and identity. Meanwhile, works such as W. Bruce Lincoln's *The Romanovs: Autocrats of All the Russias* (New York, 1981) are produced to trace the evolution of autocrats. Of course, just due must be given to the many modern scholarly works available on Russia's rulers, both those that are biographical, and those that take a more general look at individual reigns. Cited throughout this dissertation are the works of Philip Longworth (*Alexis, Tsar of All the Russias*, London, 1984), Lindsey Hughes (*Sophia, Regent of Russia, 1657-1704*, New Haven, 1990; *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, New Haven, 1998), Isabel De Madariaga (*Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, New Haven, 1981), Roderick McGrew (*Paul I of Russia, 1754-1801*, Oxford, 1992), K. Waliszewski (*Paul the First of Russia, the Son of Catherine the Great*, London, 1913), M.K. Dziewanowski (*Alexander I, Russia's Mysterious Tsar*, New York, 1990), Janet Hartley (*Alexander I*, London, 1994), Bruce Lincoln (*Nicholas I, Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias*, Bloomington, 1978), W.E. Mosse (*Alexander II and the Modernization of Russia* 1992), N.G.O. Pereira (*Tsar-Liberator: Alexander II of Russia, 1818-1881*, Cambridge, 1983), Petr Zaionchkovsky (*The Russian Autocracy Under Alexander III*, Gulf Breeze, 1976), and Dominic Lieven (*Nicholas II: Twilight of the Empire*, New York, 1993). All of these works were very necessary for establishing the background against which the grand dukes must be studied. Also, Richard

Wortman's *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, (Princeton, 1995) though it does not focus on the grand dukes as such, lent an invaluable perspective to this work, touching upon such issues as symbolism, autocratic tradition, and the interaction of dynasty and public.

The breadth of grand ducal involvement in civic, social, cultural, diplomatic, commercial, and military affairs presented a particular challenge. Even after eliminating many of these activities from consideration, the author found himself delving into quite disparate secondary sources, the titles of which, at first glance, seem to have little to do with the subject at hand. These include works by Richard Hellie (*Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy*, Chicago, 1971), Robert Crummey (*Aristocrats and Servitors: The Boyar Elite in Russia, 1613-1689*, Princeton, 1983), W.M. Pintner (in W.M. Pintner and D.K. Rowney, eds, *Russian Officialdom: The Bureaucratization of Russian Society from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century*, London, 1980), Dominic Lieven (*Russia's Rulers Under the Old Regime*, New Haven, 1989), Geoffrey Hosking (*The Russian Constitutional Experiment: Government and Duma, 1907-1914*, Cambridge, 1973), Howard Mehlinger and John Thompson (*Count Witte and the Tsarist Government in the 1905 Revolution*, Bloomington, 1972), and on personalities and events, with works by Robert Byrnes (*Pobedonostsev, His Life and Thought*, Bloomington, n.d.), Anatole Mazour (*The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, Berkeley, 1968), and W.H. Zawadzki (*A Man of Honour: Adam Czartoryski as a Statesman of Russia and Poland, 1795-1831*, Oxford, 1993). Especially important were works on the evolution of the Russian military, by men like Matitahu Mayzel (*Generals and Revolutionaries, The Russian General Staff During the Revolution: A Study in the Transformation of a Military Elite*, Osnabruck, 1979), Forrestt Miller (*Dmitrii Miliutin and the Reform Era in Russia*, Nashville, 1968), David Rich (*The Tsar's Colonels: Professionalism, Strategy, and Subversion in Late Imperial Russia*, Cambridge, 1998), John Curtiss (*The Russian Army Under Nicholas I*, Durham, 1965), John Keep (*Soldiers of the*

Tsar: Army and Society in Russia, 1462-1874, Oxford, 1985), and William Fuller (*Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914*, New York, 1992).

Soviet materials are seemingly scarce in this work, and it will certainly be realised that the imperial family, for most of the twentieth century, were not considered a suitable subject for scholarly research in Russia. A brief glance at our primary sources, however, reveals how thoroughly, albeit obliquely, Soviet interest in the institutions and personalities of the 'old regime' has contributed to the task of the modern researcher. The majority of the primary materials cited herein were published in the pre-Stalinist Soviet Union, with introductions and commentary by Russian scholars like Petr Zaionchkovsky (whose own books figure strongly throughout this work) and V.P. Semennikov (who specialised in the study of the confiscated Romanov documents). Works which fall into this category include the diaries of Dmitry Miliutin (*Dnevnik D.A. Miliutina*, P.A. Zaionchkovsky, ed., Moscow, 1950), Anna Tiutcheva (*Pri dvore dvukh imperatorov*, S.V. Bakhrushina, ed., 1928-29, republished with an introduction by Alfred Rieber, Cambridge, 1975), Aleksandra Bogdanovich (*Tri poslednikh samoderzhtsa: Dnevnik, 1880-1912*, E. Vavilov, ed., Moscow, 1924), Egor Peretts (*Dnevnik E.A. Perettsa, 1880-1883*, A.A. Sergeev, ed., Moscow, 1927), and Petr Valuev (*Dnevnik P.A. Valueva, ministra vnutrennykh del*, P.A. Zaionchkovsky, ed., Moscow, 1961), and the memoirs of Evgeny Feoktistov (*Vospominaniia E.M. Feoktistova: Za kulisami politiki i literatury, 1848-1896*, Iu.G. Oksman and A.E. Presniakov, eds, Leningrad, 1929).

Of course, it is their own content, rather than the predictably disdainful Marxist-Leninist commentary, that gives these works the most value. Naturally, all primary sources reflect the biases of their authors, but, so long as this is taken into account by those who use them, this can, of itself, be a useful thing. Unfortunately, however, several instances have occurred wherein historians have made unquestioning use of a single primary source which reflects their own preconceptions. Perhaps the most prominent example of this phenomenon involves

the diary of State Secretary A.A. Polovtsev (*Dnevnik gosudarstvennogo sekretaria A.A. Polovtsova*, P.A. Zaionchovsky, ed., Moscow, 1966; *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vols. 3-4, 1923; 46, 1932; 47, 1934) who worked very closely with the Chairman of the State Council, Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich, during the reign of Alexander III. Polovtsev's vindictive attitude toward the grand dukes is entirely in keeping with his period of activity, during which grand dukes were trying to seize a place for themselves in government, thus emerging as powerful rivals to Russia's professional civil servants -- a thing not directly noted in works like those of Zaionchovsky, who relies heavily upon Polovtsev. Another case in point is the secondary literature on Nikolai Nikolaevich, Jr. as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army (1914-1915). One finds a blind reliance upon the memoirs of Vladimir Voeikov (*S tsarem i bez tsaria: Vospominania posledniago dvortsovago komendanta gosudaria imperatora Nikolaia II*, Helsinki, 1936) and Vladimir Sukhomlinov (*Vospominaniia*, Berlin, 1924), both of whom despised Nikolai, with no mention of the writings of Yu.N. Danilov or other pro-Nikolai witnesses to the events described.

The political outlook of authors was not an issue in the selection of materials for this work, which cites the Voeikovs and Danilovs alike, wherever facts are credible or opinions enlightening. The emphasis, rather, is upon works produced by servitors rather than journalists or courtiers, though the Tiutcheva and Bogdanovich diaries are both sufficiently concerned with politics and public opinion to merit their inclusion here.

Three reference works proved invaluable to this project: the Brokgauz & Efron Encyclopedia (St. Petersburg) and the Military Encyclopedia (St. Petersburg), both of which belong to pre-Revolutionary Russia and contain reliable data. Equally useful was The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History Joseph L. Wiczyński, ed., Gulf Breeze), a product of Western scholarship.

Imperial Russian regimental histories, which exist in abundance though they can be difficult to find, are a useful source against which to check the military data

which appear in primary sources and are so often reproduced, without verification, in secondary works. Regretfully, the conflicting information which emerged in our research could not always be reconciled, and much archival work remains to be done on the subject of grand ducal military service. In the meantime, it is just to decry the carelessness of those who have simply presented unverified information as fact, and to conclude that they do not regard grand ducal careers as a topic of particular importance.

Of the official documents scrutinised for this work, two sets are available at the British Library, i.e., Paul I's 1797 Statute on the Imperial Family, and the letters and manifestos pertaining to Konstantin Pavlovich's renunciation of the throne and Nicholas I's accession. Augmenting these were the Russian volume of *British Documents on Foreign Affairs* (Dominic Lieven, ed., Frederick, 1983), providing an external view of grand ducal political activity.

This project, as noted, had sharp limitations, and every decision to exclude some line of enquiry was taken only with the utmost regret. A large number of sources, both published and unpublished, were scrutinised but not used, and some of these will appear in the bibliography and notes as works which nonetheless made a "silent" contribution to the overall theme developed here, especially through the questions which they raised. The author looks forward to incorporating these materials into a future volume on the grand dukes in the twentieth century, and to expanding the examination of earlier generations of non-ruling Romanovs. Indeed, it is hoped that this present work, with all its inadequacies and narrowness of focus, will nonetheless dispel the notion that the grand dukes were insignificant to the governance and development of the Russian Empire, or indifferent to the evolution of the state.

Finally, before proceeding any further, I must certainly express my debt of gratitude to the men and women who have helped me so greatly with this project. Prince Yuri Galitzine and Mr Paul Ilyinsky both opened up vast new avenues of information. Prince and Princess Emanuel Galitzine, Mr and Mrs Philip Goodman,

Prince David Chavchavadze and Professor Dominic Lieven have not only devoted a significant amount of time over the past several years to refining my understanding of the Romanov Dynasty, but extended their generous hospitality and friendship as well. Professors Geoffrey Hosking and Ian Roberts are both deserving of appreciative note here. Professor Lindsey Hughes, the soul of patience, has been a friend and guide of inestimable value since I first came under her supervision as an MA student in October, 1990, and it is to her, especially, that I owe whatever success this project might achieve. Its failings are, of course, exclusively my own.

Section One: The Roots of Grand Ducal Role

I. Grand Dukes Defined

The Romanov grand dukes, as political entities, formed an integral part of the history of Imperial Russia, beginning in the latter part of the eighteenth century. At the same time, they were continually forced by political, ideological, and social change to redefine their relationship to the dynasty on the one hand, and the state on the other, seeking to preserve tradition, while securing a legitimate and publicly accepted role. The aim of this dissertation is to place grand ducal role in its proper historical context by examining the forces, both internal and external, which shaped it.

We begin with a definition of the title 'grand duke' itself.¹ In pre-Muscovite times, beginning with the princes of Kiev and passing to the Riurik princes, 'grand duke' was a title held by independent rulers of important principalities. In almost all instances, the name of the realm itself was appended to the title. The smaller principalities were gradually swallowed up by the Grand Duke of Vladimir and Moscow in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the emergence of the first Muscovite tsar (Ivan IV, established as Grand Duke of Moscow in 1533; proclaimed himself tsar in 1547) saw the grand ducal title transferred to the sons of the ruler, all of whom received it automatically at birth. The title tsarevich (tsar's son) was, until the eighteenth century, used primarily by the Tatar aristocracy in lieu of 'khan' or khan's son. Even now this particular title is somewhat ambiguous. Sergei Pushkarev, in his dictionary of Russian historical terms, insists that any son of a tsar might use the title tsarevich, but *tsesarevich* (a title introduced by Peter I) was reserved for the heir to the throne.² In fact, only when the title *naslednik* (heir) was

¹ In Russian *velikii kniaz'*, or great prince, but the standard English translation is grand duke, with *grand-duc* used in French, and *Grossfürst* in German.

² Pushkarev, Sergei Germanovich, *Dictionary of Russian Historical*

added to tsesarevich as a prefix was formal recognition granted to the bearer as first in line to the throne.³ Informally, even during the period 1722-1797, when male primogeniture was abandoned as the sole legal basis for succession, the title tsesarevich (tsarevich predominates in modern English language sources) was reserved for the ruler's eldest son or nearest male Romanov relative, with junior males referred to as grand dukes (*velikie kniazi*). In the final analysis, though heirs were always grand dukes, and grand dukes were frequently tsar's sons, we shall, for simplicity's sake, use the grand ducal title within this text to designate those members of the dynasty raised to occupy some position other than the Russian throne.

Because our task is to examine the role, identity, and preparation for service of non-ruling members of the Romanov dynasty, we shall not include heirs as primary subjects, or, for that matter, grand duchesses, who were barred by their gender from playing an official service role in Russia after 1797.

Of course, the elimination of heirs and grand duchesses limits our study of the seventeenth, and all but the latter portion of the eighteenth, century to the evolution of autocratic ideology and succession law. Neither Muscovy nor Imperial Russia witnessed the maturity of a single junior Romanov until Konstantin Pavlovich came of age during the reign of the Emperor Paul (1796-1801). So near was the ruling house to extinction before Paul's four healthy sons made their appearance in the 1770s and 90s, that every grand duke who lived past infancy saw himself elevated to the role of heir or ruler before he could pioneer a distinct grand ducal service tradition. Nor, after the death of Tsar Fedor in 1682, was Romanov succession functionally grounded in male primogeniture until Alexander II's enthronement in 1855 (a development which lasted only sixty-two years insofar as Nicholas II took it upon himself to abdicate on behalf of his son in 1917).

Terms from the Eleventh Century to 1917, (George Vernadsky and Ralph Fisher, Jr., eds.), New Haven, 1970, p. 38.

³ de Madariaga, Isabel, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, New Haven, 1981, p. 28.

II. Service & Autocracy, 1613-1682

A great deal has been written about the Muscovite service establishment, marked as it was by fierce competition between the boyar elite and the upstart middle service class, and the resistance of all traditional castes to the encroachments of government sponsored modernization. So, too, has the birth of the Romanov dynasty received abundant attention. Insofar as a rudimentary understanding of both service establishment and dynasty -- their theoretical bases and practical functions -- is essential to this study, we shall endeavor, in brief, to highlight those points relevant to the future emergence of a grand ducal service role.

Within Muscovy, the tsar symbolised the active element, or will. In his absence, the various institutions and castes which made up the government and populace, could retain their transcendent cohesiveness only briefly, and it was, indeed, his function as a unifying and preserving force that characterised his rule. The extinction of the Riurik dynasty, and the ensuing Time of Troubles, during which Muscovy itself almost succumbed to extinction, served to reinforce the belief that a tsar-centred government was a true necessity,⁴ and the election of Michael Romanov to the Muscovite throne in 1613 established a seventeenth-century dynastic mythos.

A meek young man of sixteen, Michael hardly embodied the concept of autocratic will, but his supporters nurtured his candidacy upon religious grounds, arguing that God himself had desired the enthronement of his father, Fedor Romanov, and had turned His back upon Muscovy when Boris Godunov had ascended in Fedor's place. God's choice now fell upon Michael, a pious youth, the son of persecuted parents. To reject him was to invite a continuation of divine wrath.⁵ Here, then, was

⁴ Gadlo, A.V., "Bytovoi zhizni pervykh Romanovykh i russkaïa narodnaïa kul'tura XVII v." in *Dom Romanovykh v istorii Rossii*, (O.E. Khovanova, ed.), St. Petersburg, 1995, p. 110.

⁵ Tiumentsev, I.O., "Iz istorii izbiratel'nogo Zemskogo Sobora 1613 g.", in *Dom Romanovykh v istorii Rossii*, pp 78-79.

the theoretical foundation of Romanov sovereignty. It helped that the family possessed a blood link to the Riurik dynasty through the wife of Ivan IV, but this in itself did not make them royal. Only God could bestow the creative monopoly which made a man His representative on earth, and raised that man's wife and children to a position above all ordinary mortals.

As the century wore on, the sacred quality of the tsar's person and power grew in the popular consciousness. His legitimacy did not rest upon an active demonstration of his will. Seventeenth-century tsarist duties were, according to Cynthia Whittaker, "liturgical in form and static in content".⁶ Indeed, a look at palace records dating from Alexis Mikhailovich's reign reveals a schedule dominated by religious observances. Moreover, the early Romanovs, whose "efforts to differentiate themselves" from the boyar elite would constitute a "major [dynastic] theme", made good use of this sacred image. Lindsey Hughes writes of Alexis:

"The Tsar and other members of his family made public appearances during celebrations of the thirteen major Church holidays, on family and national occasions, and countless saints' days... These observances contained a strong political element, for the solemn rituals of Orthodoxy formed a vital part of the overall 'package' of autocracy."⁷

Finally, though true autocratic rule may not have been realised by Michael or his first two successors, their subjects, in theory, were their slaves -- even the most aristocratic Muscovite was a servitor who owed unconditional obedience to his sovereign, and the state might be likened to a spiritual extension of the tsar.

The obligation to obey the tsar in all things extended not only to the populace, but to the ruler's family, over which he presided both as sovereign and patriarch. At the

⁶ Whittaker, Cynthia, "The Reforming Tsar: The Redefinition of Autocratic Duty in Eighteenth-Century Russia", *Slavic Review*, v. 51, #1, Spring 1992.

⁷ Hughes, Lindsey, *Sophia, Regent of Russia, 1657-1704*, New Haven, 1990, pp 11, 19.

same time, the divine spark which formed the basis of his creative monopoly resided within them as well. The royal family, in its entirety, constituted "a single sacred association", but Michael's parents fell outside of this group.⁸ Fedor had long since proved himself to be an ambitious man. Indeed, his struggle with Boris Godunov for the Muscovite throne had resulted in the persecution of the Romanov clan, with Fedor forced to become a monk (Filaret), and his wife a nun (Marfa). Forever barred from playing an official role outside the church, they could never become royal.⁹ Thus Michael had perfect security in his relationship with his father. He could allow Filaret, who was made Patriarch in 1619, to rule Muscovy in his name. He could even allow him to bear the title "great sovereign", without any threat to his own status as the head of the dynasty.

For the tsar's royal relatives, however, things must, of necessity, be different. Their inclusion in the dynasty made them, theoretically, potential possessors of the supreme will, by virtue of the divine spark which itself defined royalty. When Alexis died in 1676, allegiance was sworn not only to his successor, Fedor, but to the entire royal family.¹⁰ Their behaviour must, therefore, be carefully managed, both to ensure that they did not encroach upon the tsar's sovereignty, and to ensure that they did not tarnish the image of the ruling house.

Michael had no surviving siblings, thus we cannot know whether younger brothers would have received grand ducal status and a place in the succession. In fact, although male primogeniture had been an accepted Riurik tradition, the Romanovs possessed no written law of succession. Michael never formally declared his only surviving son the heir, but he established the boy's claim as soon as he reached a suitable age (thirteen) by placing him upon an ivory throne during the New Year's celebration in 1642. Thereafter, Alexis was always to be seen at his father's side, and at age fifteen he stood in for the tsar at an Epiphany ceremony.

⁸ Gadlo, *Dom*, p. 113.

⁹ Lincoln, W. Bruce, *The Romanovs: Autocrats of All the Russias*, New York, 1981, pp 27-28.

¹⁰ Hughes, *Sophia*, p. 44.

The tsar reportedly named Alexis his successor with his dying breath, and Alexis, at his coronation, based his legitimacy upon Michael's command that he should succeed.¹¹

The new tsar clearly favoured primogeniture, but refrained from issuing a succession law. Of his six sons, the second, Aleksei, born several years after the death of his older brother, was declared heir only when he turned thirteen (in 1667). He died three years later, making nine year old Fedor the senior *tsarevich*.. Another four years passed, therefore, before Muscovy again possessed an official heir.

Why were pre-adolescent boys not confirmed as their father's successors? High childhood death rates undoubtedly contributed to this practice. More importantly, however, the public association of ruler and heir, traced by Longworth both to the Byzantine and to the Roman successions, remained an important tradition so long as male primogeniture, customary though it may have been, possessed no legal foundation.¹² A child simply could not fulfil the necessary role. Pre-adolescent royal boys, no less than their female relatives, were, by tradition, concealed from public view.¹³

The reason for this practice remains obscure. It has been suggested that fear of the "evil eye" underlay it. There seems, moreover, to have been a stigma attached to childhood, which was viewed as incompatible with the demi-god status attributed to royalty.¹⁴ At any rate, until they reached adolescence, little distinction appears to have been drawn between eldest sons and their brothers. Since Alexis's younger brothers died in early childhood, we cannot know what kind of an education they would have received relative to his, but he himself had four sons who survived to an educable age, providing us with a basis for comparison.

¹¹ Longworth, Philip, *Alexis, Tsar of All the Russias*, London, 1984, pp 15-16, 19, 22.

¹² Ibid., p. 25.

¹³ Gadlo, *Dom*, p. 113; Longworth, Alexis, p. 25; Hughes, *Sophia*, p. 38.

¹⁴ Gadlo, *Dom*, p. 113.

Great ceremony and celebration attended the birth of royal children. In keeping with the religious nature of Muscovite life, the first visitor to the newborn was a priest, and all the Kremlin churches offered services of thanksgiving. On the secular side, the tsar usually hosted a celebratory banquet, distributed largesse to the populace, and sent out rescripts to religious and governmental figures of note.¹⁵

Given the sacred ideal in which the Romanov mythos was cloaked, religion formed an essential part of royal education. Alexis began Orthodox instruction and observance at age three, two years before embarking upon his general education. When he turned five he was placed under the supervision of a secular overseer, court functionary Boris Morozov, presiding over a staff of lesser tutors. His lessons continued to have strong religious overtones, however. Every letter in his alphabet book "was accompanied by sayings associated with the life of Jesus", and his primers were Orthodox texts.¹⁶

Even so, practicality demanded that a prince know something of worldly matters. Whilst remaining hidden from public view, Romanov boys were allowed the company of non-royal contemporaries, with whom they shared lessons and play. They received a wide variety of toys, musical instruments and games, some of which were frowned upon by the Church. They wore German clothing as well as Russian, and were entertained by dancers and acrobats.¹⁷

In Alexis's ninth year, Morozov both accelerated and secularised his lessons. Thirteen year old Artamon Matveev, the son of a non-noble official, was brought in as a study companion, with the specific purpose of "bring[ing Alexis] on the faster". Morozov, for his part, was a "politically astute" and "progressive" man who challenged the limits of custom by introducing the tsarevich to educational materials from the west. The basic aim of the boy's education was "doubtless utilitarian". He required a firm knowledge of military science, international affairs, and government,

¹⁵ Hughes, *Sophia*, pp 24-25.

¹⁶ Longworth, *Alexis*, pp 8-10; Lincoln, *Romanovs*, p. 39.

¹⁷ Gadlo, *Dom*, pp 117-118; Hughes, *Sophia*, p. 29.

and was "soon immersed in quite extensive studies, including the elements of several sciences as well as history and geography".¹⁸

When Alexis had sons of his own he followed the custom of turning them over to boyar overseers at age five. Foreign observers took a dismissive view of the children's education, which, so far as they were concerned, was narrow in the extreme, encompassing nothing more than reading, counting, and a basic familiarization with domestic and foreign affairs.¹⁹ Even this, however, would, undoubtedly, have constituted a superior education when compared to that received by the majority of well born Muscovite boys. Indeed, Muscovite aristocrats do not appear to have received any formal education at all!²⁰

Alexis took a step toward broadening his children's education when, in 1667, he appointed Simeon Polotsky, an experienced instructor and scholar of merit, to teach Aleksei, the thirteen year old heir to the throne. Polotsky, who had himself been educated in Poland, implemented a programme of classical instruction. One might conjecture that his engagement represented a conscious effort to provide the heir with a superior education. It was only after Aleksei's death that the tutor undertook to instruct third son Fedor, now the unofficial heir. That said, Alexis had himself begun the scholarly portion of his education only upon reaching his ninth year, and Fedor, who was eight when his elder brother died, may have escaped Polotsky's previous attention solely because of his youth. That the scholar was permitted to expend his efforts upon royal children with no conceivable future rulership role, and was himself eager to do so, is demonstrated by the fact that, while tutoring Aleksei, he apparently provided instruction to the *tsarevna* Sophia as well. Of the remaining *tsarevichi*, Ivan was too feeble-minded to benefit from an advanced education, and Peter too young (he turned eight in 1680, the year of Polotsky's death). Even had Polotsky lived long enough to take Peter into hand, however, it is unlikely that he

¹⁸ Longworth, *Alexis*, pp 11-12.

¹⁹ Hughes, *Sophia*, pp 33, 42 ; Lincoln, *Romanovs*, p. 39.

²⁰ Crummey, Robert, *Aristocrats and Servitors: The Boyar Elite in Russia, 1613-1689*, Princeton, 1983, p. 36.

would have been allowed to do so. Alexis died in 1676, and, with a teen-aged half brother at the head of the dynasty instead of a father, Peter appears to have been left within his mother's sphere of influence. The scholarly Fedor might have been expected to appoint Polotsky's "protege", Silvester Medvedev, tutor to his youngest brother had he chosen to involve himself in the matter, but Peter's mother sought her counsel from Patriarch Joachim, a conservative figure who could not have approved of Medvedev's latinising tendencies. As a result, Peter's education was not on a par with that accorded his older siblings. Like them, he had instructors seconded from government chancelleries, but, ironically given his future role, there was no progressive individual at the head of his staff.²¹

Peter was a self-motivated young man when it came to things that really interested him, however, and, in the end, he saw to it that he received the education he needed. His preoccupation with the military was wholly indulged, if only as a source of amusement, and by the time he reached adolescence he was well on his way toward a thorough understanding of modern troop manoeuvres.

Of Peter's education we shall say no more. But the military aspect of his father's and brothers' training remains to be examined. Michael, for his part, certainly never played an active military role in his kingdom, but his son and grandsons each received a toy horse on their first birthday,²² a custom which may have been symbolic of their boyar-cavalry heritage, and an indication of its survival within the sacred Romanov mythos. Muscovy's tsars, were, after all, looked upon as *defenders* of the Orthodox faith.

The *tsarevichi* received other, more explicitly, military toys as well. Alexis had a sabre, bow and arrows, long before he was old enough to manipulate them, and his sons played with toy soldiers, cannon, bows and arrows and drums.²³ Longworth makes clear his opinion that military leadership was meant to be a part of Alexis's

²¹ Hughes, *Peter*, p. 3.

²² Gadlo, *Dom*, pp 117-118.

²³ Longworth, *Alexis*, pp 7, 11; Hughes, *Peter*, p. 3.

future role. As we have already noted, he includes "knowledge of military organization and weaponry" amongst the utilitarian subjects included in the boy's formal curriculum, with lessons in horsemanship, archery and swordsmanship.²⁴ These latter activities, of course, belonged to the increasingly anachronistic *milieu* of militia-style warfare. But Alexis anticipated Peter I's precocious passion for modern military science, filling his library with translations of western works on this subject.²⁵ Alexis's sons, for their part, were seemingly taught the traditional skills of the cavalry archer, but their martial toys included some with undeniable western provenance.

In fact, the throne was the chief proponent of military modernization in Muscovy, going back to Vasily Shuisky's brief career during the Time of Troubles. A half a century later, Alexis certainly recognised that his army was in dire need of reform. Traditional military service in Muscovy was anything but professional. Indeed, modern service principles were held in contempt by noble servitors, who considered them "socially degrading", and preferred to leave such endeavors to foreign mercenaries.²⁶

Theoretically, service was owed to the sovereign under whatever terms he cared to specify. In practice, Muscovy's servitors had themselves been inculcated with a mercenary outlook by the system of service based landholding developed under Riurik rulership as a way to secure the obedience of the nobles. The system peaked in the last quarter of the sixteenth century when a 1556 decree defining military obligation in relation to estate size was extended to include hereditary land holdings in addition to crown owned service lands. It declined steadily under the Romanovs, however, as service lands began to pass from one generation to the next, and by 1677 was essentially abolished.²⁷

²⁴ Longworth, *Alexis*, pp 7, 11.

²⁵ Lincoln, *Romanovs*, p. 40; Longworth, *Alexis*, p. 8.

²⁶ Hellie, Richard, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy*, Chicago, 1971, p. 192.

²⁷ Crummey, *Aristocrats*, p. 34; Hellie, *Enserfment*, pp 38, 57-58.

With the theoretical basis of their service amounting to a demeaning subjugation and the practical basis more or less defunct, Muscovy's noble servitors became increasingly uncooperative. The scope and seriousness of absenteeism remains a subject of historical dispute, though the phenomenon itself is generally acknowledged.²⁸ The acquisition of secure patrimonial landholdings certainly removed much of the motivation for service, and when the threat of forced modernization was added to this mix one can readily perceive how morale and unity waned.

Another point of general friction was *mestnichestvo*, a clan based system of service appointments which rested upon the belief that family ties were a reliable indicator of intrinsic worthiness.²⁹ Muscovy's middle service class had reason to oppose *menstnichestvo* since it barred their way to the higher positions. The tsar always had the right to override this system, which was frequently suspended before being abolished altogether as a military service institution in 1682. But throughout the seventeenth century and beyond, Russia's rulers continued to look to the aristocracy as the source wherein would be found the best indigenous commanders, for the most part sharing the opinion that good birth presupposed natural leadership ability.³⁰

Here, then, in greatly simplified form, was the backdrop against which service took place in Muscovy. Unfortunately, though boys typically began their careers at the age of fifteen, we have not a single able-bodied Romanov tsarevich (excluding Alexis himself who, at fifteen, was clearly the heir to the throne) to provide us with an example of how non-ruling royals would have functioned within this scenario. The military aspect of Romanov upbringing was, as we have seen, neither insignificant, nor as intense and systematic as religious instruction. Muscovy was a service-oriented society, but public opinion might have accepted a grand duke who

²⁸ see, for instance, Hellie, *Enserfment*, pp 214, 216-219, 233.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 191-192; Crummey, *Aristocrats*, pp 38-39.

³⁰ Crummey, *Aristocrats*, pp 46,48.

(with the tsar's blessing) chose a life of pious retirement, eschewing any service role at all.

On the other hand, Alexis, though fulfilling the requirements of religious observance, sought a warrior role and image for himself, and in so doing, took a step toward forcing such a role upon his sons. That he was eager to father as many boys as possible is only partially explained by the high childhood mortality rate. August von Meyerberg, a foreign observer at his court, noted that, in addition to wishing to "preserve the sceptre of Moscow" for his descendants, the tsar also intended to "establish his dominion by the number of his children".³¹ This assertion suggests that Alexis envisioned an important public role, whether active or symbolic, for whatever sons he produced. Indeed, one can imagine instances wherein family collaboration would have been useful to the maintenance of Romanov authority and prestige, helping, perhaps, to raise service morale as well. Alexis's absence at the Polish front in 1654 might have provided an opportunity for an adult grand duke to chair one of the commissions which took charge of affairs in Moscow and at court. If, however, the tsar had not wished to go to the front himself, he could have sent a grand duke in his place, and dispatched others as dynastic representatives to conquered territories. All of these functions would be assumed by Romanov grand dukes in centuries to come. But, while Alexis himself failed to provide the dynasty with a thriving brood of *tsarevichi*, autocratic ideology, as it was established in the Muscovite period, left a profound mark upon the definition of grand ducal role.

To begin with, the demi-god status attached to members of the ruling house would, during the Muscovite period itself, have demanded that they accept positions only at the apex of the service hierarchy. To submit to the authority of an ordinary mortal, however brilliant, would have been sacrilege. This, at any rate, was entirely in keeping with the traditional boyar world view, being, essentially, an extension of

³¹ Hughes, *Sophia*, p. 27.

mestnichestvo into the metaphysical realm. Peter I's redefinition of service and dynastic values negatively impacted, without obliterating, this principle, creating grounds for a conflict of interests which we shall trace in later chapters.

The most significant and immutable rule of grand ducal existence, again springing directly from the demi-god status attributed not only to Michael and his successors, but to all of his descendants, was the demand that the non-ruling male renounce all claim to an independent will or a public persona. Every citizen was, as we have seen, obliged to recognise the tsar's creative monopoly, but the creative *potential* intrinsic to royal blood represented an omnipresent danger to the head of the dynasty. The grand duke who served, in whatever capacity, must do so as a passive extension of the tsar's own person. Thus, Alexis assumed much when he envisioned a large cohesive dynasty. What would his life have been like if he had had a Peter the Great for a younger brother, or even a handful of average brothers with wives drawn from the ambitious boyar aristocracy? Would he have been willing to entrust them with service roles? Would he have been able to maintain dominion over his family?

Three *tsarevichi* remained when Alexis died in 1676, and it has been alleged that plots were already being hatched to place the youngest (Peter) on the throne.³² Fedor's death six years later was enough to precipitate a bloody succession crisis. There were, of course, unique circumstances in this case -- the tsar had no children and had not declared an heir. His eldest brother (Ivan) was clearly incompetent. His youngest brother (Peter) was a half-sibling and a child. Both had ambitious maternal relatives. In the event, the boys succeeded as co-rulers, and each went to his grave without leaving a son. Peter's grandson, who died in adolescence (whilst occupying the throne as Peter II), was the last direct male-line Romanov descendant. By the time Alexander I succeeded in 1801 -- the first tsar since Fedor Alekseevich to have non-ruling brothers -- a detailed succession law was in place. But the theoretical

³² Ibid., pp. 43-44.

existence of that intrinsic creative potential remained as firmly entrenched as it had in Muscovite times, and, along with it, the necessity of public self-abnegation for grand dukes, though the service ethos itself was now vastly different, thanks in large part to the revolutionary reign of Peter I.

III. The Dawn of Russia's Imperial Age, 1682-1725

Peter I's succession in 1682 as junior tsar represented a compromise between practicality and tradition. The simultaneous existence of greater and lesser autocrats was illogical, but the formulators of the compromise portrayed Ivan as the embodiment of autocracy's higher spiritual function, while Peter's future role as the active autocrat, though necessary to the state, was, ostensibly, lower.

This was not meant as a permanent solution. Had the senior tsar sired a healthy son, this child would, presumably, have assumed the mantle of sole heir rather than co-heir with Peter's eldest son. Ivan fathered only daughters, however, and remained a passive figure until his death in 1696. Peter's true rival was his sister, Sophia, who, as regent, staked her own claim to sovereignty, with no apparent intention of giving it up when her brothers came of age. Peter succeeded in nullifying his sister's power and relegating her to a convent in 1689, but he was still a youth with much to learn and did not immediately take his kingdom into hand. Not much time would pass, however, before even the most exalted of his subjects discovered that there was nothing imaginary about Peter's creative monopoly.

The Imperial Age began with Peter I, whose all-consuming desire to transform Muscovy into a modern secular power led to the birth of the Russian Empire. International recognition of this transformation hinged upon proof of Russia's military superiority, finally obtained in 1721 through victory over Sweden. In Russia itself, the emergence of an imperial consciousness overshadowed mere technological advancement. It was Peter's recognition of the existence of an

ideologically independent Russian State which really effected the revolutionary change. What had been a single entity -- the tsar with his *votchina* , Muscovy, as a spiritual extension of himself -- split into two potentially rival centres of allegiance: dynasty and state. In order to avoid conflict, however, it was clearly necessary to establish grounds for a working relationship between the two, rejoining them in a functional unity wherein each partner so perfectly complemented the other that there need never arise any question as to which was the superior.

What actually did emerge during Peter's reign was a quasi-state-centred ideology, within which the state appeared to be the senior partner, inasmuch as its preservation was represented as paramount. The emperor had compelling reasons to foster such an outlook. His own identity was so thoroughly invested in the Empire, that he readily came to view himself as a servant of the state, not hesitating to place its interests above those of the dynasty, as was the case when, in 1718, he removed the tsesarevich from the line of succession, and, by so doing, nearly doomed the ruling house to extinction. Peter clearly recognised that the only foundation upon which to build a modern professional officer corps was a patriotic ethos. A man might sacrifice his life to defend his national honour, but a slave was not likely to care so deeply about his master's patrimony. It was this realization which, according to Feofan Prokopovich, led the tsar to declare to his troops on the eve of the battle of Poltava that they were fighting not "for Peter but for the state entrusted to him",³³ and the resulting victory must have reinforced his belief in the power of imperial pride.

To the extent that the tsar willed his subjects to look upon the state as their primary concern, Russia did indeed possess a state-centred ideology. Richard Wortman writes that the "relationship between sovereign and subjects was [henceforth] to be based not on hereditary right and personal obligation, but on the obligation to serve the state".³⁴ But, in an absolute sense, the Petrine Empire

³³ Whittaker, "Reforming Tsar", p. 84.

³⁴ Wortman, Richard, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in*

remained as tsar-centred as Holy Muscovy. The critical distinction lay in the voluntary nature of dynastic subordination to the state, which latter possessed no guarantee of its ideological autonomy. The tsar was free as before to treat his realm as a patrimonial holding, and, in this respect, the state's independence was purely ephemeral.

So far as the basis for his own sovereignty was concerned, Peter professed his belief in the divine origin of his power, its absolute nature, and the autocrat's complete lack of accountability before men. He maintained that, when Michael was elected to the throne in 1613, the Russian people, guided by God, had renounced their collective will, ceding it to the tsar, who thereafter possessed an exclusive right to "decide the common weal".³⁵ Thus far he was in accord with traditional thought. But Peter's devotion to the state, when combined with his practical-mindedness, allowed for no illusion as to the infrequency with which the moral superiority implicit in royal birth truly manifested itself in life. His own elevation to the throne in 1682 demonstrated that there were many amongst the Muscovite elite who were willing to dispense with tradition under dire circumstances. Peter, though he had never questioned Ivan's legitimacy as senior ruler, went even further, taking it upon himself toward the end of his reign to make the autocratic power self-correcting. His succession statute, referred to by Prokopovich as "a kind of prophylactic or preventative medicine for the monarchy of all the Russias", appeared in 1722. Thereafter, male primogeniture remained as an ideal, but the reigning monarch received legal right to appoint as his successor "whomsoever" he saw fit.³⁶ Writes Wortman: "[Peter's] Succession Law and other legislation established a utilitarian measure of justifying rule by dedication to the general good".³⁷ Thus, by injecting a meritocratic principle into the autocratic structure, the emperor clearly believed it

Russian Monarchy, Princeton, 1995, p. 64.

³⁵ Lentin, A. (ed.), *Peter the Great, His Law on the Imperial Succession. The Official Commentary*, Oxford, 1996, p. 39.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 8, 13, 46.

³⁷ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 81.

possible to ensure the unity of state and dynasty, and the integrity of the patriotic ethos, in perpetuity.

The meritocratic principle formed the real foundation of Peter's programme. What the succession law was to the imperial family, the Table of Ranks was to the nobility. The Table, which also appeared in 1722, brought a western style service hierarchy to Russia, with ranks borrowed directly from the Prussian model. But this in itself was scarcely more than a superficial change. The real heart of the measure lay in its insistence that all servitors must begin their careers at the lowest non-commissioned rank, and advance thereafter according to practical criteria. Peter's belief in the ideal of high birth made him eager to encourage young noblemen to lead in every aspect of service life. Those who entered the army could, for instance, serve in exclusively noble guards regiments which functioned as special training units for highborn men of non-commissioned rank. But the incentives stopped short of compromising the meritocratic principle itself. Thus the Table of Ranks, though it recognised the social prerogatives of birth, was clear about the requirements of service. Moreover, although the Petrine officer corps remained exclusively noble, any man able to work his way up through the ranks received a patent of nobility upon obtaining his commission.

The hostile reaction of Russia's noble servitors to the institutionalization of the meritocratic principle can readily be imagined. Even the petty nobility, who stood to gain from this measure in relation to the elite, could not but have been horrified at the thought of facing competition from commoners. It cut to the very quick of the noble identity, and, in so doing, threatened to precipitate a new epidemic of desertion. Thus, the long-term success of Peter's programme of modernization depended not so much upon the use of legal coercion, as upon his ability to persuade the nobility that they, as individuals, needed a direct connection to the Petrine State. The breakdown of the clan mentality (leaving caste consciousness intact) had already begun years before the Petrine reforms. But it was only in transferring honour, pride, and responsibility from a collective, to an individual,

basis that the destruction of this anachronistic outlook could occur. In order to avoid the disaffection that had undermined the effectiveness of the Muscovite service establishment, Peter wanted his servitors to view the state's interests as their own.

Henceforth, any member of the 'warrior' classes who failed to establish an individual relationship with the State must exist as an outsider in his own native land. The spiritual bond which had formerly linked all Muscovite subjects to the tsar, though it survived as a unifying element, could not act as a direct point of connection between free Russians and the secular State. The nobleman who refused to embark upon a service career would retain his seigneurial identity and his link to the mystical Muscovite world (which continued to exist within Russia's territorial boundaries, but outside of the new ideological perimeters of the state). He would forfeit, however, all right to participate in the life of the Empire. Service alone bestowed upon a man the opportunity to partake of imperial glory. It also conferred rank, the outward symbol of his individual value to the Empire, without which he could have no official place at the Imperial Court or among his peers.

The threat of disenfranchisement alone might have been sufficient to compel most nobles to serve, but it could not have provided the kind of *esprit de corps* which Peter recognised as essential for a cohesive service establishment. Here the crucial ingredient was the emergence among the service classes of a genuine sense of national pride. Highborn and educated Russians, having grown thoroughly tired of expressions of contempt from the west, delighted in the Empire's great-power status, and it was here that the introduction of a western-style chivalric code became both feasible and necessary. The clan-based Muscovite code of honour had undermined the effectiveness of the armed forces by placing a low value upon individual performance. No *social* stigma arose from cowardly or self-serving behaviour, and defence of the clan usually involved nothing more demanding than legal action to preserve place prerogative.³⁸ Western style chivalry, on the other

³⁸ For an in depth discussion of clan-based honour and litigation see: N.S. Kollmann, *Honor & Society in Early Russia*, (forthcoming).

hand, was based upon *personal* martial virtues, and the willingness of the individual to sacrifice himself to a higher cause. Russian servitors came to regard national honour as an extension of personal honour, thus binding themselves to the state.

This is not to suggest that the majority of eighteenth-century servitors perceived themselves as servants of the state. Rather, patriotism overtook, without entirely supplanting, the mystical roots of their veneration for autocracy. A tsar-centred orientation prevailed, but it was one in which the idealised image of the ruler was not primarily that of the pious sovereign, but of a champion of imperial interests. Whittaker, describes the Petrine doctrine as one of "divine duty rather than divine right,"³⁹ emphasizing the active nature of Petrine sovereignty. Peter so perfectly embodied Russia's might, and his dynamism so aptly corresponded to the nation's imperial longings, that an ideal was established wherein the distinction between Emperor and Empire, man and idea, became obscure.

Thus the imperial consciousness was formed, to a large degree, in Peter's image. In addition to its other qualities, it encompassed a quasi-European identity, fostered, initially, through the forced introduction of western culture. Combined, these things represented a very great change indeed. Of course, there remained vast portions of the population to whom the ideological boundaries of Empire did not extend. The *narod* largely regarded the Petrine State as a foreign intruder. Nor were they encouraged to abandon their traditional world view, or to forge a link with the state. It was enough that they should retain their spiritual bond to the tsar.

The Romanovs, on the other hand, were now bound, like the nobility, to the idea of Empire, and would, henceforth, define themselves in relation to the state. Peter had irrevocably tied dynastic prestige to the great power status of the Russian Empire. Of course, they, too, retained their link to the traditional realm, carrying their spiritual-patriarchal function over from the Muscovite age. To begin with, the

³⁹ Whittaker, "Reforming Tsar", p. 83.

enormous expanses of land still held as Romanov patrimony conferred upon the members of the family (to whom they would be distributed once the family itself began to grow) a dynastic seigneurial role. But the practical significance of this role was very small. Religious role was much more significant. Because the vast majority of the population continued to exist entirely outside of the ideological boundaries of the state, and because the sovereign was not only emperor, but also tsar and protector of the faith, no grand duke who renounced Orthodoxy could have hoped to retain his place in the line of succession.

Elsewhere, however, Muscovite tradition could not prevail in the face of Peter's efforts. The imperial family underwent the same cultural transformation as the nobility, forming an image of itself as a European dynasty (while continuing to enjoy immunity from any kind of accountability), and if the nobility were now duty bound to adjust their lives to suit the interests of the Empire, then, in accordance with Peter's apparent perception of caste as a scale of moral obligation (with exalted birth being defined more by the expectations and obligations it imposed than by the privilege it bestowed), Romanovs possessed an even greater imperative to do so.

Peter's own public conduct sometimes contradicted the notion of an all-inclusive duty wherein members of the dynasty existed as public figures from the day of their birth. In the course of his autocratic career he attempted many times to free himself, if only briefly, from the constrictions imposed upon him by his position. He travelled and worked incognito, socialised with commoners, and established a mock tsar to whom he himself paid homage. All of this was inconsequential insofar as it did not have an identifiable bearing upon future dynastic custom, and was not copied by his successors. Peter's example with regard to marriage custom was more significant.

As a European ruling house, it behooved the Romanovs to adopt a custom of intermarriage with the other dynasties of Europe. Michael's attempt to marry his daughter to a Danish prince had failed, but now the time was ripe for such a union. Ambitious boyar in-laws had long since proved themselves a threat to dynastic

cohesion. Furthermore, the diplomatic connections and prestige to be gained from such a practice would benefit both state and dynasty. Peter thus arranged royal marriages for his dependents, female as well as male, but he himself, having divorced the *boyarinia* chosen for him by his mother, opted to marry a low born woman, thereby demonstrating that royal marriage did not, in itself, constitute an inviolable principle. The principle which came into play was, rather, that of obedience to the sovereign will. In the event, all of Peter's successors chose to impose royal marriage upon their direct descendants, and, in this way, it became a firm custom long before it was incorporated into the succession law in 1911.⁴⁰ But the absence of a direct Petrine association reduced the custom itself to a level of significance falling far below that of an imperial absolute.

That said, Peter not only recognised his position as a role model, but regarded example as his instrument of choice in molding the behaviour of others.⁴¹ It is precisely thus that we are able to determine wherein his real priorities lay with regard to the role of non-ruling grand dukes in the imperial age. The social and cultural sphere, though far from insignificant, was clearly of secondary importance. There was no principle which Peter regarded more reverently than that of practical service to the state. Here his example was above reproach. He began service in adolescence, and adhered to the meritocratic principle, working his way up from the lowest non-commissioned rank, accepting the authority of superior officers, and receiving promotion only in accordance with professional criteria. In so doing, he acted simultaneously to embrace an obligatory lifelong service role on behalf of the dynasty, and to bind his descendants to the Table of Ranks. Finally, because Peter chose to emphasize the Romanov military mission as the defining factor in the relationship between state and dynasty, the military service role would emerge as the

⁴⁰ See Suichev, Colonel, *Zakony o nasledstve v Rossii*, Berlin, 1934, p.11.

⁴¹ Whittaker, "Reforming Tsar", p. 84.

cornerstone of dynastic identity, having abandoned which, no grand duke could continue to regard himself as a grand duke .

The imperial service role was thus designed to ensure that, in fulfilling his dynastic duty, the grand duke must automatically make a contribution to the well-being of the state. The potential benefits of this arrangement were clear, not least in the fostering of a shared professional service identity. On the other hand, the incorporation of state service into dynastic duty as a component part reflected the ultimate superiority of the dynasty in its relationship to the state, and forced the service model to adapt to pre-existing dynastic rules. These latter allowed the development of a tenuous modern partnership between dynasty and service establishment, but prevented true integration.

The failure to integrate individual members of the family into the service establishment, like the failure to integrate the dynasty into the state by formalizing its subordination, sprang from the preservation of belief in the divine origin of the sovereign power. The principles which belonged to this belief, though themselves superficially modifiable, clashed with the values of a state-centred ideology. For instance, the modern service ethic demanded that all servitors must submit to regulations and accept the authority of superiors. Traditional ideology was able to adjust to this requirement by positing an understanding between the ruler and his commanding officers, wherein members of the dynasty served at the tsar's pleasure, and were subject to independent authority only insofar as the tsar willed them to be. However, because the Petrine autocrat, chosen by his predecessor in recognition of his proven competence and love of the state, could automatically be trusted to eschew arbitrary interference in matters relating to the maintenance of discipline, grand ducal service *should* , at all times, be as genuine as that of non-royal servitors.

In the event, whether or not they believed in the tsar's integrity, no one who served above, below, or alongside a grand duke could have failed to grasp the unique terms of Romanov participation in the military life of the Empire.

Undoubtedly, Russia's non-royal servitors likewise grasped the Muscovite principle which continued to underlay all grand ducal service, i.e., that preservation of the tsar's creative prerogative demanded the forfeiture of ideological individuality by non-ruling members of the royal house. The dynasty, as an extension of the tsar, must always function as an indivisible unit, animated by a single will (the tsar's), and possessing a single voice (the tsar's). It was not so much the representative nature of grand ducal role, as the inability of individual grand dukes to establish independent ties to any ideologically significant Russian institution, which lent this principle its practical significance. Although the burden of service fell unavoidably upon each grand duke, only the dynasty had the right to interact with the state. Thus, a grand duke who violated dynastic duty and was, on this basis, removed from the line of succession *could not* have retained his rank or citizenship without posing, at the very least, a symbolic threat to the integrity of the sovereign power. Nor did the change in the succession law, allowing the emperor to bestow creative potential upon a non-Romanov heir, deprive grand dukes of the equivalent potential bestowed upon them by God and popular consensus, as witnessed by Peter's own realization that his son must not only be disinherited, but killed.

Of course, so long as a tsar-centred mentality prevailed within the Russian service establishment, no grand duke need seek any independent connection to the state. His status as a member of the dynasty would meet this need. By the same respect, so long as the Petrine model of reforming autocracy and voluntary dynastic subordination to national interests continued to function, the service establishment would have no need to draw a distinction between state and dynasty. That the distinction existed, however, having been recognised by Peter, was enough, of itself, to precipitate a shift to a state-centred ideology should the Petrine model be compromised. The question, in such an instance, must be who had the right to determine wherein the state's best interests lay. Peter knew from experience that Russia's religious leaders sometimes felt themselves entitled to speak on *God's* behalf in calling a sovereign to account, and he dealt with this presumption by

depriving the Church of its independent voice. At the same time, he apparently did not foresee the emergence of a possible rival when he set about to create an independent service establishment which would function as an organ of the state (rather than an extension or possession of the dynasty) and coalesce around a patriotic *raison d'être* -- or suspect that such a body might come to view *itself* as the voice of the state and claim an extralegal right to judge a future tsar on the basis of his performance.

IV. The Post-Petrine Eighteenth-Century

If Peter's co-elevation to the throne had marked a tentative shift away from the mystical and static religiosity which had formed such an important part of the original Romanov mythos, if Peter himself had grown to redefine that mythos as an heroic imperial ideal, then the post-Petrine eighteenth-century would witness the seizure of that ideal by the service elite as a means of self-empowerment.

The conceptual importance of the state to the heirs of the Petrine service establishment can scarcely be underestimated. Wortman points to changes in coronation ceremonies in the immediate post-Petrine period as evidence of "the sacred character" now attributed to the state, noting the appearance of new items of state regalia and the official inclusion of representatives of state institutions.⁴²

Beyond this, the succession crises which followed Peter's death in 1725 and continued until the accession of Elizabeth in 1741, gave the nobility, from whom the service elite was drawn, power to determine the political future of the Empire. Catherine I established a Supreme Privy Council in 1726, and, upon her death in 1730, the aristocratic members of the council undertook to form an oligarchy, inviting Peter I's daughter Anna to reign as a puppet monarch. Their attempt failed

⁴² Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 100.

as a result of opposition from a large number of their own fellow nobles. Anna was deluged with petitions asking her to rule Russia as an autocrat. Some of these were undoubtedly motivated by purely selfish considerations, but the majority of the signers "saw themselves as the Autocrat's creations". They were not ready to conceive of a state truly independent of the ruler, but they certainly were ready to demand more caste privileges, which Anna readily granted.⁴³

The military service elite played a particularly powerful role in the choice of Russia's eighteenth-century rulers. Several candidates for the throne, beginning with Catherine I, appealed to the Guards Corps for support, encouraging elite servitors to view themselves as defenders of the Petrine State. Thus Elizabeth, during her 1742 coronation, willingly presented prominent servitors to the public as "champions of the empire's well-being". And Catherine II, in her accession manifesto, made it clear that the struggle against Peter III had been a struggle to secure Russia's future.⁴⁴

Outraged national pride played an indisputable role in the assassination of Peter III, who fell far short of Petrine ideals, both physically and behaviourally. The fact that he had been raised in Germany did not, in itself, represent a significant obstacle to his acceptance by the Russian service elite, as witnessed by Catherine's popularity (she, too, had been brought from Germany). But Peter flaunted his German identity at a time when Russian victories over Prussia in the Seven Years War had nurtured a high degree of patriotic pride amongst educated Russians in general and military men in particular. He forced Prussian drill and dress upon the troops, and enraged his officers by withdrawing Russia from war with Prussia on the eve of a brilliant victory. Even his decree of 1762, freeing the nobles from compulsory service, was not enough to make up for the damage done to imperial pride.⁴⁵

⁴³ Lincoln, *Romanovs*, pp 168, 180.

⁴⁴ Worlman, *Scenarios*, pp 90, 110.

⁴⁵ de Madariaga, *Catherine*, pp 23-24.

Paul Petrovich, like his father, offended his elite servitors in numerous ways. To begin with, he was unable to reflect Russia's glory physically. N.A. Sablukov, a Horse Guards officer who served during his reign, perceived an essential difference between past monarchs, whose shortcomings and eccentricities were acceptable, and Paul, who aroused contempt. The former could be forgiven because their "personal vanity" was inextricably tied to "the greatness of the state", and their deeds sprang from "a feeling of ardent love for the motherland". That Paul did not seem to him to share this patriotic spirit was at least in part a result of the fact that, whereas "...the majority of the representatives of this house, both male and female, have always been distinguished by remarkable beauty and physical strength", the unfortunate Paul was a "tsar-cripple", and no allowances were made for his extravagances.⁴⁶ Moreover, his behaviour often made him seem ridiculous in the eyes of his aristocratic subjects, accustomed as they were to Catherine's majesty. E. I. Nelidova, an imperial lady-in-waiting believed the emperor's insistence upon playing the "common and petty drill master" undermined his autocratic dignity (how ironic, then, that the drill master role would become so bound up with Romanov image in later reigns).⁴⁷

Paul's dispute with the Guards Officer Corps was the final, fatal element in his policy. The steps he took were designed to humiliate this body, to undermine the security of its members, and destroy its corporate identity. He greatly preferred the Gatchina troops which he had formed and drilled during Catherine's reign. These units, led by "low born" officers, were allowed to appropriate the names of the Guards regiments. Sablukov describes how Paul "stood them before us like a model of perfection which we should imitate blindly". Meanwhile, the Guards were forced

⁴⁶ Sablukov, N.A., in *Tsareubiistvo 11 Marta 1801 goda: Zapiski uchastnikov i sovremennikov*, St Petersburg, 1899, p. 66; see also McGrew, Roderick, *Paul I of Russia*, Oxford, 1992, p.280.

⁴⁷ Shmigorsky, E. S., *Ekaterina Ivanovna Nelidova (1758-1839): Ocherk iz istorii imperatora Pavla*, St. Petersburg, 1898, p. 98.

to witness the dismemberment of one of their most prestigious regiments (the Horse Guards), to accept Prussian style uniforms, and to submit to arbitrary arrests.⁴⁸

Paul's behaviour toward the Guards Officer Corps makes sense only when viewed in the context of his hatred for his mother's regime. He clearly considered the nobility in general, and the Guards Officer Corps in particular, as Catherine's willing accomplices in the murder of Peter III, a man whom it suited him to idealise, and by choosing to look upon Russia's service elite as a rival political entity, he contributed greatly to its politicization. Finally, even outside the Guards, considerable concern arose as to whether Paul could remain on the throne without leading Russia into disaster. His position as would-be Grand Master of the Knights of Malta influenced him to the extent that he adopted an irrational attitude toward foreign policy, leading Russia toward a clash with Great Britain. A contemporary witness, Countess Golovina, wrote: "The nation was shocked to see its emperor more proud of being grand master of the order of Malta than of being sovereign of Russia."⁴⁹

Theoretically, there was no ideological dispute between the tsar and his servitors. Both considered themselves upholders of the Petrine heritage. Paul had been raised to look upon Peter I as a role model, and, long before his accession, voiced the conviction that he could have no other interest than those of the state.⁵⁰ But he was unable to realise this ideal, both because of his eccentricities and animosities, and because of his lack of the progressive qualities which his servitors associated with Peter.⁵¹ His autocratic ideology was anachronistic insofar as it had a strongly religious foundation. He had been inculcated by his spiritual instructor with the Muscovite conception that "the sovereign was a living manifestation of God's will",⁵² and he took this concept far too literally as a justification for whatever whim

⁴⁸ Sablukov, *Tsareubiistvo*, pp 17-24.

⁴⁹ quoted in: McGrew, *Paul*, p. 278.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp 49, 106, 64.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵² Ibid., p. 61.

might seize him, believing that all his impulses were, by definition, good for the state.

The elite servitors, for their part, were only too willing to claim the protectorship of the Empire's interests as their own moral high ground. Thus, a dispute which was, in essence, a power struggle between autocrat and nobility, took on greater ideological significance in the eyes of many of those involved. The Guards in particular were "imbued with the Petrine heritage".⁵³ Peter I had so far succeeded in establishing the link between service and the state, that the elite officers (who made up almost two-thirds of the identified conspirators),⁵⁴ with their highly developed sense of corporate identity, were prepared to equate any slight or threat to themselves as a slight or threat to the Empire, and from this it was but a short leap to assuming a right to act as the voice of the state, thus usurping autocratic prerogative.⁵⁵ Other disgruntled members of the service elite could both share, and exploit, this tendency amongst the officers. Petr Pahlen, who along with Nikita Panin originated the conspiracy, presented himself as a "disinterested state servant acting to protect society".⁵⁶ After the assassination, Adam Czartoryski found the Zubov brothers, whose role had likewise been crucial, "convinced that they had done a great service to Russia".⁵⁷

And yet, although the significance of Paul's assassination cannot be denied as a step forward in the evolution of state-centred ideology, it in no way represented a mature manifestation of belief in the independence of the state. Definite steps had been taken in previous reigns to establish the immutable unity of state and dynasty, the former being increasingly represented by the aristocracy. Wortman describes how the necessity of broadening the privilege of the nobility during the crises of the post

⁵³ Ibid., p.19 .

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 350.

⁵⁵ See *Tsareubiistvo* for an excellent account of feelings within the Guards Officer Corps.

⁵⁶ McGrew, *Paul*, p. 332.

⁵⁷ Czartoryski, Adam, *Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski and his Correspondence with Alexander I* (Adam Gielgud, ed.), London, 1888, vol. 1, p. 251.

Petrine period meant that "Peter's secular, rationalist scenario of power was recast to express the harmony between sovereign and nobility".⁵⁸ Paul's disruption of this bond was not sufficient to destroy it altogether. The men who conspired against him, by seeking the support of the heir, demonstrated a desire to safeguard the traditional order.

During Paul's reign there did emerge a body of men who desired a constitutional regime, but the majority of those involved in the assassination appear to have remained loyal to autocracy, merely desiring to exercise some quality-control over the person of the autocrat. It was less troubling to view both Peter III and Paul as aberrations than to question the very principles which underlay the aristocracy's own philosophy, legitimizing their belief in the intrinsic value of exalted birth. With regard to Paul, it was even possible to question his legitimacy as Catherine's heir. Her contempt for him was openly displayed in the last years of her reign, and it was (and is) widely believed that she intended naming Alexander her successor.⁵⁹ The Zubovs even claimed that Catherine had "expressly enjoined [them] to look upon Alexander as their only legitimate sovereign".⁶⁰

In fact, although willing to initiate a coup without the active participation, of the heir, the conspirators nonetheless sought his alliance, demonstrating their desire to witness the accession of an autocrat who would grant them a voice in the political life of the Empire, while freeing them from the need to break with tradition entirely. Catherine was not the only one who had seen in Paul's eldest son a vision of Russian glory. S.R. Vorontsov, writing a short time before the assassination, characterised Paul as a monomaniacal skipper, driving the ship of state before a storm, while the "attractive young first officer [note the importance attached to Alexander's physical beauty], stood below decks, able to replace the captain's

⁵⁸ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 82.

⁵⁹ de Madariaga, *Catherine*, p. 572; see also Shumigorsky, *Nelidova*, pp 59-60.

⁶⁰ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 251.

madness with his own rational command, "if only he would".⁶¹ (The nautical theme was particularly appropriate given the underlying dispute over Peter I's legacy.) In the event, Panin and Pahlen, took the decision to "initiate" Alexander into the plot, and Czartoryski wrote: "although everybody sympathised with the conspiracy, nothing was done until Alexander had [agreed] to his father's deposition".⁶² The convictions held by Alexander himself, and, more significantly, his brother Konstantin, are the subject of our next two chapters, as we move on to a direct examination of grand ducal role.

Section Two: The First Generation of Romanov Grand Dukes

I. Catherine II's Reign, 1762-1796

Konstantin Pavlovich, the first junior Romanov grand duke to reach adulthood, was born in 1779 during the reign of his grandmother, Catherine II. The service *milieu* which formed the backdrop of Konstantin's upbringing had diverged significantly from the Petrine ideal. The meritocratic principle, being anathema to noble self-image, had fallen by the wayside, so that the linking of national prestige and personal honour to professional integrity failed to gain ground within the service elite.

Pride in the Empire was genuine, thus no one could suggest the scrapping of the Table of Ranks -- a potent imperial symbol. But its weakness lay precisely in the extent to which it could be reduced to a symbolic use. Initially, those noblemen who could, circumvented Peter's meritocratic measures through subterfuge -- they enrolled their infant sons in regiments where length of service counted toward promotion, so that by the time boys reached young adulthood they already

⁶¹ McGrew, *Paul*, p. 230.

⁶² Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, pp 228-30, 235.

possessed commissions and need not offend their noble dignity through service in the ranks. A mere six years after Peter's death, however, Anna I took steps to placate the nobility by reasserting the special claim to officer's status of the man of noble *birth*. Her creation of the first Imperial Cadet Corps in 1731 might, in fact, be called a significant professional advancement for the Russian army. The objective of the corps, to produce knowledgeable and capable officers,⁶³ complied with the spirit of the Petrine ethic, but the ban on non-noble enrolment played havoc with the meritocratic principle.

In fact, the linking of the meritocratic principle to obligatory service in the ranks had been a miscalculation on Peter's part. The more military science advanced, the less feasible it became for the officer to evolve from the soldier. The ideal officer, even by the standards of the eighteenth century, was a member of a distinct profession, possessing specialised knowledge (as opposed to manual skill), the obtainment of which could not be served by years spent in the ranks. But if education was to be, in future, the route to the military elite, then the exclusivity of the cadet corps must represent the triumph of birth over merit. Twice during the course of the eighteenth century Russia's rulers (Elizabeth I and Catherine II) "requested that non-noble elements be assigned to the corps", but the law itself would not be changed until 1876, and the evolution of the corps into an instrument for the dissemination of "a distinctive noble culture", stunted its professional function.⁶⁴

In the Guards regiments themselves, no officer was required to attend drill more than once a year! Those who, through personal conviction, took their duties seriously, were ridiculed by "young men of fashion". Czartoryski could not help but see the irony in the fact that officers, "without any personal merit should find the

⁶³ Taylor, Rosemary, "Cadet Corps", in *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, (Joseph L. Wiczyński, ed.) v. 6, 1978, p. 86.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

gates of the palace open to them, while generals of long-service mixed with the crowd in the ante-chambers."⁶⁵

This state of affairs suited the aristocracy perfectly. If, in years to come, the grand dukes would feel themselves torn between a service elite and throne vying with one another to define Russia's Petrine heritage, during Catherine's reign this struggle took place only within the dynasty itself, with the nature of the Romanovs' own Petrine heritage at stake.

Catherine assumed the mantle of Petrine tradition insofar as she identified herself and her descendants as servants of the state. She removed her grandsons from their parents' care as soon as they were born, on the grounds of their importance to the Empire. They could not be allowed to live as private citizens, whose personal lives were distinct from their public duties. Thus, when Paul requested the return of his children, Catherine replied: "your children are yours, they are ours, they are the State's".⁶⁶

Their role need not be primarily military, however. Paul had been appointed General Admiral of the fleet upon his mother's accession -- a clear concession to the dynasty's Petrine heritage, but hardly a serious one insofar as it placed an eight year old at the top of the Table of Ranks! The post itself was highly ambiguous. It could be active, but need not be. Of Paul's predecessors, the first, F.M. Apraksin, was a Romanov relation and an "armchair admiral". The second, A.I. Osterman, was an immigrant who had worked his way up in the service. And the third, M.M. Golitsyn, Jr., was a war hero who had served for seven years as acting head of the fleet before obtaining the General Admiral's title in 1756.⁶⁷

As heir to the throne, Paul could not hold the post in earnest, even as an adult. Moreover, his *vospitatel'* (preceptor), N.I. Panin, "did not consider [military]

⁶⁵ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v. 1, pp 95, 99-100.

⁶⁶ Pienkos, Angela, *The Imperfect Autocrat: Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich and the Polish Congress Kingdom*, Boulder, 1987, p. 2

⁶⁷ Hughes, *Peter*, pp 56, 418-419, 430; see also Velichko, K.A., et al (eds.), *Voennaia Entsiklopediia*, St. Petersburg, 1911-1915, "General Admiral", p. 226.

training a desirable preparation for ruling", and Catherine agreed. Ivan Golenishchev-Kutuzov, director of the Naval Cadet Corps, "consulted" his little chief, and tried to cultivate Paul's interest in naval science, even inviting him to attend cadet classes.⁶⁸ Paul does not appear to have accepted the invitation, however, and when he reached adulthood, Catherine would not even allow him to inspect the fleet.⁶⁹ Indeed, so unconcerned was she with the dynasty's military mythos, that, on the one occasion when she permitted him to join Russia's troops, he was ordered to remain an observer, and news of his participation was *not* made public.⁷⁰ Paul's Gatchina troops were regarded by court and public as nothing more than an infantile source of entertainment.⁷¹

Catherine fancied herself an enlightened sovereign, and expected her successors to be the same. They must, therefore, receive an broad education which would produce men more interested in the overall stewardship of their country than in warfare for its own sake.

Konstantin's birth caused no modification of this objective. To begin with, as we have noted, Catherine's elite officers were valued for their courtliness rather than their professionalism. Thus, even if she had intended her younger grandson to pursue a military career, she would scarcely have subjected him to a utilitarian education. In the event, Catherine had grander plans for Konstantin. He was to rule over a second Romanov empire, based in Constantinople. Specially minted coins linked the infant to Constantine the Great, and a manifesto which "broadly hinted at his Greek imperial future" revealed Catherine's designs to the public.⁷²

⁶⁸ McGrew, *Paul*, pp 59, 60.

⁶⁹ Colquhoun Grant, Mrs., *A Mother of Tsars: A Sketch of the Life of Marie Feodorowna, Wife of Paul I and Mother of Alexander I and Nicholas I*, London, 1905, pp 188-189.

⁷⁰ McGrew, *Paul*, pp 168-69.

⁷¹ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, pp 120-21.

⁷² Ragsdale, Hugh, "Evaluating the Traditions of Russian Aggression: Catherine II and the Greek Project", *Slavonic & East European Review*, v. 66, no. 1, Jan., 1988, p. 93.

Konstantin was surrounded by Greek servants and playmates. He was even exposed to Greek political affairs, receiving the knife which had been used to assassinate a prominent Turkish figure, and being hailed by Greek visitors to Russia.⁷³ The question thus arises as to the influence of this pre-designation upon the boy's identity. Missing in his correspondence is any evidence that he felt particular sympathy for Greece, or regarded himself as a future emperor. Of course, the Greek project was far from stable. By the time he was eleven years old, events in Europe had inclined his grandmother to adopt a "somewhat more modest" ideal. In a 1790 letter to Grigory Potemkin, she toyed with the idea of making Konstantin ruler of Dacia, an independent kingdom formed from the united Romanian principalities.⁷⁴ The Swedish and Polish thrones were both suggested and rejected, as was a 1793 offer from the Court of Naples to grant Konstantin an "independent territory" on the condition that he marry a Neapolitan princess.⁷⁵

In 1794, with war looming between Turkey and Austria, the Greek project was briefly revived, and, although she finally recognised the impossibility of realizing her original vision for her grandson, Catherine seemingly never relinquished the idea altogether. She never designated any other role for him.⁷⁶

The Greek instruction aside, Konstantin was educated jointly with Alexander, who was only eighteen months his elder, and their grandmother supervised every facet of their lives.⁷⁷ Catherine insisted that they be allowed to sleep "as long as they wish" and play "as long as they like".⁷⁸ She delighted in showing them off at Court, and the ballroom, not the parade ground, was their regular *milieu*. Nor were they

⁷³ Karnovich, E.P., *Tsesarevich Konstantin Pavlovich*, St Petersburg, 1899, p. 8.

⁷⁴ Ragsdale, "Traditions", p. 111; see also de Madariaga, *Catherine*, p. 387.

⁷⁵ Zawadzki, W.H., *A Man of Honour: Adam Czartoryski as a Statesman of Russia and Poland 1795-1831*, Oxford, 1993, p. 14; Maroger, Dominique (ed.) *The Memoirs of Catherine the Great*, London, 1955, pp 392-393.

⁷⁶ de Madariaga, *Catherine*, p. 450; Maroger, Dominique, ed., *The Memoirs of Catherine the Great*, London, 1955, p. 378.

⁷⁷ Colquhoun, Grant, *Sketch*, pp 52, 187.

⁷⁸ Rappaport, Angela S., *The Curse of the Romanovs: A Study of the Lives of Two Tsars, Paul I and Alexander I of Russia*, London, 1907, pp 287-287.



unfamiliar to the man on the street in St Petersburg. When they drove out they were permitted to stop and enter shops.⁷⁹

The death of their nursery supervisor in 1783 seems to have been the chief impetus in the transfer of the boys, aged six and four, to the schoolroom and the care of an exclusively masculine staff. The writings of Locke and Rousseau formed the philosophical foundation for their instruction. The Russian aristocracy aped Catherine in this respect, and wishing to "emerge from barbarism... attended to the education of [its own] children with much care".⁸⁰

Over the years, Alexander and Konstantin had an impressive number of tutors, some of whom were hired to teach a single subject, with others attached to their staff on the sole basis of imperial favour.⁸¹ Two men stood out above the others, however, N.I. Saltykov and Frederic-Cesar La Harpe.

Saltykov, appointed *vospitatel'*, was the head of the boys' staff, to which position he brought several desirable characteristics; high military rank (he was an Adjutant General and President of the College of War) gave him a Petrine veneer, though he had made his career as a skilled courtier, and it was to this latter quality that he owed his new position.⁸²

Politically, he favoured "the most absolute autocracy", but it was not he who was entrusted with the actual instruction of the boys.⁸³ This role fell upon La Harpe, a Swiss republican, recommended to Catherine by F.M. Grimm (French and Swiss tutors were highly fashionable in Russia).⁸⁴ La Harpe was determined to inculcate

⁷⁹ Smol'ianinov, V.N. (ed.), *Vosemnadtsatii vek. Istoricheskii sbornik izdavaemii po bumagam famil'nago arkhiva pochetnym chlenom arkhelogicheskago instituta kniazem Fedorom Alekseevichem Kurakinym*, vol. 1 (1904), St. Petersburg, pp 29, 34, 42, 47.

⁸⁰ Masson, C.F.P., *Memoirs of Catherine II. and the Court of St. Petersburg During Her Reign and that of Paul I., By One of Her Courtiers*, London, n.d., p. 301, 310.

⁸¹ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, p. 131-32.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp 130-31; de Madariaga, *Catherine*, p. 568; Masson, *Memoirs*, p. 217.

⁸³ Waliszewski, K., *Paul the First of Russia, the Son of Catherine the Great*, London, 1913, p. 19.

⁸⁴ de Madariaga, *Catherine*, p. 568; Masson, *Memoirs*, p. 311.

his charges with his own views, informing them "...that all men are born equal, the power which is inherited by some being a matter of pure accident".⁸⁵ Moreover, Catherine stood by him.⁸⁶ When he finally fell out of favour and left Russia in 1795, it was reportedly because of his reluctance to press Alexander to accept Paul's disenfranchisement -- not because of his 'jacobinism' (though this view is contested).⁸⁷

The empress certainly realised that her grandsons must have some familiarity with military science -- enough to make them the equals of the elite servitors who surrounded them from childhood when their playmates were seconded from the Cadet Corps.⁸⁸ The boys slept in a room facing the Admiralty Dockyard so that they would become accustomed to cannon fire from an early age,⁸⁹ and when Alexander was nine and Konstantin eight they received lessons in fortification and engineering,⁹⁰ but it was only after their general education was well under way that they were introduced to "war studies".⁹¹ Their first "real" exposure to military life did not come until 1794, when Catherine judged it fitting for them "to progress from military theory to practice". For Konstantin, this meant receiving command of an instructional detachment of fifteen men.⁹² The next year each boy was named honorary colonel of a line regiment, and Konstantin was permitted to make an inspection tour of fortresses in Finland.⁹³

Konstantin's love of things military was apparent from an early age, and Catherine admired the boy's vitality.⁹⁴ That said, when rumour reached her in 1796

⁸⁵ Rappoport, *Curse*, p. 275.

⁸⁶ see, for instance, Masson, *Memoirs*, p. 305.

⁸⁷ sec: de Madariaga, *Catherine*, p. 572; Hartley, Janet, *Alexander I*, London, 1994, p. 15.

⁸⁸ de Madariaga, *Catherine*, p. 567.

⁸⁹ Hartley, *Alexander*, p. 13.

⁹⁰ La Harpe, Frédéric-César and Alexander I, *Correspondance de Frédéric-César de la Harpe et Alexandre Ier*, Éditions de la Baconniere, Neuchatel, 1978, p. 161.

⁹¹ Pienkos, Angela, *Imperfect*, p. 5.

⁹² Ibid., p. 6.

⁹³ Smol'ianinov, *Kurakin*, p. 206.

⁹⁴ Rappoport, *Curse*, p. 269.

that Paul had raised some special naval battalions and appointed Alexander and Konstantin to head them, she wrote to Saltykov in a rage. Naturally, she was upset at her son's audacity. Much greater, however, was her apparent concern lest her grandsons be contaminated by their father's example. Her attitude toward bellicosity changed when the quality in question was tainted by association with her son, and manifested in a particularly lowly fashion (i.e., that of a drill sergeant). She informed Saltykov in no uncertain terms that it was:

"...not suitable to allow young men like Alexander and Constantine to indulge in this ridiculous soldiering... it is not in keeping with their rank, origin, and dynasty to beat and ill-treat men... all I want for the well-being of these boys... is that they should grow up and spend their youth in harmless, gentle occupations, without raising even their fingers to offend anyone..."⁹⁵

The brothers were drawn to their father's military activities, however. Paul, unlike Catherine, entrusted them with what they perceived as real commands, a gift sufficiently flattering to negate the contempt in which society held the Gatchina exercises. Moreover, their participation won them their father's approval. Czartoryski writes:

"[Alexander and Konstantin] gave themselves up to their duties with the zeal of young men who are for the first time given something to do, and the Court and the public compared them to children playing at soldiers. This, however, produced no impression upon them; all they thought of was to obey the wishes and even the eccentricities of their father... To these young princes, it was an active life which gave them importance in a restricted circle no doubt but where they played a part which while it flattered their vanity, contented their juvenile activity without much expenditure of thought. The regulated uniformity of their grandmother's Court, on the other hand, where they had no serious occupation, was often inexpressibly tedious to them."⁹⁶

Alexander was even flattered at the unfounded thought of having "inspired some fear" in his grandmother,⁹⁷ a vaguely treasonous sentiment, to be sure, but De Madariaga goes far in clarifying the boys' behaviour when she writes: "Adolescents normally go through a phase of revolt against their parents. Catherine had usurped the role of the parents and the revolt was directed against her."⁹⁸ She also points out the role that gender played in this equation. It was all too easy for Alexander and

⁹⁵ Maroger, *Memoirs*, pp 352-352.

⁹⁶ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, pp 121-22.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 123.

⁹⁸ de Madariaga, *Catherine*, p. 570.

Konstantin to look upon their grandmother's court as one corrupted by femininity. Their masculine self-esteem demanded an identity rooted in service, not merely grandeur. In this respect they shared a common opinion with their father, who had certainly felt the pain of being held in a state of static superfluity by Catherine, and considered the "corruption, indolence, and self-indulgence" demonstrated by his mother to be "inseparable from women's rule".⁹⁹

Paul's example to his sons was undoubtedly a confusing one. Shortly before they were born he had made a brief effort at becoming "assertive", challenging the authority of Grigory Potemkin, criticizing Catherine's policy, and seeking public popularity. His first wife took the lion's share of the blame for her husband's inappropriate behaviour.¹⁰⁰ When she died giving birth to a stillborn child, Catherine and Paul both took steps to ensure that the second grand duchess would be free of ambition.

However much Paul resented his mother, he recognised that, as the established sovereign, she was entitled to deference. He, of course, expected to be emperor, and believed that he would then be justified in demanding self-abnegation from his own family members.¹⁰¹ Thus the Muscovite principle lived on in him. Paul obeyed his mother. But the tension between them remained and grew. His sons would have known that he attended family dinners and divine services only as a matter of duty, slipping away as soon as possible.¹⁰² They also would have witnessed how Catherine tolerated her courtiers' contempt for Paul, despite the damage this did to dynastic prestige. Finally, the uncertainty of Paul's future status, and the resulting impossibility of giving him a definite role, left both boys without a service model, or a firm notion of what their own future would hold.

As the brothers grew older, they clearly began to resent their grandmother's overwhelming presence. Alexander secretly confessed that he disapproved of her

⁹⁹ McGrew, *Paul*, pp 197-198.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp 88-89.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁰² Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v. 1, p. 88.

illiberal Polish policy, and praised La Harpe's republican sentiments.¹⁰³ Of course, there was a paradoxical element in the young man's behaviour, and many of his friends undoubtedly lived to recognise the folly of having dismissed his immersion into his father's militaristic *milieu* as a youthful aberration.

Meanwhile, no such ambiguity shrouded Konstantin's views. He was more heated than Alexander in his criticism of the empress, and not above speaking of her "in the coarsest terms". He would not, however, have accused her of being insufficiently liberal. Ideologically, Konstantin was his father's son, and Alexander forbade his friends to engage the younger grand duke in political discussions.¹⁰⁴

Konstantin resembled his father, both physically and temperamentally -- a thing which prejudiced opinion against him.¹⁰⁵ His predesignation as the "Emperor of the East" notwithstanding, he would always occupy a secondary position relative to his elder brother, the beautiful, angelic Alexander, whose destiny it was to rule Russia. Indeed, Konstantin's position as junior grand duke was extremely difficult. His ugliness was a burden, but had he been more attractive than Alexander, this in itself might have been resented. In the event, if, as Masson suggests, Konstantin's deliberate "buffoonery" gained him a certain popularity amongst unrefined people,¹⁰⁶ it is hardly difficult to perceive why he would embrace such behaviour (in conscious imitation of Peter I?).

A certain unpleasantness did, indeed, arise from the fact that Konstantin was more bold and energetic than his elder brother. While still a small boy he was already attracting negative commentary of the type voiced by courtier Aleksei Kurakin, who noted with disapproval how he overshadowed the retiring Alexander at court balls.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.111.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp 116, 125.

¹⁰⁵ see, for instance, Masson, *Memoirs*, p. 179, or Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, p.107.

¹⁰⁶ Masson, *Memoirs*, p. 178.

¹⁰⁷ Smol'ianinov, *Kurakin*, pp 34, 47.

In the classroom, Konstantin's hyperactivity made him disruptive, and La Harpe responded by shaming the boy, with Alexander paraded before him as a model of perfection.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, the boy, who was pandered to by lackeys and weak-willed tutors on the one hand, and made to feel his inadequacies and relative unimportance on the other, developed a glaringly apparent inferiority complex along with an equally heated, albeit contradictory, resentment of all those who failed to recognise his imperial dignity, and a determination to assert it. He was, in short, a rebellious and angry youth, who acted out his frustrations, often brutally, but nonetheless craved approval.

At twelve, Konstantin confessed himself such a failure that it was not surprising: *"...qu'on ne veuille plus de moi, et qu'on m'abandonne à la triste destinée qui m'attend... Mon savoir et mon émulation sont digne d'un tambour d'Armée. En un mot je ne serai jamais rien en ma vie."*¹⁰⁹

Alexander wrote similarly shame-faced letters,¹¹⁰ and both boys clearly learned passive-aggressive behavioural patterns, but Alexander was compliant by nature, whereas Konstantin was defiant. This quality is perceivable even in some of his most self-abasing statements, with words which seem meant to say, if you insist upon telling me I'm worthless, then I'll be worthless, and we shall see if it pleases you. On one occasion, when admonished to follow the example of his older brother, he replied: "He is [the future] tsar and I am a soldier; who am I to imitate him?"¹¹¹

The combination of arrogance, self-loathing, resentment and impetuosity which figured so prominently in Konstantin's character manifested itself, sometimes violently, in his behaviour. The military realm afforded one particularly satisfying outlet for negative self-expression. He horrified La Harpe with a 1794 essay on what he purported to regard as the two principles of officers' service: 1) *"Un*

¹⁰⁸ Masson, *Memoirs*, pp 179, 303; see *Sbornik imperatorskago russkago istoricheskago obshchestva*, St. Petersburg, vol. 5, 1870, p. 54.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 56.

¹¹⁰ see, for instance, Hartley, *Alexander*, p. 14.

¹¹¹ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 28.

officier est un pure machine", and 2) *Tout ce que le Commandant ordonne à son subordonné doit être exécuté, fut-ce une atrocité.*" Thus, as he freely admitted: *"l'instruction, la raisonnement, les sentiments d'honneur et de droiture sont chose nuisables au maintien d'une bonne discipline."*¹¹²

Undoubtedly, a desire to shock La Harpe contributed to the composition of this essay. In later years, Konstantin would demonstrate that he cared deeply about *"les sentiments d'honneur"*, as embraced by military men of all ranks. That said, he was not long in putting his exaggerated concept of discipline into practice. His grandmother had to disband the little detachment she had given him after only a few months, when news reached her that he had caned the major! Konstantin was placed under arrest, and not allowed another "command" until after his marriage.¹¹³

The brothers' maturation into young adults did not diminish Catherine's interference. As members of the imperial family, over which she presided, they simply did not have a right to personal lives. Their father accepted this, so must they, and Konstantin would have been the last man to refute the principle which lay behind it. In fact, he would undoubtedly have been delighted if his grandmother had outlined a service role for him. The primary dynastic duty she lay upon her grandsons, however, was that of marriage. Her haste was said to have resulted from her desire to see her great-grandchildren,¹¹⁴ but she probably also wished to ensure that neither her own death, nor the rebelliousness and romantic ardour of youth, should thwart her prerogative to choose royal wives. Thus, Alexander was betrothed at age fourteen and married a year later, in 1793.¹¹⁵

Predictably, Konstantin was more difficult to dispose of. He rejected several of Catherine's marital suggestions.¹¹⁶ Finally, she invited the three princesses of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfield to visit St Petersburg, and, although he did not "like" any of them,

¹¹² *SIRIO*, v. 5 (1870), pp38-39.

¹¹³ Masson, *Memoirs*, p. 179.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

¹¹⁵ Lincoln, *Romanovs*, pp 384-385.

¹¹⁶ Chavchavadze, David, *The Grand Dukes*, New York, 1990, p. 20.

he "obeyed the orders of his all-powerful grandmother" and chose one.¹¹⁷ He was seventeen when they married in 1796.

Konstantin found other avenues for offending his grandmother and demonstrating his contempt for her court. One of his most public displays of bad behaviour occurred in 1796 when Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden came to St Petersburg, the intended bride-groom of Grand Duchess Anna Pavlovna. The young prince was conspicuously more genteel than either Alexander or Konstantin, but the latter, in particular, made a public display of himself with "coarse tricks and rough horse-play",¹¹⁸ provoking Catherine into placing him under arrest.¹¹⁹ In a letter to Saltykov, she expressed her fear that Konstantin would "throw dishonour on the whole dynasty" if he did not change his behaviour.¹²⁰ It may, indeed, have been the case that he was willing to shame himself and the dynasty in order to shame Catherine.

As for the relationship between the brothers, one might guess, given the constant reminders of Alexander's superiority, that Konstantin would nurture a resentment toward him. In fact, he seemingly accepted Alexander's perfection, adored him, and sought, albeit with little success, to imitate him. No such close filial relationship could have emerged without Alexander's enthusiastic participation. By and large, he appears to have been the soul of patience with the younger boy. In the classroom, he guided Konstantin through his lessons, and on the social 'front' he interceded with the members of his own set to ensure that his brother, whose erratic and violent character made intimacy with him "undesirable", was treated amicably.¹²¹

In fact, Alexander had every reason for embracing his brother. He was, seemingly, a naturally kind-hearted person. He was secure in his position as the empress's favourite. He admired Konstantin's knowledge of military science and

¹¹⁷ Masson, *Memoirs*, p. 46; Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, p. 98.

¹¹⁸ Colquhoun Grant, *Sketch*, p. 205; Masson, *Memoirs*, p. 25.

¹¹⁹ Masson, *Memoirs*, p. 25.

¹²⁰ Maroger, *Memoirs*, p. 353.

¹²¹ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, p. 116.

loved to converse upon the "minutiae" of this subject, and, most importantly, no one but Konstantin could truly be a peer to him.¹²² La Harpe realised this latter fact only too well. In trying to mold Konstantin into the image of Alexander, he did the younger boy a disservice, but in trying, with all his might, to impart to Alexander how important it was that he both guide and cleave to his brother, he did both boys a very great service indeed.

Alexander must, of course, assume the leadership role, but a solid fraternal relationship was as essential to the well-being of the future tsar as it was to his younger brother. Wrote La Harpe:

*"Continuez, je vous en conjure, à demeurer unis, et ne laissez jamais coucher le soleil sans vous expliquer sur les tracasseries qu'on pourrait vous susciter. Soutenez-vous mutuellement, aidez-vous, consultez-vous, vivez en vrais amis, en frères, en bons frères, sans confidentes que vous seuls."*¹²³

Above all else, the brothers must keep their own council, never revealing any sign of disagreement. La Harpe had already laboured to impart to the forthright Konstantin that he could not be free with his opinions. *"Offrez au monde"*, the old tutor concluded, *"le spectacle d'une amitié que rien n'altère, et vous braveriez l'envie, l'intrigue et la malveillance"*.¹²⁴

It was thus, in the midst of dynastic disharmony, with empress and tsesarevich eyeing each other warily, that a model of supportive cooperation emerged as one of the first well-defined statements pertaining to proper grand ducal role. That it was devised and cultivated by an outsider is hardly surprising under the circumstances.

So far as service was concerned, we shall, of course, never know what role (if any) Catherine would have bestowed upon a fully mature Konstantin. It may be that he would simply have remained, like his father, superfluous, waiting in the wings for the make-believe eastern imperial throne. We do know that when her third grandson was born in 1796, Catherine, though she predicted great things for the baby, made no dispensation for his future role at all. Nicholas would not grow up in

¹²² Ibid., pp 122-123.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 146.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 173.

such a vague environment, however, nor Konstantin be left in limbo for long, for with the death of Catherine later that year, and the accession of Paul, a new interpretation of the Petrine ideal came into play, and along with it a dramatic reassessment of dynastic principles and grand ducal role.

II. The Reign of Paul I, 1796-1801

Catherine II's death freed Paul to pursue his own vision of Empire. His reign, as noted by Wortman, marked the real beginning of the "dynastic scenario", if only because he fathered four healthy sons, thus pointing to the establishment of several junior dynastic branches.

If there was one belief which Paul shared with his mother, it was that the ruling house was inextricably linked to the state. What Catherine had merely expressed, however, Paul defined and organised. Wortman writes that the emperor's Statute on the Imperial Family "made the connection between the well-being of the [dynasty] and the well-being of the state" an explicit premise of Russian autocracy".¹²⁵ But Paul was also farsighted enough to realise that Romanov increase "could become burdensome to the state" unless conscious steps were taken to prevent disorder, internal rivalry, and extravagant expenditure.¹²⁶

To the newly crowned tsar, embittered by the ambiguity of his former position and convinced that female sovereignty was to blame for many of the Empire's ills, the key to establishing dynastic harmony, and through it the well-being of the state, lay in the creation of a new succession law, based upon male primogeniture. From 1797 onward, women could mount the throne only if the male line failed. A firm division was drawn between the heir and his younger brothers,¹²⁷ and the

¹²⁵ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 178.

¹²⁶ *Uchrezhdenie ob imperatorskoi familii*, 1797, British Library, Official Documents Section, introduction (no page numbers).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, item 10.

meritocratic principle which allowed each ruler to choose his own successor was abolished forever.

The succession law was accompanied by a precise dynastic hierarchy. Every member of the family derived his place from his relationship to the emperor from whom he himself was descended.¹²⁸ The sons, grandsons, great grandsons and great-great grandsons of a tsar were all entitled to call themselves grand dukes. The eldest son of the reigning emperor likewise received this title, but he alone was allowed to call himself "heir tsesarevich". Daughters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters and great-great granddaughters received the designation grand duchess, but their children inherited no Romanov title from the female line.¹²⁹

Finally, to eliminate all confusion, the reigning emperor was established as "the Head of the whole Imperial Family", to whom all other members owed unconditional "respect, obedience... and submission", both in his capacity as autocrat, and as dynastic patriarch.¹³⁰ Moreover, upon attaining their majority, Romanov sons and daughters were required to swear an oath of loyalty to the reigning sovereign and to the "fatherland", in which they vowed to observe the succession law and respect the boundaries of their heirarchical place.¹³¹ The extension of dynastic duty into the personal sphere was confirmed as well. Any Romanov marriage which did not receive the emperor's approval could not be recognised by law.¹³² The age of adulthood for family members was set at twenty, but if they entered into approved marriages at a younger age they would then be recognised as adults.¹³³

To secure his descendants' material well-being and disassociate it from tax revenue, Paul established an appanage department, designed to husband the landed wealth of the imperial house. Each minor would receive from this source an annual

¹²⁸ Ibid., item 9.

¹²⁹ Ibid., items 12, 30, 33, 39.

¹³⁰ Ibid., items 22-23.

¹³¹ Ibid., item 29.

¹³² Ibid., item 25.

¹³³ Ibid., items 26-27.

allowance ranging from 30,000 to 100,000 roubles. And each adult male would receive from 100,000 to 500,000 per year, plus a marital supplement of from 15,000 to 60,000 roubles annually, if applicable, and appanage property.¹³⁴ These landholdings were, for the most part, heritable, but, because they belonged to the dynasty, they could not be sold, mortgaged or exchanged, and if a man died without sons they were reabsorbed by the appanage department.¹³⁵

Appanage income was, theoretically, divorced from service. Grand ducal rights and privileges were not inalienable, however. Paul chose to draw a connection between the observance of law and the receipt of appanage wealth, writing: "In return for having secured their material well-being, the Emperor expects his relatives to show their gratitude by honoring the Fundamental Laws of the Empire."¹³⁶ This pronouncement implies that Romanov sons and daughters were immune from criminal prosecution, but their oath of submission to the tsar bound them unconditionally to the sovereign will. Thus, they were certainly not immune from the negative consequences of their behaviour, as we shall see, and appanage income was always stripped simultaneously with service rank.

Roderick McGrew credits Paul's legislation with placing the dynasty "at the centre of the socio-political system",¹³⁷ and Wortman points to ceremonial observance as proof that Paul celebrated the grandeur of his house on an unprecedented scale.¹³⁸ In fact, since Peter I's establishment of a secular tradition, the birth and christening of Romanov children had been marked with great ceremony. When Aleksei Petrovich was born, military units played a central role in the celebration and were honoured with gifts, thereby underlying their connection to the dynasty. The public, too, benefitted, with fireworks and feasts going on for

¹³⁴ Ibid., item 76.

¹³⁵ Ibid., item 49-50.

¹³⁶ Ibid., item 77.

¹³⁷ McGrew, *Paul*, p. 231.

¹³⁸ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 188.

several days -- a signal that dynastic increase was to be looked upon as a fortuitous event for the entire nation.¹³⁹

Salutes were fired for girls as well as boys, and did not, in themselves, have military significance, though they did mark the imperial glory, founded on military might, to which the newborn was an heir. Beyond this, they introduced the child to the public. Official receptions allowed indigenous and foreign elites, especially those from the political service *milieux*, to acknowledge the newborn as a figure of importance to the Russian state.¹⁴⁰ Not neglected was the child's induction into Orthodoxy, without which males could have no place in the line of succession, and females, in the event that they married a fellow Romanov, could not produce sons with a right to succeed.¹⁴¹ Christenings were thus treated as occasions of great significance, with a salute surpassing in number of guns (301 for a boy) that which announced a birth (201), and a new round of festivities.¹⁴²

Catherine observed the Petrine tradition with the birth of her grandchildren, but Wortman asserts that Paul went further than any of his predecessors, marking the "imperial days", (i.e., birthdays and namedays) with special magnificence, in keeping with "the new importance assigned to the imperial family".¹⁴³ Moreover, that Romanovs were to be regarded not merely as the state's senior servants but as exalted beings, was demonstrated by Paul's promulgation of a law requiring all passersby to make obeisance should they encounter a member of the dynasty on the street.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Hughes, *Peter*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁰ Bozherianov, Ivan Nikolaevich, *Pervii tsarstvennii general'-fel'dtseikhmeister velikii kniaz' Mikhail Pavlovich, 1798-1849: Bibliograficheskii ocherk*, St. Petersburg, 1898, pp 2-5; Zherve, V.V., *General'-fel'dmarshal velikii kniaz' Nikolai Nikolaevich starshii: Istoricheskii ocherk ego zhizni i deiatel'nosti, 1831-1891*, St. Petersburg, 1911, pp 2, 4.

¹⁴¹ See: Suichev, *Zakony*.

¹⁴² Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, pp 2-5.

¹⁴³ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 188.

¹⁴⁴ McGrew, *Paul*, p. 213.

This was an extravagant conceit to say the least. Much more worrisome from a Petrine standpoint, however, was Paul's behaviour with regard to the order of St Andrew. Established by Peter I sometime around 1699, the order was never an inviolable service decoration, as demonstrated by the fact that Peter bestowed one upon Aleksei Petrovich merely for marrying. But he nonetheless made it clear that he considered it ludicrous to confer such honours upon children.¹⁴⁵

The first minor to receive the order was the infant Ivan VI.¹⁴⁶ Thereafter it was bestowed upon all male Romanovs, and Paul not only sanctioned this practice, but augmented it. At his command, newborn grand dukes received four other decorations (the Order of St. Alexander Nevsky, the Order of the White Eagle, the Order of St. Anna, and the Order of St. Stanislav) along with their Andrews. Finally, the tsar proclaimed that all holders of the Order of St Andrew would automatically advance to the third highest rung on the Table of Ranks, meaning that, from his reign on, every grand duke, from the moment of his birth, became either a General or an Admiral!¹⁴⁷ This, of course, was a direct affront to Peter's intentions. In practice, however, it was offset by Paul's effort to resurrect the Petrine service heritage, both within and outside of the dynasty.

Paul and his sons shared a belief in the primacy of the Romanov military mission, and this common ground would form the basis of a lasting dynastic legacy. During Catherine's reign, as we have seen, it brought them into an alliance, the rebellious quality of which greatly appealed to the boys. Her death brought about the end of that alliance, and as their co-conspirator (Paul) was transformed into their oppressor, Alexander and Konstantin sought new allies. Moreover, instead of being

¹⁴⁵ Grebelsky, Petr, and Aleksandr Mirvis (eds), *Dom Romanovykh: Biograficheskie svedeniia o chlenakh tsarstvovavshego doma, ikh predkakh i rodstvennikakh*, St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 266.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 266.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 267; Kashchenko, S.G., & N.G. Rogulin, "Predstaviteli doma. Romanovykh -- Kavalerii ordena Sviatovo Georgiia" in *Dom Romanovykh* (Khovanova, ed.), pp 261, 267.

caught between warring family members, they found themselves in the midst of a conflict which pitted their father against their nearest peers, Russia's elite servitors.

Paul's sons were immediately associated with his new military regime. Indeed, while their grandmother lay dying they met him at the Winter Palace, dressed in Gatchina uniforms,¹⁴⁸ and marched at the head of the emperor's troops when these latter made their entry into St Petersburg.¹⁴⁹ They were apprehensive about this role. Their hitherto private connection to the ridiculed units was now conspicuously public. In the event, Paul was thrilled with his triumph, and praised his sons liberally. At the same time, the citizens of the capital hastened to give the emperor's troops a friendly reception, and the brothers' misapprehensions undoubtedly diminished.¹⁵⁰

Of course, the old order could not be immediately supplanted, and Paul deigned to appoint himself and each of his sons commander-in-chief of a guards regiment.¹⁵¹ Thus, his domination was extended to this hostile elite, both directly and by proxy. The political question aside, however, in examining the role the brothers played as regimental commanders, we arrive at our first test of grand ducal service under the new regime.

Honorary appointments were common within the Russian imperial family, as they were (and are) in other European royal houses. The commander-in-chief of a regiment need not be a service-aged male. His (or her) duty was purely symbolic. He/she nurtured bonds of familial affection between the troops and the dynasty, and honoured distinguished units. The ruler could also use such appointments to demonstrate which members of his family stood most highly in his favour, and further diplomatic relations by bestowing them upon foreign royals. The line regiment "command" positions given to Alexander and Konstantin by their

¹⁴⁸ Hartley, *Alexander*, p. 19.

¹⁴⁹ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, p. 141.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹⁵¹ Lincoln, *Romanovs*, pp 49-50; Komarovsky, E.F., *Zapiski grafa E.F. Komarovskago*, (P.E. Shchegolev, ed.), St. Petersburg, 1914, p. 49.

grandmother were strictly honorary, so, too, Paul's self-appointed post. But the brothers' new positions represented a hazy middle-ground.

Paul expected young noblemen, including all those ornamental persons who had adorned his mother's court, to "choose some career and devote themselves to it". Lest they rush to obtain, or take comfort in an existing guards sinecure, he made it known that "amateurs" were no longer welcome in the military service, and discipline became severe.¹⁵² The guards lifestyle "changed utterly". Officers were now expected to serve long shifts, and were drilled "like recruits".¹⁵³

This new order extended to Paul's sons. Their royal status, though it demanded that they receive lofty posts, did not entitle them to hold sinecures. In the event, Alexander and Konstantin were probably equal, if not superior, to many a guards commander so far as superficial military knowledge was concerned. They certainly had more experience with Prussian style drill. Moreover, their youth did not stand in such shocking disparity to their rank as one might imagine. The Czartoryski brothers, for instance, had both obtained general officers' rank by the end of Paul's reign.¹⁵⁴

Alexander and Konstantin were not regimental commanders in the strict "career" sense. Both had other posts, and were still guided by overseers. That said, their duties distinguished them from truly honorary commanders. They played an active and influential role in the life of their units, and were "absorbed" by the "endless details" connected with regimental command. They were held strictly accountable by Paul for the maintenance of proper regimental order, and were subject to punishment in the event of failure.¹⁵⁵

Nicholas, of course, could not even attend upon a regiment, but it seems reasonable to assert that Paul intended him to assume this same kind of command when he reached maturity. In the meantime, he and his troops could familiarise

¹⁵² Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, p. 142.

¹⁵³ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, p. 53.

¹⁵⁴ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, p. 93.

¹⁵⁵ Waliszewski, *Paul*, p. 108; Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, p. 157.

themselves with one another, and the child grow up immersed in the idea of his future service role. Thus his appointment is best defined as temporarily inactive (though, despite his lack of duties, Nicholas did receive the normal colonel's salary of 1,105 rubles *per annum*).¹⁵⁶

In essence, what Paul's sons were called upon to play was an executive role which was "real", but much more flexible than a traditional command. Implicit in this design was the understanding that grand dukes must not be specialists, but extensions of the ruler. Alexander, as heir, was invested with titles of great authority almost immediately. He was Governor-General of St. Petersburg (with the notorious Aleksei Arakcheev at his side to guide him in the guise of "commandant") and Inspector General of Infantry.¹⁵⁷ Konstantin received more modest posts. In 1796 he became chief of the First Cadet Corps, a position which had once belonged to the future Peter III. The corps continued to be run by a director, and Konstantin's role was less integral than that which he played as regimental commander, but it was not without significance. The director reported to him on all administrative matters. In practice, this meant that his adjutant, Komarovsky, reviewed the corps' paperwork, and brought anything of significance to the grand duke's attention. If Konstantin elected to intervene, the director was obliged to obey him.¹⁵⁸

In 1798, Paul appointed his second son Governor General of Peterhof for the duration of the court's stay there. A guards commander acted as "commandant", and, in practice, the governor generalship was nothing more than a modest military task, calling for the supervision of the Peterhof palace guard. Like the regimental command, however, it did require considerable effort to ensure that Paul's regulations were adhered to scrupulously, especially when so many officers held

¹⁵⁶ *SIRIO, Materialy i cherty k biografii imperatora Nikolaia I i k istorii ego tsarstvovaniia*, (N.F. Dubrovin, ed.), v. 98, 1896, p. 17.

¹⁵⁷ Dziewanowski, M.K., *Alexander I, Russia's Mysterious Tsar*, New York, 1990, p. 72.

¹⁵⁸ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, pp 63-65.

them in contempt.¹⁵⁹ The grand duke fulfilled a similar function in Gatchina during annual troop manoeuvres, with the title of military governor.¹⁶⁰

Finally, it is worth noting Charles Masson's rather vague reference to Konstantin as an "officer of the police". It was in this capacity that he is said to have carried out Paul's order that Catherine's last favourite, Platon Zubov, a man of immense power in the preceding reign, should be turned out of his chancery. Whether or not Konstantin held an official police position, the role that he played *vis à vis* Zubov was a prototype for a future grand ducal function, to wit, handling sensitive matters at risk of reputation or image. In this instance, the symbolic importance of direct Romanov involvement in Zubov's fall from power was achieved without exposing the sovereign or the heir to political taint.

Observing events from afar, La Harpe was simply gratified to know that both of his former charges had been "initiated into the management of affairs", though other men decried the fact that the duties they were given were of little benefit, either to them or to the state.¹⁶¹

Paul himself undoubtedly looked upon his service regime as being genuinely Petrine in contrast to his mother's, and his demands did not appear to disturb the young men.¹⁶² Both shared his parade mentality. Both were pleased to be employed (and thus feel important). Both continued to treasure their father's approval. But there was, from the first, a smothering quality in his attentions, an atmosphere of paranoia surrounding him, and a sense that his determination to keep his sons tied up with trivialities owed much to his need to maintain control over those near him.

Alexander and Konstantin remained as tightly supervised as ever. Paul not only agreed with Catherine that members of the dynasty could not have personal lives, but took a particularly rigid stance in relation to his elder children. The brothers were

¹⁵⁹ see Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, p. 193; Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, pp 66-67.

¹⁶⁰ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, p. 72.

¹⁶¹ La Harpe, *Correspondence*, v.1, p. 209; Waliszewski, *Paul*, p. 390;

Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, p. 157.

¹⁶² Waliszewski, *Paul*, p. 390.

kept very close to their father and held in a "state of dependence".¹⁶³ Konstantin was watched by an adjutant called Safonov, instructed by Paul to act "as a nanny" [diad'ka] to the young man, and report on "all his highness's actions". Nor was Konstantin left in doubt as to the man's role. Paul informed him that Safonov should be treated as "'my own proxy'".¹⁶⁴

Certainly it was not unreasonable for Paul to appoint overseers to his sons. Indeed, it might be interpreted as a token of his desire to increase the practicality of the imperial service role. Under the guidance of experienced men, these youths could shoulder real responsibility. That said, it would be disingenuous to pretend that Paul wasn't motivated, in large part, by less noble sentiments.

Highlighting how quickly intra family relations degenerated -- and Konstantin's place in Paul's hierarchy of suspicion -- is an event which occurred in 1798 during the grand duke's tenure as Governor-General of Peterhof. The source of the conflict was absurdly trivial. A ball was held, after which Paul told Konstantin that he need no longer attend him, and the grand duke decided to go for a walk in the gardens. A short time later, Komarovsky received word that Paul was enraged at his son's absence from the nightly report. The adjutant retrieved the grand duke, but it was too late. After a sleepless night, Konstantin wrote a letter to his father, but it was returned. Horrified, he implored Komarovsky to seek out Ivan Kutaisov, the tsar's current favourite, and persuade him to intervene. Coming across the emperor, Komarovsky took the initiative himself and begged Paul to receive his son who was so distraught that his health was in danger. The emperor seemed gratified by this development, and confided in Komarovsky that "everyone" was against him, including his wife and heir. He had "counted on the loyalty of [Konstantin] alone", but the "misdeed" of the night before had "forced [him] to think that [Konstantin]

¹⁶³ McGrew, Paul, p. 204; see also Masson, *Memoirs*, p. 177.

¹⁶⁴ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, p. 75.

too [had] passed over to the opposition". He accepted Komarovsky's explanation and agreed to forgive his son.¹⁶⁵ For the moment disaster was averted.

Whatever Paul's suspicions about his sons might have been, the year 1799 witnessed a logical progression in their career development. Alexander received appointment to the Senate and the newly organised State Council, thus bringing him before the public eye as a capable governmental leader. Konstantin went to war, and by so doing, created the prototype for grand ducal field military role.

Both the emperor and his son were eager to seize this opportunity. It was important for the maintenance of dynastic prestige to have a representative amongst the allied troops in Italy. Other European ruling houses were sending their sons to war. The Duke of York would lead an attack on Holland. Archduke Charles of Austria was chosen to command the troops in Germany, and the young Prince of Orange would have taken command in Italy but for his premature demise. Two other royals (a Wurttemberger and a Habsburg) were considered for the supreme command, but rejected due to insufficient experience. Under the circumstances, Konstantin certainly could not have filled the gap, nor was his name advanced -- the position went to the famous Aleksandr Suvorov (who assumed the rank of Field Marshal).¹⁶⁶ But the grand duke's presence was still a symbolic feather in Russia's cap. Moreover, Paul believed that it lent "greater significance" to the campaign itself in the eyes of the Russian public.¹⁶⁷

For Konstantin, war meant a chance to prove his merit as a servitor, to gain the experience he needed if he was ever to be taken seriously as a military leader, and to win his father's approval. He departed Russia at the beginning of March, travelling under the name "Count Romanov," the better to emphasize his status as a volunteer.¹⁶⁸ That said, he was accompanied by a "brilliant" suite (four adjutants, two doctors, two pages, a "riding master", and V.K. Derfel'den, a sixty-four year

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp 68-70.

¹⁶⁶ McGrew, *Paul*, pp 294-295.

¹⁶⁷ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, p. 75.

¹⁶⁸ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 9; Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 57.

old cavalry general, who would later undertake an independent command),¹⁶⁹ though extravagance of this kind would not necessarily have distinguished him from his aristocratic peers, one of whom brought along "his entire *psovai* hunt"!¹⁷⁰

Konstantin's incognito was ignored at headquarters, where his arrival placed Suvorov in an extremely awkward position. Since the emperor had not defined his son's role, it was left to the Marshal to deal with the conflicting demands of grand ducal dignity, professional integrity, and his own authority. When, later in the campaign, hungry Russian soldiers began to seize goods in Switzerland, Suvorov, it is alleged, chose to look the other way, not out of necessity alone, but because of his determination "to maintain his popularity in view of the pretensions of [Konstantin] to the chief command".¹⁷¹

At their initial meeting, Suvorov received Konstantin with exaggerated deference, addressing him repeatedly as "the son of our noble sovereign". When the grand duke remarked upon the Marshal's bandaged eye, he proclaimed to Derfel'den: "we must take better care of His Imperial Highness, the son of our noble sovereign, than we do of our own eyes. We have two eyes, but only one grand duke here with us."¹⁷² Thereafter he presented Konstantin with a report upon the disposition of the troops, and the next morning appeared at his quarters in full dress uniform to offer his "advice" on the proper course of activity for the day.¹⁷³

Proving his courage appears to have been a high priority for the grand duke, and one which he equated with the establishment of his status as a "real" officer. His first conflict with the Marshal arose from the recklessness borne of this enthusiasm. When danger threatened during an early skirmish, Suvorov recalled Konstantin, who then made use of his royal privilege to defy this command, dispatching

¹⁶⁹ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, p. 76; Waliszewski, *Paul*, p. 320.

¹⁷⁰ Cheremeteff, D. S., *Country Life and Sport in Russia from my Reminiscences*, unpublished, 1926, p. 385, *psovai* hunting was coursing with hounds in the traditional Russian manner.

¹⁷¹ Waliszewski, *Paul*, p. 305.

¹⁷² Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, , pp 81-82.

¹⁷³ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 57; Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, p. 82.

Komarovsky to give the Marshal the news. Rather than precipitating a showdown, Suvorov railed at the adjutant, informing him that *his* irresponsible behaviour would be reported to Paul. Konstantin, after all, could not be treated as a normal officer. If he should be captured by the enemy "what shame would fall upon the entire army, upon all Russia... how the republicans would rejoice!" For the moment, however, Suvorov contented himself with strengthening Konstantin's Cossack bodyguard,¹⁷⁴ and it looked as though the grand duke would retain the advantage, until his first effort at military leadership ended in catastrophe. He goaded a general into confronting the enemy against Suvorov's explicit orders, and nearly 1,300 Russian troopers were lost! The punishments meted out in the aftermath of this disaster were outrageously light. The general received "a sharp rebuke".¹⁷⁵ Konstantin was ushered into Suvorov's room in privacy, remained there for a long time, and emerged with a distressed mien. The Marshal wished to issue a dispatch to the entire army, blaming the day's defeat upon the "inexperience and passion of youth", thus plainly implicating the grand duke.¹⁷⁶ In the event, even this mild step was abandoned, but the power dynamic had nonetheless shifted in Suvorov's favour.

No further difficulties were reported between the two men that summer, nor was Konstantin excluded from combat, as Pienkos has alleged.¹⁷⁷ August found him at the head of an Austrian dragoon regiment.¹⁷⁸ Suvorov may not have desired this appointment, but it would have been politically inopportune to oppose it. In the event, it was with his dragoons that the grand duke experienced his real baptism of fire at the battle of Novi (6 August), from which the allies emerged victorious. He remained in the combat zone for the duration of the battle, during which several

¹⁷⁴ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, pp 82-83.

¹⁷⁵ Longworth, Philip, *The Art of Victory: The Life and Achievements of Generalissimo Suvorov, 1729-1800*, London, 1965, p. 245.

¹⁷⁶ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, pp 84-85.

¹⁷⁷ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 9.

¹⁷⁸ see Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky, Aleksandr Ivanovich, *Istoriia voyny Rossii s Frantsieiu v 1799 godu* (Dmitry Miliutin, ed.) v.3, p. 208; Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, p. 95.

members of his suite had their horses shot from beneath them. This time, his meeting with Suvorov at day's end was public and triumphant. The Marshal congratulated him on the victory and hailed him for having emboldened the troops through his own courage.¹⁷⁹

With the departure of his dragoons at the end of August, and the campaign's shift to Switzerland, Konstantin occupied a new position as a member of Suvorov's war council -- a thing which could only have flattered his vanity and pleased the emperor. Once having admitted him to the circle of decision makers, Suvorov could scarcely have ignored him, and, although accounts differ, it is generally agreed that Konstantin did influence the council.¹⁸⁰ Beyond this, as a representative of the dynasty, he seemingly contributed to the morale of the high command at a moment of severe stress, when Suvorov's army found itself abandoned and encircled in the mountains. The Marshal, overcome with emotion, shouted to his commanders: "Save the honour of Russia and her Sovereign! Save our Emperor's son!" throwing himself at Konstantin's feet and weeping. The grand duke then lifted Suvorov and embraced him.¹⁸¹

In the aftermath of the campaign, Paul, who had received an excellent report of "Count Romanov" from Suvorov, lavished rewards upon his son. While yet abroad, Konstantin received command of the LG Cuirassiers. During the campaign itself this unit had fought under Rimsky-Korsakov at Zurich.¹⁸² Its transfer to the grand duke's leadership appears to have been either temporary or honorary, since his name does not figure in the history of the regiment, nor theirs in the history of his career. It undoubtedly fit the moment, as did Paul's instruction that Konstantin

¹⁷⁹ Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky, *Istoriia*, v. 3, pp 67-68.

¹⁸⁰ see: Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 9; Longworth, *Suvorov*, p. 272; Waliszewski, *Paul*, pp 297, 299-300; Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 72.

¹⁸¹ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 72.

¹⁸² de Gmelinc, Patrick, and Gerard Gorokhoff, *La Garde Impériale Russe, 1896-1914*, Paris, 1986, p.193.

should be allowed to act as Inspector General of Cavalry for the purpose of reviewing all of Suvorov's mounted troops.¹⁸³

The most important result of Konstantin's success, however, was the increased prestige which he gained. In Augsburg he was met by a representative of the Viennese Court, who asked him to champion the Austrian cause before Paul, bypassing the intractable Suvorov.¹⁸⁴ While Konstantin declined this commission as outside his authority and experience,¹⁸⁵ it nonetheless attested to his image as a man high in the emperor's favour. And, indeed, the tsar's most extravagant gift to his son was a very conspicuous one -- bestowal of the title tsesarevich. Paul's ukase of 28 October, 1799 read:

"Seeing... the outstanding feats of courage and exemplary manliness displayed against the enemy of the kingdom (tsarstvo) and the [Orthodox] faith by Our most beloved son... during the entire course of the present campaign, We bestow upon him, as a mark of great distinction, the title of Tsesarevich."¹⁸⁶

Wortman regards this as a political act, meant to undermine Alexander's position,¹⁸⁷ and it certainly fell outside the traditional military pale, but it might yet have been a spontaneous expression of the tsar's pleasure at Konstantin's realization of the cherished military ideal (which he himself had been denied), and a symbol of the value he placed upon military achievement. At any rate, Alexander retained sole possession of the title "heir", so the succession remained unaffected. Had he looked upon his brother as a rival, he would surely have found more to fear in Konstantin's image as a "war hero", and the enthusiastic welcome he received from the Russian public upon his return, than from the legally meaningless title.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, whatever Paul's intention may have been, the brothers could scarcely have viewed one another as adversaries while the real threat to their security emanated from their father.

¹⁸³ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 76.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁸⁵ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, pp 88-89.

¹⁸⁶ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 74.

¹⁸⁷ Wortman, *Scenarios*, pp 188-189.

¹⁸⁸ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 10.

By the end of 1799, with his wife in deep disfavour, Paul began to regard his eldest sons with increased suspicion.¹⁸⁹ Anyone closely connected to Maria was now tainted in his eyes, and both Alexander and Konstantin were judged to be insufficiently "devoted to his interests".¹⁹⁰ In fact, it seems possible that, even before Paul's falling out with Maria, he had begun to associate the brothers with a figure much more damning -- Catherine. That Alexander and Konstantin shared their father's disapprobation of their grandmother we have noted. But, after having spent their formative years at her court, it was inevitable that they should absorb some of her ways, and the smallest reminder of his mother's rule was enough to unnerve Paul. Konstantin's return from abroad was quickly marred by an incident springing directly from the emperor's prejudice. Asked to submit a design for improved military uniforms, the grand duke presented his father with models which recalled Catherine's taste, to which Paul responded: "I see you want to introduce Potemkin garb into my army. Get them out of my sight!" From then on "there emerged a coldness toward the grand duke and all those who attended him", spreading, in short order, even to the veterans of the Italian campaign.¹⁹¹

Notwithstanding the tremendous strain which now disrupted family relations however, the development of grand ducal role continued. The year 1798 had witnessed the birth of Paul's fourth and youngest son, Mikhail, who was immediately named General Feldzeugmeister (Inspector General of Ordnance). General Inspectorates were *not* usually honorary positions, and Mikhail's appointment, like Nicholas's regimental command, should be looked upon as temporarily inactive. The inspectorates of ordnance, infantry and cavalry brought their bearers significant authority, and dated from Peter I's reign. The military regulations of 1716 placed them together on the second highest rung of the table of ranks, just beneath the General Field Marshal and Lt. General Field Marshal. In the

¹⁸⁹ McGrew, *Paul*, p. 268; Shumigorsky, *Nelidova*, p. 60.

¹⁹⁰ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, pp 184-186.

¹⁹¹ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, p. 92.

absence of these latter, the supreme command would fall upon the senior of the inspectors.¹⁹²

Much of the power of the general inspectorates lay in their guarantee of direct access to the tsar.¹⁹³ Within the autocratic system, this privilege represented the height of political entitlement. Its holders may not always have succeeded in wielding the influence they desired, but they were answerable to no man but the sovereign himself, and this fitted very well into the traditional conception of the grand duke as demi-god. Insofar as the inspectorates were also perceived as practical and useful posts, the perfect melding of Petrine and traditional criteria was achieved.

Throughout their existence, despite changes implemented by successive rulers, the inspectors almost always had the potential to exert a formative influence upon the branches of the service entrusted to their supervision. To be sure, if they served under a strong-willed tsar they were more likely to channel his desired ideal, but a less rigid ruler meant that they themselves would have broad power to implement their conceptions in the emperor's name.

General inspectorates had, hitherto, been bestowed upon non-royal servitors high in the sovereign's favour. Alexander's appointment as General Inspector of Infantry may not have had great significance since he was the heir to the throne, but Mikhail's status as General Feldzeugmeister signalled the real beginning of the cooption of general inspectorates to the grand ducal realm.

Paul's timing may have been a reflection of his delight at the birth of a son untainted by Catherine. This would explain why Nicholas was overlooked, at least temporarily. As for Mikhail's age, an inactive appointment may have seemed practical to the tsar, insofar as it would allow the boy to prepare for a specific

¹⁹² *Voennaia Entsiklopedia*, "General Inspektory", v.7 (1912) p.233; Grebelsky, *Dom Romanovykh*, p. 248.

¹⁹³ Curtiss, John, *The Russian Army Under Nicholas I*, Durham, 1965, p. 98.

service role from early childhood, and ensure that he had an important place within the Empire, despite being the youngest of four sons.

Meanwhile, the director of the First Cadet Corps, M.I. Lamsdorf, was asked to undertake the bringing up of the two youngest grand dukes. He hesitated, but Paul insisted that he must accept the task "for Russia".¹⁹⁴ The appointment was made in 1800 (though the children would not leave the nursery until 1803 when Nicholas was seven and Mikhail five),¹⁹⁵ and demonstrated the emperor's commitment to training his sons as real military men. After all, given Lamsdorf's connection to the Cadet Corps, it was to be expected that the boys would be raised in keeping with contemporary military standards. Paul instructed the general that he must never allow his charges to become good-for-nothing loafers like the sons of other royal houses, and he lost no time in clothing them in tiny uniforms.¹⁹⁶ Nicholas donned a regimental tunic for the first time in 1799, aged two. In 1801 he began to wear his uniforms more frequently than ordinary children's clothing.¹⁹⁷ Mikhail was also displayed in uniform, and coaxed, while still an infant, into "receiving" artillery reports.¹⁹⁸

Of course, the real measure of the tsar's intentions is best gleaned from Konstantin's role. His wartime participation, as we have seen, far exceeded the bounds of what his experience should have allowed, but it was not lacking in effort, and it was not at odds with contemporary European thought on the interaction of birth and service. Now that his son was home again and in need of a peacetime occupation, Paul had once more to consider the issues of practical preparation and merit. Konstantin's combat exposure made him more experienced than Alexander, but the heir's exalted status overcame all boundaries, and he could hold his general inspectorate without further qualification. Konstantin, of course, had his modest

¹⁹⁴ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, p. 8.

¹⁹⁵ *SIRIO*, v. 98, p. 25 ("Materialy i cherty k biografii imperatora Nikolaia I", N.F. Dubrovin, ed.).

¹⁹⁶ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, p. 8.

¹⁹⁷ *SIRIO*, v. 98, pp 23-24, 31 ("Materialy").

¹⁹⁸ Bozheryanov, *Pervyi*, p. 9.

position over the First Cadet Corps. What he really desired, however, was the General Inspectorate of Cavalry.

Unfortunately, available sources conflict as to whether he received this post during his father's reign. Sablukov denies that the appointment occurred, and Komarovsky never mentions it.¹⁹⁹ The Imperial Russian Military Encyclopedia states that Alexander bestowed the inspectorate upon his brother in 1807.²⁰⁰ Pienkos, Grabel'sky, and Mirvis assert that the appointment did take place in 1797, but they fail to offer documentation.²⁰¹ Finally, Konstantin's biographer, Karnovich, seconds Sablukov's contention that Paul refused to grant this post to his son until he had gained substantial peacetime experience as the commander of a cavalry regiment.²⁰²

The tsar appears to have held the inspectorate open for his son, allowing him to assume its mantle on notable occasions (e.g., at the end of the Suvorov campaign, and at a review on the Austrian frontier in 1800).²⁰³ But he seemingly did wish Konstantin, whose future should be primarily military, to mature as an officer before leaping ahead in his career. In 1800, Konstantin's command of the LG Izmailovsky regiment was transferred, in titular form, to four year old Nicholas, who ceded the Horse Guards in return. According to Sablukov, this change sprang directly from the grand duke's wish to obtain the cavalry inspectorate, and Paul's demand that he first demonstrate the necessary ability.²⁰⁴

Though disparaging in his attitude toward Konstantin, Sablukov certainly regarded him as the actual commander of the Horse Guards, as did K.A. Borozdin, another regimental officer.²⁰⁵ The official regimental history, however, identifies Konstantin only as honorary commander, listing *five* actual commanders for

¹⁹⁹ Sablukov, *Tsareubiistvo*, p. 67.

²⁰⁰ *Voennaia Entsiklopedia*, "General Inspektory", p. 228.

²⁰¹ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 8; Grebelsky, *Dom Romanovykh*, p. 136.

²⁰² Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, pp 52, 76.

²⁰³ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, p. 103.

²⁰⁴ Sablukov, *Tsareubiistvo*, p. 67.

²⁰⁵ Borozdin, K.A., "K kharakteristike Aleksandra I", *Istoricheskii Vestnik* # 68, p. 473.

1800.²⁰⁶ Fortunately, we have a second account provided by Komarovsky, whose perspective is very different from Sablukov's. According to him, both Konstantin and the Horse Guards were ill treated by Paul, who nursed a special grudge for this regiment. A short time after the grand duke's return from Austria, the tsar flew into a rage during a Horse Guards review, and placed several officers under arrest. The commander was dismissed from service altogether, and the regiment, hitherto quartered in St. Petersburg, was transferred to Tsarskoe Selo that very day, with Konstantin instructed not merely to take command, but to "destroy the spirit of disorder and rebelliousness which [had] infected [the Horse Guards]",²⁰⁷ i.e., to act as a channel of dynastic dominance and wrath. Finally, though he may have desired a cavalry command, the position was far from salutary in many ways, and, indeed, appears to have been punitive. He and his suite were obliged, by the emperor's orders, to occupy a palace in Tsarskoe, which had fallen into disrepair, and was so cold that they could not remove their outdoor clothing. Nor were they allowed to travel freely to St. Petersburg (the grand duke himself was permitted to go only on Sundays). Of the two adjutants general dispatched from the tsar's suite to aid Konstantin one was regarded as a spy.²⁰⁸

Three months later, one of Paul's favorites,²⁰⁹ Adjutant General Uvarov, arrived in Tsarskoe, bringing with him authorization to select the best horses and men from the Horse Guards, with whom to form a new regiment. Konstantin was outraged. He tried to hinder the general's activities, but Uvarov simply complained to Paul and the matter was settled in his favour. The Cavalier Guards thus came into being, with three squadrons confiscated from Konstantin.²¹⁰ Soon thereafter, Komarovsky,

²⁰⁶ Kozlianinov, Vladimir (ed.), *Manuel Commémoratif de la Garde a Cheval*, Paris, 1931, pp 56-57.

²⁰⁷ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, p. 93.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., pp 93-94.

²⁰⁹ Sablukov, *Tsareubiistvo*, p. 67.

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 67; Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 52; de Gmeline, *La Garde*, 179; Kozlianinov, *Manuel*, pp 56-57.

Safonov, and another valued member of the grand duke's suite were transferred into the regular army by Paul.²¹¹

Ultimately, the service picture is clear enough. Konstantin did play an integral role in the life of the regiment, but in an executive capacity, and the succession of five "commanders" listed by the regimental history only bears further witness to Paul's distrust of anyone connected to this regiment (and/or anyone long in his son's personal *milieu*). Sablukov's acceptance of Konstantin's role as a true command reflects early nineteenth-century thinking, while the twentieth-century editors of the regimental history took a narrower and more professional view. Going beyond the military realm, the Horse Guards affair highlights the inherent political quality of grand ducal role, with Konstantin being both a magnet for suspicion, and a tool for the stamping out of sedition.

Paul possessed (as we have noted) a sound political rationale for appointing his sons commanders of the Guard at the beginning of his reign, but a self-destructive element is also perceivable behind his desire that Alexander and Konstantin, already tainted with their grandmother's memory, should be so closely thrown together with the very men whom he reviled as the would-be champions of Catherine's vision of empire. Indeed, McGrew, linking Paul's paranoia directly to the childhood trauma of Catherine's coup, notes that the tsar "looked for" conspiratorial tendencies within his family and "seemed almost to take for granted" his relatives' "intention to betray him",²¹² from which point it would appear but a short mental step toward actually precipitating the feared scenario by way of resigning oneself to one's fate.

In fact, neither Alexander nor Konstantin was popular with his colleagues. The brothers had not had the opportunity, during their grandmother's reign, to forge a strong bond with the military service elite, being trained, rather, in the harsh discipline of Gatchina. Now turned loose in the guards, they, no less than their

²¹¹ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, pp 95-97.

²¹² McGrew, *Paul*, p. 43.

father, abused their authority.²¹³ There is, moreover, a clear note of disdain in Sablukov's description of the brothers' performance of their duties, even given the low professional standards of the Guards in the early nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the fact that the two not only found themselves linked to these men by their father, but, like them, faced an ever increasing threat of disenfranchisement, if not actual bodily harm, at his command, created potent grounds for the establishment of a conspiratorial alliance.

Countless rumours circulated with regard to Paul's intentions *vis à vis* the succession. Despite his devotion to male primogeniture, the emperor appears to have considered naming an alternate heir. Some accounts single Nicholas out as the favourite, some Mikhail. Other possibilities included his illegitimate children, and his wife's nephew, Prince Eugen of Wurttemberg. Should such a change occur, Maria, Alexander, and Konstantin, it was said, would be imprisoned.²¹⁴ True or not, these rumours undoubtedly reached the brother's ears, and Paul's erratic behaviour could only have reinforced them.

If, however, personal preservation provided the greatest motivation for *all* those who sought Paul's downfall, they nonetheless required an honourable justification, and this could be found in the defence of Russia's welfare. Alexander and Konstantin were not only exposed to rumours of their own demise, they were accustomed to hearing their colleagues label Paul a lunatic.²¹⁵ In the event, when Panin held his first secret meeting with Alexander, though certainly pointing out the danger posed by Paul to the members of the imperial family, he emphasized the patriotic element, declaring that: "Alexander's most sacred duty was to his country, and that he must not sacrifice millions of people to the extravagant caprices and follies of a single man..."²¹⁶ Even so, it was only with "extreme difficulty", over a

²¹³ Sablukov, *Tsareubiistvo*, p. 67; Shumigorsky, *Nelidova*, p. 97.

²¹⁴ Wortman, *Scenarios*, pp 188-189; Schiemann, Theodor, *Smert' Pavla Pervago*, Moscow, 1909, pp 77-78.

²¹⁵ See, for instance, Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, p. 93.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

course of some time, that he made progress with the heir. Many accounts suggest that Pahlen finally expedited matters by hinting to Paul that his elder sons were plotting against him, knowing the emperor would order their arrest, thus prompting them to take action.²¹⁷

Opinions differ as to whether Alexander and Konstantin were actually arrested on the evening of the murder. Alexander told Sablukov they were, adding that they had been forced to reswear their allegiance to Paul.²¹⁸ Konstantin's arrest for "some trifling negligence on duty" was attested to by several contemporaries, though this would not have been an extraordinary occurrence, and he remained, at any rate, in active command of his regiment.²¹⁹

Alexander's limited participation in the conspiracy is too well documented to be disputed. Konstantin, however, is another matter. That he could have had no inkling of what was going on seems implausible.²²⁰ Ultimately, however, whatever the case may have been, Konstantin could certainly not have emerged from the affair unscathed. There was, to begin with, the horrifying evidence that both of his parents considered him capable of patricide. He probably heard the allegation that Paul, while struggling for his life, cried out to him for mercy! He certainly felt his mother's wrath in the immediate aftermath of the assassination, when she declared that her two eldest sons were both traitors.²²¹

Alexander and Konstantin were said to have been devastated by their father's murder, and each would, in his own way, carry the mark of that shock forever. In Konstantin's case, the bitterness and self-doubt already native to his character were aggravated, and the scar left by the affair appears to have borne a negative impact both upon his dynastic identity and his relationship toward the state -- a subject

²¹⁷ McGrew, *Paul*, pp 268, 347; Schiemann, *Smert'*, p. 77; Shumigorsky, *Nelidova*, p. 60.

²¹⁸ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 80; Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 11; Schiemann, *Smert'*, p. 79; Waliszewski, *Paul*, p. 440.

²¹⁹ see Sablukov, *Tsareubiistvo*, pp 98-100.

²²⁰ see Waliszewski, *Paul*, pp 440, 442.

²²¹ McGrew, *Paul*, 252-253; Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.1, pp 241, 251.

which we will examine when we look at the reigns of Alexander I and Nicholas I. For the moment it is sufficient to note that, a few days after Paul's death, Konstantin declared to Sablukov: "...my brother can rule if he likes, but if the throne should ever pass to me, I shall undoubtedly refuse it".²²² History would attest to the sincerity of this utterance, and before his premature death in 1831 Konstantin would demonstrate the complications posed to dynastic harmony by a grand ducal maverick.

III. The Reign of Alexander I, 1801-1825

Alexander I began his reign by confirming his commitment to Russia's welfare, even going so far as to state that "the principle of all supreme power is found essentially in the nation".²²³ These were noble words, but so long as Russia lacked a constitution, the state's independence remained ephemeral, and Alexander would never grant a constitution. Some progress was made during his reign, however, toward the modernization of service. He tried to staff his bureaucracy with educated officials, as was current practice in Western Europe. The task of implementing this reform was given to Mikhail Speransky, a man who had risen to the top of the civil service through merit, took pride in his professionalism, and was committed to the welfare of the state.²²⁴

The result of the tsar's half-hearted approach to reform is well-known. Russia's elite servitors, many of whom, after returning home from France, were disturbed by their new perception of their country's backwardness, proved unwilling to accept unfulfilled promises. They formed secret societies for the purpose of championing their own interpretation of the state's welfare -- one which was progressive, patriotic, and incompatible with autocracy. Meanwhile, from the very beginning of

²²² Sablukov, *Tsareubiistvo*, p. 100.

²²³ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 196.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 202-203.

his reign Alexander faced the question of how his brothers fitted into the Russian Empire of the nineteenth-century.

Konstantin's role was a pressing concern. He was immediately made an adjutant general in the imperial suite,²²⁵ but departed St. Petersburg to command the Dnepr Division in the Southwestern Provinces.²²⁶ Here was a real and unromantic position -- one which afforded him an intimate view of provincial army life. That Konstantin desired the move in the aftermath of the assassination trauma seems probable. At any rate, he did not remain away for long. By June he was presiding as chairman of a war commission, convened to study the size, organization, and provisioning of the army.

Thus it appeared that the grand duke, who took a dilligent approach to service, would be an asset to his sovereign. In fact, however, difficulties arose rapidly. As a second son, very close in age to the heir, Konstantin was, as we have seen, both forcibly drawn into, and treated as an interloper within, his brother's world. The supreme power stood tantalizingly before him, but just beyond his reach. The heir, from his position of isolation, looked to him as *confidant*. The loyalty and affection born from such a relationship could only dampen the second son's ambitions *vis à vis* his brother's throne, channelling it into other directions. Moreover, the second son who enjoyed his brother's trust and regard inevitably became an object of resentment to jealous courtiers, and these were often successful in pushing him away, even where they could not alienate his brother's affections. Thus, having first experienced life in his older brother's shadow, and now finding himself driven back by courtiers, it was a rare man who would not begin to resent the established order, and to look elsewhere for a place to establish his own identity. Any such assertion of independence violated the Muscovite principle of self-abnegation, however, and could be interpreted as a sign of illegitimate ambition. It thus offered ammunition to rivals for sowing discord between the heir and his eldest brother, and suggested to

²²⁵ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, p. 112.

²²⁶ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 97.

others that the second son could himself be co-opted as a player or pawn in political wrangling.

Only months elapsed before Konstantin's loyalty was questioned. In a June 1801 letter to his brother, S.R. Vorontsov expressed his fear that the grand duke might provide a power base for the fulfilment of a new *coup d'état*, writing:

"The emperor should look to his family, because, if Konstantin doesn't follow his brother's example and distance himself from those scoundrels who surround [him], then there will be two parties: one composed of good people, and the other of immoral people, and because this latter, as is usually the case, will be the more active [of the two], then [it] will overthrow both the sovereign and the state."²²⁷

Fueling the fire was Konstantin's appointment as Inspector of the Southern Army, a post which placed more than two-thirds of Russia's land forces under his direct command. He was twenty-two years old, and this kind of power seemed extravagant even for a grand duke. Vorontsov warned N.N. Novosil'tsev that Alexander's own entourage had arranged the appointment:

"in case the need should arise to contraposition [Konstantin] against his brother... They want to rule over the elder brother, frightening him with the rebellion of the younger. In a word, I consider the state to be in danger."²²⁸

Clearly the threat of which Vorontsov spoke was never realised, and one doubts that it was ever as grave as he perceived. The assassination of Paul undoubtedly inflamed anxieties, even among those who were happy to be rid of him. In fact, Konstantin never expressed a desire to supplant his older brother. He continued, however, to demonstrate his sense of alienation from, and even hostility toward, the court. In 1803 he expressed his intention of obtaining a divorce -- behaviour which could not be attributed solely to his dislike for his wife. Dynastic duty did not, after all, demand that he live with the grand duchess, or refrain from taking mistresses. In the event, the dowager empress summed up the dynastic position when she made it clear that grand ducal duty and national duty were indistinguishable in this instance, and Konstantin's divorce, by demaning the imperial family, would threaten the

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 85.

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 85.

stability of the state. She wrote: "only unwavering virtue will enable us to instill in the people confidence in our superiority, which together with the feeling of reverent respect, secures the tranquility of the empire".²²⁹

Faced with familial opposition, Konstantin relented, and in 1804 Alexander appointed him head of the entire military educational establishment. He was the driving force in the convocation of a council to oversee developments in this sphere, and as chairman of this body presided over several important men, amongst them the Minister of Education, the Minister of War, the acting heads of Engineering and Artillery and the Vice-Minister of Interior.

All proceeded smoothly until the possibility of war arose in 1805. Konstantin, in his capacity as Chairman of the War Commission, advocated non-intervention.²³⁰ Throughout his life he would be recognised as a man who did not approve of warfare, the reason most frequently cited being his concern with the fact that it ruined carefully drilled troops.²³¹ One rather thinks, however, that it may also have had something to do with his first-hand experience of the unpleasantness of war. At any rate, when called upon to do his part, he performed commendably, outshining Alexander, whose attempt to prove himself as a wartime commander ended with the routing of his troops at Austerlitz.²³²

The grand duke's title was commander of the guards reserve, under the authority of General Kutuzov. This command, though impressive, was less grand than Konstantin's peacetime role. In the event, he himself gave it its grandeur. Finding his troops cut off, he initiated a counterattack and then a strategic retreat to Austerlitz,²³³ for which feat he received the Order of St George, third class, a grand ducal first. Alexander was offered a first class St. George, but declined it in favour

²²⁹ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 251.

²³⁰ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 12.

²³¹ Grebelsky, *Dom*, p. 136.

²³² Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 238.

²³³ Dziewanowski, *Alexander*, p. 182; Kashchenko & Rogulin, *Dom* (Khovanova, ed.), p. 264; Zawadzki, *Honour*, p. 141.

of a fourth class,²³⁴ thereby demonstrating his intention of upholding a practical standard of Romanov service.

In 1807, Konstantin again took an anti-war stance, and not without reason. Of Alexander's generals, only one favoured action, and even he was concerned that Russia lacked sufficient troop strength to defeat Napoleon. The grand duke spoke ardently to his brother, presenting himself as a representative of the officer corps, but accomplished nothing. If Alexander was not paying attention, however, there were others who were. On 13 June, the eve of the disastrous battle of Friedland, Prussia's Prime Minister complained to the emperor that Konstantin was the "principal instigator" of peace-centred "intrigues and demonstrations" within the Russian officer corps. Alexander insisted that this was untrue. A few moments later, however, the grand duke arrived at headquarters, and called for an immediate peace. The emperor, now placed in an embarrassing position, responded angrily, ordering his brother to return to the army immediately. Konstantin was undaunted and, following the defeat at Friedland, proclaimed that the army's welfare demanded peace.²³⁵ His devotion to his colleagues' interests thus legitimised his outspokenness in his eyes. He clearly drew the line, however, at disobeying Alexander, and when the decision was taken to go to war, Konstantin went too. Moreover, at the end of the 1807 campaign Alexander rewarded him lavishly. Not only did he finally receive the general inspectorate of cavalry, but became chief [*nachal'nik*] of the peacetime army.²³⁶

Konstantin was diligent and sincere in his desire to effect reform. He established a training centre at Strel'na, where officers gathered to learn his methods so that they could bring them back to their own units.²³⁷ He was only twenty-eight years old,

²³⁴ Kashchenko & Rogulin, *Dom* (Khovanova, ed.), pp 261-264.

²³⁵ Tatistcheff, Serge (ed.), *Alexandre Ier et Napoléon d'après leur correspondance inédite 1801-1812*, Paris, 1891, pp 111, 114-117.

²³⁶ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, pp 95-96.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

but a combat veteran whose heart belonged to his troops, and in this respect not far removed from the Petrine ideal.

Meanwhile, in Prussia, Prince William (b. 1797), younger brother of Crown Prince Frederick William, was receiving an education which undoubtedly would have met with Paul I's approval. He was supervised by a military preceptor and drilled by a guards sergeant. He had left the nursery at age seven, and received a commission at ten, becoming a guards cadet officer. At eleven he held the rank of lieutenant -- one of the few distinctions from Paul's programme, which bestowed general's rank upon Romanov boys at birth.²³⁸

In Russia, there was some question, however, as to whether Paul's military-centred educational programme would survive its creator's demise. The challenge originated not with Alexander, but with the dowager empress, Maria Fedorovna, and touched directly upon what role the younger grand dukes would play when they reached maturity. The tsar appears to have shared his father's views, but had enough to occupy his time without taking charge of his brothers' upbringing. It was easier to leave this concern to his mother, and Maria had a vision of her own.

One thing mother and son agreed upon was the retention of Lamsdorf. In fact, it was neither Paul nor Alexander but Maria who encouraged the general to treat his pupils brutally. He maintained rigorous control over them, and would, on occasion, go so far as to beat them with ramrods or throw them against walls (none of which was omitted from the daily reports given to Maria).²³⁹

The empress's consent to this treatment is difficult to understand. She was opposed to the idea of her sons developing into military automatons. Their education, in her opinion, should focus upon the arts and sciences.²⁴⁰ Indeed, the "primary aim" of her initial exertions was to wean them away from their passion for all things military. Paul's boys, not surprisingly, had military toys in abundance,

²³⁸ Nelson, Walter, *The Soldier Kings: The House of Hohenzollern*, London, 1971, p. 285.

²³⁹ SIRIO 98, pp 26-27, 54.

²⁴⁰ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, p. 10; SIRIO 98, p. 33.

and were already well-established in their martial preferences. Having made up her mind to alter their tastes, Maria made a surprising ally of Lamsdorf. He appears to have perceived at once wherein the real authority lay with regard to the children, and being allowed to impose the discipline to which he was so devoted as a developmental tool, agreed to implement Maria's educational programme.²⁴¹ Thus the boys studied even such "impractical" things as classical languages,²⁴² and their staff, including Lamsdorf, were at times placed in the difficult position of having to try to please Maria, to whom they were directly accountable, without arousing the wrath of the tsar, who deigned to observe things from a distance.²⁴³

So far as ideological indoctrination was concerned, when the boys misbehaved they were reminded by Lamsdorf both of the duty they owed to the state, and of the fact that their personal dignity and their royal status were inseparable.²⁴⁴ That veneration for Peter I was included in their upbringing is attested to by the fact that, when shown for the first time some chairs at Gatchina which bore Peter's cypher, Nicholas was so moved that he kissed this symbol of his imperial forbear.²⁴⁵

In 1809, Maria took a further step toward undermining her sons' military obsession by banishing the non-royal companions whom Paul had permitted them. These boys, who anticipated military careers, would, in her opinion, hinder the "moral and-intellectual" development of the grand dukes. They were packed off to military schools, and Maria set her designs into full swing. To begin with, she endeavored, as much as possible, to distance her sons from military display and to sequester them at Gatchina, which now, ironically, was to be an intellectual retreat. Professors replaced their tutors, and they were compelled to immerse themselves in study.²⁴⁶

²⁴¹ SIRIO 98, p. 33.

²⁴² Ibid., p. 50.

²⁴³ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, p. 10; SIRIO 98, p. 33.

²⁴⁴ SIRIO 98, p. 72.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 40.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., pp 54, 58-59.

Maria understood that grand dukes must play some kind of military role. The possibility of convincing Alexander that his brothers should receive an exclusively civilian education would probably have been non-existent under any circumstances, but given Europe's tumultuous state, military education was even more expedient, and the empress reconciled herself to it by determining that the boys would be taught military science by the most qualified instructors so that they could genuinely rise to the top of the profession. Nicholas, who had always shown an aptitude for building and designing, was given specialised instruction in military engineering (beginning in 1809). His teacher was General Oppermann, a famous practical engineer. A full time artillery instructor (more in keeping with Mikhail's tastes) was seconded from the 2nd Cadet Corps in 1810.²⁴⁷ Thus the most advanced and intellectual branches of the military received pride of place in the brothers' instruction (as they had, indeed, in Catherine's programme for Alexander and Konstantin).

Maria would not, however, relinquish her Catherinian vision of her sons as bastions of enlightened European culture. Thus she suggested that they be sent to the University of Leipzig, a radical departure from Romanov tradition. Not surprisingly, Alexander refused to allow it, but he did offer a compromise -- a lyceum would be built in Tsarskoe Selo where the boys could attend public lectures. The students would constitute an elite, with each predestined for a grand career in the government of the empire, and everything military would be excluded.²⁴⁸ Maria, seemingly, was delighted with this prospect, and had no objection to her sons mingling with non-royal scholars.

The Alexander Lyceum opened in October 1811, but Nicholas and Mikhail never enrolled. As adults, both would state that the threat of war had been the only thing which frustrated their mother's desire, but it has been suggested that Alexander could not, in the end, reconcile himself to seeing his brothers appear in a public educational institution, however elite. Thus, while the lyceum pupils took the first

²⁴⁷ Ibid., pp 61-63.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p 58.

step toward their grand futures, the grand dukes underwent a brief private course in political economy.²⁴⁹

The campaign of 1812 and its aftermath necessarily made a profound impact upon the lives of the imperial brothers. As before, Konstantin opposed war, going so far as to ally himself with the so called "French Party", and even volunteering to "deliver a message of conciliation" to Napoleon personally!²⁵⁰ None of this appears to have weakened Alexander's esteem for his brother, however. Now recognised as an experienced general and war hero, Konstantin continued to rise in the service. In 1812 he was made a corps commander, and given a place among the country's top military strategists, sitting on the Smolensk War Council. After Napoleon's retreat, he led the allied reserves in the first army, performing with such distinction "that his command of his troops and brilliantly planned attacks were praised as being among the most outstanding of the entire Napoleonic Wars".²⁵¹ For his participation in the battle of Leipzig in 1813 he was awarded the Order of St. George, second class.²⁵²

The most interesting aspect of Konstantin's service, however, was not his battlefield performance, but his relationship with his superiors. In peacetime, his position as corps commander would have been an independent post, but during wartime it subjected him to the authority of General Barclay de Tolly, the commander of the Army of the West, and Konstantin clashed with the general almost immediately. When the War Council supported his call for an offensive, Barclay de Tolly ignored its decision.²⁵³ Of course, as the tsar's chosen military leader, he represented Alexander's own authority, but Konstantin, overcome by passion, apparently failed to consider this when he sought to involve the people of Smolensk in his dispute with the general, proclaiming publicly: "Russian blood does not flow in him who commands". The general responded by sending the grand duke

²⁴⁹ Ibid., pp 58, 64.

²⁵⁰ Brokgaus, F.A., and I.A. Efron (eds), *Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar'*, v. 31 (1895), p. 74.

²⁵¹ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, pp 15-16.

²⁵² Kashchenko & Rogulin, *Dom* (Khovanova, ed.), p. 264.

²⁵³ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, pp 14-15.

to Moscow with a message to the tsar, thus gingerly but effectively removing his "dissident voice" from Smolensk. Nor did Alexander force a reconciliation, despite the fact that Konstantin insisted upon returning. Rather, he was assigned the task of raising a new cavalry company, a considerable demotion from the position of corps commander!

Once again he proved unable to get along with either his superior or his subordinates, and Alexander supported the former, Count Rostopchin, who was so much at odds with Konstantin that he requested his outright removal. The next assignment offered was even more far flung and demeaning. Alexander "suggested" that Konstantin should form a provincial militia. Faced with his brother's resistance, the tsar relented, but when Konstantin began to speak out against Barclay de Tolly again he was dismissed on the general's own authority. Alexander approved, and Konstantin's participation in the campaign came to a halt. He went to live with his sister, Ekaterina, in Tver', remaining there until after the French retreat. Once the Russian army had adopted an offensive posture, Konstantin's conflict with Barclay de Tolly disappeared, and Alexander was able to reintroduce him. It was then that he took command of the allied reserves and proved once again that he was capable of serving with real merit so long as his heart was in his task.

The tsar was clearly canny enough to realise that he could not disregard either public opinion, or the desires of his commanders, merely to gratify Konstantin. But there is no evidence that he looked upon his brother as a threat to himself, or wished Konstantin's foes to be able to sneer at him. Alexander thus seized upon the opportunities which presented themselves to demonstrate his favour toward the grand duke publicly. His recall saw his inclusion in the emperor's suite for the journey to Warsaw. Then, in June, Alexander sent him to Russia to proclaim the end of the war, news which aroused such joy that the messenger was treated as a hero. Soon thereafter he was sent on a similar mission to Vienna, and here, again, was feted by a joyous populace. Thereafter, he was allowed to accompany his

brother to the Congress of Vienna.²⁵⁴ His inability to adapt himself to situations contrary to his own convictions would remain a constant feature of his character, however, and one which never ceased to bedevil his sovereigns, proving itself incompatible with the grand ducal ideal.

By 1812 Nicholas was sixteen -- old enough to participate in the war effort in some capacity. Both he and fourteen-year-old Mikhail wanted desperately to join the troops, but Maria opposed it, and this time Alexander hesitated as well, certainly realizing that the boys' presence would be disruptive at a time when Russia's survival was at stake.

As 1813 dawned, Maria insisted that Nicholas begin to study English.²⁵⁵ Both brothers continued Latin lessons, which they abhorred, but which she considered an essential foundation to intellectual development. Four professors were attached to the boys as full-time staff, teaching them political economy, natural law, the history of law, and physics.²⁵⁶

At last, in February 1814, after the Russian army had established itself in France, Nicholas and Mikhail were allowed to make the debut which their mother grandiloquently referred to as "*l'Epoque de Votre entrée dans le monde, de Votre apparition sur le champ de l'honneur, de la gloire...*" She wrote a set of instructions for her sons, emphasizing the avoidance of three destructive traits: arrogance, assertiveness, and lack of productivity. The boys must realise that they would be observed with great interest by their military 'colleagues', and could not afford to flout such scrutiny, "*car l'opinion de l'armée est presque toujours impartiale et elle fixera sur Vous celle de Votre patrie.*"²⁵⁷

Maria suggested that they take the initiative to continue their studies whenever they were free of military duties. Each was to keep a journal, to read as much as

²⁵⁴ Ibid., pp 15-16.

²⁵⁵ SIRIO 98, p. 68.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., pp 67, 69.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 75.

possible, and to undertake "*un vrai travail d'Esprit* ", absorbing the history which surrounded them. Of course, they were not to evade danger if circumstances thrust it upon them -- to do so would be an abrogation of duty and honour.²⁵⁸ This advice was consistent with Maria's grandiose outlook, though she undoubtedly realised how improbable it was that the boys would come under fire. Certainly no one expected them to perform a real military function, or to integrate into the command hierarchy.

Like Konstantin in 1799, they travelled under the surname Romanov. Their presence was scarcely brilliant, however. Their sister, Maria, mistook Nicholas, whom she had not seen in several years, for a courier, since his dress and attitude did not distinguish him from the messengers who were constantly arriving at her home. Moreover, when the boys made a stop in Stuttgart, local authorities did not even bother to announce their presence to their uncle, King Frederick, until two days after their arrival.²⁵⁹

The empress presumed that her sons' "military mentor" (appointed by Alexander from among the generals of his suite) would occupy them primarily with "*la tactique envisagée en grand* ".²⁶⁰ And, indeed, once having joined their older brothers, they spent their time in such lofty occupations as inspecting arsenals and recruits.²⁶¹ Wortman writes that they made their "debut as commanders" at Vertus, with Nicholas heading a grenadier's brigade, while Mikhail commanded the horse artillery.²⁶² In fact, they merely led troops in a parade. Once this function was fulfilled, neither brother retained his "command" position.

Maria warned her sons against succumbing to their father's obsession with military trivia. Indeed, so concerned was she that she advised them to contradict any

²⁵⁸ Ibid., pp 77-78.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 81.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., pp 77, 79.

²⁶¹ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, pp 13, 15, 17.

²⁶² Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 256.

commander who encouraged such an attitude. If necessary, they were to insist that their mentors provide them with the knowledge

*"qui forment le grand Capitaine et qui s'étendent dans tant de différentes branches que Vous devriez embrasser toutes, en y faisant entrer particulièrement celles qui ont la conservation du Soldat pour objet, qui bien souvent est négligée et sacrifiée à l'élégance de l'habillement, des exercices inutiles, à l'Ambition personnelle, et à l'ignorance du Chef; enfin persuadez Votre Instituteur militaire que Vous devez apprendre le métier en Prince, qui veut se faire un nom dans cette noble et belle carrière, et mériter l'Estime de Votre Souverain, de Votre Patrie et de Vos Contemporains."*²⁶³

Interestingly, the grand dukes' contemporary, Prince William of Prussia, also participated in the war, but on a more genuine basis. In 1814 he rode in a bloody cavalry charge, thereafter galloping alone through enemy fire at his father's command that he "obtain intelligence". For this feat he was highly decorated, and justly so if the description of his performance is accurate.²⁶⁴ Meanwhile, Alexander, to his credit, did not bestow the Order of St George upon the less active Nicholas and Mikhail.

Their return to Russia brought a renewal of academic labours. Maria, who had intended that they should complete their education when they reached age seventeen, now pressed Nicholas to continue with his studies. Lectures occurred with less regularity, however, as the brothers occupied their time with the same kind of symbolic duties they had carried out abroad (i.e., inspections and reviews).²⁶⁵

At the beginning of 1815 they undertook an intensive study of military strategy, with Nicholas devising a battle plan for war against an allied Prussia and Poland.²⁶⁶ They were thus being prepared in the manner of general staff officers for careers at the highest command level. When, that same year, Napoleon precipitated a new, albeit brief, military campaign, Alexander no longer hesitated to allow his brothers to participate, this time as part of his own suite. Once again they were turned over to the supervision of an adjutant general, and undertook symbolic roles.²⁶⁷ Their mother repeated her earlier instructions, adding that they should take care to conform

²⁶³ SIRIO 98, p.79.

²⁶⁴ Nelson, *Soldier*, p. 285.

²⁶⁵ SIRIO 98, p. 82.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 83.

²⁶⁷ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, p. 22.

to regulations.²⁶⁸ Meanwhile, she expressed her doubt that they were fulfilling any useful function or gaining any practical experience, and complained of the interruption in their studies.²⁶⁹ Writing to La Harpe in 1818 of Mikhail's incomplete education, she expressed the hope that lost years of learning could be regained, and his military ardour cooled.²⁷⁰

In 1816, Maria sent Nicholas on a three-month tour of provincial Russia. Konstantin, as a young man, had accompanied his father and elder brother into the interior of the country, but only as a member of the imperial party, and certainly not to prepare him for a specific role.

Another detailed maternal instruction was prepared, with emphasis placed upon courting public favour. To merit the esteem of his countrymen must form "*toujours et toujours le soin de Votre Vie entière*." If, during the campaign abroad, the army had had a chance to scrutinise the young grand duke, ordinary Russians had not. Thus he was instructed to take pains in everything, right down to the tone of his voice. If he spoke too forcefully, he would be considered brusque, a fate which he must "*absolument éviter*". His mother wished him to appear as a modest, thoughtful young man.²⁷¹ A desire to steer him forcefully away from the errors committed by his father (and to a lesser extent by Konstantin) was thus apparent.

At each stop, local officials showed Nicholas places of civic interest and he responded by donating money (to orphanages, old soldiers' homes, schools, hospitals, etc.), thus demonstrating his love of the Russian people, and his commitment to their welfare. Balls were held in his honour, allowing him to interact with the leading citizens of each locality in a direct, albeit carefully scripted, manner.

Of course, the tour was not made for public relations purposes alone. Nicholas received warning that he was being sent to learn, not to inspect or judge, and was not to preoccupy himself with military matters. The principal aim of his journey:

²⁶⁸ SIRIO 98, p. 86.

²⁶⁹ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, p. 19.

²⁷⁰ SIRIO 98, p. 103.

²⁷¹ Ibid., pp 88-89.

"...consiste à apprendre à connoître Votre patrie, à savoir l'apprécier dans ses détails, à connoître l'État de chaque province que Vous parcourerez, ses ressources, ses manques, la cause de ses manques, le moyen de les soulager, à voir tous les Etablissemens utiles sous le rapport de la bienfaisance, de la science, les fabriques... Vous devez rassembler pour la Vie un fond de connoissance qui Vous mette un jour à même de bien servir l'Empereur, ainsi donc de Vous rendre utile à Votre patrie: les connoissances militaires que Vous acquererez dans ce Voyage ne sont à envisager que comme un accessoire utile."

The young man recorded his observations in two journals, which would serve as a basis upon which Alexander could decide his brother's future role.²⁷²

Before he had returned home, his mother had already arranged a European tour. Nicholas would spend three weeks in Berlin, then four months in England.²⁷³ That these tours were designed to prepare him as Alexander's successor is contradicted by the fact that Mikhail underwent the same process, though separately. Maria placed even more emphasis upon her youngest son's social success. Mikhail had already gained a reputation as a frivolous and corrupt young man, and his mother saw the tour as an opportunity not only to further his knowledge of Russia's civil institutions, but to improve public opinion on his behalf. Once again she declared her own belief, undoubtedly fueled by the memory of her husband's fate, that:

"the future happiness of my son will be based upon that good impression which he tries to make on his contemporaries, because I will always connect the happiness of my children to the esteem [given them by] the people."²⁷⁴

Mikhail, like Nicholas, was warned not to overstep his role as an observer, but at least one of the officials he encountered assumed that the young grand duke had authority to intervene in local affairs. This man tried to involve him in an imbroglio involving the wreck of a Turkish ship at the port of Feodosia, but General Paskevich, the boy's overseer, made it clear that his charge was not to be involved in "matters of civil administration".²⁷⁵

In fact, neither grand duke was pleased with the passivity prescribed by Maria. Wortman writes of Nicholas: "Despite [his mother's] admonitions, [he] viewed

²⁷² Ibid., pp 89-90.

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 98.

²⁷⁴ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, pp 25-26.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p.31.

himself as an inspector, as a judge of what he saw, a young man not mindful of the opinions of society".²⁷⁶ Mikhail took his military inspections so seriously that, on one occasion he publicly berated a veteran staff officer. This fit of temper did not go unpunished, however. An infuriated Paskevich undertook to set the young man straight in the strongest possible terms. Later, during Mikhail's European tour (1818-1819), he proclaimed in advance that the Russian corps, which was scheduled for review, might not live up to St. Petersburg drill standards, but *was* composed of valuable soldiers, commanded by M.S. Vorontsov, "one of the best and most worthy generals in the Russian army", so Mikhail should take care not to give offence, and recall that someday he may have need of these men, just as Russia most certainly needed Vorontsov. In the event, Mikhail did point out the type of drill required in St. Petersburg, but was careful to adopt a diplomatic tone, himself undertaking to coach one batallion as a demonstration.²⁷⁷

Of course, Paskevich's satisfaction with Mikhail's restraint, and Maria's belief that her sons were regarded as observers, certainly did not accord with Vorontsov's own opinion. He was not unsympathetic toward the young man, but expressed a sharp professional disdain for the military efforts of the dynasty, writing:

*"Il [Mikhail] a la maladie du kapral'stvo; mais comme elle est héréditaire dans la famille... il n'est pas fautif de l'avoir. Et à toute occasion, quand il parle du militaire, je me moque, et il le prend très-bien. Je crois en vérité que s'il restait dans ce pays une couple d'années (ce qui n'est pas possible) il finirait par comprendre le ridicule et tout le mal de l'éducation qu'on lui a donnée."*²⁷⁸

His critical tone echoed that of Sablukov two decades before, suggesting that the Russian officer corps already considered Romanov service a burden. Nor did Vorontsov perceive Mikhail's visit as an instructional one. He guessed rightly that the young man would be sending a report to the tsar.²⁷⁹

The brothers' tours marked the conclusion of their education. As they prepared to embark upon their careers, the first duty which confronted them was that of

²⁷⁶ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 258.

²⁷⁷ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, pp 29, 37-38.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., pp 37-38.

marriage. Neither Alexander nor Konstantin had produced legitimate heirs, but Nicholas and Mikhail do not appear to have been under the same pressure to marry early that their brothers had faced from Catherine. Nicholas chose his own bride, Princess Charlotte of Prussia, with whom he fell in love in 1814. They married in 1817, when he was twenty years old.

Mikhail managed to postpone marriage, establishing a bachelor household and focusing upon his artillery career. Alexander gave each of the young men an important (and potentially responsible) military post. By so doing he not only bestowed upon them a secure dynastic patrimony, but ensured their connection to the state as heirs of Peter I. Nicholas was named Inspector General of Engineers in 1818, six years after the creation of the Engineering Corps, and two years after he attained his majority.²⁸⁰ He also received command of a guards brigade.²⁸¹ Mikhail, already General Feldzeugmeister, finally gained active authority over the artillery in 1819, one year after attaining his majority. He, too, took command of a guards brigade.²⁸²

In 1822, unable to resist his dynastic duty indefinitely, Mikhail was betrothed to Princess Charlotte of Wurttemberg, a woman not at all to his taste. He was twenty-six years old when they wed in 1824, an extraordinary age for a grand ducal bridegroom. Konstantin, who greatly admired his new sister-in-law, wrote to Anna Pavlovna, expressing his rather radical conviction that, given Mikhail's feelings, marriage was an "accessory" which he could just as well do without.²⁸³

Meanwhile, Russia's military had come to be dominated by grand dukes, with engineering, artillery, cavalry and military education all supervised by Alexander's brothers. The precedent thus established would extend into all succeeding reigns.

²⁸⁰ Voennaia Entsiklopediia, "General Inspektory", p.228.

²⁸¹ Lincoln, W. Bruce, Nicholas I, *Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias*, Bloomington, 1978, p. 68.

²⁸² Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, p. 42.

²⁸³ Jackman, Sydney (ed.), *Romanov Relations: The Private Correspondence of Tsars Alexander I, Nicholas I and the Grand Dukes Constantine and Michael with their Sister, Queen Anna Pavlovna, 1817-1855*, London, 1969, pp 95, 147.

Konstantin and Mikhail's biographers praise their subjects' success as reformers. Konstantin is said to have been a positive influence in the organization and education of troops,²⁸⁴ while Mikhail, in addition to other accomplishments, founded the Mikhailovskoe Artillery School, and placed the artillery service on a more cost-efficient footing, thus earning the approbation of the chief of the Main Staff.²⁸⁵

Thus, it would seem that the Pavlovich grand dukes did make some effort toward fulfilling the duties attached to their posts. Of course, all three were considered harsh and overbearing by officers who served beneath them, and all, despite their mother's precautions, inherited Paul's preoccupation with military minutiae.²⁸⁶ Mikhail was derided by some for his reactionary attitude, and he was also known to allow personal animosity to override professional concerns in influencing his behaviour toward those under his authority.²⁸⁷ Naturally, none of these traits furthered the development of close bonds between the grand dukes and their colleagues. At the same time, none of them was unusual by the standards of the day. Many of Russia's most prominent military leaders had been (and would be) rigid, overbearing men. Moreover, the brothers do not appear to have been accused by fellow officers of treating their posts as sinecures. Alexander, for his part, continued to demonstrate his confidence in his brothers by expanding and rewarding their service activities. In 1823 he bestowed yet another responsible post upon Mikhail, that of commander of the 1st Guards Division.²⁸⁸

While Mikhail and Nicholas served in Russia, Konstantin had finally received the post which would define his career -- Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces in the Kingdom of Poland. His connection with this country began during Catherine's

²⁸⁴ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 12.

²⁸⁵ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, pp 43, 62-63.

²⁸⁶ See Bozherianov on Mikhail, Sablukov and Pienkos on Konstantin, and Curtiss, *Army*, on all three of the brothers.

²⁸⁷ Curtiss, *Army*, p. 51.

²⁸⁸ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, p. 63; *Brokgauz & Efron Slovar'*, "Mikhail Nikolaevich", v.41, p.119.

reign when, as we have noted, he was briefly proposed as king. The same proposal was made by Adam Czartoryski in 1803, and appeared in reports which reached Prince Karl August of Weimar in 1805.²⁸⁹ Finally, with Napoleon's defeat, Poland's future lay in the balance. Already in December 1812 Czartoryski had begged Alexander to reunite the eastern provinces with Poland, and place fifteen year old Mikhail at the head of a constitutional monarchy. This was, in effect, an effort to keep Konstantin, who opposed reunification and the granting of a constitution, out of Poland. The tsar refused to consider the establishment there of "another sovereign than the one who rules Russia".²⁹⁰

Two years later, in the spring of 1814, Alexander introduced his eldest brother to Polish affairs by placing him at the head of a committee formed for the reorganization of the Polish army.²⁹¹ That summer, Konstantin stood beside Alexander in Paris while the latter received a deputation of officers from the Polish legions who had accompanied Napoleon's troops into Russia. The tsar treated these men graciously, and informed them that his brother would henceforth be their commander. Konstantin then made a conciliatory speech of his own, lauding the Poles' valour without reference to the circumstances under which it had been displayed.²⁹²

In mid September, Alexander announced his intention to create a constitutional Poland which would unify the Duchy of Warsaw with the eastern provinces. Konstantin appeared in the Polish capital shortly thereafter at the head of the Russian Guards Corps. He was never appointed Viceroy, though he is frequently misidentified as such, and his broad involvement in Polish affairs makes the mistake one of title only. Alexander initially appointed a five man Provisional Government, the leader of which was Czartoryski (this group, made up of two Russians and three Poles, also included the man who would become Konstantin's other self-perceived

²⁸⁹ Zawadzki, *Honour*, pp 83, 128.

²⁹⁰ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v.2, pp 233-236.

²⁹¹ Zawadzki, *Honour*, pp 226-227.

²⁹² Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, pp 117-118.

nemesis, Prince Lubecki). By early 1816, however, Czartoryski's star was on the wane. A compliant viceroy was chosen in the person of General Jozef Zajaczek.²⁹³ Konstantin, meanwhile, "shunned" the viceregal designation, insisting that he did not wish to have "any great [civil] duties", and yielded precedence to Zajaczek on official occasions.²⁹⁴

As commander-in-chief of the Polish army he presided over the 25,000 Russian troops in Poland, and was invested with the task of establishing a native corps. In 1817, he would receive command of the newly created Lithuanian Corps which was 40,000 men strong.²⁹⁵ He retained his status as Inspector General of Cavalry and Head of Military Education in Russia, but his presence in Warsaw left no doubt as to what his primary role was. Nor could it be argued that Konstantin was being sent to Poland merely as a figure head. He began to form the new Polish army at the beginning of 1815, displaying considerable "interest and industry" toward the task.²⁹⁶ When it was at last completed in 1823, a review was held for Alexander, who expressed himself pleased with his brother's labours.²⁹⁷ Unfortunately, however, Konstantin's work ethic did not include a modern vision of military service. All the negative characteristics already associated with him followed him to his new post. He insisted upon relentless drill and seemed to be preparing the corps for a pageant rather than a war. He favoured "the old Prussian military style", and opposed "the freer military traditions of the Poles and the liberal development of the Napoleonic period".²⁹⁸

It was not his military role which distinguished Konstantin's sojourn in Poland, however, but his evolution into the virtual ruler of the kingdom. In May 1815 Alexander issued a proclamation, outlining the chief points of the Polish constitution. Konstantin rode with him in an open carriage, through streets thronged

²⁹³ Zawadzki, *Honour*, pp 232, 259, 263.

²⁹⁴ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, pp 121-122.

²⁹⁵ Zawadzki, *Honour*, p. 273.

²⁹⁶ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 43.

²⁹⁷ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 120.

²⁹⁸ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, pp 40-43.

with a jubilant crowd. He was, however, in no way an advocate of constitutionalism. Speaking confidentially to K.A. Borozdin, a member of Alexander's suite, he dismissed the whole proceeding as a farce, and declared that the Poles could go "to the devil" for all he cared.²⁹⁹

Given this inimical attitude, the question arises as to why Alexander sent Konstantin to Warsaw in the first place. Pienkos points out that, in appointing his brother as their leader, the emperor honoured Polish soldiers, whose loyalty was uncertain, and acted to "tie [them] more closely with the person of the Tsar-King".³⁰⁰ Next, the grand duke's presence was a potent symbol to Russians, who could look upon him as a symbol of Russian dominance in Poland. Alexander himself explained his behaviour thusly in a personal interview with the demoralised Czartoryski in September, 1816.³⁰¹

More important, perhaps, than Konstantin's role as a representative of crown and country, however, was his ability to free Alexander from the political taint of Poland. As unofficial ruler he could act toward the realization of Russian ambitions in the region, while allowing the emperor to adopt a disengenuous tone toward Western European leaders who complained about the sabotaging of their own interests,³⁰² thus preserving his reputation as an enlightened sovereign. Czartoryski, signalled his recognition of this motive when he suggested that Mikhail's enthronement would act as a powerful gesture of peace at a time when the Poles anticipated Russian vengeance (with Konstantin as its instrument). Alexander insisted that he had no intention of seeking revenge.³⁰³ Whatever the case may have been, however, a strong arm function of the type implied would not have been at all alien to grand ducal role, or, for that matter, to Konstantin, who had already rendered similar aid (albeit on a much smaller scale) to his father.

²⁹⁹ Borozdin, "K kharakteristike", pp 473-474.

³⁰⁰ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 39.

³⁰¹ Zawadzki, *Honour*, pp 260, 270.

³⁰² Pienkos, *Imperfect*, pp 19-20.

³⁰³ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, pp 233, 235.

So far as his actual performance was concerned, it is hardly surprising, given his attitude and character, that Konstantin was, from the beginning, a thorn in the government's side. Alexander did use N.N. Novosil'tsev, his personal commissioner to the Polish government, as a "restraining influence" on Konstantin, and Czartoryski initially held out some hope that Zajaczek could "curb [the grand duke's] excesses",³⁰⁴ but conflict nonetheless arose before the new kingdom had reached its second anniversary. Konstantin seized whatever authority he could in Poland, clearly seeking to consolidate his power.

Czartoryski's stream of letters to Alexander provides us with details of the grand duke's extra-constitutional activities. He began by denying Poland's legislators any influence within the military sphere. Czartoryski, writing to Alexander on behalf of his colleagues, brought up the fact that, although the constitution provided for a Ministry of War responsible to the government, no such body existed or could exist in the presence of Konstantin. Here appeared the first example of a consistent strategy adopted by Czartoryski -- that of suggesting that Konstantin's excesses were undermining the tsar's own prerogatives as king. To this end, he stated that "this total separation between the civil and military administrations" had made it "impossible for the Government to present to your Majesty a general report on the situation and the probable requirements of the State".³⁰⁵

In July (1815), Czartoryski sent two more letters. The first, after complaining of Konstantin's hostility toward all things Polish, and his attempts to undermine the constitution, concluded:

"It looks as if a plan had been formed for rendering your Majesty's benefits illusory and making your scheme fail from the beginning. In that case the Grand-Duke is, without knowing it, the blind tool of certain persons in his confidence who encourage his sombre and passionate temper."³⁰⁶

Indeed, it seems improbable that Czartoryski, who had disliked Konstantin from the beginning of their association, believed that the grand duke was the dupe of his

³⁰⁴ Zawadzki, *Honour*, pp 263-264.

³⁰⁵ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, p. 304.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

ill-intentioned entourage. But he was certainly intelligent enough to realise that Alexander would resist any suggestion that his brother was plotting against him. By laying the blame upon others, the tsar's old comrade had freed himself to proceed with his intimations that Alexander's will was being thwarted through Konstantin's actions.

The second letter read:

"...the Grand Duke has several times intimated to the Government that civil officials, magistrates, mayors, etc., should be brought before him, and the other day he placed the President of the town of Warsaw under arrest. Some days ago, too, his Highness issued a decree by means of which he will have the power of trying any citizen by court-martial.

"The provisional government cannot but recognise that such proceedings are contrary to the rules established in all countries for the public peace and security, and that they are especially in direct opposition to the Constitution which your Majesty has just granted to the country... Under these circumstances all the members of the Government are unanimously of the opinion that the above facts should be laid before you with a view to your Majesty placing your Government in a position to carry out your will."³⁰⁷

In January 1816, Czartoryski wrote about Konstantin's relationship with Zajaczek:

"Your Majesty's Lieutenant Governor... seems to consider that every wish expressed by the Grand Duke Constantine must be regarded as that of your Majesty. He is ready to violate the Constitution at any moment if his Highness should require him to do so... Such a degree of submission in the highest official of the realm would make your Constitution a farce. If you will inform him that you wish [him] to respect your own work and cause it to be respected, and that his duties to his sovereign and his country may be combined with, but should never be subordinated to, his obligation to the Grand Duke, he will no doubt carry out your will."³⁰⁸

On the surface, as we have noted, these letters were designed to play upon Alexander's insecurities. If, however, this proved to be ineffective, there would remain the old insinuation that the emperor himself was a hypocrite who posed as a proponent of Polish autonomy while unleashing his reactionary brother upon the kingdom. In the event, Alexander did authorise the creation of a War Ministry, but Konstantin was allowed to choose the minister who would head it. His choice, Michael Wielhorski, was an able man, but he was barred by his imperial patron from cooperating with members of the Administrative Council. Proclaiming the absolute separation of military authority from all other administrative branches of the

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 308.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., pp 308-309.

government, Konstantin insisted that no one had a right to confer with Alexander on Polish military concerns but him.³⁰⁹ Zajaczek, for his part, declared: "What is law, what is this country. Nothing... I faithfully execute orders and if a project is presented that the Grand Duke wants, I sign it and confirm it."³¹⁰ Czartoryski and Wielhorski were not, however, quite so pliable. The former once more dispatched a letter to the tsar, and this time he appended a suicide note written by a Polish officer and lamenting that the laws promulgated by "the best of sovereigns" had been flouted by Konstantin.³¹¹ Wielhorski reached the same conclusion as his more experienced colleague, to wit, that a grand duke's authority came from the tsar, not from the law, thus only a personal appeal to the tsar might curtail it. He wrote to Alexander, and Konstantin, likewise knowing wherein his authority lay, set off to St. Petersburg to meet with his brother.³¹²

Alexander's response was equivocal. He tried to appease both men, asking Wielhorski not to resign as he had threatened, but remaining intractable in his refusal to limit Konstantin's authority. Naturally, this did not represent any kind of a solution, and a short time later Wielhorski again decided to resign, dispatching another angry letter to the tsar. This time Konstantin's insecurity was even more apparent as he intercepted the War Minister's letter. Wielhorski did manage to communicate with Alexander, however, and the emperor accepted his resignation,³¹³ demonstrating his unshakeable support for his brother. Thus, with the War Ministry under his authority, Konstantin gained control of some fifty percent of Poland's revenues. Czartoryski was so disgusted that he ceased attending meetings of the Administrative Council and left Warsaw.³¹⁴

In July 1819, Alexander issued an ukase to the Senate in which he extended Konstantin's authority as commander-in-chief to the disputed eastern provinces. A

³⁰⁹ Ibid., pp 309-310.

³¹⁰ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 31.

³¹¹ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, pp 309-310.

³¹² Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 35.

³¹³ Ibid., p. 35.

³¹⁴ Zawadski, *Honour*, p. 265.

year later, prodded by political unrest in Europe and the outspoken opposition in Poland, the emperor granted Konstantin authority to disregard the constitution.³¹⁵

In 1822, faced with information concerning the emergence of anti-Russian societies in Poland, Konstantin convened a special investigative commission, and this work continued for the next two years, at which time those found guilty of seditious activity were given harsh punishments. Meanwhile, a group calling itself the "patriotic union" continued to meet unobserved, establishing links with the Southern Society of the Decembrist movement.³¹⁶ Of course, the gradual slide toward revolution was only one significant development in the kingdom at that time -- Konstantin's personal evolution into a supporter of Polish constitutionalism and reunification was another, more surprising event.

The factors which brought about this transformation had little to do with Poland itself. There was, to begin with, the fragility of Konstantin's identity -- his inability ever to forgive the Russian court and state for the grief they had caused him, his burning desire to find his *own* place in the world. Opposing, but not negating, these tendencies was his devotion to Alexander and the service ideal. On the other side of the equation, Alexander was confronted with the difficulty posed by Konstantin's place in the succession hierarchy. His marital problems, his insistence that he would never accept the crown, and his tendency to play the maverick all made the tsesarevich a danger to dynastic cohesion.

The appointment to Warsaw signalled both brothers' recognition of Konstantin's real position. His status as a "working" grand duke, residing outside of Russia and involved in sensitive activity, was not compatible with his official designation as heir. Moreover, it is generally believed that Alexander's willingness to grant him such extraordinary power in 1819 was a compensatory prelude to the dynastic disenfranchisement which would follow in 1820.³¹⁷ The tsesarevich virtually

³¹⁵ Ibid., pp 281-282.

³¹⁶ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 134.

³¹⁷ see, for instance, Zawadzki, *Honour*, p. 279; Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 65.

possessed his own domain. The Governor-General of Vil'no province, for instance, reported to him on every detail of local government, right down to the signing of small town trade agreements. All such matters received Konstantin's approval before they were passed along to Russia's Minister of Interior, whence they received the confirmation of the emperor.³¹⁸

The matrimonial issue was the centre-point of the whole affair. Konstantin divorced and remarried in May 1820, voluntarily (but unofficially) renouncing his place in the succession hierarchy.³¹⁹ Alexander shared his mother's view of dynastic marriage as an issue of state, and would only consent to divorce and remarriage if he came to believe that the potential benefit to both state and dynasty somehow outweighed the potential harm, and that was precisely what occurred.

The confusion produced by Konstantin's ambiguous position was substantial. In 1821, for instance, the old Empire of the East scenario reemerged in a letter from Count Rostopchin to M.S. Vorontsov, claiming that Alexander intended to seize Constantinople and give it to Konstantin in order to clear the succession for Nicholas.³²⁰ The emperor's desire to formalise matters was commendable, but his secretive methods only served to increase the general bewilderment.

In January 1822, Konstantin made his renunciation of the throne official by signing a secret declaration in which he confessed that he had neither the "gifts", the "strengths", nor the "spirit" to rule Russia. He thus dared to ask the sovereign to pass his birthright on to Nicholas, "and by so doing to secure forever the immovable position of OUR State".³²¹ Alexander stated that, knowing as he did Konstantin's "exalted sensibilities" he was not surprised by this "new proof of Your sincere love of the State and [your] solicitude for it's immovable tranquility". Conferring with the dowager empress, he decided to grant Konstantin "complete freedom" to follow

³¹⁸ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, pp 134-135; Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 66.

³¹⁹ Grebelsky, *Dom*, p. 136.

³²⁰ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 10.

³²¹ Konstantin Pavlovich, Grand Duke, *Letter to Alexander I*, British Library, Russia: Miscellaneous Official Publications, S.N. 6/2.

through with his decision.³²² In an addendum, he requested that the matter be kept secret until his own death.³²³ Significant were the patriotic language, affirming the importance of this matter to the state, and the involvement of Maria, affirming the familial character of the event.

Later that year, Konstantin's authority in the eastern provinces was reconfirmed, and Alexander issued orders to the effect that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and all Russia's embassies were required to send all circular reports and special reports to the grand duke, thereby keeping him informed even about those foreign policy issues outside his own *milieu*. The ever independent tsesarevich did not hesitate to exceed even these liberal bounds, contacting foreign heads of government himself when he felt it necessary.³²⁴

Meanwhile, the disenfranchisement process resumed in August 1823 when Alexander signed a secret manifesto removing Konstantin from the succession. The document proclaimed that this step was taken to ensure the "tranquility and welfare" of the fatherland. Konstantin's abdication was declared irrevocable, and Nicholas designated heir.³²⁵ This manifesto was delivered to the State Council on 15 October, in a sealed envelope marked: "Keep [this envelope] in the State Council until I request [it], and in the event of MY death, reveal [it's contents] in a special session before [taking] any other action".³²⁶

Through his abdication, Konstantin was able simultaneously to demonstrate his contempt for the Russian establishment, and to preserve his formal link to the state (i.e., his service status). At the time of his marriage he had written to his sister, Anna, taking pains to explain his motives and making clear his estrangement from the court, declaring:

³²² Alexander I, B.L.: Russia, S.N. 6/2 (3).

³²³ The addendum itself is not extant, but Konstantin refers to it in a 1825 letter to his mother which can be found at the British Library, S.N. 6/2 (6).

³²⁴ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, pp 64-65, 73-74.

³²⁵ Alexander I, B.L., S.N. 6/2 (3).

³²⁶ Alexander I, B.L., S.N. 6/2 (12).

"To resolve everything and to give me some peace in a home, I felt it best to seek the hand of a private person who... would in no way hinder the established state of affairs...I have my home established the way I wish it, with a wife who is not, thank God, a Grand Duchess and does not wish to be one."³²⁷

Konstantin's transformation into a Polish sympathiser certainly had something to do with the fact that his bride, Jeanette Grudzinskaya (renamed Princess Lovich by Alexander), was a Polish woman. Likewise, when Alexander extended his brother's domain to include the eastern provinces, thereby arousing in him an ardent desire to see the kingdom reunified, he inadvertently created a common ground between Konstantin and Polish nationalists. Thus, when Czartoryski met with Alexander for the last time, in October, 1823, though he still complained bitterly about Novosil'tsev and Zajaczek, he was less hostile toward Konstantin.³²⁸

The shift in the tsesarevich's attitude became increasingly apparent. Though he had taken measures to root out sedition, and had a secret police force to spy on the Polish troops,³²⁹ he remained confident that Poland was secure, and refused to believe Novosil'tsev's warnings to the contrary, maintaining his faith in the loyalty of the Polish government, the army, and the Lithuanian Corps, and believing that, in the unlikely event of a popular uprising, these institutions would support him. Karnovich finds proof of this faith in the steps which he took to perfect these military bodies, and states his own opinion that Konstantin "deluded himself with the hope, that his name would be immortalised in history" as a fulcrum through which Russia and Poland met. Thus he would not recognise any differentiation between representatives of Russian and Polish nationality. He was fluent in Polish and spoke it interchangeably with Russian, protected mixed (Polish-Russian) marriages, and viewed the joint service of Russian and Polish troops idealistically as a "brotherhood in arms of both nations".³³⁰ At one point he even proclaimed: "In my heart I am a Pole, completely a Pole!"³³¹

³²⁷ Jackman, *Romanov*, pp. 80-81.

³²⁸ Zawadzki, *Honour*, p. 286.

³²⁹ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 47.

³³⁰ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 137.

³³¹ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, pp 52, 62.

Konstantin could have sought a proprietorial dominion over Poland without ever developing a Polish identity, but his passionate nature and the scars which remained from traumas and perceived slights in connection with Russia argued against the long term success of this outlook. He wanted desperately to believe that the Poles were grateful to him, i.e., that they granted him the approval which he felt he did not receive, or could not accept, from Russians.

Of course, his embarkation upon this journey of political and personal fulfilment challenged the tradition of grand ducal passivity. His eventual attempts to gain acceptance and support among the Polish elite brought him into contact with some who were vehemently opposed to Alexander's Polish policies (and surely, by extension, to the tsar himself). And while these contacts could scarcely be called political alliances, they bore Konstantin to the edge of illegitimacy. His Secret Chancellery was said to have spied upon Alexander, and the grand duke resisted and appeared to resent any attempts by the tsar to interfere with the Polish Army or assert his own claim to it.³³²

Konstantin continued to preserve his devotion to Alexander by drawing a line between the emperor and the Russian government, and channelling his ambitions and resentments away from his brother. However much he desired a domain of his own, he remained adamantly opposed to occupying the Russian throne, and when, from time to time, he publicly expressed his resentment or dissatisfaction toward Russian policy, it was the government (or army) which he criticised, not the sovereign himself.³³³

If Alexander himself expressed opinions which his brother found shocking (as he did in 1815 on the subject of a future Russian constitution), then the blame was attributed to the "meddlers" who surrounded him.³³⁴ This variation upon "naive monarchism" clearly worked for the tsesarevich.

³³² Ibid., pp 72, 40-41.

³³³ Ibid., p. 62.

³³⁴ Borozdin, "*K Kharakteristike*", pp 474-75.

Konstantin and Alexander, though they sometimes quarreled and often disagreed, never wavered in their loyalty to one another, resisting all attempts to come between them, and adapting to adverse circumstances. Meanwhile, neither Nicholas nor Mikhail showed signs of non-conformity. Thus the imperial house received a much needed respite from disharmony. As Alexander's reign neared its end, however, Russia plummeted into crisis, with Poland not far behind, and the grand dukes' role in these momentous events would prove very significant indeed.

IV. The Pavlovich Grand Dukes After the Death of Alexander I

Alexander's death on 19 November, 1825, left Russia with three grand dukes but no emperor, and a revelation of dynastic disharmony which glowed before all those who had wearied of autocracy. While he lived, Alexander had been the fulcrum around which his eldest brothers were united. But his failure to define and nurture the relationship which must bind them in his absence was a grave mistake indeed.

The suddenness of the emperor's death was aggravated by the dispersion of the brothers. Alexander died in Taganrog. Konstantin and Mikhail were in Warsaw. Nicholas remained in St Petersburg. News of the catastrophe reached the Polish capital two days before its arrival at the Winter Palace. That interval allowed Konstantin to compose a letter to his brother, acknowledging him as emperor. He had no desire to hold any title beyond that of tsesarevich, which, he reminded Nicholas, he had received for meritorious service. Proof of his faithfulness was to be found precisely in the service he had rendered to the crown for more than thirty years. Thus the first step had been taken toward defining a relationship which would always be rocky. Nicholas, though he had his brother's fidelity, was tacitly

instructed not to touch his incongruous title, and to bear in mind that Konstantin had been serving Russia longer than he had been alive!³³⁵

Konstantin placed this letter (and another to his mother) in the hands of Mikhail, who set off for St Petersburg, embarking upon his own career as mediator between his brothers. That mediation would be required was a thing which anyone might have predicted. Konstantin would never lose the bitter edge to his character, which caused him to take offence easily and behave in an offensive manner whenever he felt threatened. He had never made his peace, either with authority figures, or with the Russian state, though at heart he wanted desperately to be the ideal servitor. Alexander had known what tone to take with his brother, but Nicholas was a relative stranger, and a much younger man, which went against the patriarchal grain so deeply embedded in both men's psyches when it came to the exercise of authority. In fact, Nicholas had served as an adjutant to his brother, an association which highlighted their position relative to one another.³³⁶

There may have been an unexpressed, or even subconscious, rivalry between the brothers. Konstantin struggled with feelings of inadequacy. Nicholas was self-assured. The younger man was not popular with the public, but he was successful in his way -- a prince of "heroic" demeanor -- and, unlike Konstantin, he was never simply dismissed as a burden or a boor. Finally, it was inevitable that, no matter what either man did, there would always exist between them the unspoken knowledge that Nicholas ruled because Konstantin had allowed it.

On 27 November, without knowledge of Konstantin's reaction, Nicholas did his duty in accordance with the 1797 Statute and swore allegiance to the new "emperor", instructing the members of the Senate to do the same, and to distribute the oath.³³⁷ The subsequent revelation of the abdication documents failed to effect an

³³⁵ Konstantin Pavlovich, Grand Duke, *Letters to Nicholas and Maria*, B.L., Official Documents, S.N. 6/2 (6, 9).

³³⁶ *SIRIO* 131, 1910, p. 79 (recollection in letter from Nich. to Kon., 6 June, 1826).

³³⁷ Nicholas I, B.L., Official Documents, Russia: Imperial Proclamations, S.N. 7 (5).

immediate change. Nicholas declared that he had no right to recognise acts which had never been publicised. He did not seek to oppose Konstantin's will, still less Alexander's, but to uphold the law, and to "protect OUR beloved Fatherland from even the smallest momentary confusion as to [the identity of its] Lawful SOVEREIGN..."³³⁸

In the meantime, another dialogue was going on between Konstantin and his sister Anna. The latter reminded her brother of a previous conversation in which they had decided that: "our family union is an alliance which everything must help consolidate". She thought Konstantin's abdication "noble" especially since it forced him to "constrain" himself "to obey a younger brother". Konstantin replied:

"What seems difficult to you in my position, to obey [Nicholas's] orders, is not so for me as I have been accustomed to obey since my earliest youth and God knows who I have not obeyed during my military service and my life... Moreover, I owe it to my own honour and our late master's wishes which will give me the happiness of serving him after he is no more."³³⁹

This response is significant insofar as it signals an intensification of Konstantin's self-image as a passive and longsuffering servant of the crown, which, along with the "cult of Alexander", would emerge as a defining point in his relationship with Nicholas. In fact, each brother would invoke the service ideal and the late sovereign's name, both as a common ground upon which to build dialogue, and as a means of claiming moral ascendancy.

Had Konstantin agreed to leave Warsaw, he would have aided Nicholas by presenting a picture of a united dynasty. By this time, however, he was so disaffected that a return was out of the question. In 1827 he informed Anna that, were it not for the presence of their mother, he would "be able to give a plausible reason for never again soiling my feet with [St. Petersburg contact]".³⁴⁰ Nicholas thus had no choice but to proceed without him, and it has been alledged that, when the contents of the abdication documents were revealed to the State Council,

³³⁸ *SIRIO* 131, p. 8.

³³⁹ Jackman, *Romanov*, p. 116, (Anna to Kon., 27 Dec., 1825); pp 119-20, (Kon. to Anna, 19 Jan., 1826).

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 136-37, (Kon. to Anna, 12 June, 1827).

including the letter in which Konstantin described himself as incapable of ruling, this "breach of family secrecy" was viewed by him as an act of gross disrespect on the part of his brother. So great was his rage that he threatened to mobilise the Polish and Lithuanian troops "in defence of his rights against Nicholas".³⁴¹

If this incident occurred as presented, it reveals Konstantin's sensitivity to his status relative to Nicholas, his expectation of special treatment, his recognition of the fragile balance of power, and his willingness to flex his muscles in order to secure the desired treatment. If the account is false or exaggerated, it nonetheless reveals the readiness of the public to look upon the second son (or, in this unique case, the elder brother) as a sinister, power-hungry figure.

Nicholas's response to Konstantin's anger was so obsequious that it did indeed suggest a wariness approaching fear:

*"C'est posterné à Vos pieds, en frère, en sujet, que j'implore Votre pardon, Votre bénédiction, cher, cher Constantin; décidez de mon sort, ordonnez à Votre sujet fidèle et comptez sur sa sainte obéissance. Que puis-je, grand Dieu, faire? que puis-je Vous dire? Vous avez mon serment, je suis Votre sujet, je ne puis que me soumettre et Vous obéir; je le ferai, puisque tel est mon devoir, Votre volonté de mon maître, de mon souverain et qui ne cessera jamais de l'être pour moi; mais prenez pitié d'un malheureux..."*³⁴²

Ultimately, Nicholas's deference proved a wise strategy insofar as it mollified Konstantin.³⁴³ The drama which played itself out really had nothing to do with the throne, which Konstantin did not desire, and everything to do with defining the power dynamic between the brothers. On 8 December, the tsesarevich again pledged his eternal "obedience" to the crown, offering, however, a pointed word of advice:

*"ne rien changer à ce qu'a fait notre cher, excellent et adoré défunt comme dans les plus grandes, ainsi que dans les plus petites choses... En un mot, prenez pour principe, que Vous n'êtes que le fondé de pouvoir du défunt bienfaiteur et qu'à chaque moment Vous devez être prêt à lui rendre compte de ce que Vous faites et ferez."*³⁴⁴

In other words, Nicholas must not interfere with Konstantin's authority in Poland, which Alexander himself had sanctioned.

³⁴¹ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 83.

³⁴² *SIRIO* 131, p.2 (Nich. to Kon., 3 Dec, 1825).

³⁴³ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 83.

³⁴⁴ *SIRIO* 131, p. 3 (Kon. to Nich., 8 Dec, 1825).

Unfortunately for Russia, while Konstantin and Nicholas sized one another up, rebellion was afoot. This was the moment wherein the seeds of personal identification with the state, sowed by Peter I and evolving into a sense of political entitlement, at last led to conflict with the institution of autocracy. The conspirators were drawn principally from the nobility, but their patriotic idealism was, in most cases, sincere. The crown had ceased to provide progressive leadership, and they had reached the conclusion "that they themselves would have to take up the cause of realizing the Western political ideal in Russia".³⁴⁵

There was no sympathy between the grand dukes and the conspirators. The brothers were unpopular with their colleagues.³⁴⁶ Nor did any of them express dissatisfaction with autocracy. In short, there appear to have been no grounds for the development of ideological bonds between them and those servitors who chose to view themselves as the voice of the state. Even Konstantin's crisis of identity was of no avail in this respect, since he directed his resentment away from the tsar. That said, his disaffection, and the resulting dynastic disharmony, did provide a resource to the conspirators, and his loyalty was brought into new dispute.

Events reached a head on 14 December, when Nicholas issued a manifesto confirming his succession, and instructing that the oath be taken to him and to his heir (identified as Grand Duke Alexander Nikolaevich, without the title tsesarevich).³⁴⁷ That same day, he dispatched a note to Konstantin, promising to follow "*Vos volontés et le modelé de notre ange* [Alexander]" in his policy-making,³⁴⁸ a significant concession from the throne, and one which attested both to Nicholas's insecurity, and his discomfort with the misaligned succession hierarchy.

The real complications posed by Konstantin's position as a non-reigning elder brother were immediately revealed. Komarovskiy was in Petersburg on the fateful

³⁴⁵ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 239.

³⁴⁶ Curtiss, *Army*, pp 7, 11; Keep, John, *Soldiers of the Tsar: Army and Society in Russia, 1462-1874*, Oxford, 1985, p. 264.

³⁴⁷ Nicholas I, B.L., Russia: Imperial Proclamations, S.N. 7/5, 6/2(10)

³⁴⁸ *SIRIO* 131, pp 4, 6-7 (Nich. to Kon., 14-15 Dec., 1825).

day. His first knowledge of the uprising came when one of his adjutants burst in crying: "Rebellion! Senate Square is completely full of soldiers yelling 'Hurrah, Konstantin!'"³⁴⁹ The Northern Society of Decembrists had seen the earlier oath of loyalty as an opportunity for refusing to swear to Nicholas. "Konstantin and Constitution" were the catchwords of the revolt, and it was considered by the leaders that the soldiers would rally to the elder son's cause.³⁵⁰ This proved to be a sound strategy.

Memory of Konstantin's eccentricities had been blunted by his long absence, and it was reported that his Polish troops enjoyed excellent pay and short terms of service. The tsesarevich had also come to be regarded by many as a "liberal" who desired an end to serfdom and would abolish oppressive military colonies.³⁵¹

Nicholas knew that the conspirators' use of his brother's name was disingenuous, but the fact that it could be exploited so effectively, demonstrated the threat to dynastic unity that Konstantin's disaffection presented. A non-conformist grand duke, however loyal he might be to the ruler, was a lightning rod for malcontents who could attribute to him all their own motives and ideals. And the public might well desire to have a potential counter-weight to the tsar, even while it showed itself jealous, on the tsar's behalf, of the autocratic power.

It was not easy to quash suspicions once they found a voice. Konstantin's absence from St Petersburg was regarded by the public with discomfort, and was seemingly made use of by intriguers at court to plant seeds of doubt in Nicholas's mind. The correspondence carried on between the brothers in the aftermath of the uprising frequently touched upon this theme. Nicholas tried a variety of approaches to coax Konstantin home. When his appeals for a family visit failed, he became more frank, writing on 4 January, 1826:

³⁴⁹ Komarovsky, *Zapiski*, pp 237-238.

³⁵⁰ Mazour, Anatole G, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, Berkeley, 1937, pp 159-161.

³⁵¹ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 87.

*"Je ne Vous cache pas que dans la troupe il y a encore une certaine inquiétude de ne pas Vous voir et des bruits, comme si Vous marchiez avec un corps sur Petersbourg; il n'y a que Votre présence, qui puisse tranquilliser complètement là-dessus."*³⁵²

He also noted persistent rumours that Konstantin had been arrested.³⁵³ One thing he did not do, however, was to order his brother's return.

Konstantin insisted that his presence during the uprising would have been an agitating factor, and, even now, his appearance could only provoke turmoil. He even forwarded an anonymous letter claiming that some of the conspirators were still at large and awaiting his arrival in Petersburg in order to recommence their activities.³⁵⁴ In response to the allegation that he was preparing to march on St Petersburg, he declared:

"Quant à mon arrivé à Petersbourg pour faire finir l'incertitude dans les troupes sur une soi-disante marche... il est tellement absurde, tellement bête, que je ne puis l'attribuer qu'à l'envie de reproduire quelques scènes de scandale nouveau sous l'égide, non de mon malheureux nom, mais de ma personne en présence. Mon présence est nécessaire loin de Vous... pour faire finir tout ceci, envoyez, sous quelque prétexte, ou en courrier, ici quelqu'un, ou bien quelques-uns de marquant, qui, en revenant, prouveront que personne ne bouge et que tout est ici comme du règne de feu l'Empereur."

He concluded by noting that his conscience was clear. God knew that he was not *"en connivence"* with any conspirator, from which assertion it seems clear that he himself felt uncertain of Nicholas's trust.³⁵⁵

On January 22 (1826), both men wrote letters of loyalty to one another.

Konstantin, somewhat ironically, emphasized the importance of a common dynastic front.³⁵⁶ Nicholas, for his part, poured out his heart. His greatest desire was to obtain Konstantin's *"approbation ... ce seul mot de Votre bouche ou de Votre chère main est tout, ce que je puis encore désirer sur cette terre"*.³⁵⁷

That same month, Nicholas granted his brother authority to deal with the uprising of the Southern Society, putting the 3rd Corps of the Russian army under his

³⁵² *SIRIO* 131, p.25 (Nich. to Kon. 4 Jan., 1826).

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 33 (Nich. to Kon., 11 Jan., 1826).

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.23 (Kon to Nich, 4 Jan., 1826).

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30 (Kon. to Nich, 9 Jan., 1826).

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40 (Kon. to Nich., 22 Jan., 1826).

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43 (Nich. to Kon., 22 Jan., 1826).

command.³⁵⁸ As it happened, the discovery of *Polish* insurrectionists developed into a sore point between the brothers. Nicholas had received reports that the Polish Patriotic Society was connected to the Southern Society, and passed these along with great urgency to Konstantin (In fact, though the Poles were not in league with the Decembrists, there had been contact between the groups).³⁵⁹

Konstantin was outraged. Poland's tranquility throughout the uprising had been a matter of pride to him,³⁶⁰ and he complained of the "ill-intentioned Russians" who were feeding their sovereign these lies. Nicholas should not allow those who fell under "the protection of the late emperor" (Konstantin's chief bulwark against his brother's anti-Polish sentiment) to become "the victims of intrigue".³⁶¹ In this instance, the tsesarevich's desire to champion the Poles clashed sharply with the behaviour mandated by the sovereign *and* by Russian public opinion.

Nicholas wished the accused Poles to stand trial in Russia. Konstantin refused. He would always insist that his troops, whether Polish or Russian, must remain under his jurisdiction.³⁶² This was a bold stand to take against an autocrat, and it is doubtful that anyone but Konstantin could have succeeded, but the emperor remained unwilling to challenge his brother and, in a letter of 28 January, he granted him authority to proceed as he saw fit.³⁶³

Konstantin initially favoured investigation by secret military tribunal, with "a few" harsh sentences imposed to satisfy Nicholas. Things were not to be so easy, however. Prince Lubecki, who had been Poland's Minister of Finance since 1820 and won respect in St. Petersburg for his pro Russian views, intervened on behalf of his countrymen to force a public trial, thus gaining popularity at home.³⁶⁴

³⁵⁸ Ibid., pp 25, 34 (Nich. to Kon., 5, 16 Jan., 1826).

³⁵⁹ Zawadzki, *Honour*, p. 293.

³⁶⁰ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 89.

³⁶¹ *SIRIO* 131, pp 27-28 (Kon. to Nich., 7 Jan., 1826).

³⁶² Ibid., p. 88 (Kon. to Nich., 21 July, 1826).

³⁶³ Ibid., pp 46-47 (Nich. to Kon., 28 Jan., 1826).

³⁶⁴ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 91; Zawadzki, *Honour*, pp 294-295.

Trapped between the tsar's desire and Polish public opinion, Konstantin took Lubecki's side, and Nicholas permitted the Polish Senate to try the accused. The tsesarevich then attempted to salvage his standing with the emperor by pressing for harsh sentences. Meanwhile, Czartoryski, who believed that Konstantin now shared Poland's aspirations for reunification, met with his former adversary and was persuaded to "urge his fellow senators against leniency".³⁶⁵

The Russian conspirators had already been sentenced by mid-June, while the Polish inquest was only beginning. Nicholas could not understand why things should not proceed as they had in Russia, and was undoubtedly bewildered by Konstantin's defence of the constitutional order. It was now his turn to be placed on the defensive, and he declared: "*...je n'ai jamais eu en vue autre chose que de nous en tenir strictement à la teneur de la loi*" ³⁶⁶ Sentencing took place in May 1828, and the failure of the Polish Senators to inflict severe punishment angered both the imperial brothers.³⁶⁷

At times the tsesarevich appeared blind to the implications of his actions, petitioning his brother, for instance, to allow the elevation of a certain Polish fortress in direct tactical opposition to a corresponding Russian structure.³⁶⁸ Nicholas, of course, refused, but he made no move to curtail Konstantin's authority, even in the wake of the disastrous trial. The tsesarevich's refusal to allow Russian gendarmes into his domain was accepted, and when Zajaczek died later that year (1826), Konstantin simply replaced him with an administrative council.³⁶⁹

Nicholas's image as a forceful ruler often seems incongruous with his behaviour toward Konstantin. His recognition of his brother's unique position *vis à vis* the throne clearly contributed a great deal to this, but it would be wrong not to credit his need for familial support as another relevant factor. Nor is there any reason to

³⁶⁵ Zawadzki, *Honour*, pp 294-295.

³⁶⁶ *SIRIO* 131, pp 100-101 (Nich. to Kon., 27 Oct., 1826).

³⁶⁷ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 137.

³⁶⁸ Karnovich, *Tseseravich*, p. 120.

³⁶⁹ Picnkos, *Imperfect*, pp 68, 92.

believe that he spoke insincerely when he appealed to his brother, though many accounts of the mens' relationship cite only the relatively rare negative passages in the tsar's correspondence. In fact, a persusal of his letters makes it clear that he respected Konstantin's experience, especially in the military sphere, and scarcely contemplated a change, even in uniforms or rifle specifications, without first consulting his brother.³⁷⁰ The tsesarevich remained Inspector General of Cavalry and Head of Military Education. Mikhail, with his approval, took over some of the duties attached to these posts, and Nicholas sought Konstantin's "permission" when reforms were contemplated.³⁷¹ He also kept his brother informed of Russia's political and diplomatic dealings, soliciting his advice here, too, and emphasizing to his officials that the lines of communication remained open.

While the investigation of the Polish Patriotic Society was still ongoing, and the brothers as yet dissatisfied with one another's views, another divisive issue arose -- the tsesarevich's role in the upcoming coronation. Konstantin did attend the event, but accounts differ as to whether or not he was welcome. According to Karnovich, who drew upon the recollections of members of the grand ducal suite, Konstantin embarked for Moscow on his own initiative, without knowing the precise date of the coronation,³⁷² and the brothers' correspondence supports this version of events. At the end of May (1826), Konstantin asked Nicholas for the date, and was told it would take place on 10 July.³⁷³ No word was said about his attendance. Shortly thereafter, his mother wrote, demanding his appearance at her nameday. In a new letter to Nicholas, he declared that he could not oblige her since the inquest required his presence in Warsaw. He had, however, noticed that the date given for the nameday conflicted with the coronation date, and he wished Nicholas to clarify the matter.³⁷⁴ If an unspoken agreement had existed between the brothers, compelling

³⁷⁰ see, for instance, *SIRIO* 131, p. 96 (Nich. to Kon., 27 Sept., 1826).

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp 99-100 (Nich. to Kon., 27 Oct., 1826).

³⁷² Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 172.

³⁷³ *SIRIO* 131, p. 79 (Nich. to Kon., 6 June, 1826).

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 80, 84 (Kon. to Nich., 14 June, 1826).

Konstantin to remain in Poland, it was clearly negated by this hint of perfidy, which affronted the grand ducal pride.

Nicholas confessed that events had been rescheduled. He longed to see Konstantin, but if that was "impossible", he would understand.³⁷⁵ Thus, he appears to have believed that by expressing his disappointment at his brother's absence, he could stave off a fit of temper. Finally, on 3 August, he wrote that he was in Moscow, and the coronation had been postponed because of his wife's poor health.³⁷⁶ There is no indication in the letter that he expected Konstantin to attend, and his surprise was great when his brother appeared before him eleven days later. The tsesarevich went straight to the Kremlin upon arrival, abandoning his entourage at the station in his haste. Thereafter, Konstantin appeared beside Nicholas at military manoeuvres and at the celebration of the Assumption.³⁷⁷ So far as the coronation itself was concerned, he was asked to place the crown on his brother's head, but refused. He stood with the other members of the family during the ceremony, but accompanied Nicholas on his stops in the Arkhangelsk and Blagoveshchensky Cathedrals, being placed at his right hand, and thoroughly scrutinised by the public.³⁷⁸

In fact, the citizens of Moscow seemed amazingly receptive to the return of the prodigal son, greeting Konstantin enthusiastically. His virtues were extolled, and rumour spread of the military support he could count on "should he wish to regain the crown".³⁷⁹ Here, then, was a sterling example of public readiness to seize upon the "second son" as an idealised counter-weight to the tsar. Konstantin's mien was gloomy, however, and his behaviour characteristically boorish. He left public gatherings before the emperor, and generally showed himself ready, as always, to

³⁷⁵ Ibid., pp 82-83, 86 (Nich. to Kon., 23 June, 14 July, 1826).

³⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 89 (Nich. to Kon., 3 Aug., 1826).

³⁷⁷ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 172.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 172; Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 93.

³⁷⁹ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 94; Jackman, *Romanov*, p. 126 (Kon. to Anna, 16 Sept, 1826).

thumb his nose at the Russian establishment.³⁸⁰ Thus, the "enchantment" which had surrounded him plummeted,³⁸¹ and he departed Moscow after ten days.

In November, prompted by the anniversary of Alexander's death, Nicholas wrote a sentimental and deferential letter to his brother:

"...je viens implorer Vos bénédictions, comme à celui qu'il m'est et me sera toujours permis de regarder, en moi-meme, comme mon Maître, comme celui qui remplace, pour moi, mon adorable bienfaiteur, comme celui, auquel j'ai dévoué toute mon existence; conservez-moi indulgence avant tout..."

He further clarified his perception of Konstantin's position when he appealed to the older man *"comme au chef de la famille"* for a decision on what to do with a compromising document from the reign of Elizabeth Petrovna!³⁸² Whether this was a genuine expression of the tsar's inability to abandon patriarchal principles (even when they conflicted with the 1797 Statute), or a patronizing attempt to secure Konstantin's benignity, we can only speculate. It is always possible that there were elements of both considerations at play.

Konstantin, not to be outdone, made his own declarations of devotion, the defensive phrasing of which demonstrated his continued belief that he existed under a cloud of suspicion.³⁸³ At any rate, his readiness to take offence soon came to the fore. Suddenly, and without issuing any specific complaints, he sent Nicholas a letter peppered with indignant allusions, and concluding with the words *"dites-moi sans façon et Vous serez débarrassé de ma personne de suite"*.³⁸⁴ The emperor was dumbfounded, and wrote back: *"Peut-il être question entre Vous et moi de mécontentement?"*³⁸⁵

In fact, the cause of the tsesarevich's outburst was his frustration with the criticism levelled at him in connection to the inquest.³⁸⁶ Nicholas's letter, with its assurances of unwavering confidence and its assertion that, above all else, he

³⁸⁰ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 172.

³⁸¹ Picnikos, *Imperfect*, p. 94.

³⁸² *SIRIO* 131, p. 104 (Nich. to Kon., 25 Nov., 1826).

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 107 (Kon. to Nich., 6 Dec., 1826).

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 109 (Kon. to Nich., 31 Dec., 1826).

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 110-111 (Nich. to Kon., 8 Jan. 1827).

³⁸⁶ see *SIRIO* 131, p. 113 (Kon. to Nich., 14 Jan., 1827).

desired his brother's approval, instantly mollified Konstantin.³⁸⁷ Finally, Nicholas acted to end the inquest related tension once and for all by writing: "*Je suis persuadé que notre cher ange eût été satisfait de Votre manière délicate de procéder dans cette affaire.*"³⁸⁸ In July 1827 he named his newborn son Konstantin after the elder brother who had given up the throne for him.³⁸⁹

At the beginning of 1828, less than six months after this incident, Konstantin was struggling to maintain his self-esteem against a backdrop of criticism and suspicion. A lifetime of dealing with these things had not decreased his hypersensitivity, and he wrote a self-justifying letter to La Harpe, reiterating the purity of his intentions.³⁹⁰ Konstantin's discontent festered until, by the end of the year, he was declaring his wish to leave public life altogether. He insisted there was no fraternal strain, no feud with the Russian public. It was just that he was worn out after three decades of service. The praise which he heaped upon Alexander as the best of "masters" evoked an unmistakeable longing for times gone by, when the emperor understood him.³⁹¹ In fact, however sincerely Konstantin might have dreamed of retirement, he was not willing to cede his domain, or suffer interference, and his words must therefore be interpreted as part of a pattern of passive-aggressive behaviour. When Nicholas tried to mobilise Polish troops for war against the Ottoman Empire, he resisted mightily, yielding only when it became clear that the tsar would not let the matter die.³⁹²

Given his brother's obstinacy, we might well ask why Nicholas never recalled him. He certainly must have weighed the advantages and disadvantages of the situation. Amongst the former were the threat of political turmoil should the *status quo* in Poland be disturbed, the need to protect dynastic prestige which could only suffer from a grand ducal recall, the desire to keep the peace within the family itself

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 114 (Kon. to Nick., 22 Jan., 1827).

³⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 117 (Nich. to Kon., 26 Jan., 1827).

³⁸⁹ Jackman, *Romanovs*, pp 140-41 (Kon to Anna, 25 July, '27).

³⁹⁰ *SIRIO* 5 (1870), (Kon. to LaHarpe., 5 Jan., 1828), p. 3.

³⁹¹ *SIRIO* 5, (Kon. to LaH., 31 Dec., 1828), p. 51.

³⁹² Pienkos, *Imperfect*, pp 92-93; Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 140.

and to honour Alexander's memory. But surely the most important obstacle to Konstantin's removal was the idea of having a superfluous and disaffected grand duke in the capital, especially an elder brother -- better he should remain in Warsaw and be gradually marginalised, and this was precisely Nicholas's strategy. He began allowing "intrusions on [Konstantin's] prerogatives". The eastern provinces were the first to be affected. Konstantin tried to assert a "Polish influence" in this territory. Nicholas retaliated by dispatching a large contingent of Russian officers and men to occupy positions in the Lithuanian Corps, and Russian civil servants to hold administrative posts in the provinces. These appointments, made without Konstantin's approval, undermined his authority and called into question his future in Poland proper.³⁹³

In May 1829, Nicholas came to Warsaw for his Polish coronation, accompanied by his wife, the heir, and Mikhail. He was "extremely pleased" with the success of this event, during which he appeared to be always "cheerful", remarking to Konstantin: "I feel like the Polish Sovereign, and foresee that sooner or later I will win the favour of the Poles". His attitude toward the tsesarevich himself is more difficult to gauge. Princess Lovich was well treated by the imperial couple, who visited her frequently and accorded her an important official place alongside young Alexander in the coronation procession!³⁹⁴ Finally, Nicholas made his nephew, Pavel Konstantinovich, a fliegel adjutant.³⁹⁵ That said, no member of Konstantin's suite received a decoration, though many other men did.³⁹⁶ Thus a line appears to have been drawn between the familial and official realms, with warmth and affection manifested within the former, and mild disapprobation in the latter.

Konstantin did not share his brother's happy mien, any more than he had when Alexander had visited Poland. He was "angry and morose", having nothing to say to Nicholas's assertion that he now really felt like the king. His jealous pique ended

³⁹³ Picnkos, *Imperfect*, pp 95-96, 110.

³⁹⁴ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, pp 192-193.

³⁹⁵ Jackman, *Romanov*, p. 181 (Kon. to Anna, 14 July, 1829).

³⁹⁶ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 193.

with a declaration that he wished to retire to Frankfurt and live as a private citizen.³⁹⁷

To his sister Anna he wrote that Nicholas's sojourn had been so exhausting that "my whole being, both physical and moral, was very strongly shaken". He was much concerned with the "hundred thousand stupidities" which had been retailed through "public reports", and insisted that everything had gone well, to the "great disappointment" of his foes.³⁹⁸ He maintained that he and Nicholas enjoyed good relations. In fact, he intended, after taking the cure at Ems, to return to his post:

"fresh and ready to begin again better than ever and a great disappointment to those who would like to see me removed from it. It seems to me that, concerning this matter, the Warsaw visit of [Nicholas] was most helpful and that he deigned to unseal the eyes of those who would consider it meritorious, and even dutiful, to calumniate faithful and devoted servants in order to further their own interests to take advantage of his lack of experience..."³⁹⁹

As 1830 dawned, Konstantin was grappling with encroaching marginalization. His perceived loss of power to Prince Lubecki enraged him, and he wrote Nicholas a long letter in which he resorted to an anti-constitutional and anti-nationalist stance, denouncing Czartoryski and Lubecki as the heads of a "*parti liberal*" which was full of "*patriots*" and "*constitutionnelles*". These men, he warned, were clever enough to feign devotion, but, at bottom, were nothing but liars, out to gain Polish independence. He forwarded some confiscated letters which would show Nicholas "*l'opinion que l'on a ici du pouvoir du Prince Lubecki auprès de Vous*". Malcontents in both Poland and Lithuania had succeeded in gaining Lubecki's patronage. Thus:

*"Ma position devient de plus en plus difficile et le deviendra encore de jour en jour davantage, puisque je vois que tous ces êtres ont trouvé protection et appui à Petersbourg. Si cet état des choses dure, j'oserai Vous demander de nouvelles instructions... Je sais qu'elles gênent furieusement tous ces intrigants sourds et qu'ils auraient donné cher, afin que tous mes pouvoirs me soient retirés... L'astuce et la manière de s'immiscer du Prince Lubecki dans toutes les affaires est telle, qu'elle est devenue l'opinion générale de tout le monde dans le pays, et on le considère comme le lieutenant tacite du Royaume."*⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 196 .

³⁹⁸ Jackman, *Romanov*, p. 179 (Kon. to Anna, 14 July, 1829).

³⁹⁹ Ibid., pp 180-81 (Kon. to Anna, 14 July, 1829).

⁴⁰⁰ *SIRIO* 132, pp 4-5 (Kon. to Nich., 25 Jan., 1830).

This letter demonstrated that, although Konstantin was undoubtedly sincere in his earlier (and later) pronouncements of sympathy for the Polish nationalist cause, he could not bear the idea of having a rival for power, and would use any means to maintain his position.

Nicholas took an exasperated tone in his reply, and invoked Alexander's name in defence of those whom Konstantin attacked:

"Je vois avec une peine profonde que de sottises et méprisables fautes partielles que je suis le premier à blâmer et à réprimer, si tôt qu'elles parviennent à ma connaissance, paraissent produire sur Vous l'impression comme si elles étaient provoquées ou bien motivées par une indifférence marquée de ma part pour tous les avis que Vous daignez me faire parvenir sur ceux que la confiance de feu l'Empereur a appelés aux postes qu'ils remplissent; bien plus, que le Prince Lubecki... est un être tout puissant qui m'a subjugué, ainsi qu'il l'a fait de tout le reste des membres de l'administration du royaume, se basant, dites-Vous, sur l'opinion qu'il laisse croire, qu'il est muni de pleins-pouvoirs et d'instructions secrètes de ma part; que des individus que Vous réprouvez dans la domaine de Votre administration pour des raisons plus que valables, trouvent accès, asyle et emploi dans les différents dycastres ici à Petersbourg. En un mot, que Vous supposez exister un système de contradiction dans l'administration d'ici contre les mesures tant adoptées antérieurement que contre celles qui émanent des instructions qui Vous ont dirigé jusqu'à cette heure et que Vous êtes en conséquence obligé d'en demander de nouvelles..."

He agreed with many of Konstantin's criticisms of Lubecki, but found that the man possessed real merit as an administrator. His brother's allegation that men who had been dismissed from his service had found asylum with Nicholas was a blow to his honour, and he assured Konstantin that investigations were being carried out, though no one knew of the existence of any such men. He dismissed Konstantin's petulant call for new instructions:

"car Vous me fîtes l'honneur de me dire, lorsque je Vous demandais s'il n'y avait rien à faire pour les provinces polonaises... que Vous ne pouviez pas administrer ces provinces sur d'autres principes que ceux des pleins-pouvoirs que Vous possédiez" .⁴⁰¹

The tsesarevich, for his part, was displeased by Nicholas's tone, writing:

"N'ayant jamais transigé avec mon honneur jusqu'à ce moment, n'ayant jamais permis à qui que ce soit d'y porter atteinte, pas même à feu ma mère et qui a daigné dans le temps me rendre pleine et entière justice, malgré que le tout ne fut basé que sur un soupçon, j'ai cru pouvoir Vous énoncer avec franchise ce qui pouvait m'être blessant dans mon service, à la fin presque de ma carrière. Je vois que je me suis trompé et je connais mon devoir et, certes, person ne me apprendra. J'ose Vous donner l'assurance que je saurai me taire et qu'aucune plainte ne m'échappera pour l'avenir..."⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., pp 6-9 (Nich. to Kon., 4 Feb., 1830).

⁴⁰² Ibid., pp 9-10 (Kon. to Nich., 13 Feb., 1830).

The tsar once again took the high road, sending off a conciliatory letter.⁴⁰³ Konstantin was at once placated and wrote back that he had "wept with joy" when he read his brother's words. This mutually laudatory correspondence continued for months to come, with Nicholas emphasizing that they must work together for the good of the state (*"un seul but bous est commun a tous deux: servir notre patrie jusqu'à la dernière goutte de notre sang... c'est la seule manière de être dignes de notre nom..."*).⁴⁰⁴ This was an interesting departure from the evocation of Alexander as the common ground between the two of them.

In the event, history intervened to put an end to Konstantin's career and free Nicholas from the inconvenience posed by his brother's existence. The Polish public had been enraged in 1829 by the retrial in Russia of the head of the Polish Patriotic Society. By 1830 a new nationalist society had formed in the infantry cadet school, and events in Europe would bring this movement to a head.⁴⁰⁵ Nicholas was alarmed at the abdication of Charles X of France. He had little sympathy for Charles, but if there was any attempt to push back the boundaries of France and upset the peace in Europe, he would feel compelled to act, moreover, it was Konstantin's troops whom he had in mind to employ.⁴⁰⁶

Not surprisingly, Konstantin fought his brother's designs, thinning the ranks of the army. Nicholas, however, had by now had enough of game playing. The five years that had passed since his accession had established him firmly in the role of autocrat. If Konstantin had, in the past, used emotional blackmail to good effect, that day appeared to be over. He circumvented his brother's authority, reminding one and all that it was Konstantin who served at his pleasure, not the other way around. Moreover, the man to whom he turned was Prince Lubecki, who was instructed, without Konstantin's knowledge, to appropriate the funds for mobilization and begin purchasing provisions. Finally, on 6 October, he wrote a

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p. 11 (Nich. to Kon., 25 Feb., 1830).

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 29 (Nich. to Kon., 9 July, 1830).

⁴⁰⁵ Zawadzki, *Honour*, p. 300.

⁴⁰⁶ *SIRIO* 132, p. 37 (Nich. to Kon., 6 Aug., 1830).

letter to his brother in which he declared that it was necessary to prepare for war, and he wished Konstantin, at the head of his troops, to represent Russia in the allied anti-revolutionary effort (Pienkos calls the proffered appointment a bribe, and she is undoubtedly correct).⁴⁰⁷ He proceeded to outline his reasons for asking his brother to accept this military burden, the first being his "*confiance illimité*" in Konstantin. Beyond that, he mentioned his superior knowledge of the places and people involved, and the convenient location of his troops.⁴⁰⁸

Konstantin was ready with a plethora of reasons why mobilization would be injudicious, not least of which was increasing unrest in Poland itself. Moreover, so far as the supreme command of the troops was concerned, he not only did not desire it, but declared himself unfit, noting that he had never held such wartime authority.⁴⁰⁹ Nicholas was unmoved,⁴¹⁰ so Konstantin suspended war preparations on his own initiative.⁴¹¹ Things were not to be so easy, however. In November, only days after he wrote his last letter of postponement, the mobilization was announced in the Polish press, and the nationalists seized upon the fear and indignation roused within the kingdom's population.⁴¹² Revolution broke out in Warsaw on the 17th, and conspirators entered the Belvedere Palace with the intention of killing Konstantin, who was saved by a warning shout from a visitor. In the heat of the moment, Princess Lovich was said to have begged her husband's forgiveness for her own Polish ethnicity, to which Konstantin replied that the assassins were probably not Poles.⁴¹³

Of the troops who gathered to support the tsesarevich, a significant number were Poles. His favourite unit, the 4th Regiment of Jaegers, was not amongst them, however, and when news reached him, through a feldjaeger who had been sent to

⁴⁰⁷ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, pp 103-104.

⁴⁰⁸ *SIRIO* 132, pp 55-56 (Nich. to Kon., 6 Oct., 1830).

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 57-58 (Kon. to Nich., 13 Oct., 1830).

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 61-62 (Nich. to Kon., 28 Oct., 1830).

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63 (Kon. to Nich., 3 Nov., 1830).

⁴¹² Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, v. II, p. 314.

⁴¹³ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 206.

assess the situation in Warsaw, that these men were revelling in the disorder, he refused to believe it, dispatching the same man (Reiser) a second time. This time Reiser did not return, so Konstantin sent one of his adjutants, Captain Gresser, who came back with the same news, but found the tsesarevich no more willing to accept it. Gresser, too, was sent a second time, and fell into the hands of the rebels. Two more men were sent and lost, while the tsesarevich struggled to maintain his denial.⁴¹⁴

His generals pleaded with him to retake Warsaw. Konstantin refused, insisting that this was an internal matter, and must be handled by the Polish government. The Provisional Government sent word that they were engaged in calming the populace.⁴¹⁵ On 21 November they dispatched a deputation to his encampment with demands that the constitution should be strictly observed, the eastern provinces restored, and amnesty granted to all those who had participated in the uprising.⁴¹⁶ Konstantin replied: "It may be... that I share your opinion about current events, more or less, but now I wish to remain a non-participant in your affairs and can only petition the emperor to pardon the guilty."⁴¹⁷

He insisted that he had no intention of attacking Warsaw, and wished only to leave Poland with the Russian forces. Lubecki swore that he would be allowed to do so unmolested. In parting, Konstantin is alleged to have promised that if, at some point, he was forced to launch an attack, he would give the government forty-eight hours notice. This claim is unsubstantiated, as are allegations that he was asked to accept the Polish crown, though he would state later that the deputies "had offered him the option of returning to Warsaw at the head of the Polish troops".⁴¹⁸ This, of course, he could not do, since it would mean burning all bridges with Nicholas and

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., pp 211-212, 214.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid. pp 214-215.

⁴¹⁶ Zawadzki, *Honour*, p. 303.

⁴¹⁷ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 217.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., pp 217-218, 284.

Russia, a thing which his identity, so rooted in loyalty and service, would not allow.

What, then, became of his *Polish* identity? A sardonic bitterness, of the kind which Nicholas himself would have found only too familiar, was apparent in his interview with deputy Valitsky (who met him privately on 23 November). It was during this exchange that he declared:

"In essence, I am a better Pole than all you gentlemen. I am married to a Pole. I live amongst you. I have spoken your language for so long that it is now difficult for me to speak Russian. I demonstrated my sympathy for you by forbidding the imperial troops to fire upon you. If I had wished it, you would all have been destroyed in the first minute. I was the only one amongst my staff who did not want to fire upon you..."⁴¹⁹

Nor would he forget his promise of intercession with the tsar.⁴²⁰ Nicholas refused to yield, however, and commanded his brother not to make any concessions.⁴²¹

Ultimately, the identity issue proved to be of great importance during the revolutionary crisis. The ambiguity of Konstantin's position was a source of consternation for all involved. The Poles rejected his promise of neutrality and pursued him, shattering his hope of avoiding personal conflict.⁴²² The Russians, likewise, found his fence-straddling unacceptable. On 1 December (1830), Nicholas wrote, asking Konstantin "Where are you and what are you doing?". He could wait no longer for his brother to act, and had mobilised an anti-revolutionary force under General Rosen (soon to be replaced by I.I. Dibich). He implored Konstantin not to alter these arrangements, lest chaos reign.⁴²³

Konstantin responded by ordering Rosen to suspend hostilities. Nicholas, he declared, had two options: "*la force et la grandeur d'âme*". Before choosing the former, he would do well to consider whether success was really attainable, bearing in mind that the Poles were resolved to see the matter through. If pushed they would

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p. 283.

⁴²⁰ *SIRIO* 132, p. 77 (Kon. to Nich., 8 Dec., 1830); pp 83-84 (Kon. to Nich., 13 Dec., 1830).

⁴²¹ Ibid., p. 65 (Nich. to Kon., 29 Nov., 1830).

⁴²² Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 108; Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, pp 293-94.

⁴²³ *SIRIO* 132, p. 67 (Nich. to Kon., 30 Nov., 1830).

"defend their territory to the utmost extremity", but if moderation was shown, they themselves would pursue the trouble-makers.⁴²⁴

Lincoln calls Konstantin's waiting posture "very difficult to explain",⁴²⁵ but, in truth, it seems entirely predictable. To move against the Poles would have meant forfeiting his Polish identity, just as surely as pro-Polish action would have made him an outcast from Russia and the dynasty. Reconciliation held out the only hope of salvation. On 30 December he had a long conversation with Dibich, expressing his fear that intervention would "augment, and to some extent legitimise the war cry of the rebels -- that the Russians were killing Poles", as a result of which the whole country would be consumed by "hate and revolution".⁴²⁶

Though paralysed by his inability to deal with the situation, Konstantin declined to exit the field. Dibich, understandably, was anxious to define the tsesarevich's position. He began by offering an apology for his own precedence, reiterating Nicholas's assertion that, in light of Konstantin's silence, a quick decision had had to be made. It was now up to him to decide whether he would remain at the head of his "old troops", take command of the guards, or make "some other resolution". Konstantin gave the appearance of being happy with this choice, and assured Dibich that he was gladdened by his arrival and "content to serve under [him]", but gave no indication of what role he would take.⁴²⁷

The fact of the matter was that Nicholas and Dibich now had more than just Konstantin's *presence* to worry about. He had begun to show signs of wishing to play an active role, and was eager to regain command of his beloved Lithuanian Grenadiers, but Dibich insisted that it was impossible, for the time being, to separate this regiment from its corps, and he requested that Konstantin should allow him to send his orders directly to the corps commander (Rosen), without seeking prior

⁴²⁴ Ibid., p. 72 (Kon. to Nich., 3 Dec., 1830).

⁴²⁵ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 140.

⁴²⁶ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, pp 293-295, (Letter from Dibich to Nicholas, 31 December, 1830, reproduced in full).

⁴²⁷ Ibid., pp 293-94 (Dibich to Nicholas, 31 Dec., 1830).

approval. The tsesarevich agreed, but the general remained unsatisfied, remarking to Nicholas that his position was still "extremely delicate". As for the possibility of Konstantin taking Rosen's command, he could not support it. The tsesarevich had behaved nobly by remaining with his troops, but he could not possibly find it agreeable to participate in a war which would force him to witness the destruction of the Polish troops which he himself had formed. Dibich then launched an all out appeal to Nicholas. He would not suggest that anything should be ceded to "the spirit of the times", but there was no point in opposing it "without advantage" and it seemed to him:

"scarcely desirable, and even harmful for the good cause, that princes should go on campaign against their rebellious subjects. It would increase the bitterness of the revolt, and, even should the prince himself obtain military glory, it would ever be mingled with painful memories."⁴²⁸

Of course, one suspects that Dibich did not approve of princely interference in any kind of campaign, though it is worth noting that the involvement of grand dukes in punitive and/or anti-revolutionary actions would remain a controversial subject, precisely because of the potential taint to the dynasty. So far as Konstantin's retention of the title of commander-in-chief was concerned, Dibich opposed it. If the tsesarevich was allowed to hold both title and authority, he would then, by his mere presence, make it impossible to maintain a single command structure. If he held the title nominally, this concession would diminish "the respect and importance" of the position.⁴²⁹

Nicholas would not strip his brother of the appointment granted him by Alexander, however, and Konstantin's position remained as ambiguous as ever, though, in typically dramatic style, he made a point of emphasizing his submission to Dibich, the while he criticised the man's behaviour.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 295-96 (Dibich to Nicholas, 31 Dec., 1830).

⁴²⁹ Ibid., p. 296 (Dibich to Nicholas, 31, Dec., 1830).

⁴³⁰ *SIRIO* 132, p. 131 (Kon. to Nich., 19 Feb, 1831); p. 122 (Kon. to Nich., 20 Feb, 1831).

After a Russian defeat on 13 February, Nicholas asked Konstantin to choose the commanders who would lead the reinforcements.⁴³¹ The tsesarevich refused, proclaiming that, after having been betrayed by many of his own personnel, he no longer felt qualified to make such choices.⁴³² This response appears to have been the last straw for the tsar. He remarked that Konstantin had now fulfilled all the obligations that honour demanded of him. It was time for him to ask himself if it was appropriate to remain in service. What post could he take? He had made it clear that he did not wish to be the actual commander-in-chief. He had not even wished to replace Rosen as head of the Lithuanian Corps. "What is left for you? To stay on with the army would be inappropriate in view of your rank, your birth, and, most important of all, the danger." Nicholas's warning that the consequences would be horrible should Konstantin fall into the hands of the enemy revived Suvorov's concern with regard to a grand ducal combat role. He was, however, willing to offer one final compromise. Mikhail had just arrived at the front with the Guards Corps, and this command could be transferred to Konstantin.⁴³³ In fact, Mikhail had been instructed to press for Konstantin's retirement,⁴³⁴ and it seems clear that the Guards offer was a disingenuous one, which the tsesarevich was expected to decline. He was not that easily dealt with, however, and persisted with the idea that his honour required him to remain near the troops who had fled with him from Warsaw.⁴³⁵

The extent to which Konstantin's Polish identity (and his resentment toward Russia) remained intact was nowhere better illustrated than in his behaviour as a battlefield observer. At Grochow, he is alleged to have encouraged the rebel troops with the words "Good, good, children, Polish soldiers are the best in the world"! And it is claimed that "the Russian advance was halted because Constantine intervened and forced Dibich to order a cease fire", thus crossing from passive to

⁴³¹ Ibid., p. 120 (Nich. to Kon., 17 Feb., 1831).

⁴³² Ibid., pp 126-27 (Kon. to Nich., 22 Feb., 1831).

⁴³³ Ibid., p. 132 (Nich. to Kon., 25 Feb., 1831).

⁴³⁴ Ibid., p. 134 (Nich. to Kon., 2 March, 1831).

⁴³⁵ Ibid., p. 141 (Kon. to Nich., 12 March, 1831).

active partisanship.⁴³⁶ Whether or not this was true, complaints arose that he was to blame for the unsatisfactory outcome of the battle. Nor did he aid his own cause when he boasted to Nicholas: "if the Poles had not suffered from a numerical disadvantage, they may well have prevailed".⁴³⁷

This was, apparently, enough for the emperor. In April Dibič gave Konstantin "an express invitation" to retire, and the tsesarevich interpreted this (undoubtedly correctly) as an expression of Nicholas's will, pledging his obedience.⁴³⁸ Thus, for all intents and purposes, he was a superfluous grand duke at the age of fifty-one. His official service titles were not enough to satisfy his sense of self-worth, and, despite his ambivalence toward the Russian state, he, no less than the superfluous noblemen of Nicholas's reign, needed a service role to make him feel like a valuable and honourable person. Writing to his brother in June 1831, he noted that theirs was an age of "ingratitude" and "vicious sentiments", for which reason he had endeavored "to avoid society and occupy myself with nothing but my service and my work, while I had it".⁴³⁹ To his friend F.P. Opočinin, after complaining of "boredom, boredom and boredom", he wrote: "Having experienced every kind of military service, I have now, in my old age, experienced the duties of a transport clerk [*furštatsky chinovnik*]: *au ridicule il n'y à qu'un pas*."⁴⁴⁰

The man who had so often spoken of retirement, clung to the forlorn hope of reviving his Polish career. To Nicholas, who, in June, asked him to return to St. Petersburg, he continued to insist that he could not, under any circumstances but death, abandon "the sad remainder of my people". He asked Nicholas to inform him how he wished him to bear himself in St. Petersburg. Should he approach the foot of the throne clothed in "shame", with the "face of a malcontent"? His "pained mien" would be interpreted by Russians and foreigners alike as one of "dissatisfaction and

⁴³⁶ Piczkos, *Imperfect*, pp 111-112.

⁴³⁷ *SIRIO* 132, p. 122 (Kon. to Nich., 20 Feb., 1831).

⁴³⁸ Ibid., p. 160 (Kon. to Nich., 6 Apr., 1831).

⁴³⁹ Ibid., p. 229 (Kon. to Nich., 7 June, 1831), italics mine.

⁴⁴⁰ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 300, (Konstantin to F.P. Opočinin, 7 June, 1831).

family disharmony", and seized upon by real malcontents. Should he "shut [himself] up" in his own home out of shame for the "sad role" which had ended thirty-six years of service? The public would, after all, have a "right" to say "he has abandoned his own [people]".⁴⁴¹

Nicholas simply reiterated that he had to consider:

"the honour of the name which you bear and which you could have gratuitously demeaned by remaining, along with your detachment, an idle witness to the disasters which followed [the initial outbreak of revolution]".⁴⁴²

Konstantin pointed out that it was Russia's generals, not he, who had failed to comprehend that this would be a long and nasty war. Indeed, he had tried to warn them of the Poles' determination to fight to the last drop of blood. By this he wished to make the point that he, more than anyone else, had understood that he would not simply be able to return to Warsaw after a brief Russian intervention. This also gave him the opportunity to criticize Dibich and others for underestimating the military capabilities of the Poles (whom Konstantin had, of course, trained himself), and to brag, in the guise of lamenting, that if 10,000 fighting Poles were destroyed today, then 20,000 would replace them tomorrow, invested with "a new hate and vengeance in their hearts because of the punishment and vexation of all kinds which they have been made to suffer".⁴⁴³ For his part, he continued to insist that his behaviour arose from his devotion to his troops who were "more dear to me than my own existence".⁴⁴⁴ The letter which contained these lines was written on 12 June; three days later he succumbed to cholera.

Thus ended the troubled life of Russia's first mature non-ruling grand duke. His commitment to his version of the Petrine service ideal had been unwavering. Like Poland, the *idea* of service had, for him, been a psychological sanctuary, giving him his sense of worth in the face of constant adversity, which itself arose from his struggle for independence. The while he fought against the constraints of dynastic

⁴⁴¹ *SIRIO* 132, pp 230-31 (Kon. to Nich., 7 June, 1831).

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 232 (Nich. to Kon., 9 June, 1831).

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp 237-241 (Kon. to Nich., 13 June, 1831).

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 235 (Kon. to Nich., 12 June, 1831).

tradition, however, he treasured his heritage, bombarding his brother with requests for family memorabilia.⁴⁴⁵

Konstantin's death removed a great burden from Nicholas's, to wit, what to do with a brother who could no longer be an asset, either in Russia or in Poland, but whose disenfranchisement would diminish dynastic prestige and raise the spectre of dynastic disharmony. "Relief" was the "dominant reaction" in court and governmental circles, where it was thought that the the tsesarevich's demise would simplify relations with Poland.⁴⁴⁶ The new viceroy, Prince Paskevich, was not hindered by a Polish identity, and would faithfully implement the wishes of the tsar.⁴⁴⁷

Of course, the challenge posed by Konstantin had never been limited to Polish policy. Indeed, the Polish issue itself was only one manifestation of the "second son's" need to find a place for himself. And the tsesarevich's role as a lightning rod for popular anxieties and frustrations continued to assert itself, if only briefly, after his death. Nicholas aggravated matters by behaving secretively. The circumstances of his brother's death were not publicly revealed, and the Russian press did not even mark his passing -- an unprecedented omission. Whether this lapse represented a posthumous extension of the marginalization process, or a precaution against cholera related hysteria, the outcome was predictable. A variety of rumours began to circulate, with some claiming that the tsesarevich had been poisoned, others that he had taken his own life, and still others that he had been imprisoned, or was roaming Russia under an assumed name.⁴⁴⁸ These found expression in the foreign press, amongst Russian soldiers, and amongst the Russian folk.⁴⁴⁹ Songs recalling the Decembrist uprising presented Konstantin as a popular hero, and one portrayed him

⁴⁴⁵ *SIRIO* 131; pp 49, 54 (Kon. to Nich., 15 Feb, 1826); p. 65 (Kon. to Nich., 27 March, 1826); p. 73 (Nich. to Kon., 12 May, 1826); 76 (Kon. to Nich., 24 May, 1826).

⁴⁴⁶ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 113; see also Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 142.

⁴⁴⁷ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 151.

⁴⁴⁸ Pienkos, *Imperfect*, p. 112.

⁴⁴⁹ Karnovich, *Tsesarevich*, p. 248.

fighting at the head of the guards to claim his throne.⁴⁵⁰ In any event, whatever one believed about Konstantin, it was Mikhail who now stood before the public as the last Pavlovich grand duke.

In Mikhail, Nicholas very nearly had the ideal grand duke. He was devoted to service, not nearly as majestic as the tsar himself, uninterested in politics, and a model of conformity. Beyond this, he was an adoring younger brother, the emperor's closest childhood companion, but a man never invested with the idea (as Konstantin had been) that he would someday have a realm of his own. All of Nicholas's affection was lavished upon Mikhail. Far from trying to curtail his public role, the emperor seemed intent upon broadening his career and generally building him up. For instance, during the Polish uprising, it was Mikhail who led the Russian troops into Warsaw, though Field-Marshal Paskevich had won the victory.⁴⁵¹

Mikhail was the first man appointed to the State Council under Nicholas (in September 1826), and, although this honour did not, in itself, confer much of a political role since Nicholas, unlike Alexander, "assigned little importance" to the State Council,⁴⁵² and granted his brother a dispensation allowing him to miss sessions whenever his other duties interfered,⁴⁵³ it was surely symbolic of the emperor's conception of grand ducal role as one which involved participation in the overall life of the Empire. Indeed, in Nicholas's Russia, a military career was no obstacle to involvement in government. The emperor believed that if a man could lead troops, he could lead civilian institutions.⁴⁵⁴

From the beginning, Mikhail rose to his task as Nicholas's special aide. The emperor wrote Konstantin in January 1826 with praise for the "*zèle* " with which the young man carried out whatever duties he was given, adding: "*il m'est un grand*

⁴⁵⁰ Keep, *Soldiers*, p. 214.

⁴⁵¹ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 156.

⁴⁵² Ibid., p. 165.

⁴⁵³ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, pp 66-67.

⁴⁵⁴ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 164.

secour".⁴⁵⁵ Particularly important was his function as a kind of executive political officer in the wake of the Decembrist uprising, identifying and implementing reforms necessary to combat unrest amongst the troops.⁴⁵⁶ He had initiated this activity with his participation in the inquest which followed the revolt.⁴⁵⁷ Elsewhere, we have already had occasion to describe the part he played in furthering communication between his two elder brothers.

Finally, in addition to honorary military appointments, of which Mikhail received an abundance,⁴⁵⁸ two civilian honours were bestowed upon him. In 1826 he was made an honorary member of the Academy of Sciences, and in 1841 of St. Petersburg University.⁴⁵⁹ These appointments suggest that Nicholas had successfully signalled to highly-placed individuals outside of court circles that to honour his brother was to honour him, and that the dynasty welcomed the symbolic extension of its proprietorial bond to non-military organizations.

Of course, Mikhail's primary role continued to be military. In addition to his artillery post and brigade command, he took over the tsar's duties as Inspector General of Engineers (1825), and, upon Konstantin's death, stepped into the role of Head of Military Education. Interestingly, before he received this last appointment he had already been named Commander of the School of Guards Cadets (1825) and president of the General Staff Academy (1829).⁴⁶⁰ Whether these posts constituted a deliberate encroachment upon Konstantin's sphere of influence, and thus figured in the process of marginalization, we can only speculate. But, whatever the case may have been, Nicholas clearly intended to perpetuate the dynasty's influence within the armed forces. Having already bestowed two important posts upon his brother, he added yet another in 1826, when Mikhail was

⁴⁵⁵ *SIRIO* 131, p.33 (Nich. to Kon., 11 Jan. 1826).

⁴⁵⁶ *SIRIO* 131, see, for instance, p. 111 (Nich. to K., 8 Jan., 1827); pp 115-116 (Kon. to Nich., 22 Jan., 1827); p. 108 (Kon. to Nich., 2 March, 1827).

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68 (Nich. to Kon., 27 Apr., 1826); p.78 (Nich. to Kon., 6 June, 1826).

⁴⁵⁸ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, pp 80, 112.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 93-94.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

named Commander of the Guards and Grenadier Corps (upgraded to "Main" Commander in 1831).⁴⁶¹

Throughout this period there were, of course, non-royal inspectors. The supervision of the infantry had not been held by a Romanov since Alexander relinquished it upon his succession, and, after Konstantin's death, the supervision of the cavalry fell into non-royal hands. But there is no indication that the service oriented emperor intended any of Mikhail's appointments to be sinecures, and, when combined, they held forth a potential for extraordinary influence. Here it is worth noting that there was nothing unprecedented about the multiple postings. Alexander, while yet heir, and Konstantin, under Alexander, both held combined posts of this nature, moreover, non-royal persons who appeared to the ruler to be particularly capable sometimes received them as well.⁴⁶² Men who held such posts were not merely administrators, but demi-rulers.

To gauge the exact perimeters of the grand duke's authority is somewhat problematic. At the beginning of Nicholas's reign there were five military posts independent of the War Ministry, and Mikhail held four of these (Commander of the Guards and Grenadier Corps, General Feldzeugmeister, General Inspector of Engineers, Head of Military Education; the fifth was supreme command of the active army). Then, in 1836, Nicholas's new Military Regulation required the official subordination of the General Feldzeugmeister and the Inspector General of Engineers to the War Minister. That said, so long as Romanovs held these posts, any practical distinction between pre and post 1836 prerogatives was largely negated inasmuch as they invariably possessed the *familial* privilege of direct access to the tsar. The result, therefore, was the emergence of a "somewhat ambiguous" relationship between the imperial inspectors and Russia's War Ministers.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., p. 80.

⁴⁶² *Voennaia Entsiklopedia*, "General Inspector", p. 228.

⁴⁶³ Curtiss, *Army*, p. 98; Miller, Forrest, *Dmitrii Miliutin and the Reform Era in Russia*, Nashville, 1968, p. 81.

In Mikhail's case, even taking the 1836 Regulation into consideration, he still retained two non-subordinate positions. Moreover, there appears to have been no friction between him and the War Ministry. Of course, the way was certainly open for future power struggles between grand dukes, inclined to take their superiority for granted, and War Ministers jealous of their official prerogatives, and the question arises as to what lay behind Nicholas's decision to subordinate inspector generalships, by now firmly associated with the imperial family, to ministerial authority. If he perceived the change as a practical necessity it would have been in keeping with his character to have sacrificed something of grand ducal prestige and power for the sake of military efficiency, and he may have desired a greater degree of centralization within the command hierarchy, realizing that, so long as individual grand dukes behaved responsibly and cultivated the favour of the tsar, they would suffer no loss of prerogative, whereas, if they did behave badly, the tsar would have the option of allowing the War Minister to deal with them, and they themselves would possess no official right to circumvent this. Apparently, the concept of grand ducal subordination to non-royal authority did not, in itself, disturb Nicholas inasmuch as it must remain clear to all concerned that only a grand duke who was seriously out of favour with the tsar would be subject to the correction of the War Minister, and then only to the extent that the tsar himself approved.

Given Mikhail's extraordinary position within the military service establishment, it may seem preposterous to suggest that any genuinely Petrine impulses influenced the emperor's decisions with regard to his brother's career. On the other hand, Mikhail *had* performed satisfactorily as General Feldzeugmeister during Alexander's reign. Admittedly, this was a weak foundation for assuming that he could do the same as Inspector General of Engineers, especially given the doubling of his duties. But it did provide some indication of competence. And Mikhail's claim to experience, both general and specialised, was even greater at the time of his succession to the headship of Military Education (after all, he had founded and supervised the operation of the Artillery Academy, and served to Nicholas's obvious

satisfaction as Commander of the School of Guards Cadets). But there was no professional basis for giving him command of the Guards and Grenadier Corps in 1826, since he had no combat experience.

Beyond this, there arose the question of the feasibility (within the contemporary service context) of the whole concept of multiple appointments. In fact, as we have noted, precedent did exist for such service. That said, there can be no doubt but that appointments of this kind, being awarded exclusively to favourites and grand dukes, never had a sound professional basis, and, despite the Petrine roots of the practice, it had come to belong to the non-progressive school of military thought, conferring a grand and amorphous rulership position rather than well-defined administrative duties. To be sure, each appointment had its own regulations, but combined posts, by their very nature, encouraged their holders to behave autocratically. And this, indeed, appears to have been largely how Mikhail functioned. As Head of Military Education, for instance, he refused even to ride past the General Staff Academy (let alone take it in hand), though he lavished his attention upon the other military schools and entered into the details of their day to day operations.⁴⁶⁴ Moreover, although this latter activity was certainly commendable, he insisted upon relating to the cadets in a patronizing manner, placing more emphasis upon the establishment of familial ties between Russia's future servitors and the dynasty, than upon the cultivation of a shared professional identity.⁴⁶⁵

Of course, such behaviour would not have seemed odd at the time. But professional sensibilities were evolving. The chief question lay in whether or not they would develop apace within the dynasty. Paul's three younger sons, as we have noted, showed themselves, over the years, to have a strong tendency toward autocratic behaviour in relation to their service colleagues and underlings. At the same time, however, all the brothers demonstrated how thoroughly the expansive Muscovite warlord mentality had been tempered by a training regimen which

⁴⁶⁴ Curtiss, *Army*, p. 105.

⁴⁶⁵ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, p. 96.

emphasized conservative, regulation-centred thought, and seemed designed to produce fussy regimental staff officers. Such an outlook, favouring brutality, endless drill, and contempt for intellectual development, could not be called practical, but its bearers would have thought of it as such, and associated it with their desire to realise Petrine service principles. It thus brought with it certain martial virtues, which might contribute to the development of a professional ethos, to wit, diligence, discipline and devotion to duty. In Mikhail there was even evidence of a meritocratic sense. He was willing to reward talent within the nobility, providing money for poor but capable cadets to enter the Guards regiments.⁴⁶⁶ Still more laudable was the patronage he bestowed upon Dmitry Miliutin, the man who would become nineteenth-century Russia's greatest military reformer. Miliutin, a General Staff Academy graduate, came to the "special attention" of Mikhail and received a position as director of the Training Department of the Military Educational Administration. So impressed was the grand duke with his protege's work in this field that, when Nicholas attempted to transfer him to a military-historical project, Mikhail intervened, obtaining an appointment for Miliutin on the educational committee of the War Ministry.⁴⁶⁷

Another pronounced component of the Petrine inheritance, as it was imparted to the Pavlovich grand dukes, was a need to prove themselves in battle, this being the greatest standard by which the validity of one's service, and hence one's legitimate connection to the state, could be judged. As the new reign began, neither the emperor nor his younger brother had had an opportunity to establish themselves as combat veterans. For Mikhail, the Decembrist uprising provided an opportunity to demonstrate his courage, and he predictably flung himself into harm's way (just as Konstantin had done on his first military campaign).⁴⁶⁸ Of course, such behaviour was in no way professional, or even helpful, in most instances. But romantic

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 96.

⁴⁶⁷ Miller, *Dmitrii*, pp 20-21; Miliutin, Dmitry, *Dnevnik D.A. Miliutina*, (P.A. Zaionchkovsky, ed.), Moscow, 1950, v. 2, p. 33.

⁴⁶⁸ Lincoln, *Nicholas II*, p. 44.

preconceptions demanded it of the man who wished to win a hero's laurels.

Whatever satisfaction Mikhail may have derived from his anti-Decembrist role, however, it gave him no opportunity to prove his aptitude as a military leader. For this, both he and Nicholas would have to await the outbreak of war against Turkey in 1828. The emperor was advised by his staff to forswear participation, but would have none of it.⁴⁶⁹ Of course, as sovereign, he could not accept a subordinate post, but lacked all qualification to lead the troops. He appointed commanders-in-chief on each front, but presumably took the supreme command upon himself. This in itself might have been merely a convention, but, once he had joined the troops, Nicholas could not restrain his martial impulses. His interference in strategy formulation produced lamentable results,⁴⁷⁰ beyond which, it went without saying that, sooner or later, he would feel compelled to try his hand at a combat command. He "acquitted himself tolerably well," in this endeavor, being steadfast under fire, but was "still a parade-ground commander". To his own credit, Nicholas realised his shortcomings and withdrew.⁴⁷¹ He did not request an Order of St George. Before he left the front, however, he had, by his very presence, reaffirmed the Petrine ideal of the dynasty's military mission. And it was more or less on this basis that, in 1838, he successfully petitioned the Cavalier's Duma for the bestowal of a fourth class order, in recognition of twenty-five years of service as a Russian officer (Alexander had decreed that the Order of St. George could be given for "prolonged meritorious service").⁴⁷²

Mikhail, since he need not be concerned about questions of supreme authority, had a better chance to play a role commensurate with his abilities. As had been the case at Austerlitz many years before, the tsar made less of a positive impact on the battlefield than his brother. Mikhail commanded the troops who beseiged Brailov,

⁴⁶⁹ Curtiss, *Army*, p. 53.

⁴⁷⁰ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 312.

⁴⁷¹ Lincoln, *Army*, p. 126.

⁴⁷² Kashchenko & Rogulin, *Dom* (Khovanova, ed.), p. 262.

and apparently did so ably,⁴⁷³ though he was still intent upon behaving in accordance with his romantic preconceptions of warfare, and exposed himself unnecessarily to danger.⁴⁷⁴ Unlike Nicholas, he did receive the Order of St George (second class), for his participation.⁴⁷⁵

Later, during the suppression of the Polish uprising, he again participated. Nicholas was content this time not to take part, nor did he disregard professional considerations so far as to bestow the supreme command upon Mikhail after Konstantin refused to accept it. But, as commander of the Guards Corps, Mikhail nonetheless did have an important role to play, and seemingly played it well, at one point making "a skilful fighting retreat" in the face of the Polish onslaught, and leading his troops across the river Narew where they repulsed the advancing Poles and inflicted heavy losses upon them.⁴⁷⁶ Nicholas wrote Konstantin that he hoped Mikhail would be able to demonstrate "what a good chief with a good troop can do", and subsequently praised his brother's pursuit of the retreating Polish troops.⁴⁷⁷

To reward his service, the emperor made Mikhail an adjutant general in the imperial suite.⁴⁷⁸ This appointment was far from insignificant. By the 1840s, ten of the Empire's thirteen ministers would be adjutant generals.⁴⁷⁹ To hold this position in Nicholas's Russia was to possess an *entr  e* into the inner circle of policy makers. From the emperor's point of view, it must have seemed that a man who could command ably in two armed conflicts was qualified to be entrusted with important responsibilities of any kind.⁴⁸⁰ Thus, while Mikhail's appointment to the State Council had been more or less automatic, his elevation to the suite was seemingly performance based.

⁴⁷³ Curtiss, *Army*, p. 58.

⁴⁷⁴ Bozheryanov, *Pervyi*, p. 82; Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 143.

⁴⁷⁵ Kashchenko & Rogulin, *Dom* (Khovanova, ed.) p. 264.

⁴⁷⁶ Curtiss, *Army*, p. 84

⁴⁷⁷ *SIRIO* 132, pp 148, 154 (Nich. to Kon., 22 and 25 March, 1831), see also p. 187 (Nich. to Kon., 12 May, 1831).; pp 193, 196 (Nich. to Kon., 17 and 19 May, 1831).

⁴⁷⁸ Bozheryanov, *Pervyi*, p. 89.

⁴⁷⁹ Curtiss, *Army*, p. 47.

⁴⁸⁰ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, pp 88, 164.

Elsewhere, the dynamic which emerged between Nicholas, Mikhail, and the service establishment was interesting. Many of the officers offended by Mikhail's tyrannical behaviour *were* willing to lodge complaints, the grand duke's favoured status notwithstanding. The foremost recipients of these petitions were V.P. Kochubei, President of the Committee of Ministers, I.V. Vassilchikov, a cavalry commander and adjutant general, and A.Kh. Benckendorff, who, in his capacity as Chief of the Third Section, considered the negative reports he received frequent and angry enough to "give cause for anxiety".⁴⁸¹ If the War Ministry was privy to any of these grumblings, they either let them drop or forwarded them to Benckendorff. Thus it certainly cannot be said that the complaints went through proper channels. Mikhail, whatever the official limits of his authority, simply was not contained within the service sphere. His grand ducal status prevailed in this instance.

For their part, Kochubei, Vassilchikov and Benckendorff were each sufficiently alarmed at the destructive potential of the complaints to take them seriously (one cannot, of course, rule out ulterior motives as well, given Mikhail's privileged position), and the only effective action they could take in relation to a grand duke was to go to Nicholas. The tsar, like Alexander before him, was sympathetic to the offended officers. He asked Benckendorff to talk to Mikhail, thus suggesting that he did not wish to intervene personally. But when, sometime later, Benckendorff forwarded a new collection of complaints, Nicholas wrote "'I do not know how this nuisance is to be abated. I have argued, ordered and implored in vain. What am I to do?"⁴⁸² What he did *not* do was dismiss Mikhail from any of his positions, and, on this occasion he thus proved himself to be less decisive than Alexander who had removed Konstantin when necessary.

Finally, it is worth noting that Mikhail was not unamenable to correction from a non-royal source (any more than he had been as a young man under Paskevich's authority). He *did* respond to Benckendorff's admonitions for a time, reportedly

⁴⁸¹ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 46.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

trying to improve (though, of course, he would have realised that Benckendorff had Nicholas's backing). Meanwhile, Benckendorff worried that he had "probably estranged myself from [Mikhail] forever".⁴⁸³ Thus, even a man of his power and favour, acting upon the instructions of the tsar, was seemingly wary of the grand ducal potential to wreak havoc as a random element within the military and governmental spheres.

Despite the often indistinct border between these spheres, however, and the prominent role played by patronage within the autocratic system, Mikhail does not appear to have possessed a reputation as an intriguer, or to have assumed the role of the second son, with all its attendant perils, when Konstantin passed away. Ideologically, he remained untainted, sharing the prevailing notion that state and dynasty were indivisible. In a letter written for dissemination to graduating cadets he entreated: "Do not forget that in Russia, in our glorious Russia, the sacred name of the Sovereign and of the fatherland are inseparable."⁴⁸⁴

Thus Mikhail clearly viewed Nicholas as the embodiment of the Empire, and focused his patriotic fervour upon the tsar and upon his own role as a loyal subject. So far as this latter characteristic was concerned, it, as much as combat credibility, was a thing which Romanov grand dukes would seemingly always feel at pains to demonstrate in the most conspicuous way -- to the public, to the tsar, and to themselves. And both of these insecurities (about being accepted as real soldiers and being believed in their self-abnegating adoration of the sovereign) would very much colour grand ducal behaviour. Historian Ivan Golovin wrote of Mikhail: "...in public he is always seen bent double while speaking, with manifest veneration, to his brother. He is the first servant of the tsar".⁴⁸⁵ Moreover (like Konstantin in relation to Alexander), he expressed his willingness to play the role of imperial scapegoat. His severity as commander of the Guards Corps was alleged to have

⁴⁸³ Ibid., p. 46.

⁴⁸⁴ Bozheryanov, *Pervyi*, p. 96; Keep, *Soldiers*, p. 347.

⁴⁸⁵ quoted in Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 45.

been based on the idea that the soldiers would grumble about him and not about the tsar, in support of which he was said to have proclaimed: "I want [them] to love my brother, not me."⁴⁸⁶ How ironic then, that it was this tyrannical behaviour which caused Nicholas such consternation!

There were, to be sure, sources of mild tension between Mikhail and his brother. The grand duke's boorish behaviour embarrassed Nicholas as much as it had Maria Fedorovna.⁴⁸⁷ The tsar probably viewed such laxity as an abrogation of dynastic duty, but if this was indeed the case, fraternal affection appears to have stayed his hand.

Instances of genuine political strain appear to have been rare. Mikhail's wife, Elena Pavlovna, was a very politically- motivated woman. She hosted her own progressive salon, but Nicholas refused to allow the police to report on these meetings.⁴⁸⁸ Even during the latter period of his reign, when censorship and paranoia ruled elsewhere, discussion of reform continued among those members of the progressive bureaucracy and moderate intelligentsia who enjoyed Elena's patronage.⁴⁸⁹ The grand duchess's political influence would eventually be very great indeed, and it seems probable that the immunity she enjoyed during Nicholas's reign owed much to the emperor's affection for his brother, even posthumously. But Mikhail had nothing to do with his wife's political activities, and the two of them resided separately.⁴⁹⁰

Mikhail died in 1849 from injuries sustained in a riding accident. No rumours appear to have arisen from his death, and, indeed, it would have been difficult for anyone to have used him as an anti-government symbol. Thus, quietly, and leaving no male heirs, the last of the Pavlovich grand dukes disappeared. Nicholas's three

⁴⁸⁶ Bozherianov, *Pervyi*, p. 100.

⁴⁸⁷ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 156.

⁴⁸⁸ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 48.

⁴⁸⁹ Lincoln, W. Bruce, "The Circle of the Grand Duchess Yelena Pavlovna, 1847-1861", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, v. 48, #112, July, 1970, p. 374.

⁴⁹⁰ Chavchavadze, *Grand Duke*, p. 48.

younger sons, named Konstantin, Nikolai and Mikhail in imitation of the previous generation (their older brother was Alexander), were twenty-one, eighteen, and sixteen years of age at the time, and it is to an examination of their upbringing and education which we now turn.

Section Three: The Nikolaevich Grand Dukes

I. Nicholas I's Russia, 1825-1855

More than his predecessors, Nicholas I seems to have envisioned himself as an emperor cast in the mold of Peter the Great, and to some extent he succeeded in realizing this ideal. Lincoln writes: "[Nicholas] served Russia with a devotion matched in Imperial Russian history only by Peter the Great."⁴⁹¹ And Wortman's description of the young tsar's self-representation at the time of his coronation contains a wealth of Petrine qualities. Nicholas, he asserts, appeared before his subjects as:

"an able and conscientious servant of the state, completely devoted to improving the workings of the autocracy... The state he served was the emanation of his own imagination and will, and the model of devoted work he presented would provide a daunting ideal and a constant admonition for his servitors."⁴⁹²

His example certainly extended to his sons, the younger of whom would father sons who could not hope to rule, but must find their own niche in accordance with the Romanov service mission as defined by Nicholas himself, and the demands of the state as defined, to an increasing extent, by the Russian public.

Nicholas's ability to look upon the state both as the object of his devotion and as a thing animated by his will was consistent with the Petrine model, but a century had passed since Peter's day, and the idea that autocracy was the form of government most conducive to the welfare of the state could no longer be taken for granted.

⁴⁹¹ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 244.

⁴⁹² Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 279.

Europe abounded with new ideas, prominent among them the belief that the people were the "creators of history".⁴⁹³ In Russia, the emergence of a rudimentary popular political consciousness would not require the abandonment of autocracy, however. So long as the autocrat continued to fulfil the popular conception of the Petrine ideal, and the Empire thrived, the mainstream public were unlikely to question the status quo. And this, indeed, was demonstrated during Nicholas's reign. The emperor may not have been as overwhelming as Peter, but he possessed a majestic bearing, and his empire enjoyed a glorious reputation as Europe's "leading military power".⁴⁹⁴ Or, as one of his courtiers wrote many years later: "'during the lifetime of Nikolai Pavlovich, Russia had great and noble stature.... [and] he heaped still greater glory upon her. Everyone and everything bowed down before him *and before Russia!*'"⁴⁹⁵

Although this measure of contentment minimised the impact of western political ideas, it could not entirely negate them. The tsar, without accepting the premise that the legitimacy of autocracy depended upon popular approval, nonetheless was somewhat influenced himself. His predecessors would have agreed that the sovereign possessed a responsibility (albeit an extra-legal one) to the state, but Nicholas appears to have taken this notion very much to heart, believing that he, as tsar, "must always serve the interests", and, as he himself put it, "defend the dignity" of Russia.⁴⁹⁶ Indeed, in his accession manifesto he asked God to strengthen his intention to "live only for the beloved Fatherland".⁴⁹⁷ This declaration contained within it an implicit recognition of the state's primacy (just as Peter's own formulation had). Nicholas felt himself a part of his country, and did not consider that he merely stood above it.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., p. 407.

⁴⁹⁴ Lieven, Dominic, *Nicholas II: Twilight of the Empire*, New York, 1993, p. 255.

⁴⁹⁵ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, (Baroness Frederiks quoted, italics mine), p. 10.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 86; see also SIRIO 98, p. 100.

⁴⁹⁷ B.L., Russia, Imperial Proclamations, S.N. 7 (5).

Wortman makes much of the role of the public in Nicholas's coronation as "an active agent of acclamation", likewise noting attempts to draw educated Russians "into the sphere of the tsar's scenario", and to "win sympathy for the monarchy" through overtures made to the press.⁴⁹⁸ Nicholas showed his respect for the citizens of the Empire by stating: "...one is truly proud to belong to them".⁴⁹⁹ What he desired was not a public dialogue concerning the welfare of the state. The censorship made that perfectly clear. But he did want public participation in the form of acclamation and approval, and he appears to have considered these an essential proof of the dynasty's connection to the public, and through it to the state. Thus Alexander was the first tsesarevich "brought up to believe that the people's approval constituted an important moral basis of autocratic rule".⁵⁰⁰

Related to this phenomenon was the rise of nationalism, another Western European trend which spread to Russia, where the ruling elite became convinced of the need to russify Petrine institutions, thereby transforming the state into an organic nation, with the folk, the educated public, the service establishment, and the dynasty bound together through their Russian character. Nicholas sought to revive Russian qualities in art, religion, and education, and Wortman considers him to have been the first tsar who stood before his subjects as "a concrete expression of the nation".⁵⁰¹ The emperor appears to have felt deeply the need to prove the genuineness of his Russian nature, not only to the public, but also to himself. In considering the qualities which a good Romanov ruler should possess, he emphasized that he must always "remember that he was Russian". Most importantly, in his view, Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality were united and personified in the tsar. Thus patriotism meant an automatic love and allegiance to

⁴⁹⁸ Wortman, *Scenarios*, pp 280-282.

⁴⁹⁹ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 251.

⁵⁰⁰ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 346.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp 298, 379-380, 388.

autocracy. And Nicholas interpreted the Decembrist uprising not merely as an attack upon the dynasty, but as an attack upon the nation.⁵⁰²

Even given Nicholas's extraordinary faculties, however, the march toward a conflict between tsar-centred and state-centred ideology gained momentum during his reign. Ideas of popular sovereignty may not have found ready ground among the bulk of the public given Russia's vaunted international position and the determination of the nobility to uphold serfdom, but the status quo could not be maintained indefinitely, and even the limited overtures made by Nicholas to the public, when combined with nationalism and the tsar's self-sacrificing service ethos, reinforced the idea that the state stood supreme, and the legitimacy of the autocratic power was conditional.⁵⁰³

Above all, it was the issue of modernization which distinguished Peter I from Nicholas. Russia could not maintain her position among western states for long without embracing reform. But in Nicholas's day, autocracy "no longer appeared as the bearer of progress".⁵⁰⁴ At the beginning of his reign, the emperor undertook a policy of gradual reform.⁵⁰⁵ Indeed, among his measures were four which would contribute much to the development of modernity in Russia. He continued Alexander's efforts to build a cadre of professional civil servants.⁵⁰⁶ He orchestrated a massive expansion of the cadet corps.⁵⁰⁷ He founded a General Staff Academy. And he decreed that the laws should be codified.⁵⁰⁸ Even so, he would never win a

⁵⁰² Lincoln, *Nicholas*, pp 86, 240, 250.

⁵⁰³ see, for instance, Gleason, Abbott, "The Terms of Russian Social History" in *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia*, (Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow, and James L. West, eds), Princeton, 1991, p. 20.

⁵⁰⁴ Wortman, *Scenarios*, pp 408-409; see also McGrew, *Paul*, p. 356; Gleason, "Terms", p. 21.

⁵⁰⁵ Lieven, *Nicholas*, p. 255.

⁵⁰⁶ Wortman, *Scenarios*, pp 408-409; Gleason, "Terms", p. 20; W.M. Pintner, "The Evolution of Civil Officialdom, 1755-1855", *Russian Officialdom: The Bureaucratization of Russian Society from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century*, (Walter Pintner and Don Rowney, eds), London, 1980, p. 224.

⁵⁰⁷ Taylor, "Cadet Corps", *MERSH*, v. 6, 1978.

⁵⁰⁸ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 103.

reputation as a progressive ruler. To begin with, the momentum for reform, always modest, soon dried up entirely. Revolutionary Europe brought out the reactionary in Nicholas, and Russia's great power status lulled him into complacency, thus allowing his domestic policy to give way to "gerontocracy, immobility and fear".⁵⁰⁹

Nicholas undoubtedly considered himself a practical, service-oriented man. But his interpretation of the Petrine ideal, while it encompassed diligence and self-sacrifice, was neither meritocratic nor professional. Even his effort to improve the civil service had a "reactionary" undercurrent, to wit, a desire to make absolutism more impregnable.⁵¹⁰ So far as he was concerned, the most effective way to preserve Russia's power was to maintain her integrity as "the most chivalrous and God fearing of states".⁵¹¹ Modernization threatened these qualities. Thus, to Nicholas, it could not be in the best interests of the state to pursue it. He certainly would not embrace that most fundamental of Petrine principles -- meritocracy. During Nicholas's reign steps were taken to keep non-noble youth out of higher education, and career expectations remained strongly linked to birth.⁵¹²

The military service remained glaringly unprofessional during Nicholas's reign. His expansion of the cadet corps opened the way for the establishment of an educated officer corps, but, under Nicholas the cadet programme remained exclusively noble and the training received by the boys was lamentably inadequate. Excessive discipline brutalised them, while endless drill and attention to external detail left them ignorant of the requirements of modern warfare. They also received a poor general education, and no effort was made to inspire them with a respect for knowledge.

⁵⁰⁹ Lieven, *Nicholas*, p. 255.

⁵¹⁰ Wortman, *Scenarios*, pp 408-409.

⁵¹¹ Tiutcheva, A.F., *Pri dvore dvukh imperatorov: Vospominaniia, Dnevnik, 1853-1882*, (Alfred J. Rieber, ed., with original introduction by S.B. Bakhrushina, 1928), Cambridge, 1975, v.1, Rieber Introduction (pages not numbered).

⁵¹² Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 174.

The General Staff Academy was another case in point. Founded in 1829, it earned a reputation as a backwards institution, and the General Staff itself, which, in keeping with Western European thought, should have enjoyed great prestige and authority as the intellectual core of the army, was treated with contempt.⁵¹³ It was Nicholas's own will and strength which animated the service during his reign, and his strongest ally in the maintenance of this control was, once again, Russia's continued prestige, preventing state-centred ideology from conflicting with tsarist policy. Beyond this, with the repression of the General Staff and the anti-intellectual curriculum in the cadet corps, the military service did not yet have a strong professional core. The civil service appears to have been somewhat more advanced, no doubt as a result of Nicholas's own modernizing measures. The men who were trained as professional bureaucrats:

"began to look to the West as a model of legality, openness, and progressive change. In Prussia and other German states, they saw monarchies that had introduced liberal legal and administrative reforms and were beginning to heed the wishes of their subjects. They began to develop a notion of the professional dignity of the law that did not comport with the idealization of personal power expressed in official presentations".⁵¹⁴

In 1848, K.D. Kavelin, an official in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and a man destined to play an important role in the Great Reforms, described the house of Romanov as an "'egotistic, degenerate, Prussian-militaristic foreign dynasty'" in a letter to a friend.⁵¹⁵ But, for the time being, bureaucratic dissatisfaction remained largely in the background. Lincoln writes: "...in the 1840s, these men were still submerged in the mass of the bureaucracy, usually occupying positions no higher than those of section chiefs or department heads". By the time they began to reach influential positions, Nicholas's reign was ending.⁵¹⁶

For the most part, those who felt dissatisfied were only beginning to explore what this meant for them and for Russia, and, insofar as the service establishment

⁵¹³ Curtiss, *Army*, pp 104, 106-107.

⁵¹⁴ Wortman, *Scenarios*, pp 408-409.

⁵¹⁵ Lincoln, "Yelena", (quoted, letter of K.D. Kavelin to T.N. Granovsky, 5 Sept., 1848), p. 373.

⁵¹⁶ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 195.

remained an extension of the tsar, they had to express their discontent not as a collective voice, but as individuals outside of that *milieu*. The Petrashevists, for instance, attracted many junior civil servants, and a few Guards officers.

Interesting, too, is the phenomenon of superfluous noblemen. These were young men, coming of age in the 30s and 40s, who had difficulty fitting into the "rigid service mould" of their day. That said, they had clearly been influenced by the same Petrine values of patriotism and duty embraced by Nicholas. Lincoln writes:

"being an aristocrat and living from the labour of one's serfs was not enough to satisfy the self-image of such men. It was necessary to fulfil some worthwhile function in society for them to justify their existence to themselves and to their associates."⁵¹⁷

For those who saw their obligation as a thing owed to the nation rather than the folk, the separation of state and dynasty must surely have offered an intellectual, if not a practical solution to their dilemma.

As for the grand dukes, it was, to a large extent, Nicholas I's tutelage which laid the groundwork for the crisis of identity which would peak during Nicholas II's reign. His effort to inculcate his own flawed but earnest version of the Petrine ideal into his sons established the foundations of grand ducal education for generations to come.

When it came to the function of the dynasty, Nicholas built upon the foundation established by his father, establishing a Ministry of Court in 1826 to oversee the observance of the 1797 Statute.⁵¹⁸ The dynasty made impressive gains during Nicholas's reign. Two grand dukes died, but nine were born, presaging the emergence of six junior branches of the family. Of the nine newcomers, three were younger sons of the emperor, together constituting an entire generation --the last to face no competition from cousins or uncles for coveted posts and honours. They could thus approach service with a strong sense of security. Beyond this, they enjoyed a stable home life, with a father who, secure in his own position, was free

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., pp 256-257, 306.

⁵¹⁸ Wortman, *Scenarios*, pp 322, 326.

to guide them, and who sought to prepare them for a productive adult role. Nor were his efforts in vain. The *Nikolaevichi* would emerge as the most noteworthy generation of grand dukes, producing two field marshals and a zealous reformer.

The fundamentals of Nicholas's educational system were carried over from the modified Prussian programme devised by Paul and Lamsdorf. Thus, high ranking military *vospitateli* were chosen to raise the grand dukes in a stern, regimented manner, initiating them "into all the hardships and privations of war and of the camp",⁵¹⁹ and imbuing them with the soldierly virtues of diligence, loyalty, toughness, and courage. Superficially, that was about all there was to it. But the tsar did succeed in placing his imprint upon the programme. His desire to emulate Peter I and perpetuate his principles resulted in a more concentrated infusion of the Petrine ideal into the educational process than had hitherto been the case. The distinction was, thus, not a matter of originality, but of degree. The emperor demonstrated in various ways that he wanted his sons' education to be more practical, more professional, more contemporary, and more patriotic than his own had been.

Nicholas let the boys know that their behaviour should be dictated by their obligation to act for the benefit of the state. When they failed in this regard he was quick to rebuke them with words such as "you belong not to yourself but your native land", or: "It is for the Motherland that you ought to do your duty. It is not I, but the Motherland, who punishes or rewards you; I am here only to carry out her orders and her intentions."⁵²⁰ Thus they were raised to believe in the essential primacy of the state, and consider themselves its servants.

Though honorary colonelcies were still generously bestowed, they were now distinct from regimental enrolments. Two of the tsar's younger sons were enrolled at birth in military units as future officers -- a practice which extended to aristocratic boys who were meant to serve in their fathers' regiments upon reaching adulthood.

⁵¹⁹ Hodgkiss, Edward Brayley, *The Court of Russia in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1908, p. 6.

⁵²⁰ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 370; Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 157.

Thus Konstantin, predesignated for a naval career, was enrolled in the Guards Equipage, and Nikolai, who would grow to be Inspector General of Engineers, was enrolled in the LG Sapper Battalion. Of course, it would be a mistake to draw any overly explicit conclusions about the significance of regimental enrolment since Nicholas was inconsistent in its employment. Mikhail Nikolaevich, for instance, was not enrolled in any unit, but had two honorary posts bestowed upon him, one of which did reflect his future in the artillery.⁵²¹ At the same time, it would be equally misguided to overlook this practice, which extended to all male Romanovs in subsequent reigns.

Both during Nicholas's reign and thereafter it was common to enrol a royal boy in two units. Often, as was the case with Nikolai, who was enrolled in an infantry regiment along with the Sapper Battalion, one of these units was clearly secondary. In such instances one would assume that the alternate unit was meant to signify the traditional grand ducal immunity to professional boundaries. Moreover, multiple high-level appointments remained a possibility, for which it would be useful to have a varied background, if only superficially. It is also possible that multiple enrolment was meant to offer a limited choice to the boy in case of pronounced personal preference for (or antipathy toward), a particular branch of the service. At any rate, there is little doubt but that regimental enrolment was linked in Nicholas's mind to regimental service, however limited or brief. Honorary appointments sometimes encompassed line units, but enrolment was exclusive to the Guards since grand dukes could not be expected to take up posts outside of this elite. Finally, in the absence of high appointment at birth, enrolment helped to define the child's future in his own eyes and the eyes of the public, and acted, at a symbolic level, as a service contract (albeit a flexible one) between the boy and the state.

Nicholas believed that the boys' seventh birthdays should mark their entry into "service". In practice this meant that, like their father and uncles before them, they

⁵²¹ *Brokgaus & Efron Slovar'*, "Mikhail Nikolaevich", v.38 (1896), p. 485.

left the care of nursemaids to pursue regular lessons under male tutelage. But emphasis was now placed upon the ideological foundation of this transition. Thus each boy was presented with an officer's uniform and sabre, to which he was certainly entitled since his Order of St Andrew had made him a general at birth.

When third son Nikolai turned seven, Nicholas, who was away at the time, wrote to him:

"It is a great day for you and for us. For us because, with this token, we dedicate our third son to the service of his brother and motherland; for you because you receive the first token of your future service. In the sabre and tunic of an officer you must feel that, from this moment on, your whole future life is [no longer] yours, but belongs to the one in whose name you received these tokens. From this moment on you are obliged never to forget that you must ceaselessly strive, through constant obedience and diligence, to be worthy to bear these tokens, not in accordance with your years, but in [accordance with] the noble sentiments awakening within you, and with the object of always being worthy of your rank."⁵²²

There are several points of interest in this letter: most notably, the early establishment of a tsar/subject relationship between Nikolai and Alexander. Nicholas displayed a bias toward tsar-centred allegiance when he admonished his son to remember that he belonged to the sovereign, thus seemingly contradicting his pronouncements that the boys must bear in mind that they belonged to the motherland. In truth, however, this only illustrates how firmly state and sovereign were linked in his mind. Undoubtedly *he* would have failed to perceive any distinction. Finally, the closing line of the letter implies that, so far as Nicholas is concerned, birth alone cannot render a grand duke worthy either to wear a uniform, or to hold dynastic rank. For this, genuine service was required. At the same time, the nobility of spirit associated with exalted birth was seen to possess such overwhelming merit that it outweighed professional shortcomings like extreme youth.

Grand ducal service, according to V.V. Zhervé, was meant to be both "high and responsible",⁵²³ and it was clearly Nicholas's ambition to achieve the synthesis of these qualities. Naturally, the programme which grew out of this goal was subject to

⁵²² Zhervé, *Nikolai*, p. 10.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

modification on the basis of each boy's predesignated role. Nicholas realised that Alexander's future would require a broad, extra-military knowledge, and he was willing to follow his grandmother's example when the time came to appoint a head tutor for the heir, bestowing the post upon a poet of liberal reputation (V.A. Zhukovsky).⁵²⁴

Zhukovsky, like La Harpe, did not hesitate to espouse views which opposed the sovereign's own. The parade ground mentality and its impact upon military education struck him as being particularly "harmful to Russia", and he felt just as strongly about the substitution of military discipline for an intellectual appreciation of "justice and truth" based upon law.⁵²⁵

Alexander also received lessons from the liberal-minded M.M. Speransky,⁵²⁶ and was the first tsesarevich (indeed, probably the first Romanov) to attend lectures at a university (he studied anatomy in Moscow).⁵²⁷ There was, therefore, a progressive element in his education, pointing to a desire on Nicholas's part to fulfil the needs of the future ruler, though the Romanovs still lagged behind other European royal houses. Of the children of the Prince and Princess of Orange, for instance, the eldest two sons enrolled at the University of Leiden (in 1835 and 1836 respectively), while the youngest boy was a naval cadet.⁵²⁸

The nine year gap which separated Alexander from his eldest brother made joint education impossible, beyond which, Nicholas had a special plan for his second son, thereby isolating the boy even from his two younger brothers. Konstantin Nikolaevich was a bright boy, who so impressed his elders that he was released from the nursery a year early. Nicholas's efforts to secure a grand place for him had little to do with this revelation of talent, however. His enrolment in the navy

⁵²⁴ Ibid., p. 12; Hodgetts, *Court*, p. 8.

⁵²⁵ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 357; Kipp, Jacob & Maia, "The Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich: The Making of a Tsarist Reformer, 1827-1853", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, n.f. 34, 1986, heft 1, p. 6.

⁵²⁶ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 182.

⁵²⁷ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 369.

⁵²⁸ Jackman, *Romanov*, p. 20.

occurred at birth, and he was three years old when he was named General Admiral, thereby reviving the post which had remained unoccupied since Paul's death thirty years before.

There were several possible reasons for Nicholas's behaviour in this instance. Having experienced the difficulties presented by a disaffected second son, he would have seen the practical merit of granting Konstantin a position grand enough to gratify his vanity, and challenging enough to demand his full attention. Beyond this, the boy's birth coincided closely with a Russian naval victory in the Mediterranean, and, even without this circumstance, there existed grounds for singling out the navy as an object of favour. To begin with, although Nicholas does not appear to have been a lover of naval warfare, his idol, Peter, most certainly was. The tsar must therefore have considered it an homage to Peter to reaffirm the direct link between the dynasty and the navy (never mind that Peter could only have shuddered at the thought of an infant being given such a post). Next, Nicholas realised the practical importance of naval warfare and the prestige to be gained from a powerful Russian fleet. It was to be hoped that Konstantin's appointment, by demonstrating the tsar's commitment to the navy, would bolster the appeal of that branch of the service, then considered an undesirable one.⁵²⁹ Finally, there was the expectation that, being trained from the age of six to oversee the navy, Konstantin would mature into an exceptionally effective General Admiral.

That Nicholas intended his son to hold the position in an active and meaningful way was implicit in his service philosophy, but it was also demonstrated by the boy's education, along with further expressions of the emperor's desire to emulate Peter I. Konstantin's study of naval science proceeded from the bottom up, not excluding courses on shipbuilding! From the age of eight he practised sailing on his own small yacht, and accompanied his *vospitatel'* on cruises abroad. From the age

⁵²⁹ Kipp, *Konstantin*, pp 6, 11.

of ten he was assigned "serious" duties, commensurate with those performed by naval cadets.⁵³⁰

Nicholas, in all seriousness, had bestowed the lowest naval rank upon Konstantin simultaneously with the highest. The contradiction thus entailed clearly did not bother him, nor was he troubled by the fact that the bestowal of non-commissioned rank upon little boys was, in origin, an anti-Petrine practice. Rather, in his determination to live up to Petrine principles, he appears to have considered it a virtue to make Konstantin "work" his way up through the ranks, ostensibly in keeping with the rules governing the Table. Naturally, this progression occurred at a greatly accelerated rate. We do not have a precise chronology, but we know that Konstantin had reached the top rank by the time he was twenty-eight, an accomplishment which lay outside the realm of possibility for non-royal persons. Nicholas undoubtedly intended the traditional and professional components of his son's career to function together in such a way that, although it was understood that he owed his advancement to his grand ducal status, his professional competence was at least sufficient to make his presence within the service hierarchy acceptable. And, in truth, even this symbolic climb represented progress for the dynasty. Nicholas clearly wanted his sons to be accepted by their colleagues and to feel comfortable among them, a thing which he and his brothers had never really achieved. The Decembrist uprising had highlighted the danger of such disharmony, and he appears to have worked toward the establishment of multi-layered bonds between his children and his servitors.

The first layer was to be based upon feelings of familial affection, and in itself encompassed two very different components. Nicholas's "special efforts" to "draw young noblemen" (i.e., cadets) into the domestic life of the imperial family, could only be looked upon as a good thing insofar as it helped to pull down barriers between the dynasty and the public. On the other hand, the practice of encouraging

⁵³⁰ Ibid., p. 9; Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 57.

military personnel to regard their imperial benefactors as father figures, and establishing familial ties through honorary colonelcies, may, on the surface, have appeared beneficial, but the armed forces could not be both a professional organization and a family. Relationships within these two entities are governed by very different principles. Moreover, Nicholas's patriarchal efforts, were useful for "weakening tendencies to professional autonomy".⁵³¹

Finally, the contradiction notwithstanding, Nicholas did try to create a professional bond between his sons and their future colleagues, based upon shared service experiences and values. Konstantin, for instance, underwent joint training exercises with naval cadets who were brought aboard his vessel, and carried out the same duties assigned to them. This represented a tremendous advance over previous years, when royal boys were exposed to fellow soldiers only in a mock command capacity, with units of adults placed under their orders for instructional purposes or for show.

Nicholas's progressive steps were always taken with caution, and a distinct distance was yet maintained between the boy who was being raised to oversee the navy and his cadet contemporaries. Konstantin had his own vessel and his own instructional staff, led by Admiral Konstantin von Litke, who was not merely a competent naval officer, but a famous Arctic explorer, and the youngest man to have circumnavigated the globe.⁵³² Moreover, Nicholas clearly did not regard it as a waste of resources to put Litke in charge of a six year old, since the boy in question was meant to become the actual leader of the fleet.

Naval training constituted the chief focus of Konstantin's education, but, of course, a grand duke must possess a respectable store of general knowledge as well. He received lessons in jurisprudence, designed to meet his needs as "a future assistant" to the tsar, and studied under the supervision of August-Theodor Grimm,

⁵³¹ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 314.

⁵³² Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 57.

a former district educational inspector in Russia.⁵³³ That the acquisition of knowledge should be viewed as a duty, and that grand dukes should not regard themselves as private individuals, was reinforced by Nicholas's insistence that Konstantin, before concluding his education, must face the scrutiny not only of his parents and tutors, but of spectators drawn from the capital's elite, and invited to witness his academic examination.⁵³⁴

This milestone accomplished, the grand duke received his first maritime command in 1843, at age seventeen.⁵³⁵ Two years later, in the summer of 1845, he sailed with the Black Sea Fleet, fulfilling Litke's notion that he should not be exposed to "sham battles, reviews and maneuvers" but to normal naval routine. The Black Sea officers were engaged in a struggle to win support for their own service ideal, which was much more professional than that of their appearance obsessed colleagues in the favoured Baltic Fleet. They realised that Konstantin's sojourn presented them with an opportunity to win the General Admiral over to their cause, and they welcomed him eagerly. Thus the young man formed an enduring attachment to this fleet, and embraced its professional ethos, a thing which contributed greatly to his subsequent emergence as a reformer.⁵³⁶

That same year (1845) he and Litke participated in the establishment of the Imperial Geographic Society, and Konstantin became its president. In the late autumn he embarked with Grimm upon the now traditional grand ducal tour of Russia and Europe, visiting Syria and Algeria as well, and returning in 1847, the year of his majority.

Konstantin had no immediate opportunity to prove himself in naval combat, but the outbreak of revolution in Europe did offer him the chance to display his merit as a soldier and an heir of Peter I. In 1849 he took leave of his naval duties and went to

⁵³³ *SIRIO* 98, p. 30.

⁵³⁴ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 57.

⁵³⁵ Fuller, William, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914*, New York, 1992, p. 281.

⁵³⁶ Kipp, *Konstantin*, pp 12-13.

Hungary as an army officer. There he participated in three engagements, one of which resulted in the deaths of several of his fellows, and for his steadfast performance received the Order of St. George (4th class).⁵³⁷ Nicholas was so pleased with Konstantin's performance (particularly with his detailed dispatches which the tsar regarded as the "best reports he received" from the front) that he rewarded the young man with a seat on the State Council -- a significant mark of favour, but one which brought with it no great responsibility, beyond which it remains unclear whether Nicholas's esteem for his son extended to the activation of his duties as General Admiral. Lincoln asserts that this occurred in 1850.⁵³⁸ The Military and Brokgauz & Efron Encyclopedias, without providing an exact date, both state that Konstantin became active head of the navy in 1855. W.E. Mosse specifies the beginning of Alexander II's reign. He does not provide the date for a specific rescript, however, and misidentifies Konstantin as Naval Minister (a title which he did not possess, though he did have ministerial prerogatives).⁵³⁹ N.G.O. Pereira and William Fuller likewise place the event within Alexander's reign, with Fuller writing that, under Nicholas, Konstantin was "an important functionary" within the Naval Ministry,⁵⁴⁰ and, indeed, beginning in 1850, Konstantin took an active part in naval reform, first as chairman of a committee on naval artillery, and thereafter as chairman of a committee on naval regulations, which body carried out the modernization and codification of the relevant body of law. Both appointments probably stemmed from Nicholas's approval of Konstantin's behaviour in Hungary, and it cannot be denied that the young man approached his new task with a progressive and industrious spirit -- one which bore corresponding results.⁵⁴¹ Finally, in 1852, he was made an adjutant general.⁵⁴²

⁵³⁷ Ibid., p. 15; Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 58.

⁵³⁸ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, pp 89, 156.

⁵³⁹ Mosse, W.E., *Alexander II and the Modernization of Russia*, 1992, p. 72.

⁵⁴⁰ N.G.O. Pereira, *Tsar-Liberator: Alexander II of Russia 1818-1881*, Massachusetts, 1983, p. 35; Fuller, *Strategy*, p. 281.

⁵⁴¹ Kipp, *Konstantin*, pp 16-17.

⁵⁴² Konstantin Nikolaevich, Grand Duke, 1857-1861, *Perepiska imperatora Aleksandra s velikim kniazem Konstantinom*

The emperor's youngest sons were born within fifteen months of one another, and would be brought up almost as twins. They received no appointments at birth, but Nicholas dedicated both of them to service in the army.⁵⁴³ General A.I. Filosofov was chosen as the boys' *vospitatel'*, and had as his assistant V.C. Korf, a man who, like Lamsdorf, was drawn from the staff of the cadet corps.

Nicholas, who regretted his own lack of practical knowledge in the field of jurisprudence, chose P.P. Gel'mersen, an instructor from the School of Jurisprudence, to oversee the boys' "intellectual development".⁵⁴⁴ This choice might demonstrate the importance of law to Nicholas, and his desire to broaden grand ducal role to include a governmental function, but, as always, the emperor's progressive impulses were moderated by his traditional outlook, and he confessed to Korf that he regarded "well-intentioned morality", as the "best theory of law".⁵⁴⁵

Nineteen tutors were engaged to instruct the boys in general academic subjects. In the military sphere, their studies centred upon the by now customary fields of fortification and artillery, with the tsar helping to instruct them. Nikolai and Mikhail, even more than their brothers, grew up in close contact with their cadet contemporaries. When they were eight and nine years old, Nicholas formed his own Petrine "toy" platoon. The majority of the participants came from aristocratic families, but an additional ten to fifteen were summoned, "in turn," from the cadet corps.⁵⁴⁶ The tsar, like his idol, assumed a variety of roles, including that of drummer, thereby setting a Petrine example for his sons.

The more serious side of the boys' interaction involved their seasonal integration into cadet units. They attended summer manoeuvres in Krasnoe Selo from the time they were infants, and began to drill with the cadets when they reached eight and seven years of age. Nicholas wished them to gain a "practical familiarization with

Nikolaevichem. Dnevnik velikogo kniaz ia Konstantina Nikolaevicha, (L. Zakharova, ed.), Moscow, 1994, p. 209.

⁵⁴³ Zherve, *Nikolai*, p. 7.

⁵⁴⁴ *SIRIO* 98, p. 30; Zherve, *Nikolai*, p. 9.

⁵⁴⁵ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 58.

⁵⁴⁶ Zherve, *Nikolai*, pp 12, 16.

the obligations of military service", and to establish a working relationship with their future colleagues. They carried out a variety of drill, field, and sentry exercises, but were not tied to any one unit, dividing their time between the 1st Cadet Corps and the Guards Page Corps.⁵⁴⁷

The cadet activities were undoubtedly better for the boys' development than the grandiose training exercises of years past had been, since they were well suited to their age and abilities. Nikolai, for instance, progressed gradually from cadet platoon commander to cadet battalion commander. The real obstacle to professionalism, once again, was accelerated promotion. Both the boys received nco's rank in 1846 when they were in their mid-teens -- hardly an extravagant gesture, but their promotion to 2nd lieutenant (the lowest commissioned rank) followed in less than a year. They advanced to full lieutenant in 1847, captain in 1848, and colonel in 1850, though they had not served in a regiment, finished their education, or attained their majority (from Nicholas's reign onward the general officers' rank bestowed upon grand dukes at birth was treated as honorary). As he had with Konstantin, the tsar seemingly remained committed to the ideal of practical service, without being troubled by the contradiction thus entailed. Indeed, far from receiving regimental commands (as befitted their rank), the boys continued to serve with the cadets, at least through the summer of 1851.⁵⁴⁸

Interestingly, when Nikolai and Mikhail toured Russia (jointly), Nicholas insisted that they must avoid being present at troop reviews or exercises. Apparently recalling his own high-handed behaviour, he was even more determined than his mother had been that his boys would not perpetuate a negative image of the dynasty. If obliged to attend such functions, they were to regard themselves as spectators. Moreover, Nicholas proclaimed that in their ordinary contact with the troops, they were not to supercede the bounds of their military rank. Of course, colonel's rank was hardly humble, but it was more modest than the general officers status

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., pp 6, 12-13, 15.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., pp 17, 22, 30.

exercised by the Pavlovich grand dukes on their tours. Finally, the brothers emulated Alexander by attending three lectures at Moscow University,⁵⁴⁹ lending further weight to the supposition that Nicholas wished his sons to appear well-rounded and modern.

The ceremony marking their transition to adulthood reveals much about the assumptions surrounding grand ducal role. Wortman asserts that it originated with Nicholas, and, so far as the spectacle was concerned, he is undoubtedly correct.⁵⁵⁰ But the oath around which the ceremony was built originated with Paul, who included it in his 1797 Statute [Item 29]. A signed oath was also required.

Nicholas did make some important changes to the observance of Paul's law. To begin with, he clearly eschewed an equivalent ceremony for female Romanovs (if, indeed, he required a women's oath at all), and this was consistent with the shift to a service emphasis, with an officer's oath added to the grand ducal observance. Finally, the initiate now pledged obedience not only to the emperor, but "to the laws of Russia",⁵⁵¹ a significant ideological step indeed (though Romanovs remained immune from prosecution in the absence of orders from the tsar).

Nikolai 's coming-of-age ceremony occurred not on his twentieth birthday, as was traditional, but several months later, on 26 November (1851), the fete day of the Cavaliers of St George. The delay was clearly inspired by the emperor's desire to lend the greatest military significance to his third son's coming-of-age, thereby imparting his vision of the young man as a future army leader. The fact that Mikhail's ceremony the following year did take place on his birthday (13 October), seems to imply that Nicholas wished the older brother to occupy a grander position than the younger.

The ceremony was held in a Winter Palace chapel, and attended by members of the court, "people of standing", officers of the Guard, army and fleet, and foreign

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., pp 19, 21.

⁵⁵⁰ Wortman, *Scenarios*, p. 357.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., p. 357.

diplomats. The halls of the palace were filled with Guards detachments and with representatives from the military schools (with whom Nicholas clearly wished to associate his sons). This first part of the ceremony was purely dynastic, however, with the imperial regalia present. After the grand entrance of the family and the offering of prayers, Nikolai swore his allegiance "to the reigning Sovereign and the Fatherland" and vowed to uphold the 1797 Statute. The family then proceeded to the St. George Hall to observe the military portion of the ceremony. There the witnesses included a similar mixture of courtiers, diplomats and prominent citizens, with the addition of the members of the State Council and the Senate, and all the available Cavaliers of St George. Nikolai swore the officers' oath of loyal service to tsar and fatherland, standing beneath the standard of the LG Uhlans, the regiment over which he had presided since birth as honorary colonel.⁵⁵²

Both brothers were quickly promoted to general officer's rank, and both were given inactive inspector generalships (Nikolai of engineering and Mikhail of artillery). Meanwhile, in the year-long interval between his coming-of-age and this occurrence, Nikolai began active service as a Horse Guards officer. Interestingly, this was not one of the regiments in which he had been enroled. It thus seems likely that his own preference for cavalry service was heeded by his father. His exact position within the regiment is not clear, but it was not regular insofar as he continued to devote considerable time to academic studies, and spent four months in Western Europe. Moreover, though officially freed from Filosofov's supervision, he continued to be supervised and instructed, not only academically but in the military sphere, receiving "practical lessons" in cavalry service from R.E. Grinval'd, a celebrated general.⁵⁵³

Nikolai's appointment as Inspector General of Engineers was accompanied by the bestowal of two lesser, ostensibly active, appointments, as commander of the

⁵⁵² Zhervc, *Nikolai*, pp 17,30.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., pp 2, 17, 24-27, 29-30; *Voennaia Entsiklopediia*, "General Inspektory ", p. 228.

1st Brigade of the 1st Guards Light Cavalry Division, and commander of the Guards Pioneer Division.⁵⁵⁴ Mikhail also received a command appointment to complement his inactive inspectorate, being named brigade commander of the Guards Horse Artillery.⁵⁵⁵ That Nicholas would have considered the command posts indispensable to his sons' early career goes without saying. Combat experience would have been preferable, but these posts would provide necessary background qualifications to both youths as potential army commanders, a role which they could not have assumed on the basis of inspector generalships alone.

In the event, neither Nikolai nor Mikhail would face the frustrations experienced by their namesakes of the previous generation, who lacked early opportunity to prove themselves under fire. By the end of 1853 war loomed, and Nikolai was sent to inspect border fortifications and bridges in the south, accompanied part of the way by his father and Mikhail. This mission had the appearance of an instructional and "promotional" tour, useful for the youth's edification and for the cultivation of his image as inspector general. He himself was eager to begin his career, expressing his determination to "elevate the engineering corps" as soon as the war was over, a thing which suggests that he expected his post to be activated soon, and took his duties seriously.⁵⁵⁶ For the whole of 1854, however, both brothers remained only tenuously established as adults.

War was declared in March, and Nikolai and Mikhail were overjoyed at the chance to solidify their self- and public image.⁵⁵⁷ They were, however, kept at home for almost six months, and when they did join the troops, in September, it was not as young generals. Nicholas set the tone for his sons reception by referring to them in his letters to Prince Gorchakov (commander of the Southern Army) and A.S. Menshikov (commander of the Crimean Army), as "children" and "my recruits".⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁴ Zherve, *Nikolai*, p. 30.

⁵⁵⁵ *Brokgauz & Efron Slovar'*, "Mikhail Nikolaevich", v.38 (1896), p.485.

⁵⁵⁶ Zherve, *Nikolai*, pp 30-31, 42.

⁵⁵⁷ Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore*, v.1, pp 126, 164.

⁵⁵⁸ Zherve, *Nikolai*, p. 34.

Moreover, they were accompanied to the front by their mentors, Filosofov and Korf.

The instructional value of controlled exposure to warfare clearly contributed to Nicholas's decision to dispatch his younger sons. They were old enough to function independently, but their father realised they weren't ready to do so, at least not at a level worthy of a grand duke. Thus Gorchakov was instructed not merely to keep an eye on them, but to "form" them into "true servitors". Moreover, they were "forbidden to judge" what was going on around them, but "ordered to observe and learn".⁵⁵⁹ This, then, was a far cry from the licence given to Konstantin Pavlovich, for instance, on his first venture into warfare.

Nikolai and Mikhail were not sent to the Crimea only for instruction, however. Nicholas declared that "honour" demanded a Romanov presence there. The brothers received troop representatives, visited military hospitals, and distributed awards in Nicholas's name. The tsar wrote to Gorchakov: "Let their presence with you show the troops the extent of my confidence"; "I entrust them to the troops as proof of my love and confidence"; and, "Let their presence among you replace [my own]." The soldiers seemed moved by this gesture, and the public responded enthusiastically, thus boosting the popularity of the war (as had been the case with Konstantin in Italy).⁵⁶⁰

Nicholas was especially eager for his sons to win the approval of the troops, instructing them to "share the hardships and danger of Russia's defenders", and asking Gorchakov not to hold them back.⁵⁶¹ Indeed, the empress went even further than her husband. When Nicholas summoned his sons home to comfort her on her sickbed, she expressed her displeasure that they had "abandoned the army".⁵⁶²

So far as this particular incident is concerned, Nicholas certainly cannot be blamed for wanting his children home during a family crisis, but, of course, few

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., pp 32, 35.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., pp 31, 32, 34, 36.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., p. 34.

⁵⁶² Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore*, v.1, p. 198.

fathers could have obtained leave for their sons under similar circumstances. Still, the emperor was determined to adhere to Petrine forms, and made a show of applying to General Menshikov, who certainly understood that a refusal was out of the question.⁵⁶³

As for their status, the brothers' rank made it difficult for them to serve in accordance with their age and abilities, and Nicholas was not willing to give them command posts against all professional logic. They arrived in Sevastopol in late October and were placed under Menshikov's supervision. They had no clearly defined task or position, but insisted that the commander should allow them to participate in the impending battle of Inkerman, and Menshikov, though reluctant, could hardly refuse given Nicholas's instructions. In the event, the grand dukes merely observed the battle, though occupying a position which exposed them to artillery fire. Afterwards, Menshikov praised them as "true Russian *molodtsami*", and surely nothing could have pleased the tsar more. They were both awarded the Order of St. George (4th Class), and their image as children fell by the wayside. Nikolai was appointed director of engineering works on the north side of Sevastopol, and Mikhail supervised the arming of batteries there.⁵⁶⁴

The appointments appear to have been reasonably suited to the young men's skills. E.I. Tottleben, in a letter to his wife, praised Nikolai's engineering knowledge, his "practical intelligence and indefatigable zeal". Nor would it be logical to dismiss all the specialised training which the grand dukes had received. Whatever the case may have been, Mikhail's biographer, V.V. Zhervé, summed up the brothers' efforts by asserting that they had succeeded in becoming one with the army, a feat which, whether realised or not, had tellingly emerged as one of the dearest wishes of the dynasty.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶³ Ibid., see v.1, pp 163-164, 167, 171, 198, 200 for Tiutcheva's account of the brothers' wartime activities, which is wholly consistent with Zhervé's.

⁵⁶⁴ Zhervé, *Nikolai*, pp 35-36.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 42.

Things transpired rather differently than Nicholas had intended when the grand dukes became involved in a command crisis which demonstrated how readily their dynastic role transcended their professional function in the eyes of their colleagues. Menshikov fell ill in mid-February and asked Nikolai to authorise his release. In truth, no one but the tsar possessed this right, but political or physical duress might have prompted Menshikov to take advantage, somewhat disingenuously, of Nikolai's status as the senior Romanov at the front. We do not know if the grand duke honoured the request, but, in any case, Menshikov stepped down. A certain Baron Osten-Saken took over the immediate duties of command, but his status as an officer lacking the sanction of the tsar made it impossible for him to act decisively. Faced with this leadership vacuum, Nikolai and Mikhail apparently *did* consider it their responsibility to sort things out. They "suggested" that Menshikov should summon Gorchakov to take over, but did not wait for him to act. Nikolai immediately wrote an explanatory letter to the tsar, and Mikhail wrote Gorchakov, asking him to rush to Sevastopol. (In the event, there was a certain strain between the emperor and Menshikov, springing from the latter's cautious command style, and Nicholas had anticipated the need to bring Gorchakov in.)⁵⁶⁶

What emerges is a fascinating illumination of grand ducal role as it wavered between modernization, with the creeping integration of the Romanovs into the service establishment, and the traditional imperative for them to remain above it -- a state of affairs which appears to have been as much dependent upon the collective service consciousness as upon the will of the emperor.

Meanwhile, the grand dukes' political careers showed signs of moving forward. We have already noted Konstantin's appointment to the State Council on the basis of his performance in Hungary. In December 1851, less than a week after his coming-of-age ceremony, Nikolai, too, received a State Council seat, though he was instructed, for the time being, to attend as an observer. His involvement in the inner

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., pp 42-43; Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 349.

workings of the autocracy was not limited to the Council, however. Already, at the age of nineteen, he had been appointed a fliegel-adjutant, and this was a post which carried a certain amount of real responsibility.⁵⁶⁷ The outer peripheries of the tsar's suite typically included a number of men who had not yet reached general officers' rank, but who did enjoy the emperor's trust and esteem. Fliegel-adjutants attended upon the tsar, received and scrutinised petitions on his behalf, and were available to undertake special missions.⁵⁶⁸ In Nikolai's case, the position was short-lived. His promotion to general officer's rank in 1852 necessitated a corresponding promotion to adjutant general.⁵⁶⁹

In 1850, Mikhail, though not yet an adult, attended a commission on the peasant question, undoubtedly as an observer, and perhaps preparatory to his own State Council appointment, which did not occur until 1855.⁵⁷⁰ This delay suggests that Nicholas demanded some indication of readiness before he would allow his sons to shoulder any true responsibility. Of course, not all the grand ducal political activity which occurred during Nicholas's reign was strictly legitimate. Within thirty years of Konstantin Pavlovich's death, Konstantin Nikolaevich had begun to emerge as a formidable second son, every bit as strong-willed as his namesake uncle, but possessing more self-confidence.

Konstantin made his debut as an adult Romanov in 1847, and, as we have seen, had won battlefield accolades and the praise of his father by 1850. All was not entirely well in his relationship to the dynasty, however. Again, like his uncle, he was more energetic and assertive than the heir, who aggravated matters by expressing his hope that Konstantin would remove some of the "dynastic burden" from his own shoulders, or perhaps even succeed instead of him!⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁷ Zherve, *Nikolai*, pp 18, 30.

⁵⁶⁸ see: Fabritsky, S.S., *Iz proshlago: vospominaniia fligel'-ad'iutanta gosudaria imperatora Nikolaia II*, Berlin, no date.

⁵⁶⁹ Zherve, *Nikolai*, p. 30.

⁵⁷⁰ *Brokgauz & Efron Slovar'*, "Mikhail Nikolaevich", p. 485.

⁵⁷¹ Pereira, *Tsar-Liberator*, p. 7.

Konstantin idolised his older brother and was not inclined to resent him, but he did suffer from pressure to curb his assertiveness, and from the disapprobation which this characteristics drew down upon him. Already, in adolescence, he had suffered "a traumatic crisis", caused in part by the "unjust suspicions" which were, even then, being levelled against him.⁵⁷² Thus the pattern of dynastic dysfunction established by the first generation of grand dukes appeared ready to reassert itself, a phenomenon overlooked in most analyses of Konstantin.

The grand duke, though he fantasized about forsaking his title and becoming a simple soldier, nonetheless continued to nurture the kind of grandiose ambitions which were sure to arouse fear, dreaming, for instance, of conquering Constantinople.⁵⁷³ In truth this juxtaposition of the humble with the grand, of strong identification with common servitors *and* the search for an independent realm was, again, a pattern established by Konstantin Pavlovich.

1848 was a turning point for Konstantin Nikolaevich. He began the year in agreement with his father's anti-revolutionary stance, but was horrified by the reactionary policies which were unleashed upon Russia, not least amongst them the censorship and the arrest of prominent Slavophiles whom he admired. His general dissatisfaction was a common feature linking him to other educated young people, and his battlefield experience had soured him upon "parade ground posturing", thus bringing him closer in attitude to Russia's military professionals.⁵⁷⁴

By 1850, Konstantin had already begun to assert himself politically, and accepted as his assistant on the committee for the review of naval regulations a progressive civil servant, A.V. Golovnin, whose career would, thereafter, become entwined with his own. The two young men, in their zeal for reform, did not hesitate to extend their embrace to the public. Golovnin wrote:

"...it was necessary in the working out of the [naval] legislation to create a so-called artificial publicity and actively to cultivate discussion and conflict of opinions within the entire class for whom the law was being written... Public opinion within the Navy was thus called forth on this

⁵⁷² Kipp, *Konstantin*, p. 9.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., pp 9-10, 13.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., pp 14-15.

matter, and when the Naval Regulations were decreed, it was discovered that they were only the expression and statement of that public opinion."⁵⁷⁵

Lincoln calls artificial publicity "a limited and structural discussion of certain state problems", and notes that Konstantin used his influence to allow the discussion of reform in the pages of the navy's press organ, the *Naval Collection*.⁵⁷⁶ For a grand duke to behave in such a manner flew in the face of tradition. But, of course, so long as the emperor approved, no one else had a right to complain. Indeed, it may have been that Nicholas, who, as we have seen, himself pursued a *rapprochement* with the public in the early days of his reign, was testing the waters of reform through Konstantin. This seems all the more possible when we consider his willingness to involve Mikhail, however peripherally, in the emancipation question. Whatever the case may have been, however, by 1854 Konstantin was seemingly established as an object of public fascination -- a treacherous position indeed for a non-ruling Romanov.

The idealised Konstantin described by lady-in-waiting Anna Tiutcheva in 1854 was majestic, charismatic, brave, selfless, patriotic and well suited to the modern age insofar as he displayed both dynamism and erudition, the very qualities which were needed to ensure progress. Tiutcheva noted how the grand duke had donated 200,000 rubles for the construction of desperately needed gun boats. This "beautiful deed" was supposed to have been carried out secretly, but somehow became known, along with Konstantin's declaration that "everything he owned belonged rightly to Russia".⁵⁷⁷ It is impossible to determine exactly what Konstantin's motives were, but even if the donation was arranged for publicity, it nonetheless demonstrated his belief in devotion to the state as the key to public popularity.

A short time later, Tiutcheva found cause to extol Konstantin's virtues when he cool-headedly rescued some drowning colleagues. Nor was she the only one to be impressed by this feat. She wrote of the public: "They are greatly praising the

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., pp 16-17.

⁵⁷⁶ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 180.

⁵⁷⁷ Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore*, v.1, p. 146, v.2, p. 38.

behaviour of the grand duke... his courage and composure". Interestingly, both the gun boat purchase and the sea rescue had Petrine nuances, though, when describing Konstantin's physical presence, Tiutcheva chose to compare him not to Peter, but to Napoleon!⁵⁷⁸

Konstantin's appeal to nationalists was especially great. Rumour had it that he refused to speak any language but Russian, and held Western Europe in contempt. Tiutcheva regretted his lack of opportunity to expand the influence of the Russian Empire, writing: "He could perhaps have realised in his person Catherine II's dream for his uncle [Konstantin Pavlovich], but in our time views on external politics have greatly changed in the higher spheres." Even without this particular destiny, however, Konstantin was expected to be "the glory of the future reign".⁵⁷⁹

Of course, the man whom Tiutcheva and her fellow citizens were seeking was the ideal Russian ruler, a born leader whose nationalism suited the public's own ambitions and conceits, whose dynamism and love of learning would ensure that Russian backwardness was forever relegated to the past. Alexander was not unpopular, but Konstantin, through the deeds and rumours related above, had managed to outshine the elder members of his family, and, in so doing, had encroached dangerously upon the sovereign's own prerogative to embody the Empire.

Of course, Konstantin was not the model of perfection his admirers sought. Tiutcheva quickly discovered that the stories about his chauvinism were exaggerated -- the first words he spoke to her were in French.⁵⁸⁰ But the public did not require any such revelations in order to demonstrate its inconstancy. From the moment Konstantin reached the apex of popular esteem it was inevitable that he would begin to arouse suspicion. Conservatives found cause for alarm in his outspokenness. The Third Section placed him under "regular surveillance", and examined his naval

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., v.1, pp 109, 151-152.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., v.1, pp 109, 146.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., v.1, p. 107.

files.⁵⁸¹ But this was only the beginning. Even Tiutcheva allowed hints of mistrust to appear amid her praise as the year wore on. For instance, although in comparing him to Napoleon -- a man who had changed history through the strength of his will - she clearly meant to compliment Konstantin, it could hardly be overlooked that the French emperor had been a usurper. And if Tiutcheva was unwilling to speculate directly about illegitimate grand ducal ambitions, she would not hesitate to record rumours of such suspicions. Thus she noted allegations that Nicholas "does not love [Konstantin] very much because of certain ambitious impulses [on the grand duke's part] which fill him with distrust toward his second son".⁵⁸² Nicholas might indeed have been disturbed by Konstantin's assertiveness if he perceived it to cross the boundaries of dynastic propriety. Lincoln states, however, that, far from having authorised it, the emperor was not even aware of the surveillance being carried out upon Konstantin.⁵⁸³

Nicholas died without having expressed disfavour toward his son, and the balance of public opinion continued to rest approvingly upon Konstantin, while his influence grew. But the charge of ambition, once raised would prove to be incredibly tenacious, and Konstantin's position in relation to the public would peak, then plummet. Meanwhile, both dynasty and state were poised at the edge of extraordinary change, with the death of Nicholas, the accession of Alexander, a Romanov "baby boom", and the advent of the Great Reforms.

II.The Beginning of Alexander II's Reign, 1855-1863

Alexander II's reign was a transitional period of great significance for Russia, marked by a programme of modernization known thereafter as the Great Reforms. The emancipation of the serfs in 1861 bore a profound impact upon Russian society,

⁵⁸¹ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 89.

⁵⁸² Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore*, v.1, p. 150.

⁵⁸³ Lincoln, *Nicholas*, p. 89.

and its promulgation owed no small debt to the efforts of Konstantin. He and his brothers participated in other aspects of the reforming process as well, and were scarcely immune to its results. The military reforms, in particular, affected their careers. The greatest impact came not from any one measure, however, but from a combination of the modernizing effort and the expansion of the imperial family, producing a threat of dynastic marginalization which directly influenced grand ducal role, identity, and behaviour.

At the time of Alexander's accession there were ten grand dukes, ranging in age from four to twenty-eight, and their numbers would increase steadily for the next two decades. Alexander had six legitimate sons (Nikolai, 1843-63; Aleksandr, 1845-94; Vladimir, 1847-1909; Sergei, 1857-1905; Pavel, 1860-1919), Konstantin four (Nikolai, 1850-1918; Konstantin, 1858-1915; Dmitry, 1860-1919; Viacheslav, 1862-79), Nikolai two (Nikolai, 1856-1929; Petr, 1864-1931), and Mikhail six (Nikolai, 1859-1919; Mikhail, 1861-1929; Georgy, 1863-1919; Aleksandr, 1866-1933; Sergei, 1869-1919; Aleksei, 1875-95).

By 1881, Alexander had eight grandsons, two of whom (Aleksandr Aleksandrovich and Aleksandr Vladimirovich) died in infancy. The remaining six (Nikolai Aleksandrovich, 1868-1918; Georgy Aleksandrovich, 1871-99; Kirill Vladimirovich, 1876-1938; Boris Vladimirovich, 1877-1943; Mikhail Aleksandrovich, 1878-1918, and Andrei Vladimirovich, 1879-1956) brought the number of grand dukes in 1881 to twenty-five, with four junior branches of the family (Konstantinovich, Nikolaevich, Mikhailovich, and Vladimirovich).

For the fourteen grand dukes from junior branches of the family, the future was hazy. No precedent existed to define their career expectations. Each of them undoubtedly considered himself entitled to an important post, but surely realised that the sons of the emperor and heir would have first claim to the most desirable positions. And even the tsar's sons, none of whom received an appointment at birth, would have to await the death or retirement of their uncles. Nor could they abandon

service without forfeiting their link to the Petrine tradition which, in turn, gave them their connection to the state.

Three strategies emerged whereby marginalization might be countered and the family hierarchy circumvented. Firstly, there was nothing to stop a grand duke from seeking imperial favour through intrigue. Next, a certain amount of independent status could sometimes be gained through courting public popularity, though the man who attempted this risked the arousal of suspicions. Finally, professional excellence might gain reward at the hands of an emperor secure in his own image and dedicated to the Petrine service ideal. Of course, resentment of encroaching marginalization could also provoke rejection of tradition, with varying degrees of non-conformist behaviour, or encourage a shift toward a state-centred ethos.

Ultimately, however, it was not dynastic growth alone, but growth combined with modernizing currents which shaped grand ducal role and identity during Alexander's reign. Both of these forces challenged non-ruling Romanovs to redefine their relationship to state and dynasty. Autocracy remained immune to the reforming process until 1905, but, because Alexander was willing to initiate modernization, in keeping with the Petrine model of dynamic autocracy, no immediate conflict emerged between state and dynasty. The question of autocratic legitimacy in the absence of clear benefit to the state did gain currency, however. In essence, the same loss of national prestige (following the Crimean defeat) which furthered Alexander's resolve to reform, brought home to the public the fragility of Russia's great power status, and opened their eyes to the fact that even an emperor as seemingly strong and practical-minded as Nicholas could be blind to the needs of the state. This realization does not appear to have lessened the value of the Petrine image, but the public gained a heightened sense of its own extra-legal "right" to judge autocratic performance, and, indeed, of the *need* to do so, lest disaster strike again.

A tendency thus emerged for like-minded citizens to come together to promote their own political notions, while continuing to view themselves as loyal sons of the

Empire. Alexander was partly responsible for this phenomenon. Dmitry Miliutin found the emperor to be "jealous of his power", and Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu noted that the tsar "did not like to delegate power into the hands of individuals with strong personalities".⁵⁸⁴ The problem was, however, that Alexander did not possess a strong personality of his own. He was tall and handsome, with a capacity for dynamism which prevented him from becoming a pathetic figure like Paul, but he was unable to realise the omnipotence projected by a Peter I or a Nicholas.

It is not the tsar's fate which concerns us, however, but the fate of the grand dukes, and public perception of a schism between state and dynasty, even with the tsar retaining his legitimacy, had the potential to effect their position profoundly. Alexander furthered progress. He embodied the majesty of the state and continued to act as the fulcrum around which the government functioned. But the modernization of the service establishment, with its increasingly state-centred orientation, must, eventually, call into question the legitimacy of grand ducal role. The more the professional service ethic took root, the less outsiders (i.e., those not subject to service regulations) received welcome.

If, in the past, officers complained about the grand dukes' behaviour, they did not turn their resentment into a public issue. The Romanov service presence was one element of a system which they not only accepted, but took for granted. Ironically, it took an exiled intellectual to bring this dissatisfaction to the public. Alexander Herzen's 1858 address to the empress, published in *Kolokol* and advocating a practical role for Russia's grand dukes, was the break-through effort -- as significant for its candour as for its content. Herzen wrote from London, but his publication had a mainstream Russian readership.⁵⁸⁵

The article addressed the empress because she was supervising her children's upbringing, and Herzen considered that only a practical education could lead to

⁵⁸⁴ Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 145; see also Lincoln, "Yelena", p. 385.

⁵⁸⁵ von Herzen, Michael, "Alexander Herzen" in *MERSH*, v. 14, 1979, pp 46-47.

useful service. There were several interesting aspects to his "letter". Its orientation was state-centred, but not inimical to the Romanovs, so long as they should devote themselves to meeting the needs of the state. The time had come for the grand dukes to prove their worth -- a thing which they could only do by returning to the ideal of service pioneered by Peter.⁵⁸⁶

One can only wonder what Nicholas would have said to this! His educational programme had, after all, been dedicated to achieving this aim. But if Herzen credited Nicholas with having had any integrity in relation to the education of his descendants, he certainly did not perceive a successful result. The dynasty, in his opinion, had lost its symbiotic relationship to the state. Its members were isolated from the citizenry, unprepared to render real service, and forced to while away their lives in a frivolous dynastic role. "Look how unproductive the grand dukes' lives are", he wrote, "how useless their wanderings around Russia...". The "emptiness of the grand ducal existence" was horrifying, and here he invoked the memory of Mikhail Pavlovich as an example of wasted talents and national alienation. So occupied had Mikhail been with pointless dynastic duties that he never had time for self-development, let alone development of real ties with his motherland. He "did not know Russia", and in an age when the Russian public took its self-perceived national responsibilities seriously, such a failing was unacceptable.

Herzen's solution: allow the grand dukes access to the public and *vice versa*. Prepare them from childhood to perform a governmental role by deemphasizing things military in favour of subjects such as economics and law. Where military training was necessary, let the boys be integrated into regular training units. Finally, in keeping with his populist sentiments, he recommended direct exposure to the peasantry. By following this advice, the dynasty could renew its links both to the Petrine State and to the Slavophile *Rus'*.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁶ Herzen, Aleksandr, "K Imperatritse Marii Aleksandrovne", *Kolokol*, no. 27, 1 Nov., 1958, p. 217.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

The argument thus advanced, that a prince removed from isolation and trained as a professional servitor could be productively absorbed into the state, was sound, barring one flaw; it failed, rather disengenuously, to consider the obstacle posed by autocracy. So long as the dynasty remained unfettered by constitutional constraints, grand dukes must remain beyond the reach of regulations, thereby representing a source of chaos. For this reason, non-royal servitors of a professional mind-set could hardly be expected to welcome even the most competent Romanovs.

Of course, it had long been taken for granted that grand dukes would be a presence within the military, but things stood otherwise in the political sphere, where there existed virtually no domestic precedent for significant grand ducal involvement. Successful officials knew how to deal with the tsar and each other, in accordance with rules both written and unwritten. But a grand duke might easily disrupt this fragile system.

Finally, it is doubtful how ready the public were to accept grand ducal political activists. One suspects the existence of an anachronistic longing for an omnipotent ruler who could unify the country and protect it from forces of destruction, both internal and external. Such a ruler would naturally hold his relatives in check, thus guarding the cohesiveness of the dynasty which must have a single voice in order to function. In truth, the blame for grand ducal improprieties would rarely fall upon a popular tsar. But Alexander *was* responsible for defining the parameters of Romanov behaviour, and there were some highly-placed persons, Tiutcheva among them, who found it difficult to adjust to the lower standards of a less controlling emperor.

There were "two basic patterns of behaviour" for female courtiers in nineteenth-century Russia, the one "pietistic, sentimental and passive", the other "flirtatious, frivolous and aggressive". As Alexander's reign progressed, the passive "predominate type" which had prevailed at Nicholas's court lost ground to its

aggressive counterpart.⁵⁸⁸ One would presume that a corresponding change took place among male courtiers, with modern man being deemed less passive and traditional, more independent and worldly. Clearly Alexander, who set about revitalizing the court, preferred the cosmopolitan scenario and desired his relatives to interact with the aristocracy. Nicholas had not been a social isolationist, but he understood the necessity of maintaining an imperial mystique, and his sons' exposure to non-royal boys had been carefully supervised. Tiutcheva now perceived problems associated with Alexander's permissiveness, as well as with the influence of the modern age itself. The court may have grown in grandeur, but etiquette had degenerated, and etiquette was as essential to the regulation of relations between royals and non-royals as discipline was to relations between military ranks.

Nicholas's death had "liberated [the grand dukes] from every constraint laid upon them". Their behaviour demonstrated their contempt for the "old traditions" and their tendency toward "moral decline".⁵⁸⁹ Of course, morality, in this instance, had less to do with personal virtue than with the upholding of public propriety. Nicholas had kept a mistress and sired illegitimate children, but because this affair was carried on with discretion, the illusion of Romanov superiority survived. Finally, etiquette was useful in stifling tendencies toward self-expression, a thing which threatened dynastic cohesion.

Tiutcheva's diaries provide several examples of the grand dukes' bad behaviour. Instead of serious conversation, Nikolai and Mikhail contributed only "insignificant opinions and mindless giggling" at the dinner table. On one occasion she was "sickened" by their "shouts, gesticulations, [and] vulgar, albeit innocent, jokes". Surely conduct of this kind would have offended her under any circumstances, but her grandiose conception of the Romanov mission made it abhorrent when it came

⁵⁸⁸ Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore*, v.1, introduction.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., v.2, p. 42.

from the grand dukes. Though sympathetic toward them, she minced no words in proclaiming that they "keep up their role of demi-god insufficiently".⁵⁹⁰

Of course, Romanov boorishness was nothing new (Peter I had made an art of it), but there was some substance to Tiutcheva's perception that the boundaries had abruptly shifted, and this, in turn, surely had something to do with the evolution of grand ducal identity. Given the new vistas unfolding before them at court, the younger Romanovs may have begun to feel themselves a part of the aristocracy, rejecting the stultifying role of demi-god. Konstantin would even join the St. Petersburg Yacht Club, a bastion of the aristocracy.

During this period of transition, old beliefs became entangled with the new. Many of Alexander's subjects would undoubtedly have supported Herzen's insistence that grand ducal role should be practical, but did they really desire a ruling house composed of professional servitors? Were they likely to be happy with grand ducal encroachment into the service *milieu*, especially at a time when many servitors were themselves unsure of their place in a changing society? One thing they could cling to was an awakening consciousness of being part of a national collective which gave "real" servitors the moral right to say "we *are* the state", and with this feeling of entitlement must come the desire to exclude outsiders. Under the circumstances, every shortcoming observed in a grand duke was bound to be seized upon and exaggerated.

E.M. Feoktistov would, for instance, react in a negative manner to Konstantin's efforts to integrate himself into the service *milieu*, complaining that the grand duke's comportment fell far beneath respectable standards for a man in his "serious position" [at that time Viceroy of Poland]. Konstantin's "manners and conversation" were, in his opinion, puerile. On one occasion, the grand duke sniffed a telegram, joking that he could distinguish good news from bad by the smell. Feoktistov was

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., v.2, p. 42.

indignant, and remarked: "I had occasion to determine that the grand duke very frequently occupied himself with trifles of this sort".⁵⁹¹

Given the innocence of the jest, it is difficult not to sympathise with Konstantin. Criticism of his vulgarity may have been justified, but the accusation of frivolity is destroyed by his impressive service record. Neither Tiutcheva nor Feoktistov, having known Alexander's brothers, was willing to call them stupid. But there remains a small-minded, condescending element to their criticism, seemingly predicated upon the fact that, insofar as none of the grand dukes could live up to their vision of the Romanov ideal, they concluded that to be a grand duke was, by definition, to be either a clown, a villain, or a non-entity, and once a man had been placed into one of these categories, his actual behaviour became almost inconsequential. Certainly Herzen's assessment of Mikhail Pavlovich's life left no room for consideration of real, albeit perhaps not highly visible, accomplishments.⁵⁹² In the event, Herzen's call for a reevaluation of grand ducal role was only the beginning of an increasingly critical public scrutiny, and the widespread circulation of several dynastic scandals would likewise contribute to the stereotype of the useless and corrupt grand duke.⁵⁹³ Finally, the transitional ideal of grand ducal service, upon which basis Romanov service was both demanded and denigrated, was, more than anything else, a manifestation of the love-hate relationship which must prevail between a modernizing society and its most traditional secular institution -- an institution which sentiment embraced, but the modern civic identity was in the process of rejecting.

Insofar as the Romanovs took public opinion seriously, it acquired a terrific capacity to impact their role. On the one hand, as noted, popularity offered a means by which to combat marginalization. On the other hand, to the man who already felt

⁵⁹¹ Feoktistov, E.M. *Vospominaniia E.M. Feoktistova: Za kulisami politiki i literatury, 1848-1896*, (Iu.G. Oksman & A.E. Presniakov, eds), Leningrad, 1929, p. 152.

⁵⁹² See Bozherianov on military advancements attributed to Mikhail.

⁵⁹³ on critical public opinion see Gleason, "Terms", p. 22.

himself marginalised, acceptance within the service *milieu* held out the possibility of a viable state-centred identity, independent of the dynasty. And, after all, public criticism, calling into question the worth of the entire grand ducal collective, must have been deeply felt by men who had been inculcated from childhood with the Petrine service ideal, and the notion of their central place within it.

Several years would pass before these currents began to produce visible results. Alexander's brothers had all received prestigious appointments from their father, and thus could be sure of their status on a superficial level. No position meant much in Russia without the support of the reigning emperor, however, and Tiutcheva believed that the grand dukes felt insecure in the aftermath of Alexander's accession. She based this assessment upon their suddenly antagonistic treatment of herself and other favourites. At a family gathering in 1855 she was snubbed by the brothers and wrote: "I sensed that they looked with hostility upon all the favour which the emperor and empress showed to [the courtiers present]".⁵⁹⁴ Of course, it seems clear that the courtiers, for their part, were equally uncertain of the role to be played by the grand dukes, and those who had hitherto been attached to the tsesarevich's court were determined to guard their interests. So far as they were concerned, it was the brothers who were ambitious interlopers.

Alexander proved to be a proponent of grand ducal involvement in the life of the Empire. He was, after all, a product of Nicholas's educational programme, with its emphasis upon the service duty. Beyond this, he had need of his brothers' help. At thirty-six he was no innocent, but, even at the best of times, the emperor of Russia occupied such an isolating position that it was difficult for him to find trustworthy men to bear some of the rulership burden. His brothers understood the mixed nature of dynastic inheritance. Moreover, they were not overbearing uncles, but young men who adored him and could be expected to respond to instruction.

⁵⁹⁴ Tiutcheva, *Pri Dvore*, v.2, pp 89-90.

The Crimean crisis aggravated Alexander's position. Russia faced not only the loss of her Black Sea fleet and financial exhaustion, but international humiliation, a thing which threatened the prestige of the dynasty. To make matters worse, Nicholas's sudden death inspired rumours that he had committed suicide. Under the circumstances, family solidarity was essential.

Alexander insisted that Sevastopol should be held, and declared himself ready to lead his troops if an honourable peace could not be obtained.⁵⁹⁵ Things had already gone too far, however, and, Gorchakov was forced to evacuate the city on his own initiative. A war council met, but Alexander stood firm. The time had come for the dynasty, in keeping with its Petrine roots, to move from words to action. Soon all four brothers had arrived at the Nikolaev naval base where they took up supervisory positions, with the grand dukes organizing the defence of the port, and Alexander overseeing operations.⁵⁹⁶ This was no more than a brief postponement of the inevitable, however, and cessation of hostilities, far from easing Alexander's worries, presented him with an empire in desperate need of far-sighted leadership. Unfortunately for him, the dynasty was almost as needy, with the first results of the decline in imperial propriety beginning to emerge. Nikolai's uninhibited behaviour prompted the emperor to seek a steadying influence in the person of Princess Aleksandra Ol'denburgskaya. Nikolai rejected this proposal, however, preferring the companionship of a certain lady-in-waiting. Alexander viewed his brother's response as an abrogation of duty. Nikolai's beloved was forced to leave the country, and he himself persuaded to reconsider his position. His engagement to Aleksandra was announced in November (1855), and the marriage took place the following year.⁵⁹⁷ Alexander was delighted at his victory, and not without reason considering that a direct challenge to dynastic cohesion had been overcome, one

⁵⁹⁵ Mosse, *Alexander*, p. 38.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 39; Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore*, v.2, p. 50; Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 73.

⁵⁹⁷ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 82.

which had occurred, moreover, simultaneously with the outbreak of a painful royal scandal.

This time there was no defiance, but the erosion of etiquette again allowed an improper relationship to emerge between Romanovs and courtiers. Konstantin's wife, Aleksandra Iosifovna, developed her own infatuation with a lady-in-waiting, based upon a mutual fascination with spiritualism. The girl, M.S. Annenkova, pretended to be a channel through which Marie Antoinette communicated from beyond the grave, demanding money and recognition for a newly revealed descendant -- Annenkova herself. Aleksandra, who had become dependent upon the girl, set about to obtain these things while Konstantin was still in Nikolaev. This absence notwithstanding, his name was inevitably linked to the scandal which erupted in October, with the circulation of "very nasty rumours" which "cast a shadow" on the dynasty, and this at a particularly delicate moment (i.e., with imminent defeat in the Crimea).⁵⁹⁸ Annenkova was forced to go abroad, though she did receive an annual income after promising to behave discreetly. Ridiculous though the whole affair was, its potential for damage was not insignificant. Despite her promise, Annenkova continued to try to exploit the situation, at one point arranging an audience with Napoleon III! As for Konstantin, the Annenkova affair only added to the suspicion which dogged him. Malicious tongues now began to claim that the girl, while in trance, had "constantly repeated to [the grand duke] that he would be emperor".⁵⁹⁹ This, indeed, was the second such accusation in less than a year. At the time of Alexander's accession it had been said that Konstantin did not wish to "subordinate himself" to the tsar. When, at the coronation, he swore his oath to Alexander "in a loud and energetic voice", remarking thereafter "I wish it to be known that I am the first and most loyal of the emperor's subjects", this was interpreted as further proof of his cunning.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁸ for details of the affair see Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore*, v.2, pp 69, 74-76, 129-133.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., v.2, pp 69.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., v.1, p.186.

Meanwhile, Konstantin's development into one of the most important political actors of his day proceeded. Elena Pavlovna sought to draw him into her circle of reformers, and urged him not to become "hemmed in" by his naval work. She realised that, as the emperor's brother, he possessed a unique ability to further the reformist cause, and the progressive element within the public appear to have shared her opinion. So many projects of all kinds were forwarded to the grand duke and his aunt that the paperwork filled two large boxes.⁶⁰¹ This, indeed, was a heady atmosphere for a young man of Konstantin's disposition!

In the event, his first involvement in affairs of state grew directly from the war. Initially, Konstantin, along with the emperor, resisted the prospect of capitulation, emerging, indeed, as the "principal spokesman" for those who opposed peace.⁶⁰² When it became clear, however, that defeat was inevitable, and that Alexander had realised this, Konstantin threw his support behind his brother, a thing which cemented the bond between them.⁶⁰³

Tiutcheva's outrage at this unpatriotic behaviour adds a further element of interest to the incident. She regarded it as a betrayal, writing: "The Grand Duke Konstantin, who always encouraged... the national party... has now done a complete about face..." It was certainly more convenient for her to criticise the emperor's brother than to turn her wrath upon Alexander himself, and, insofar as Konstantin did indeed draw some of the public's ire away from the throne, he succeeded in fulfilling a role which was precedented and useful. But, although Tiutcheva was aware of this possibility, she refused to accept it, remarking: "I do not believe in [Konstantin's] loyalty to his brother".⁶⁰⁴

The grand duke's reformist principles, already apparent during Nicholas's reign, were quick to assert themselves during Alexander's. When, toward the end of the year, P.A. Valuev produced an essay on government ("Reflections of a Russian in

⁶⁰¹ Lincoln, "Yelena", pp 381-82.

⁶⁰² Mosse, *Alexander*, pp 39-40.

⁶⁰³ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 59.

⁶⁰⁴ Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore*, v.2, pp 89-90.

the Second Half of 1855") which denounced overcentralization, censorship, and the failures of the educational system, Konstantin seized upon it, seconding the call for "public scrutiny" of government, and the involvement of the educated citizenry in the "life of the fatherland".⁶⁰⁵ He distributed copies to his naval staff, and undertook to further Valuev's career.⁶⁰⁶

Meanwhile, he turned his position as General Admiral into a platform from which to encourage more sweeping reform. The Naval Ministry, through its publishing efforts, "stimulated a lively public debate on Russia's educational system", and innovations in the field of justice contributed much to the judicial reform of 1864.⁶⁰⁷ The reorganization of the Naval Ministry itself succeeded so well that, in January 1860, the tsar extolled it as a model of "rational reform" to be emulated in all other centralised administrations.⁶⁰⁸ Konstantin was not content to limit his efforts to the navy, however, and he adapted quickly to the political dynamic of the capital. With the Naval Ministry as a base from which to operate, he undertook an expansionist strategy. His first three "satellites" were the Black Sea Steam Navigation Society, the Imperial Geographic Society, and the Orthodox Palestine Society.

The Steam Navigation Society was a commercial endeavor, but one with political overtones. Having lost its naval base on the Black Sea, the government replaced it with a merchant marine and established a virtual trade monopoly. Konstantin was a founder and shareholder within the organization, which attracted the involvement of Russia's liberal elite, a group with whom he was increasingly associated.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁵ Mallory, James, Jr., "Peter Valuev", in *MERSH*, v. 41, 1986, p. 171; Harcave, Sidney, *Years of the Golden Cockerel: The Last Romanov Tsars, 1814-1917*, New York, 1968, pp 174-175.

⁶⁰⁶ Harcave, Years, p. 174; Mallory, "Valuev", p. 171.

⁶⁰⁷ Kipp, Jacob, "Konstantin Nikolaevich", in *MERSH* v. 17, 1980, p. 160; See also: Violette, A.J., "The Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich and the Reform of the Naval Administration, 1855-1870", *Slavonic and East European Review*, v.52, no.129, 1974.

⁶⁰⁸ Konstantin, *Perepiski*, pp 127, 134.

⁶⁰⁹ Peretts, Egor Abramovich, *Dnevnik E.A. Perettsa, 1880-1883*, (A.A. Sergeev, ed.), Moscow, 1927, p. 10.

The Geographic and Palestine societies had no official link to the navy, but Konstantin's power in both organizations was bolstered by naval personnel -- his most constant political allies. Admiral Fedor Litke was vice president of the Geographic Society from 1845 until 1850, when he lost his elected position to M.N. Murav'ev, the man who would become Konstantin's principal foe. But, not long after Alexander's accession, with the grand duke's status increasing, Litke was again voted into vice presidential office.⁶¹⁰ Beyond this, it is worth noting that the Society's core membership was made up of progressive-minded officers.⁶¹¹ Indeed, it was originally thought that a grand ducal presence would prevent it from metamorphosing into a political organization.⁶¹² In the event, as we shall have occasion to demonstrate, it soon showed itself eager to influence Russia's foreign policy -- so, too, the Orthodox Palestine Society, which Konstantin founded in the late 1850s. This organization carried out missionary and charitable work, and provided services to Russian pilgrims in Palestine. In 1864, however, it would transfer to the control of the Asiatic department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and not without reason, since, under Konstantin's authority, there had been a current of political adventurism within the society's programme.

Konstantin's protege in the Palestine Society was B.P. Mansurov, a civilian official within the Naval Ministry. Mansurov acted as the Society's agent in Jerusalem, informing Konstantin that Russia's foothold there was weak, but could be improved by the establishment of charitable institutions which would help to cement a permanent presence.⁶¹³ Meanwhile, official Petersburg looked with displeasure upon Mansurov. Indeed, as his activities continued, both the Foreign Ministry and the Holy Synod began to complain of his encroachment upon their

⁶¹⁰ Rubenshtein, N.L., "Geographic Society of Russia", in *MERSH*, v. 12, p. 125.

⁶¹¹ Rich, David, *The Tsar's Colonels: Professionalism, Strategy, and Subversion in Late Imperial Russia*, Cambridge, 1998, p. 21.

⁶¹² Rubenshtein, "Geographic", p. 125.

⁶¹³ *Brokgauz & Efron Slovar'*, "Orthodox Palestine Society", v. 36 (1896), p. 552.

authority. Alexander, however, showed an inclination to favour his brother's protege, agreeing, at Konstantin's urging, to grant the man an audience, then pronouncing himself impressed. In March (1859) he authorised his brother to reward Mansurov in whatever way he felt appropriate.⁶¹⁴ Konstantin chose the rank of state secretary, which would give his protege the "social position and authority" necessary for advancing his political career.⁶¹⁵ Beyond this, he succeeded in arranging a special session of the Committee of Ministers to hear Mansurov's advice regarding Palestinian policy, despite the fervent objections of those who considered the organization's members interlopers.⁶¹⁶ Mansurov became a Senator in 1865 and a State Council member in 1872, and undoubtedly owed his success to Konstantin.

What were the grand duke's motives with regard to his foreign policy adventures? Though he was not the ideal nationalist desired by Tiutcheva, he did show himself to be an eager proponent of territorial expansion. Jacob Kipp describes him as a "diplomatic special agent", and writes that his activities "often conveyed the impression that the Naval Ministry conducted its own foreign policy quite independent of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs". He was keen to press Russian claims in the Far East, fighting for the establishment of a naval base on the Pacific, and stressing the need to demonstrate Russian power to the Chinese.⁶¹⁷ He was a member of the State Council's Siberian Committee, a body which oversaw legislation with regard to the region which bordered China,⁶¹⁸ and placed a Naval Ministry official, Admiral E.V. Putiatin, on the scene. He read Putiatin's reports before they reached the tsar, and, in June 1857, went ahead with preparations to dispatch a frigate to the Far East, so certain was he of his brother's approval.⁶¹⁹

Konstantin had another ally in the region -- a man who shared his enthusiasm for "liberal reform". This was Count N.N. Murav'ev Amursky, Governor General of

⁶¹⁴ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, (Alex. to Kon., 31 March, 1859), pp 99-100.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 22 April, 1859), pp 104-106.

⁶¹⁶ Tiutcheva, *Pri Dvore*, v.2, pp 144-145.

⁶¹⁷ Kipp, "Konstantin", *MERSH*, p. 161.

⁶¹⁸ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, p. 132.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex. 15 June, 1857), pp 53-54.

Eastern Siberia (1847-1861).⁶²⁰ The grand duke's support was crucial to Murav'ev, who did not enjoy good relations with the tsar or his ministers. That said, he was not prepared to be anyone's lackey, insisting that he should be able to report directly to the Committee of Ministers, bypassing all other departments, including the Naval Ministry. Murav'ev himself established the alliance with Konstantin, dispatching a subordinate to the grand duke with a proposal for the reorganization of the government of the Amur region. Clearly, he saw in Konstantin a man who would not be repulsed by independence or unconventionality. Nor was he mistaken. The grand duke found the proposal "entirely in line with my convictions", and vowed to help Murav'ev "with all my strength".⁶²¹

By this time it could scarcely be denied that Konstantin was a capable political actor and a man who could make careers. He was not satisfied merely to direct others, however, and in the spring of 1857 set out on his own diplomatic mission to Western Europe. Officially, this trip was "purely naval and instructive",⁶²² but it was known from the start that he would be received by Napoleon III, and Alexander, who was all too familiar with his brother's pro-French views and general assertiveness, took pains to caution him that he was only to listen, and "not to compromise [himself] by advancing [his] own ideas".⁶²³

This, apparently, was something of a "trial run" for Konstantin in the eyes of Alexander, who recognised his potential to be of great aid. For his part, the grand duke swore that he would not swerve from his instructions.⁶²⁴ In a letter from France he assured his brother that he had presented himself only as a means by which the French emperor could relay his words to Russia.⁶²⁵

Napoleon clearly welcomed the opportunity to circumvent normal diplomacy. His aim was to draw Russia into alliance, and the prospect of addressing an

⁶²⁰ Ibid., p. 321.

⁶²¹ Ibid., p. 132.

⁶²² Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 21 Apr., 1857) pp 43-44.

⁶²³ Ibid., (Alex. to Kon., 9 & 23 Mar., 1857), pp 21-23.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 10 Apr., 1857), pp 28-29.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 21 Apr., 1857), pp 43-44.

inexperienced, pro-French grand duke had obvious appeal. He was generous with his flattery, and Konstantin, when he wrote his brother, boasted of how he had gained the emperor's confidence, a thing which no mere diplomat would ever have been able to do.⁶²⁶ And, indeed, so established did he become in his go-between's role that, when Napoleon wished to arrange a meeting with Alexander that summer, he applied to Konstantin!⁶²⁷

Withal, the tsar responded favourably to his brother's behaviour abroad, and his return home witnessed the further expansion of his influence as he sought to secure a place for himself in the government, beyond the machinations of the Naval Ministry. To this endeavour, Alexander's approval was crucial, and nothing seemed to tarnish the brothers' relationship. In the tsar's letters one finds references to the Annenkova affair and trouble with the Steam Navigation Society, but these are strictly non-accusatory.⁶²⁸

When he went abroad that summer, Alexander demonstrated his confidence in Konstantin by appointing him chairman of the governing commission which would rule Russia in his absence.⁶²⁹ Later that autumn, the tsar returned to find that his committee on the peasant question had not accomplished anything, and turned to his brother for help.⁶³⁰

In this instance, the qualities which sometimes made Konstantin a liability as a grand duke -- his assertiveness and independence, were valued as characteristics which would allow him to stand up to the opposition arrayed against emancipation, to impart momentum to the effort, and bring an imperial authority to bear. Finally, there was again the prospect of drawing wrath away from the emperor. And, indeed, Feoktistov, writing years later, would note that Konstantin was considered

⁶²⁶ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 4 May, 1857), p. 46.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 10 July, 1857), p. 60.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., (Alex. to Kon., 23 Mar., 8 Apr., 1857), pp 22-26.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., p. 130.

⁶³⁰ Mosse, *Alexander*, p. 51; Konstantin, *Perepiska*, p. 135.

by many to be the "chief culprit" behind emancipation, though Alexander had been determined to implement it.⁶³¹

As 1858 dawned, however, Konstantin's contribution appeared problematic. An autocratic strain remained imbedded in his character, and conservative recalcitrance pushed him to the breaking point. In one version of events, he informed A.F. Orlov that "the Russian nobility were not good enough for him to spit on". In another, he proclaimed that there was "no true nobility" in Russia. Whatever happened, two things are clear: that he lost his temper and spoke without restraint, and that the opposition was outraged. They complained to the tsar, and Konstantin was dismissed, with Alexander stepping in to guide the committee.⁶³²

Kipp suggests that the emperor was, in fact, already inclined to remove his brother, being dissatisfied with his ideas about the use of publicity.⁶³³ Whether or not this was true, it appears to have been difficult for a reigning sovereign to side with a grand duke against his officials once high-handed behaviour had pushed animosity beyond the threshold of mere grumbling. This, at any rate, was a lesson which Konstantin Pavlovich had learned. Konstantin Nikolaevich's departure on a long sea cruise gave rise to gossip of dynastic strain, though Alexander took pains to negate such rumours by turning out with the empress to bid his brother a conspicuously tender farewell.⁶³⁴

Though his political career had suffered a set-back, Konstantin found himself in position to play a new diplomatic role. He pressed Alexander to allow him a second meeting with Napoleon.⁶³⁵ The tsar refused, but permitted him to go to Italy, where he met with Victor Emmanuel and his Prime Minister, both of whom desired Russian support in their conflict with Austria. The King was as confiding as Napoleon had been, and Konstantin used his revelations as a means by which to

⁶³¹ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 139.

⁶³² both versions recounted in Mosse, *Alexander*, pp 61-62.

⁶³³ Kipp, "Konstantin", *MERSH*, p. 161.

⁶³⁴ Tiutcheva, *Pri Dvore*, v.2, p. 105.

⁶³⁵ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, (Kon. to Alex., 15 Nov., 1858), pp 70-71.

prod the close-lipped Prime Minister. By the end of his visit he had gained Alexander's consent for the French trip, and boasted that he would also be able to employ Victor Emanuel's confidences as a lever with Napoleon.⁶³⁶

In France, the emperor revealed his plan for the formation of an anti-British alliance, and Konstantin was delighted at having been the first to hear it.⁶³⁷ A few days later he received an Italian envoy, and not only discussed international affairs with the man, but offered his own advice for Victor Emanuel.⁶³⁸

The tsar again professed himself pleased with Konstantin's accomplishments, addressing him as "faithful friend and zealous assistant".⁶³⁹ There were no more admonishments to remain circumspect, a fact which, together with Konstantin's more forward attitude, hints at a maturation of his role. The following spring, Alexander not only authorised a sensitive visit to Palestine for his brother, but called upon him to mediate between feuding parties there.⁶⁴⁰ A trip to Greece followed, during which Konstantin held lengthy discussions with the young George I, receiving his ministers, offering his opinion on a variety of issues, and forwarding his impressions to the tsar.⁶⁴¹

Still revelling in his diplomatic role, he next requested permission for a return to France, but Alexander insisted that "under the current political circumstances" he was needed at home.⁶⁴² It is difficult to determine whether the recall was truly motivated by domestic concerns. The emancipation proceedings were in the able hands of Ya.I. Rostovtsev. But the latter's health was poor, and Konstantin's value as a force for reform undeniable. Of course, there might have been a sense of discomfort in the tsar's appraisal of his brother's activities abroad. The longer he was at it, the more heady Konstantin became. Indeed, the recall notwithstanding, he

⁶³⁶ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 27 Nov., 1858), pp 74-78.

⁶³⁷ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 10 Dec., 1858), pp 78-83.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 15 Dec., 1858), p. 83.

⁶³⁹ Ibid., (Alex. to Kon., 20 Dec., 1858), pp 83-85.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., (Alex. to Kon., 31 Mar., 1859), pp 100-101.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 22 Apr., 1859), pp 104-106.

⁶⁴² Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 22 Apr., 1859), pp 104-106.

took it upon himself to stop for a week in Constantinople. Such independent decision-making was a perilous thing, and in this instance left the British Ambassador to Constantinople "terribly out of sorts".⁶⁴³

At home, Konstantin immediately took up a daunting and varied schedule. A glance at his diary for the latter half of 1859 reveals how thoroughly he involved himself in mundane naval administration, also taking interest in the proceedings of the State Council's financial committee -- so much so that he spent hours in consultation with Minister of Finance Mikhail Reutern (not coincidentally a former official of the Naval Ministry).⁶⁴⁴

Konstantin returned to the committee on emancipation, though he did not resume the chair. Rostovtsev's death in February 1860 alarmed him, as did the appointment of conservative V.N. Panin as the new chair of the editing commission.⁶⁴⁵ In the event, Panin received strict orders not to tamper with his predecessor's work, and Konstantin himself was impressed with the man's attitude.⁶⁴⁶ Mosse raises the question of why the grand duke was not given the role himself, concluding that his long absence from Russia had rendered him "out of touch" and thus disqualified him.⁶⁴⁷ But his correspondence makes it clear that he was paying close attention to the proceedings, having asked Rostovtsev to keep him "*au courant*" through the dispatch of memoranda, and his diary reveals that he spent much time with both Rostovtsev and Nikolai Miltutin toward the end of 1859, discussing emancipation.⁶⁴⁸ He never expressed a desire to succeed Rostovtsev, and there seems to have been an understanding between him and Alexander that the committee was where he would make his stand.

⁶⁴³ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 19 May, 1859), pp 113-114.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., (diary), 1859 passim.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., 7 Feb., 1860, p. 231.

⁶⁴⁶ Lincoln, "Yelena", pp 385-386; Konstantin, *Perepiska*, 15 Feb., 1860, p. 232.

⁶⁴⁷ Mosse, *Alexander*, p. 73.

⁶⁴⁸ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, (Kon. to Alex., 11 Mar., 1859); diary, 5 July, 7 Sept. 1859, pp 97-98, 177, 192.

Orlov's ill health in September 1860 presented the emperor with the opportunity to reinstate his brother as chairman,⁶⁴⁹ employing him as a kind of weapon of last resort in the face of the conservative majority, who stood ready to destroy the editing commission's work. Konstantin, recognizing the historical importance of the task which lay before him, placed it within a dynastic context by praying at Nicholas's tomb prior to the first session.⁶⁵⁰ He worked tirelessly to win the support of his opponents, often approaching them personally, with a political flair which belied the semi-divine aloofness of the traditional grand duke. On 27 October, Alexander expressed his gratitude to his brother, praising both his efforts and behaviour (presumably meaning his avoidance of any more fits of temper), and assuring him of his full confidence. It was a moment to celebrate dynastic harmony. Both men wept, embraced, and "promised to walk arm in arm always, unified, and not allowing ourselves to be divided".⁶⁵¹

The opposition gained strength, with M.N. Murav'ev leading the attack,⁶⁵² and the grand duke worried about Alexander's ability to stay the course against sustained pressure.⁶⁵³ At last, however, his willingness to plead with his opponents paid off. He was rebuffed by Murav'ev, but succeeded in bringing Panin and A.V. Adlerberg over to his side, and in this way broke the conservative majority.⁶⁵⁴ Thereafter, he turned his attention toward his own family -- summoning his younger brothers, the tsesarevich (Nikolai), and the Dukes of Leuchtenberg and Oldenburg to a gathering designed to "prepare" them for their upcoming State Council role. The family must function as a political bloc, and the grand duke, having been chosen by the tsar to fight for the cause of a just emancipation, does not appear to have doubted his authority to take charge of his junior relatives. The group reassembled the next day for a further lesson, and their instructor pronounced himself pleased with their grasp

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., 18 Sept., 1860, 29 Sept., 1860, pp 269-270.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., 10 Oct., 1860, p. 272.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., 27 Oct., 1860, p. 277.

⁶⁵² Ibid., 22 Nov., 1860, p. 281.

⁶⁵³ Ibid., 28 Nov., 1860, p. 282.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., 8, 17 Dec., 1860, p 284-285; Mossc, *Alexander*, p. 74.

of the situation.⁶⁵⁵ Nothing could be left to chance, however, and they met once more on 26 January, 1861, two days before the committee presented its proposal to the State Council.⁶⁵⁶ On 28 January, the little group accompanied the tsar to the Council, dressed in the uniforms of adjutants-general. Alexander thanked the committee members for their work, embracing Konstantin in an unmistakable demonstration of favour.⁶⁵⁷ As the sessions continued, the grand duke kept the emperor informed of proceedings, and moved quickly to bring Mikhail into line when he showed signs of wandering from the family position.⁶⁵⁸

On 19 February, Alexander signed the emancipation proclamation. Konstantin and the empress alone elected to witness this act, but the grand duke, understanding its historical significance, insisted that Alexander summon the tsesarevich. After the tsar had read the document aloud and signed it, Konstantin blotted the ink with sand, and the pen was given to Nikolai, the guardian of the dynasty's, and Russia's, future.⁶⁵⁹

The acceptance of the emancipation statute, as composed by Rostovtsev, was a political triumph, and one which sent Konstantin's career into the ascendancy. On 7 March a rescript expressing the tsar's thanks to his brother was published, and the grand duke was appointed chairman of the Main Committee on the Structure of Agrarian Relations, thus allowing his influence to continue as emancipation moved from the preparatory stage to that of implementation.⁶⁶⁰ Shortly thereafter, the reorganization of the Naval Ministry was completed, eliciting more praise and gratitude from Alexander. Indeed, a perusal of Konstantin's diary for the remainder of 1861 makes him seem virtually indispensable to the government, so frequently was his advice solicited by ministers and the tsar, and so immersed was he in

⁶⁵⁵ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, 19-20 Dec., 1860. pp 295-96.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid., 26 Feb., 1861, p.301.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., 28 Feb., 1861, p. 301.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., 2-16 Feb., 1861, passim.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid., 9-16 Feb., 1861, passim.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., 7 Mar., 1861, p. 310.

matters such as the repair of Russia's economy.⁶⁶¹ But what of the younger grand dukes and the evolution of a lasting grand ducal political role?

In addition to the State Council seats which ensured them a minimal voice in Russia's affairs, both Nikolai and Mikhail held politically significant military positions. the latter, for instance, received ministerial prerogatives along with his appointment as Head of Military Education in 1860. Neither man possessed Konstantin's drive or charisma, however, and Alexander's effort to coax them into governmental service is apparent, lending credence to the assertion that he himself wished his brothers to regard such a role as part of their duty.

Nikolai, in particular, was a soldier at heart, and a "stranger to every kind of political consideration".⁶⁶² Alexander recognised his potential usefulness, however, and called upon him for assistance in 1861 and 1862 when he toured the provinces. A Committee for the Public Welfare was convened to oversee affairs in his absence, with Nikolai named chairman on both occasions. Alexander was so pleased with his brother's performance that he appointed him chairman of the governing commission formed in 1864 to take charge of the empire while he spent several months abroad. The question arises as to why Konstantin was overlooked in all three instances. The elder grand duke had chaired the governing commission of 1857, and was much more experienced. Even without the taint of his Polish adventure (a topic which we will consider in our next chapter) however, there were grounds for bypassing him. To begin with, his public prominence threatened dynastic harmony. The promotion of Nikolai and Mikhail within the civil sphere would help to restore balance. Next, Konstantin's independence and love of politics made it unlikely that he would refrain from seeking to impose his will upon the commission, thereby arousing hostility. Nikolai, on the other hand, could be relied upon to behave as a grand duke should in such an instance, i.e., as a passive representative of the tsar, providing a firm imperial image without interfering in the mundane business of running the

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 1861, p. 349 and passim.

⁶⁶² Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 2, p. 101.

Empire. And, indeed, if Valuev praised him as a man who always showed "good sense",⁶⁶³ in sharp contrast to his criticism of Konstantin, and to Nikolai's own reputation as the least enlightened of the brothers, we can safely assume that this was a result of his pleasure at being allowed to run the commission as he wished.

There were occasions wherein Nikolai's opinion was desired by the emperor, who made it a practice to include his brothers in special councils, such as the one convened in June 1863 to formulate Russia's reaction to foreign criticism of her Polish policy. In this instance, the grand dukes might have been summoned primarily as the holders of important military posts, but such was not always the case, and Alexander does appear to have valued both the counsel, and the presence of his brothers when critical questions arose. So far as his own views were concerned, Nikolai was a traditionalist, and a nationalist. He could thus be depended upon to oppose any initiative "not in keeping with Russia's dignity".⁶⁶⁴

Mikhail would play a much greater civic role than Nikolai, but would never exhibit Konstantin's enthusiasm for politics. His passion was the artillery, and his service ethos was bound up in his reverence for the tsar. In this respect, and in his apparent lack of ambition, he resembles Mikhail Pavlovich, and it seems likely that birth order influenced some aspects of grand ducal behaviour. At any rate, Mikhail's son, Aleksandr, insisted that his father was a man who saw the world in black and white, possessing an unshakeable faith in Orthodoxy, autocracy, and the infallibility of the emperor. Thus, for instance, when Alexander angered the family by choosing to marry his mistress, Mikhail proclaimed: "We have no right to criticise his decisions. A grand duke has to take his orders in the same spirit that a simple soldier does."⁶⁶⁵ Nicholas's influence was perceivable in his philosophy, and, indeed, he was known to have worshipped the memory of his father. At the same time, like

⁶⁶³ Valuev, P.A., *Dnevnik P.A. Valueva, ministra vnutrennikh del*, (P.A. Zaionchkovsky, ed.), Moscow, 1961, v.1, pp 232, 295.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 232.

⁶⁶⁵ Alexander (Mikhailovich), Grand Duke, *Once a Grand Duke*, Garden City, 1932, p. 48.

Alexander, he lacked Nicholas's commanding personality, and was, in fact, a mild and tolerant man.⁶⁶⁶ That Nikolai was chosen over Mikhail to oversee the government in Alexander's absence in no way indicates that he stood lower in his brother's favour, or was regarded as less reliable. In fact, he was included in the task of safeguarding order on these occasions, and in a capacity less grand, but more responsible, than Nikolai's. As Head of Military Education, he was authorised to convene an emergency council in the event of student unrest. He took it upon himself to exercise his authority on 7 May, 1861, when news arrived from Moscow that university students were inciting the peasantry not to obey the government or cede any portion of their land. Valuev's voice apparently prevailed since it was decided to allow the Ministry of Internal Affairs to handle the matter by conventional legal means rather than turning it over to the gendarmes to be dealt with "secretly". Thus it is hardly surprising that the Minister's attitude toward Mikhail, as with Nikolai, was positive, albeit patronising.⁶⁶⁷

Neither Nikolai nor Mikhail appear to have resented Konstantin's political success, his influence with Alexander, or his prominent public image. Nor are there reports of Konstantin challenging any of his brother's appointments. In general, each of the grand dukes seems to have felt secure in his role and importance, and Nicholas's decision to define his sons spheres of military interest before they were adults thus proved its merit in later years. More significant to dynastic cohesion, however, was the grand dukes' relationship to the emperor. Again, there is no reason to believe that either Nikolai or Mikhail disturbed their eldest brother's autocratic equilibrium. If anything, he desired to increase their presence within the government. With Konstantin things were rather different. Here again, by dedicating his second son to the navy, Nicholas seemingly acted to remove a source of future conflict. Assuming the tsesarevich would someday wish to take at least

⁶⁶⁶ Witte, S.Yu., *Vospominaniia*, (A.L. Sidorova, ed.), Moscow, 1960, v.1, p. 40.

⁶⁶⁷ Valuev, *Dnevnik*, v.1, pp 106-107.

nominal command of Russia's land forces, it was best to keep the heir presumptive far away from an army career. Konstantin's political zeal, on the other hand, challenged Nicholas's ability to provide a safe outlet, and the best that could be done was to inculcate the grand dukes with a firm sense of loyalty. Nor do we have reason to doubt Konstantin's allegiance to his brother. But his independence and energy clashed with the principle of grand ducal self-negation, with the result that his efforts to accept his proper role often seem forced. Even while he enjoyed the emperor's favour, there existed an undercurrent of tension between them, perceivable in the dialogue of reassurance which ran through their correspondence, with both men realizing that there were many persons who would gladly drive them apart. Thus, for instance, when a group of rebellious Caucasian recruits applied to Konstantin for aid in June 1857, he was concerned lest outside sources should relate the incident in a "greatly exaggerated form" to the tsar, and careful to present his own version (in which he upbraided the mutineers), as "the whole truth".⁶⁶⁸

Similar examples abound. In a letter of 30 August, 1858, congratulating Alexander on his nameday, Konstantin first wished him strength in his exalted role, then assured him that this sentiment came "from a pure heart" and that "no one is more delighted with your success than I am, and more prepared to help you with all his strength".⁶⁶⁹ Alexander responded with his own assurances that:

"no one loves you more than I do, and no one can appreciate and do justice to your zeal [like I can], both with regard to naval affairs and those civil affairs in which I have seen fit to make you a participant in accordance with my confidence in you..."⁶⁷⁰

A few months later Konstantin proclaimed: "You know you have in me your most faithful servant, who, whether near or far, is always prepared to serve you with absolute zeal, to the last day of my life and to the last drop of my blood."⁶⁷¹ On another occasion he wrote: "May God preserve our mutual friendship and mutual trust". He reminded Alexander that his participation in the emancipation process was

⁶⁶⁸ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, (Kon. to Alex., 23 June, 1857), pp 55-56.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 30 Aug., 1858), pp 66-67.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid., (Alex., to Kon., 9 Sept., 1858), p. 68.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 12 Jan., 1859), pp 85-88.

not motivated by ambition: "You know that I did not seek out or desire this task, and accepted it in accordance with your desire."⁶⁷² Withal, the similarity to the correspondence between Konstantin Pavlovich and Nicholas I is striking.

Alexander and "Mother Russia" were cited equally in Konstantin letters as the inspiration for his service.⁶⁷³ One might call them interchangeable, were it not for the fact that the emperor was cast by his brother in the role of a servant of the state.⁶⁷⁴ Finally, the "cult" of Nicholas, embraced by all four brothers, mirrored the adoration of Alexander which had served as a crucial link between Konstantin Pavlovich and Nicholas. To Nikolai and Mikhail, their father's memory was probably more of a guide than any form of ideology could be. Konstantin appears to have been a sincere subscriber to this cult, but, like his namesake uncle, may also have perceived its value as a dynastic unifying force, offsetting the disruptive potential of differences in outlook, temperament, and position. To venerate Nicholas and cite his influence was certainly a means by which to cement his bond with Alexander in the face of criticism and intrigue. In an 1859 letter he explained the brothers' faithfulness to Alexander by writing: "Serving you, you see, we continue to serve our unforgettable Papa."⁶⁷⁵

Undoubtedly, Konstantin's conception of legitimate grand ducal role was complicated by the transitional nature of the time, with the needs of the state coming to the fore. If he believed that reform was in the best interest of the Empire then was it not his duty to further it by every possible means? Particularly disturbing from the traditionalist standpoint was his membership in a political faction. It was bad enough when an heir to the throne took an independent stance. At least, as a future ruler, he possessed grounds for developing his political philosophy. Grand dukes, on the other hand, should never aspire to such a thing. Konstantin Pavlovich's association with the Poles, though different from Konstantin Nikolaevich's involvement with a

⁶⁷² Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 10 Oct. 1860), pp 122-123.

⁶⁷³ Ibid., see, for instance, Kon. to Alex., 27 Nov. 1858), pp 74-78.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 30 Aug. 1858, 12 Jan., 1859) pp 66-67, 85-88.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., (Kon. to Alex., 21 July, 1859), pp 114-115.

domestic political movement, highlighted an issue important in both instances: the undesirability, from a dynastic perspective, of any variation in grand ducal identity. After all, if Alexander I's oldest brother considered himself a Pole, or Alexander II's oldest brother considered himself a member of the progressive party, then both could be expected to feel a strong sense of loyalty to these groups, and, unlike military bodies, neither the Poles nor the progressives stood too far above suspicion.

Adherence to the nationalist party might have caused as much alarm, since this group disagreed with Alexander on some issues, and was as committed as the progressive party to its own interpretation of the welfare of the state. There would always be a nationalist component to Konstantin's thought. He desired to expand Russia's territorial holdings, as noted, and his own words here and there give evidence of anti-western leanings.⁶⁷⁶ But, as Tiutcheva quickly discovered, his progressive impulses were stronger than his chauvinistic ones, and he could not have accepted the reactionary thought which flourished within the nationalist camp. It was in modernization that he saw the key to securing Russia's welfare, and it was with the group known variously as the "bureaucratic reformers", the "bureaucratic party", "enlightened bureaucrats", the "ultra-bureaucratic party", and the "Petersburg party of progress", which he chose to make his stand.

This group was indeed composed primarily of civil servants, characterised by their willingness to "speak for and act in the interests of society", and their concern for "the national good".⁶⁷⁷ Sir A. Buchanan, reporting to Earl Russell in 1865, asserted that the emperor's cabinet was full of members of the "ultra-bureaucratic party", and that these were men "who have attained their present position by rising gradually in the civil service".⁶⁷⁸ Romanov patronage was, in some instances, a

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., see, for instance, 22 Apr., 1859, pp 104-106.

⁶⁷⁷ Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 5; Orlovsky, Daniel T., "High Officials in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1855-1881", *Officialdom*, pp 256-57; see also: Lincoln, W. Bruce, *In the Vanguard of Reform: Russia's Enlightened Bureaucrats, 1825-1861*, DeKalb, 1982.

⁶⁷⁸ Lieven, Dominic (ed.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, Part 1,

crucial part of their career advancement. Both the empress and Elena sought to further the cause of reform, and the significance of the latter as an unofficial political actor is indisputable.⁶⁷⁹ Moreover, it was through her patronage of progressive civil servants that she was able to make such a great impact. She had a skill for identifying men of talent, nurturing their abilities, and prevailing upon her nephew to employ them. A.A. Abaza, who would eventually win appointment as Minister of Finance (1880-1881), seemingly owed his rise to Elena and Konstantin,⁶⁸⁰ and Nikolai Miliutin, who became assistant Minister of Interior, was her "great protege".⁶⁸¹ Thus the system of imperial patronage, one of the most traditional Romanov functions was, in this instance, serving the cause of modernization.

The conservative nobility, facing a tremendous loss of income and authority in the wake of emancipation, regarded the bureaucratic reformers with something akin to hysteria, labeling them as revolutionaries, and even speculating about possible "connections with the terrorists".⁶⁸² Elena was a Romanov only by marriage, but Konstantin's involvement with such men must have struck traditionalists as very shocking indeed. Going beyond partisan reactions, however, it remains to ask where the progressives stood in relation to autocracy. It has been said that they acted out of opposition to "Nikolaevan autocracy".⁶⁸³ They did not oppose autocracy as such, however, and many of them, including Dmitry Miliutin and Konstantin, venerated the memory of Peter I.⁶⁸⁴ Of course, Nicholas, too, had tried to inject Petrine principles into his rulership style, and there can be little doubt but that his emphasis upon duty to the state contributed to the evolution of a state-centred service ethos, not least in Konstantin himself. Ultimately, however, it was Peter's

Series A, "Russia, 1859-1914", v.1, Frederick, 1983, p. 83.

⁶⁷⁹ Byrnes, Robert, *Pobedonostsev, His Life and Thought*, Bloomington, 1968, pp 80-82.

⁶⁸⁰ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, pp 215-218; Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 1, p. 122

⁶⁸¹ Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*, pp 80-82.

⁶⁸² Miller, *Dmitrii*, pp 5, 8; Harcave, *Years*, pp 174-75; Peretts, *Dnevnik*, p. v (intro.).

⁶⁸³ Peretts, *Dnevnik*, p. v (intro.); see also Harcave, *Years*, pp 174-175.

⁶⁸⁴ Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 16; Konstantin, *Perepiska*, passim.

willingness to undertake far-reaching reforms which appealed to the progressives. Theoretically, his belief in the exclusivity of the tsar's prerogative to determine wherein the empire's best interest lay, would have given way, under the right circumstances, to a recognition of the need to modify autocracy itself, and trust in Alexander's willingness to take such a step, should it become necessary, made it possible for the modern reformers to remain proponents of autocracy.⁶⁸⁵

Even the conservative nobility now longed for a political voice, as a consequence of the change brought about by emancipation.⁶⁸⁶ But the reformers went further, advocating representation for the public as a whole. Indeed, both Valuev and Konstantin drafted proposals for the integration of elected deputies into the State Council in a consultative role.⁶⁸⁷

Konstantin began his association with the bureaucratic reformers through frequent attendance at Elena's salon, where he forged important connections and participated in discussions on topics such as the comparative natures of "Petrine and pre-Petrine Rus".⁶⁸⁸ He also began to receive the leading reformers, men like S.S. Lanskoï and Nikolai Miliutin, into his own home.⁶⁸⁹ Other prominent allies included Valuev, Dmitry Miliutin, Abaza, Reutern, D.A. Obolensky, and D.A. Tolstoy (who would soon defect to the conservative cause). That Reutern, Obolensky, and Tolstoy had served under the grand duke in the Naval Ministry, along with Golovnin, highlights how this institution has itself been overlooked as a political entity.

Elena Pavlovna's position at the centre of the reform movement would gradually erode, shifting to Konstantin. Indeed, in the eyes of many, the grand duke was, by 1861, the undisputed leader of the group. Buchanan, writing in 1865, called him the

⁶⁸⁵ Jayawardane, Sri Suddha, "Court Politics and the Fate of Bureaucratic Constitutionalism in Russia, 1879-1882", PhD, University of Washington, 1982, pp 1-2.

⁶⁸⁶ Lieven, *Foreign Affairs*, v. 1, doc. 65, pp 87-90.

⁶⁸⁷ *MERSH*, Valuev (James Mallory), p. 171; Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 151.

⁶⁸⁸ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, 1859 passim; Valuev, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, p. 199.

⁶⁸⁹ Harcave, *Years*, p. 174; Konstantin, *Perepiska*, 1859 passim.

"acknowledged chief" of the "ultra-bureaucratic party", and elsewhere referred to the group itself as the "party of the Grand Duke Constantine".⁶⁹⁰

In fact, it was neither Konstantin nor Elena, but emancipation itself which initially united the reformers, bringing together men who were far from uniform in thought, and might well have regarded one another as rivals in the competitive St. Petersburg political *milieu*. For Konstantin, emancipation provided an ideal platform upon which to establish his role as a reform leader. Was he, however, in addition to being a figure head, also a tactical commander? That good relations with him were considered important is indicated by Valuev's diary for 1861, in which many meetings, dinners and discussions with Konstantin are noted.⁶⁹¹ Moreover, the benefit of his patronage was undisputed. His political triumph in 1861 coincided with the appointment of four of his allies to high ministerial posts: Dmitrii Miliutin as War Minister, Valuev as Minister of Interior, and Putiatin and A.V. Golovnin as successive Ministers of Education.⁶⁹² Golovnin chose another Konstantin ally, Mansurov, as a departmental head.⁶⁹³ Of course, men like Miliutin and Valuev were hardly likely to take orders from a grand duke, however much they may have viewed him as a useful ally, and there was a fundamental difference between his relations with them, on the one hand, and with Golovnin, who was, indeed, regarded as one of Konstantin's own "people", on the other. The latter group, containing men like Putiatin and Mansurov who acted to advance the grand duke's agenda, should not be confused with the bureaucratic party, even when it is called the "party of the Grand Duke Constantine".

Golovnin was a bureaucratic reformer, but he was also a protege of Konstantin's, having begun his career at the Naval Ministry where he caught the

⁶⁹⁰ Lieven, *Foreign Affairs*, v. 1, doc. 62, pp 81, 83, 85; see also Peretts, *Dnevnik*, p. v (intro.) Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 143.

⁶⁹¹ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 161; see also Konstantin, *Perepiska*, 1861 diary, *passim*.

⁶⁹² Konstantin, *Perepiska*, 8 Dec., 1861, p. 349; 22 Dec., 1861, p. 352.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 31 Dec., 1861, p. 354.

grand duke's eye and was chosen to be his personal secretary.⁶⁹⁴ He was the most important of Konstantin's "people", acting as his right hand man. Feoktistov, who served as Golovnin's assistant at the Ministry of Education, attributed his rise solely to patronage, though the Minister was generally regarded as an intelligent and accomplished man with a sincerely progressive outlook.⁶⁹⁵

Golovnin's attachment to his patron, though grounded in mutually held beliefs, had a personal quality. His appointment thus represented a more or less direct extension of Konstantin's own political influence, whereas the appointments of Miliutin and Valuev were merely helpful. They raised Konstantin's prestige, but represented the triumph of the cause more than a consolidation of his own power. Divergence of opinion and personal disputes were thus able to weaken the bond between Konstantin and other bureaucratic reformers who did not feel Golovnin's sense of loyalty toward him. Signs of strain were increasingly perceivable as 1862 dawned and the unifying force provided by emancipation diminished. Valuev, for one, began to take a more conservative turn, seeking a *rapprochement* with the nobility,⁶⁹⁶ and his diary reflected the development of a hostile attitude toward Konstantin. Like Tiutcheva before him, he began to detail every squabble, setback, or nasty rumour relating to the grand duke. Observing this, one senses that there was considerable strain rising directly from Konstantin's status as a politically active grand duke. As Minister of Interior, Valuev was now at the height of his power, and instead of viewing the grand duke as a necessary ally, he may have begun to consider him a dangerous rival and/or a generator of political chaos. His access to the tsar and immunity to rules threatened the very order which Valuev was now anxious to defend.

The progressive movement as a whole, having established its ascendancy, undoubtedly felt less need for Konstantin's leadership. Beyond which, the grand

⁶⁹⁴ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, pp 130, 155.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., pp 130, 155.

⁶⁹⁶ Peretts, *Dnevnik*, p. v (intro.).

duke's assertiveness only served to inflame whatever discomfort they might already feel toward him, and it was clear that, far from being satisfied with the exercise of political sway at court and in the military, he was trying to expand his influence within the governmental sphere. He already held the Ministry of Public Education through Golovnin, and now eyed the Ministry of State Domains as well. This was, after all, an institution which was bound to play a role in the implementation of emancipation, and it was in the hands of the infamous Murav'ev.

Tension peaked between the two men in December 1861. The politico-economic committee of the Imperial Geographic Society, once directed by Murav'ev himself but now by Golovnin, had invited officials of the Ministry of State Domains to participate in a discussion of state properties, and Murav'ev, regarding this as a threat to his authority, complained to the emperor. He also spoke in the State Council of what he deemed the illegitimate activities of the Society. Valuev, himself a founding member of the committee and thus unable to maintain indifference, was still allied with Konstantin and defended him by describing the "gradual broadening of [the committee's] sphere of activity" as a legitimate phenomenon. In the event, Alexander rejected Murav'ev's call to "shut the committee down". Instead he ordered it to obey the existing regulations and keep the government informed in advance of its programme.⁶⁹⁷

Konstantin, despite this stumble, continued to eye the Ministry of State Domains and seemingly scored a victory when Murav'ev was replaced by A.A. Zelenoi, a man upon whom he thought he could rely as an ally. He was enraged, therefore, when Zelenoi began implementing Murav'ev's agenda, and accused him of "leading Russia to ruin" through his reactionary policies.⁶⁹⁸ Zelenoi was shocked. Most successful Russian officials learned, of necessity, to behave with "tact and caution" as they made their way up through the bureaucratic hierarchy.⁶⁹⁹ Grand dukes, for

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., pp 134-35; see also Konstantin, *Perepiska*, 21 Dec., 1861, p. 351

⁶⁹⁸ Valuev, *Dnevnik*, v.1, p. 160.

⁶⁹⁹ Lieven, Dominic, *Russia's Rulers Under the Old Regime*, New Haven, 1989, p. 136.

their part, were required to observe military discipline and show deference to their imperial betters, but it goes without saying that an upbringing in which they were usually the centre of attention and were trained to rule over their own military patrimonies, would, given the right combination of birth order and personality, produce men who were autocratic in temperament. Thus, although one would expect to find some top officials with similarly overbearing personalities, in a grand duke, already perceived as an interloper, this quality would be watched for and resented. In fact, as we have seen, Konstantin had already gotten in trouble for losing his temper with Orlov in 1858. His devotion to progressive principles had not tempered this instinct in him. Moreover, in his dispute with Zelenoi he clearly felt himself betrayed. But a grand ducal title was no more able to cow the governing elite of his generation than it had the military elite of Konstantin Pavlovich's. The minister answered just as "sharply" as he had been addressed.

Ultimately, however, the only way to enforce conformity to service etiquette upon a grand duke was to complain to the emperor, himself an observer of the unwritten rules which alone made fruitful interaction with his officials possible. On this particular occasion, rumour had it that Alexander's patience toward Konstantin had worn thin. Golovnin, the grand duke, and Zelenoi all appear to have believed that such was the case. Thus Golovnin rushed to placate the minister, going so far as to call Konstantin's words "madness", and Konstantin himself approached Zelenoi that evening at a ball, making a conspicuous effort to smooth things over. The next day he apologised and asked Zelenoi not to speak to Alexander. The minister, seemingly enjoying this advantage over a Romanov, replied that it would "not be right" to remain silent.⁷⁰⁰

All three men underestimated Alexander's willingness to show forbearance toward his brother, however, and there is no record of negative consequences resulting from this dispute. Even so, Konstantin had cause to worry about his

⁷⁰⁰ Valuev, *Dnevnik*, v.1, p. 160.

position. He had gained many enemies as a result of his emancipation role, and could ill afford to lose the good-will of his allies. And, indeed, he and Golovnin made every effort to reclaim Valuev's favour, but the breach was already too great. The Minister took a dim view of Konstantin's overtures, asking in his diary: "What will come of this?"⁷⁰¹

Beyond the difficulties he faced from his fellow reformers, Konstantin had to reckon with the hostility of the reactionary "Russian Party", another group possessing strong links to officialdom, though its members belonged mostly to the lower echelons.⁷⁰² They, like the progressives, chose to view themselves as champions of the state, the prestige of which concerned them above all else. They invested their identity in nationalism, and considered the security of the Empire to lie in the strengthening of traditional Russian institutions, most notably autocracy. The Russian party was anti-intellectual, though it did not lack spokesmen of brilliance. Murav'ev belonged to this camp, as did Katkov. Besides Murav'ev's personal rivalry with the grand duke, the party itself had ample cause to oppose him. Konstantin's pursuit of a non-traditional grand ducal role could hardly win their approval, beyond which, his liberalism and betrayal of early nationalist hopes must mark him as a villain, despite his royalty.

So far as this last point was concerned, however, it does appear to have caused some discomfort among Konstantin's foes. Feoktistov, an ally of Murav'ev and Katkov, believed Konstantin to be ambitious, but it was Golovnin whom he singled out as the real evil behind the grand ducal power, noting that he had "worm[ed] his way into [Konstantin's] confidence", then "little by little... completely mastered him". A villain of Golovnin's magnitude could have no concern for Russia. He was, rather, "trying with satanic malice to sow the seeds of... evil" within his ministry.⁷⁰³ Here, then, was yet another variation of naive monarchism. Its

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., p. 159.

⁷⁰² Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 161.

⁷⁰³ Ibid., pp 130, 155.

application to grand dukes could only increase as the latter sought a new role for themselves.

Whatever the orientation of the servitors in question, they clearly found it difficult to adjust to the inclusion of a grand duke within the political realm. Konstantin may have had the best of intentions, but his aggressive, self-confident, and autocratic style offended his allies and highlighted his "otherness". Most among them respected the dynasty, but they did not wish to see its members throw off the constraints of tradition and invade their own domain. A grand duke's great advantage could not be overlooked, no matter how determined he was to adapt to the rules of the service *milieu*. Ironically, given Konstantin's modernizing efforts, the more sophisticated the military and government became, the more a grand duke, as a representative of an increasingly anachronistic institution, must seem out of place, and the conflicting tendencies which he himself encompassed made his intentions all the more difficult to assess.

Feoktistov was intrigued by the contradictory descriptions of Konstantin which circulated in St. Petersburg in 1862, with some observers considering him "practically a genius", and others "a light-minded and foolish man". When he made Konstantin's acquaintance he found him to be very intelligent, but flighty and superficial.⁷⁰⁴ Valuev described him in remarkably similar terms as:

"intelligent but full of strange contradictions, [he] has experience in affairs [but] at times is amazingly immature, comprehends quickly, understands shrewdly, [but], with regard to several matters, has an almost childlike naivete."⁷⁰⁵

Undoubtedly, this odd combination owed much to an upbringing which was simultaneously expansive (encompassing as it did extensive travel and exposure to a wide variety of people and situations) and sheltered (since every trip, meeting, and experience was carefully orchestrated), and an education which veered between training designed to produce a military specialist on the one hand, and a courtly, quasi-ruler on the other. The result clearly did not satisfy the service elite of

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid., pp 139, 150.

⁷⁰⁵ Valuev, *Dnevnik*, p. 170.

Konstantin's day. Upon learning of his appointment as Viceroy of Poland, Valuev wrote: "It may be that he will speak Polish better than any other language because he hasn't learned those grand ducal expressions in [Polish] which he uses in Russian, French and German."⁷⁰⁶ In fact, Konstantin's Polish mission only served to heighten the controversy surrounding his career, and it is to the grand ducal vicereencies of Alexander's reign that we now turn.

III. The Grand Ducal Vicereencies

On 11 March, 1861, Konstantin was informed by State Councilman Sergei Sumarokov that he and Alexander had discussed dispatching him to Warsaw. He expressed no surprise, though he claimed that the idea horrified him. Two days later the Council of Ministers met to discuss Polish unrest, and Konstantin argued for conciliation.⁷⁰⁷ On the 29th, Alexander showed him dispatches from Warsaw about the outbreak of new disorder, thus clearly accepting his brother's involvement in the matter. For the time being, Konstantin remained merely an interested spectator, however, and several months passed before he went a step further, meeting with the Marquis Wielopolski to discuss Polish affairs, and pronouncing him "very intelligent", thus paving the way for their future collaboration in Warsaw, where Wielopolski would be his "right hand".⁷⁰⁸

On 9 May, 1862, with Poland under martial law, Alexander convened a council to discuss Russia's options. Konstantin and Mikhail were present, and the emperor announced his decision to appoint his youngest brother viceroy of Poland.⁷⁰⁹

The tsar's desire to send a grand duke was not in itself surprising. There was precedent (albeit not a reassuring one), and the appointment met all the demands of

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 170.

⁷⁰⁷ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, Mar. 11, 13, 1861, p. 311.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., 14 Dec., 1861, p. 350; Wielopolski, le Marquis, *Grand-Duc Constantin, le Marquis Wielopolski, et les Polonais*, Paris, 1862, p. 6.

⁷⁰⁹ Valuev, *Dnevnik*, v.1, p. 165.

traditional grand ducal role. On the practical side, it would extend the imperial presence directly to a troubled region, and this was undoubtedly the primary consideration. That Mikhail was preferred is likewise not difficult to comprehend. He could be counted upon to follow orders without reference to his own views or ambitions, and to maintain firmness without antagonizing the Poles through an overly rigid or chauvinistic stance.

Only one of the tsar's officials opposed this decision, stating that what Poland needed was an experienced military leader with "an iron hand". The major point of debate was timing. V.A. Dolgorukov, Chief of the Third Section, insisted that Mikhail should be dispatched at once. Konstantin, Valuev, and two others argued for delay. The meeting adjourned with no agreement. The emperor had yet to realise wherein the real obstacle lay; Mikhail was so horrified at the prospect before him that not even his extraordinary sense of duty could compel him to accept it. Alexander had either not mentioned it to him in advance, or was oblivious to his reaction. Mikhail, for his part, may have endeavored to conceal his horror -- certainly he refrained from voicing any objection at the council. To do so in front of others would have been a violation of the support he owed Alexander. But Valuev thought his discomfort obvious, noting that he resorted to monosyllabic responses whenever he was addressed.⁷¹⁰

The next day, Mikhail visited the Minister of Interior with a plea for intervention, confessing that he was "not prepared" to go to Warsaw. He was seemingly motivated by an inability to face Alexander, which itself undoubtedly sprang from his realization of abrogating his duty. Valuev responded sympathetically, not least, one suspects, because his vanity was flattered, and Mikhail's relief was so great that he embraced the minister with tears in his eyes.⁷¹¹

That same day, Alexander assembled a few advisers to discuss the viceregency before a scheduled session of the Council of Ministers. Dolgorukov continued to

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., p. 165-166.

⁷¹¹ Ibid., pp 166-167.

insist that a grand duke must be dispatched immediately, but now favoured Konstantin. If Mikhail's discomfort was as obvious as Valuev portrays it, then Konstantin may simply have emerged as the only alternative (assuming Nikolai was uninterested in the position, which seems likely). At the same time, we cannot rule out the possibility of "campaigning" on Konstantin's part, despite his insistence that a Polish post would be horrible. In the event, Alexander's proved unwilling to support this shift, insisting that he "needed" his brother in St Petersburg.

Konstantin had certainly proved his usefulness to Alexander in the past, but it seems unlikely that this assertion of need was anything more than a polite way of saying that his candidacy was unacceptable. One might have thought it would be a relief to Alexander to witness Konstantin's withdrawal from the capital's political *milieu*, within which he was already much more conspicuous than a grand duke should be. But Poland was a sensitive and closely watched region, and Alexander could have no doubt as to Konstantin's insistence upon the vigorous application of his *own* policies should he be entrusted with the viceregency. Konstantin Pavlovich's experience stood as a warning of the risks attached to the empowerment of a pro-Polish grand duke.

After the State Council meeting, Alexander summoned his brothers to a family conference. Two things would have been clear to him by this time: that Mikhail was determined not to go, and Konstantin desired the appointment. In the event, whether Alexander's conviction that a grand duke must be sent, or Konstantin's persuasive powers prevailed, a decision was made in favour of the dynamic "second son". Valuev noted in his diary that this outcome "amazed everyone, beginning with the sovereign". Indeed, Alexander confessed to his Minister that he had not expected it.⁷¹²

One wonders if Mikhail's reluctance might have owed something to a knowledge of Konstantin's determination. Of course, there is little doubt but that the

⁷¹² Ibid., pp 166-167.

appointment was a thankless task, and the cautious Mikhail must have recognised the dangers attendant upon it. Konstantin's self-confidence apparently did not allow room for such doubt. At any rate, given the presence of his "numerous enemies" in the capital, Warsaw might have seemed relatively welcoming. Aleksandra Iosifovna proclaimed: "*Là-bas la position du gr. duc sera très difficile; mais celle qu'il avait ici était encore moins bonne pour lui.*" Konstantin professed to see things differently, describing his position in St Petersburg as "splendid". But Golovnin tried frantically to convince him that his foes were poised to erode his influence in the capital. Konstantin must, indeed, have realised how risky it was to stray from the centre of power. He chose to portray himself to Valuev as a sacrificial lamb -- an affectation which succeeded only poorly since the Minister perceived his joy at his appointment. Aleksandra, too, emphasized the sacrifice required by the viceregency. Valuev wrote: "*La grande duchesse se pose un peu en héroïne de dévouement patriotique.*"⁷¹³ And, indeed, Konstantin may have considered the assignment an excellent opportunity to reclaim the heroic image he had enjoyed in years gone by. A dramatic success would silence critics and reinvigorate his political reputation.

S.A. Greig, soon to be Vice Minister of Finance, and a friend of Konstantin's, shared Golovnin's apprehension, and predicted that "nothing good" would come of the affair, a conviction which appears to have been shared by almost all the members of St. Petersburg officialdom -- nor was it long in receiving confirmation. Konstantin, his wife and children left for Warsaw on 19 June, 1862, and on the very day of his arrival he was shot by a young nationalist, sustaining a flesh wound. No thought of returning to Russia appears to have entered his mind, however. To do so would have been humiliating. In St Petersburg, a service of thanksgiving was held, and of all the members of the governing elite, only Valuev and the Procurator of the Holy Synod attended.⁷¹⁴

⁷¹³ Ibid., pp 167, 170.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., pp 167, 180.

Once established in Poland, Konstantin opened universities, embraced exiles, reestablished Polish as the official language, and generally tried to implement a conciliatory policy.⁷¹⁵ In 1863, Feoktistov remarked contemptuously that, even after a tumultuous year in Poland, Konstantin was still trying to maintain Polish autonomy and refused to ban Poles from holding important governmental posts, as they had before the rebellion. Moreover, the grand duke admitted that he had done his utmost to aid the Archbishop of Warsaw, an outspoken proponent of autonomy who had been exiled to Yaroslavl by imperial decree after penning an incendiary letter to Alexander (one which he had brought to Konstantin first, thereafter refusing the grand duke's pleas not to send it).⁷¹⁶ This known affiliation with a critic of the tsar reinforced suspicions of Konstantin's political unreliability.

The success which Konstantin had been so confident of achieving eluded him. Talk of his removal circulated in January 1863, and the fragility of his position among the reformers became very dire indeed. In May, Elena informed Valuev that Konstantin's adjutant (F.F. Berg) and wife were complaining that Gorchakov, Valuev and Miliutin were "intriguing" against him. Valuev lamented that things had come to a sorry pass if Konstantin's camp was "attacking its allies".⁷¹⁷ That said, the evidence of his own diary lends substance to Aleksandra and Berg's allegations.

Open criticism of the grand duke's performance was now commonplace within the progressive camp. His motives were the subject of malicious speculation. Predictably, Aleksandra emerged as the object of a great deal of this conjecture. She was, after all, a Romanov by marriage, and if a member of the dynasty was to be perceived as a virtual traitor, then it would feel better to blame his wife for leading him astray. This is not to suggest that Aleksandra, or any other grand duchess, never warranted accusations of ambition. Indeed, at a time when women were excluded from official political activity, it stands to reason that many would seek to

⁷¹⁵ Wielopolski, *Grand-Duc*, p. 6.

⁷¹⁶ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, pp 151-152.

⁷¹⁷ Valuev, *Dnevnik*, v.1, pp 206, 227.

express themselves through their husbands. But grand dukes were, in all such instances, responsible for their own actions. At any rate, Valuev believed that Aleksandra "wanted Warsaw even more than the grand duke". And Greig, who would remain a friend of Konstantin's family into the next generation, proclaimed that she "want[ed] at all cost to be queen".⁷¹⁸ Even coming from an ally, however, such accusations remained questionable given the extent to which officialdom seemed befuddled by Konstantin's unconventionality.

Valuev considered several possibilities in his search for understanding. On 7 June, 1862, he wrote in his diary:

"The grand duke is clearly in the hands of traitors or under the influence of fear for his person, or what would be even worse, under the influence of considerations of the possibility of a separate Poland under his sceptre."⁷¹⁹

Dmitry Miliutin discovered that Konstantin was secretly transferring money abroad via couriers dispatched from the Naval Ministry, and was so alarmed that he reported the matter to the Third Section. Rumour had it that Alexander responded with a letter of heated reproach to his brother. Meanwhile, Aleksandra sent letters to the empress and Elena, reportedly proclaiming that she and her husband would rather be brought back to St. Petersburg as "cadavers" than leave Poland voluntarily. Elena's attitude toward Aleksandra was as negative as that of the rest of the reformers. Having previously complained about her paranoia, she now brought the latest gossip (i.e., Aleksandra's letter) to Valuev, adding her opinion that: "*Dès qu'il y a près de Constantine un homme capable, elle le prend en grippe et l'éloigne...*"⁷²⁰

The while that Konstantin's erstwhile allies were clucking over the couple's behaviour, his foes were engaging him in a public relations duel. This was an innovative strategy for neutralizing the power of a grand duke -- a break from the traditional recourse of appealing to the tsar. Moreover, it was hardly inappropriate in

⁷¹⁸ Ibid., p. 167.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., p. 228.

⁷²⁰ Ibid., pp 228-229, 240.

this instance, given Konstantin's own desire to establish a heroic popular image, his appreciation of the importance of public opinion, and his past efforts to open the political *milieu* to a greater flow of public input. In the event, Konstantin and M.N. Murav'ev now faced each other "in the field", with Konstantin as viceregent of Poland and Murav'ev as Governor General of the eastern provinces. Meanwhile, Golovnin and Katkov squared off in Russia proper, each trying to manipulate opinion on his champion's behalf. Insofar as the fight took place in the public arena, the issue was no longer one of ministerial control or access to the tsar, but was, rather, the right of the disputants to style themselves as true servants of the state. The winner would be the man who could best convince the public of his patriotic motives.

In Katkov, Konstantin and Golovnin had a formidable enemy. He was the editor of *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, Russia's foremost newspaper. Indeed, Feoktistov credits him with having "created a healthy [i.e., conservative and chauvinistic] public opinion". Konstantin surely did not realise at the time of his departure just how powerful public opinion would be, or how readily Katkov would be able to shape and wield it. By the end of his viceregency, however, he could no longer harbour any illusions. Years after the termination of his Polish sojourn he still felt strongly enough to complain about how *Moskovskie Vedomosti* had "fulminated against [his viceregal] policies". Aleksandra, while yet in Poland, lamented: "God knows what [Katkov] writes about us -- [it's] simply horrible... his correspondents follow our every step and misinterpret everything."⁷²¹

In a "Memorandum on the State of the Press in Russia", dispatched to London from St Petersburg in 1865, we find an interesting account of the Konstantin-Katkov duel, including evidence that the nationalists, like many of the progressives, blamed Konstantin's behaviour on monarchical ambition. It states:

"The Grand Duke Constantine was accused [in *Mosk. Vedomosti*] in ambiguous terms which no one misunderstood, of conciliating the Poles with a view to being crowned their king. His adherents... were taxed with promoting those views , and generally with favouring the separatist

⁷²¹ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, pp 137, 148.

tendencies of certain provinces of the empire, by allowing them the free use of their ancient constitutional rights... This policy was condemned as unpatriotic and dangerous to the integrity of the Empire. The Minister of Public Instruction, devoted to the Grand Duke Constantine, strove to conciliate the editor by writing him flattering letters on the services which his journal had rendered, and offering him considerable subsidy in the shape of a subscription to many thousand copies of a reproduction of M. Katkoff's leading articles, which the Minister suggested should be made. The overture was indignantly rejected, and the Minister's conduct exposed in terms which gave rise to a bitter antagonism between the Moscow editors and the party of the Grand Duke Constantine."⁷²²

Golovnin also tried to launch a positive public relations campaign. Feoktistov, by his own account, was dispatched to Warsaw by the Minister of Education (at that time still his immediate superior) on some insignificant errand which served solely as a pretext by which to throw him into Konstantin's company, in order that he might be persuaded to provide "news more favourable to the grand duke".

Naturally, he refused this commission, soon thereafter leaving the Ministry.⁷²³

Finally, Golovnin undertook to publish two propaganda brochures, which were distributed primarily within institutions of higher education. This, then, represented a departure from the earlier effort to reach a broad portion of the population through newspaper articles. The first brochure, *"La question polonaise au point de vue de la Pologne, de la Russie et de l'Europe"*, appeared in 1863 while Konstantin was still Viceroy.⁷²⁴ Feoktistov knew of its existence, but, oddly, Valuev did not, noting only the 1864 publication of *"Que fera-t-on de la Pologne"*, which he described as "the only publication, the only voice... in defence of the grand duke".⁷²⁵

If these materials had any beneficial effect, it was surely outweighed by the public scandal which ensued when Golovnin's connection to them came to light. This, after all, was an imperial minister appealing to a group considered highly politically suspect, in favour of Polish autonomy! Golovnin rushed to take responsibility for the brochures, insisting to Alexander that he had "rendered a bad service to Konstantin"⁷²⁶ (though it seems unlikely that Konstantin was entirely

⁷²² Lieven, *Foreign Affairs*, v.1, doc. 62, p. 85 ("Memorandum on the State of the Press in Russia", dispatched from St. Petersburg to London, 1865).

⁷²³ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 195.

⁷²⁴ Ibid., p. 155.

⁷²⁵ Valuev, *Dnevnik*, v.1, p. 419.

⁷²⁶ Ibid., p. 419.

innocent). Writing over two decades later, A.G. Troinitsky would criticise Golovnin for trying to serve two masters, i.e., acting "on the instructions" of the grand duke while holding a governmental post,⁷²⁷ thus making it clear that he believed Konstantin to have been engaged in the pursuit of interests independent of the tsar's. As bad as it was for a minister to behave in such a way, for a grand duke to do so was nearly unthinkable, and the willingness of men like Feoktistov to accept Golovnin's confession, despite their antipathy toward Konstantin, bears witness to their reluctance to go too far in their criticism of any blood member of the dynasty.

On 2 July, 1863, just over a year after Konstantin's arrival in Warsaw, a decision was taken to recall him in the event of the outbreak of war in Poland. Three days later, Alexander asked Valuev to read a letter which he had written to Konstantin concerning the money secreted abroad "and several other issues". Then, on 1 August, the Emperor summoned his brother to the capital for a personal conference, and Konstantin's foes anticipated his dismissal.⁷²⁸

Feoktistov's visit to Warsaw occurred around this time, and provides us with a valuable perspective. He was an excellent representative of the professional service mentality which existed within nationalist and progressive camps alike insofar as each harboured men who saw themselves as the state's champions. He resented Konstantin's presence within the service *milieu*, and based his criticism upon the the grand duke's unprofessional conduct. He took offence at the condescending treatment he received from Berg, who, behaving as a kind of grand ducal retainer (as opposed to Golovnin, who was a political lieutenant), rejected Feoktistov's claim to status through professional standing, and expressed his indignation that such a non-entity could refuse to do Konstantin's bidding, "when the grand duke had done me the honour of demanding my service". Konstantin, for his part, was at pains to relate to Feoktistov as one professional to another, using the same interpersonal skills which he had employed so effectively in the emancipation effort. But

⁷²⁷ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 161.

⁷²⁸ Valuev, *Dnevnik*, v.1, pp 234, 240.

Feoktistov was as firmly entrenched in his prejudices as was Berg, and Konstantin's attempts to "fit in" only increased his condescension.⁷²⁹

Insofar as Konstantin desired to live up to his own interpretation of the Petrine ideal, he undoubtedly felt compelled to show Russia's increasingly self-important service elite that grand dukes, too, could play a beneficial role, and, in a broader sense, to convince the public as a whole that he was a man of vision, and ability. If, however, he equated Petrine dynamism with a liberal philosophy, the majority of his fellow citizens by now, seemingly, did not. The man who was emerging to claim the patriot-hero's role which Konstantin so coveted, was none other than Murav'ev. While the mainstream Russian press viewed the grand duke's pacificatory policy "as a direct indulgence to the Poles", Murav'ev's chauvinistic stance kindled pride. Public opinion declared Murav'ev a "patriot *par excellence*", and Konstantin "almost a traitor".⁷³⁰

Having received the tsar's summons, Konstantin invited Feoktistov to travel with him, and asked why he should be so reviled while Murav'ev was lauded. This seems an odd question coming from a man of his sophistication. It was not merely his personal foes who jeered him this time, however, but public opinion itself, and the accusation of ambition traditionally levelled against a "second son" gave way to one which clearly both disturbed and amazed Konstantin, i.e., that he was unpatriotic. *Moskovskie Vedomosti* had even accused his wife of adorning herself in the "Polish national colours" when she wore a red cloak! Six years later, upon meeting Katkov face to face, Konstantin apparently felt no need to defend his political philosophy, but rushed to assure his former accuser of his devotion to the state, proclaiming: "You probably ascribed bad intentions to me, but I love Russia and value her might no less than any other."⁷³¹

⁷²⁹ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, pp 152, 195.

⁷³⁰ Ibid., p. 153.

⁷³¹ Ibid., pp 148-149.

Power and reputation were both at stake in Konstantin's rivalry with Murav'ev, and as the grand ducal train approached Vil'no, Feoktistov noticed that Konstantin grew increasingly anxious. An adjutant informed him that the grand duke feared a public snub from Murav'ev, and, indeed, the Governor-General's representatives met the grand duke on the platform with news that their chief was indisposed. Later, however, Murav'ev would declare:

"The general indignation and, I can even say, suspicion, of all the Russian people and the troops themselves toward the grand duke and his management of affairs was so great that I did not consider it appropriate, as the chief of the region, to receive His Highness personally."⁷³²

Murav'ev wished, at all costs, to avoid a scene, and surely realised that to be treated disrespectfully by Konstantin would have damaged his heroic image. In fact, even assuming a lack of malice on the grand duke's part, his status as a Romanov would have required Murav'ev to render conspicuous deference (this being one of those ineradicable advantages which made grand dukes so unwelcome in the service *milieu*). In snubbing Konstantin, Murav'ev risked offending the tsar, but clearly believed that the grand duke's unpopularity with the public was the force most likely to carry the day.

Konstantin was enraged. He treated the Governor General's representatives rudely, refused to greet the honour guard or partake of the buffet which had been laid out for him, and invited none of the local officials to tea. More tellingly, finding himself ill-used, he instantly shed his professional veneer and brought the full weight of his royal status to bear, roaring at those assembled:

"Tell General Murav'ev that when a grand duke, the brother of the sovereign and the Viceroy of the Kingdom of Poland passes through [his domain], then he could take some pains to come out and meet him instead of pleading illness."⁷³³

In truth, Murav'ev, while correctly gauging Konstantin's political decline, had underestimated the strength of the fraternal bond. When the viceregal train reached Tsarskoe Selo, Alexander stood on the platform. He wrapped his brother in a long

⁷³² Ibid., p. 160.

⁷³³ Ibid., p. 155.

embrace and kissed him, in a scene reminiscent of that which had followed Konstantin's spat with Orlov in 1858. Feoktistov wrote: "Obviously this was done with the aim of heartening the grand duke, upon whom the public looked as one infected with plague."⁷³⁴ One suspects as well that, however mindful Alexander may have been toward public opinion, he yet wished to demonstrate his defiance of its machinations, and found it unacceptable to allow non-royal servitors to gloat over the misfortunes of a Romanov. Of course, it was not possible to permit such feelings to interfere too deeply with actual policy. When, on 16 August, a conference was held to discuss Poland and the eastern provinces, Murav'ev received an increase in his territorial authority, despite Konstantin's indignation.⁷³⁵

Throughout this period, Konstantin's motives continued to be the subject of much speculation. Aleksandra denied that her husband desired a throne. The Poles had offered one, but he had refused it.⁷³⁶ This subject was touched upon by a certain Colonel Stanton who, reporting to Earl Russell in April 1863, noted that M. Wenglewski, upon resigning his post in the Polish Council of State, had informed Konstantin that there were only two possible solutions to Poland's difficulties: that the crown of an independent kingdom should be conferred upon a Romanov, or that Western Europe should intervene on Poland's behalf. Both proposals were dismissed by the grand duke.⁷³⁷ Unlike his namesake uncle, Konstantin had never developed a Polish identity to divide his loyalties, even superficially, and whatever his monarchical ambitions might have been, he remained bound to Alexander and Russia.

When castigating Murav'ev, Konstantin struck a progressive pose, recognizing, as well, the need to undermine his opponent's claim to supreme patriotism. He accused him of disregarding Russia's interests in his quest for popularity. Murav'ev's extreme severity won him praise, as intended, but the resulting mess

⁷³⁴ Ibid., p. 155.

⁷³⁵ Valuev, *Dnevnik*, v.1, p. 243.

⁷³⁶ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 149.

⁷³⁷ Lieven, *Foreign Affairs*, Part 1, Series A, v. 1, pp 36-37.

would have to be dealt with by someone else, leaving the grand duke to query:

"Really, do such people think about the future?"⁷³⁸

Konstantin's own ideals, like his motives, remained obscure to many observers. Feoktistov expressed "great amazement" at how quickly he yielded to argument during their journey from Warsaw to St Petersburg. He conceded, for instance, that the Poles were a sorry lot, and even desired to obtain P.A. Shuvalov, the head of the Third Section, as his chief of gendarmes in Poland (Shuvalov refused the post).⁷³⁹ It is, of course, possible that after having been shot and reviled in Warsaw, Konstantin's opinion of the Poles had changed. Beyond which, the relentless criticism directed toward him from Russia undoubtedly took its toll. This, then, was the moment of truth, wherein he would be called upon to demonstrate whether a grand duke could be tough enough to survive the pressure of real political life. By and large, those following the course of events (not all of whom were inimical toward Konstantin), perceived that he was failing. His mental state appeared to have deteriorated, and his behaviour had grown more erratic. Prince N.A. Orlov, a childhood friend, was so disturbed by Konstantin's apparent inability to cope, that he left his diplomatic post in Belgium, journeying to Warsaw with the hope of "lead[ing] the grand duke out of a difficult situation..." Once there he only exacerbated matters, taking it upon himself to enter into negotiations which ultimately involved even Napoleon III. All of this was done "without the knowledge of the sovereign and the Minister of Foreign Affairs", and, it goes without saying, "greatly irritated" Alexander.⁷⁴⁰ Moreover, whether or not Konstantin was aware of Orlov's activities, they undoubtedly bolstered suspicions that he was not his own master. After witnessing his outburst over Murav'ev's expanded authority in August 1863, Valuev lamented:

⁷³⁸ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 152.

⁷³⁹ Ibid., pp 151-152; Valuev, *Dnevnik*, v.1, p. 228.

⁷⁴⁰ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, pp 53-54.

"...the Kingdom of Poland is in these hands at such a moment! I don't understand what has happened to him. He was intelligent and business-like before, despite his shortcomings. Into whose hands did he fall?"⁷⁴¹

Aleksandra and Golovnin continued to attract the lion's share of the suspicion. Feoktistov, without levelling any specific accusation, remarked that she was an overbearing woman, eager to discuss politics.⁷⁴² Katkov claimed that Konstantin had never intended "to play that shameful role by which he had sullied his name in Warsaw", but that Golovnin had clouded his mind with "liberalism" and "behind [Konstantin's] back" had "communicated with... all our enemies and the ringleaders of European revolution... I am firmly convinced that Golovnin [maintained] the closest relations with foreign revolutionaries." His ultimate aim, like that attributed to Aleksandra, was monarchical power. He had intended "to lead the country to a fundamental revolution in order to place g.d. Konstantin on the throne" so that he, Golovnin, could "rule in his name"!⁷⁴³

Much later, Feoktistov would wonder whether Konstantin had received secret "instructions" from St Petersburg, reflecting a reluctance on Alexander's part to take a firm stance with the Poles. In this scenario Konstantin emerges as the loyal brother, voluntarily accepting the role of scapegoat.⁷⁴⁴ As we have seen, this would not have been an unprecedented task for a grand duke, although it is curious that Feoktistov, a man with little sympathy for Konstantin, would acquit the grand duke at the tsar's expense under any circumstances.

Konstantin remained determined to defend his viceregal position come what may. A second conference was held on 17 August, and he promised to restore order in Poland if given additional troops, thus conveying that a certain amount of repression was, indeed, acceptable as a measure of last resort. Valuev scoffed at such "childish" promises. The two men met after the conference, and their veneer of friendship vanished, with the grand duke accusing the reformers of having betrayed

⁷⁴¹ Valuev, *Dnevnik*, v.1, p. 243.

⁷⁴² Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, pp 148-149.

⁷⁴³ Ibid., pp 130-131.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid., pp 114-115.

him. He as much as declared that Valuev was aiding the nationalists when he accused him of having blocked the publication of any article which presented him in a favourable light. Valuev promised, like Zelenoi before him, to go to the tsar with a report of Konstantin's outburst. Once again, however, Alexander showed himself reluctant to allow an official to win a moral victory over a grand duke. He informed Valuev that it was "necessary to be indulgent" with Konstantin. Under the circumstances, neither Valuev nor anyone else could be certain that the emperor would recall Konstantin. As noted, Alexander had not wanted his eldest brother to take the Polish post to begin with, but he could not now be dismissed without embarrassing the dynasty. Even if Alexander had sent him to Poland as a dupe (which seems unlikely), he had surely not anticipated this disastrous outcome. In the event, rumours were already circulating that Aleksandra had "ordered" Konstantin's entourage to see to it that he did not receive "an opportunity to agree [to his own resignation]".⁷⁴⁵

A third conference was scheduled for 21 August, and, shortly before it began, the grand duke was heard to state that he "could not agree" to the anticipated proposal of a military dictatorship in Poland, a thing which was "against his principles". When the tsar announced that a dictatorship was exactly what he desired, however, and received the support of the majority, Konstantin yielded and resigned.⁷⁴⁶ Indeed, what else could he have done? Clinging to liberal ideals would, in this instance, have brought him into open conflict with the emperor, and this was a line which he was clearly not willing to cross, any more than Konstantin Pavlovich had been willing to defy Nicholas once it became apparent that compromise was no longer possible.

Konstantin had lost the public opinion war resoundingly. Golovnin wrote that events in Poland had created "great bitterness" toward the grand duke among educated Russians, arising from the perception that he had championed the Poles "at

⁷⁴⁵ Valuev, *Dnevnik*, v.1, p. 245.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 245.

Russia's expense".⁷⁴⁷ By successfully undermining his claim to be a true servant of the state, Katkov had landed a crippling blow.

Konstantin spent the next seven months outside of St Petersburg. But when he returned in the spring of 1864, the emperor arranged a grand reception at the train station, and invited him to stay at the Winter Palace. At an official dinner he raised a toast to Konstantin and embraced him.⁷⁴⁸ The message was clear: all those who viewed the grand duke's disgrace as an accomplished fact should think again. Thus Konstantin, unlike his uncle, escaped disenfranchisement. Still, his political star had fallen, and it remained to be seen whether he would be able to flout traditional boundaries to play an independent role in future.

Murav'ev, meanwhile, had become "almost legendary". His suppression of the Polish rebellion had ensured that a "huge majority" of the public "pronounced his name with reverence".⁷⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, many reformers, despite having done their best to distance themselves from Konstantin, found their own positions slipping. Elena was accused of being in league with Herzen!⁷⁵⁰ Both she and Nikolai Miliutin suffered loss of influence after 1863, with her salon fading into obscurity.⁷⁵¹

Konstantin himself, whether out of generosity of spirit or a calculated desire to regroup, began making overtures toward his old allies. Valuev, for one, appears to have been amenable to a limited reconciliation. He called on Konstantin only days after the grand duke's return to St Petersburg and was not received, but Konstantin took the initiative shortly thereafter and approached him at Elena's salon, extending his hand, and chatting "as if nothing had happened between us".⁷⁵²

Golovnin held onto his ministerial post until 1866, the year of Dmitry Karakazov's attempt upon the life of the tsar. With his dismissal, Konstantin lost

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 419.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid., pp 278-279.

⁷⁴⁹ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 153.

⁷⁵⁰ Harcave, *Years*, p. 195.

⁷⁵¹ Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*, pp 80-82.

⁷⁵² Valuev, *Dnevnik*, v.1, p. 278.

one of his most important political footholds, and, indeed, Murav'ev has been credited with having secured the appointment of Dmitry Tolstoy as Minister of Education. According to Feoktistov, he was less impressed with Tolstoy's reactionary views than with his status as "an irreconcilable enemy of [Konstantin] and Golovnin".⁷⁵³

The conservative element had reason to remain wary of Konstantin. In 1865 Alexander appointed him chairman of the State Council, a post which was unlikely to be a sinecure in his hands. His opinions would still find official grounds for expression, and his influence would still carry considerable weight. Moreover, the emperor's support of his continued political involvement was confirmed.

Elsewhere, less than a year after having rejected the Polish viceregency, Mikhail Nikolaevich became Viceroy of the Caucasus. He would remain at the post for eighteen years, raising seven children in a "wild" region, far removed from Court. Mikhail was thirty years old at the time of his appointment, thus uncommonly young to be shouldering such responsibility. The region itself was volatile and sensitive, with continued fighting in the northwest. Many of the native groups were at odds with each other, and all were potentially hostile toward the Russian conqueror.⁷⁵⁴ A military administrator with little governmental experience would thus hardly seem the ideal viceregal candidate, but Mikhail appears to have regarded the Caucasian assignment as nothing like the political death-trap represented by Poland, and he brought a number of useful qualities to the post. His status as a grand duke was itself invaluable. A member of the dynasty, with authority over civil government and military administration, could cement the image of the region as a *votchina* of the tsar to a native population still immersed in a patriarchal-warrior culture, and therefore responsive to such symbolism.

Alexander's decision to send his brother instead of a non-royal overseer undoubtedly softened the sting of conquest. Chavchavadze writes that a "certain

⁷⁵³ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 171.

⁷⁵⁴ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, pp 74-75.

regional pride" developed from this mark of the emperor's esteem for the Caucasian peoples, and S.Iu. Witte, himself a resident of the Caucasus in his youth, concurs, stating that news of Mikhail's appointment drew an enthusiastic response. In fact, all local citizens could hope to benefit from the heightened prestige and "greater attention" brought to the Caucasus by the grand ducal presence.⁷⁵⁵ Mikhail's greatest qualification, however, was his own mild and level-headed disposition. This "most excellent and noblest of men" (so called by Witte) could be trusted to take a tolerant stance in the Caucasus, thereby freeing Alexander to worry about Poland and growing domestic unrest. And, in fact, Mikhail would receive only "minimal instructions" from St Petersburg, as demonstrated by the remarks of the British Consul, Herbert Chermiside, who complained in 1888 that Mikhail's successor, Prince Dondukov-Korsakov, was hampered in his exercise of authority by excessive centralization, being "constantly thwarted from St Petersburg", whereas, "during the late Governor-Generalship of the Grand Duke Michael, the local executive had far more responsibility".⁷⁵⁶

So far as his performance was concerned, Mikhail did not betray Alexander's confidence. Chavchavadze contrasts his military aptitude with his governmental skills, noting that he was only a mediocre soldier, but proved a "very good" administrator. In fact, his success sprang from his ability to act as a conciliatory and unifying force. Given the swirl of ethnic, religious, and territorial antagonisms present in the Caucasus, a rigid, chauvinistic, or tyrannical leader might have fanned the flame of disorder -- so, too, a man overzealous in the application of progressive ideals. Mikhail was too centred in the tsar to have become politicised like Konstantin. He had a practical appreciation of the need for gradual modernization and abolished serfdom in the Caucasus in 1863. Most importantly, he clearly considered that a supervisor's role was to delegate responsibility to deserving

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid., pp 74-75; Witte, *Vospominania*, p. 40.

⁷⁵⁶ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, pp 74-75; Lieven, *Foreign Affairs*, v.2, p. 240.

underlings, and, according to Witte, possessed "enough good sense to rely always upon Caucasian figures".⁷⁵⁷ Indeed, his rejection of chauvinism was, in a nationalistic age, extraordinary. His predecessor had advised him to "respect local customs", and Mikhail was wise enough to take this advice to heart.⁷⁵⁸ Chernside wrote: "[Mikhail] strongly discountenanced any domineering over native races by Russian officials or individuals, and was generally liked by all native races..."⁷⁵⁹

Witte was not entirely complimentary toward Mikhail. He thought him a man of limited intellect, poorly schooled in the workings of government. But these qualities were largely negated by a success which owed much to his standing as a man of "grand ducal tradition". This attitude, coming from a professional functionary, seems inexplicable. It reveals, however, the extent to which the professional's ideal of grand ducal behaviour matched the dynastic ideal. Both the tsar and his officials were pleased to see a conformist, unambitious, and dutiful grand duke fulfilling a role in which his royal status represented a real benefit, and which took him far from the capital with its competitive political *milieu*. The autocratic behaviour so typical in grand dukes had, for obvious reasons, never been considered a virtue by their colleagues. Indeed, if there was one characteristic which Witte admired in Mikhail, it was that he "always relied upon some other person". He wrote:

"...the grand duke, both in war and in peace time, played more of a representative role than an active one. Nonetheless, this does not diminish his meritorious service in the governing of the Caucasus; he left the best possible impression behind him in [that region]." ⁷⁶⁰

This, indeed, was the grand ducal ideal -- the passive supervisor, bringing the tsar's majesty to those who might otherwise forget their status as imperial subjects.

Mikhail would never face suspicion of disloyalty, but was dogged by accusations of financial dishonesty. Witte states merely that he was "rather fond of the material side of life". Of course, misappropriation of government funds, though undoubtedly

⁷⁵⁷ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, p. 26.

⁷⁵⁸ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 74.

⁷⁵⁹ Lieven, *Foreign Affairs*, v.2, pp 240-241.

⁷⁶⁰ Witte, *Vospominania*, v.1, pp 26, 39, 41.

harmful to the state, was so widespread in Russia, that it was treated as a minor failing relative to the unforgiveable sin of grand ducal ambition. Even so, it is interesting to note Witte's very typical (and by now familiar) assertion that it was not really Mikhail but his "rather mercenary" wife who was to blame for this shortcoming.⁷⁶¹ For the moment, however, we leave sinister grand duchesses behind, and move on to an examination of military reform and its impact upon grand ducal role.

IV. Military Reform

Alexander's reign marked the apex of grand ducal military achievement. Never again would the dynasty produce one, let alone two, field marshals. Nikolai and Mikhail both received this reward as a result of their performance during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. They owed their good fortune largely to brilliant generals like Mikhail Skobelev and Mikhail Dragomirov, who far surpassed them -- and rightly so -- in adulation. That said, it would be wrong to assert that the recognition they received was undeserved. After all, both men succeeded in finding the right balance between direct leadership and the delegation of power.

Our real issue of concern, however, is not performance, but the nature of grand ducal role in relation to the military reforms of the 1860s. Certainly, no other aspect of the modernization process bore such a direct impact upon Romanov expectations. It was as crucial to the grand duke as emancipation was to the nobleman who viewed himself primarily as the owner of "souls".

Even before the Crimean War there were many officers who dreamed about military reform in Russia, and recognised its inevitability. By the end of 1855, F.V. Rudiger, the commander of the Guards and Grenadier Corps, had submitted two memoranda addressing the shortcomings of the army. What would have been

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., p. 40.

dismissed under less dire circumstances was willingly considered now, and a special commission for the improvement of the military was formed. Of course, change could not be effected over night. Alexander continued to demand cosmetic perfection, but he was not so blind that he failed to recognise the need for reform, and he granted it his general approval.⁷⁶²

The primary author of the reforms was not Rudiger but Dmitry Miliutin, protege of the late Mikhail Pavlovich, and Konstantin Nikolaevich's ally. Miliutin had devoted much of his career to military education, and was a true *genshtabist*. Nor is there any doubt but that this combination of imperial favour, military-intellectual background, and membership within the generation of idealistic professionals produced a potent force for reform.

Miliutin's nemesis was A.I. Bariatinsky, a man who likewise enjoyed imperial patronage (most notably that of the tsesarevich).⁷⁶³ Bariatinsky did not oppose change, as such. Indeed, it was his desire to lead the reform effort, but his plan differed fundamentally from Miliutin's in ways which superceded the boundaries of technical advancement, and the fight which commenced between the opposing factions spilled over into the political *milieu*, where the stakes were extremely high.

Bariatinsky insisted that the Miliutinites were engaged in an effort to "undermine the foundations of the throne".⁷⁶⁴ Moreover, with the blossoming of the revolutionary movement, conservatives grew ever more fearful. R.A. Fadeev, one of Bariatinsky's allies, declared in 1872 that the Miliutin party were more harmful to Russia than the nihilists, and spoke of the "nihilistic spirit of the Russian government" which allowed them to prevail. Petr Shuvalov labelled the military reforms a "danger to the dynasty", and Bariatinsky himself insisted that the new organization of the army "diminished" the military role of the crown.⁷⁶⁵ Petr

⁷⁶² Zaionchkovsky, P.A., *Voennye reformy 1860-1870 godov v Rossii*, 1952, pp 45-46.

⁷⁶³ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, p. 30.

⁷⁶⁴ Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, pp 133-134.

⁷⁶⁵ Miller, Dmitrii, p. 228; Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, pp 133-134.

Zaionchkovsky agrees with this outlook, noting that the Miliutin programme "reflected the evolution of tsarism along the path of conversion into a bourgeois monarchy".⁷⁶⁶

In truth, Miliutin was loyal to the tsar, though his frustration with Alexander's eventual swing toward reaction was clear. The rational majority, he wrote, "is prepared to support the power of autocracy if only this power would move intelligently along the path of progress".⁷⁶⁷ The natural undercurrent of this reasoning was that, if autocracy should cease to function as a progressive force, it must become inimical to the state. Miliutin himself may not have been willing to draw such conclusions, but there were plenty of officers who were.⁷⁶⁸ And the modernization movement, with its emphasis upon educational development, critical thought, and merit based promotion, challenged the bases of the traditional mindset which did, indeed, underlay autocracy.

Miliutin's own protege, Nikolai Obruchev, was a man with links to the revolutionaries.⁷⁶⁹ In 1862 he was still one of the leaders of Land and Liberty, a group which he had helped to found, and in 1863 he refused orders to participate in the suppression of the Polish uprising, but soon thereafter emerged as "one of the closest assistants to the War Minister".⁷⁷⁰ Obruchev's success (in 1881 he rose to the position of Chief of the Main Staff) was not so much a reflection upon Miliutin, however, as it was an indication of the broad acceptance of radical ideas within the professional service *milieu* (the flow of intellectuals into Konstantin's Naval Ministry is another case in point). Miliutin was aware that the revolutionary movement had gained a foothold in the army. Indeed, in 1862 alone he was forced

⁷⁶⁶ Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy.*, v.1, p. 125.

⁷⁶⁷ Miller, *Dmitrii*, pp 142-143.

⁷⁶⁸ see, for instance, Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, pp 41-43.

⁷⁶⁹ Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 282.

⁷⁷⁰ Rich, David, "Imperialism, Reform, and Strategy", *Slavonic and East European Review*, #74, 1996, p. 625; Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, pp 125-126; see also Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 228.

to bring legal proceedings against 130 officers for seditious activities.⁷⁷¹ But his reforms could not have succeeded without the approval of the officer corps.

Crucial to modernization was the question of who would wield what authority. Bariatinsky and Miliutin, in their proposals, both ceded nominal supreme power to the tsar, but Bariatinsky singled out the Chief of Staff (i.e., himself) as the true war-time commander, transforming the War Ministry into "a purely bureaucratic support agency".⁷⁷² In peacetime, the Chief of Staff would occupy a "powerful and independent" position, while Russia's corps commanders would retain their autocratic authority over their own troops. Miliutin, on the other hand, intended the War Minister to be the ultimate authority. The existing corps would be replaced with much smaller divisions, arranged into military districts.⁷⁷³ These latter would possess considerable autonomy, but district commanders would enjoy nothing like the personal authority and prestige of traditional corps commanders. They would have "supervisory but not executive control" over their districts, being forced to share power with a district council which was directly linked to the War Ministry, functioning as a "local [ministerial] department". The council's membership would include a representative of the War Minister, and the latter would control all appointments to the councils.⁷⁷⁴

In the event, Miliutin prevailed, and his model was adopted in August 1864. Naturally, Russia's corps commanders had resisted this change of their fortune.⁷⁷⁵ Two of Alexander's brothers were directly affected by the reform, and even Konstantin, whose position as General Admiral put him beyond its reach, did not approve, insisting that it favoured administrators at the expense of field

⁷⁷¹ Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, pp 41-43.

⁷⁷² Miller, *Dmitrii*, pp 28-29.

⁷⁷³ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, p. 31; Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, p. 132; Miller, *Dmitrii*, pp 44, 47.

⁷⁷⁴ Miller, *Dmitrii*, pp 50-51, 53.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

commanders.⁷⁷⁶ He did not, however, allow this view to derail his support for Miliutin.

Mikhail's viceregal position encompassed the prerogatives of a corps commander, and he initially resisted the reform, trying "in every way possible" to delay it, and participating in "intrigues" against the War Ministry. When, however, his effort proved fruitless, he abandoned his opposition and later informed Miliutin that the reform was working "very well".⁷⁷⁷ It was undoubtedly the prospect of the War Minister's reach extending into his own domain which had aroused Mikhail's resentment. In the end, however, he had little to lose. After all, as viceroy, he enjoyed a special position. The reform did not subject him to the same loss of independence and prestige experienced by ordinary commanders. He retained autonomous authority in the Caucasus, and his right of direct access to the tsar.

Nikolai was likewise effected by the reform, but partly shielded from its results. Instead of replacing Rudiger as Commander of the Guards and Grenadier Corps, as he had undoubtedly anticipated, he found himself occupying the new post of Commander of the Guards and St Petersburg Military District. This was still the army's most prestigious command position, and the guards retained their designation as a corps. Emphasis was placed, however, on the fact that they were now led by the St. Petersburg Military District Commander,⁷⁷⁸ thus indicating that the holder of this post, though his precise position remained somewhat ambiguous, was expected to behave like a district commander (i.e., to accept the guidance of the War Ministry).

In both instances, the brothers were able to retain an official vestige of the rulership role so essential to grand ducal tradition (and, in Mikhail's case, his independence was very real, but vested in his civil role, not in the military one which was now linked to the War Ministry). Even so, it was clear that the service

⁷⁷⁶ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 4, p. 113.

⁷⁷⁷ Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 68; Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, p. 96; Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 1, p. 109.

⁷⁷⁸ Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 70.

establishment itself was gradually, but inexorably, rejecting that role. Grand dukes commanded only two of fifteen military districts during Alexander's reign, and they would not branch out into other districts thereafter, even given the increase in their numbers. When inspector generalships are added to the picture, however, the impact upon the grand dukes deepens considerably. Indeed, Miliutin's drive to consolidate the power of the War Ministry was directly inspired by these posts.⁷⁷⁹

The initial reform took place in 1862 when Nikolai's inspector generalship of engineering and Mikhail's of artillery were merged with their corresponding departments in the War Ministry, thereby forming the Supreme Engineering Administration and the Supreme Artillery Administration. Thenceforth the heads of each would receive the same status as district commanders, and be regarded as men responsible to the War Minister.⁷⁸⁰ According to Zaionchkovsky, however, Nikolai and Mikhail now held their posts in name only. The "actual" leadership came from their assistants. Of course, the grand dukes selected these men themselves, but could not finalise the appointments without Miliutin's consent.⁷⁸¹

Mikhail appears to have accepted the reform gracefully (again, his viceregal status was undoubtedly a cushion). He retained his passion for the artillery and continued to voice opinions, but seemingly did not seek to overstep the boundaries of his reformed post. In 1860, he had been named Head of Military Education. This independent post was absorbed into the War Ministry as the third supreme administration in January 1863, by which time he had already voluntarily resigned, transferring his duties to N.V. Isakov.⁷⁸² Miller writes:

"The actual reform of military education got under way when the Grand Duke Michael... was posted to the Caucasus, vacating his position as Chief of the Institutions of Military Instruction... The Grand Duke's departure made it possible to incorporate his administration into the War Ministry so that the entire system of military education could be properly coordinated."⁷⁸³

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 82.

⁷⁸⁰ *Voennaia Entsiklopediia*, "General' Inspektoryi", p. 233; Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 82.

⁷⁸¹ Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, pp 137-148.

⁷⁸² Ibid., pp 137-148, 229.

⁷⁸³ Miller, *Dmitrii*, pp 118-119.

The suggestion that grand ducal involvement in military administration was, by definition, inimical to progress is clearly contained within these words, and, insofar as such involvement did introduce an element of arbitrariness and unaccountability into the decision making process, we can only agree. At the same time, it would be wrong to state that all grand dukes were personally inimical to progress. Certainly, Miller does not say outright that Mikhail tried to halt educational reform, and Zaionchkovsky, his Soviet loyalties notwithstanding, provides evidence that he took steps to further it. Upon receiving his appointment as Head of Military Education he "quickly turned to a series of competent individuals", including Miliutin and Golovnin, for counsel.⁷⁸⁴ In October 1862 he chaired a committee on military educational reform, the progressive nature of which can be guessed from the fact that Miliutin and Golovnin were permitted to choose the members. The basic reforms desired by the War Minister were accepted and approved. Mikhail then yielded to Isakov, and through him, of course, to Miliutin.⁷⁸⁵

Ultimately, the consolidated War Ministry oversaw eight supreme administrations.⁷⁸⁶ The inspector generalships of cavalry and rifle regiments (the latter revived, and the former created, by Miliutin) remained outside of this conglomerate. Rich remarks that cavalry was excluded in deference to tradition, thus allowing it to continue as "the playground of grand dukes and Guards cavalrymen".⁷⁸⁷ Technically, these two entities, like the other eight, fell under the authority of the War Minister. But Alexander's rush to appoint two of his relatives to these posts hindered the consolidation effort. The inspector generalship of cavalry, formerly held by Konstantin Pavlovich, was now bestowed upon Nikolai (to be held simultaneously with his engineering post), and his passion for this branch of the service ensured his interference. Miliutin lamented how:

"in keeping with his character and habits, [he] did not remain strictly within the bounds of the Statute, [but] instead of [accepting] the role of inspector, began to act as a chief: he issued

⁷⁸⁴ Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, pp 121, 123.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., pp 228-229.

⁷⁸⁶ Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 85.

⁷⁸⁷ Rich, *Colonels*, p. 69.

commands... took all appointments in hand, [and] often gave orders without the knowledge of the district command staff".⁷⁸⁸

The Duke of Mecklenberg-Strelitz received the Inspector Generalship of Rifle Regiments and behaved in much the same manner.⁷⁸⁹ As a result, the perception grew among professional servitors and the public that grand dukes were parasitical meddlers.⁷⁹⁰ Modern writers have usually embraced this outlook as a matter of course. Zaionchkovsky's statement to the effect that the reactionary opponents of reform "met with sympathy amongst the members of the imperial family" is, of course, correct. Tsesarevich Aleksandr and his uncle Nikolai both opposed modernization. The tsar himself was, at heart, a lover of the old school.⁷⁹¹ Ultimately, however, Miliutin could not have proceeded without his support, and if Alexander put the needs of the army before his personal desires, then he does not deserve to be lumped together with those who were too close-minded to recognise their country's interests, nor do Konstantin and Mikhail. In Konstantin's case, indeed, such an accusation would be unsupportable. Before the reform programme had even gotten under way, he argued that regulations surrounding the Table of Ranks had become far too rigid, and should give way to a genuinely merit-based system of promotion. Ironically, however, the conservative majority in the State Council now viewed the Petrine rank system as a bulwark of the monarchy, and its destruction as a "democratic measure" which would lead to the introduction of "equality amongst peoples".⁷⁹²

The naval reforms alone were enough to establish Konstantin as a sincere progressive. In the 1860s, the Naval Ministry's reforming efforts were perceived to diminish, and it was precisely at this time that Konstantin's attention turned elsewhere (i.e., to Poland, and thereafter to the State Council). Moreover, in 1863, months after Mikhail gave up leadership of military education, Konstantin ceded

⁷⁸⁸ Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, p. 105.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 105.

⁷⁹⁰ see, for instance, Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 68.

⁷⁹¹ Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, p. 126.

⁷⁹² Konstantin, *Perepiska*, p. 221.

active control of the navy to Admiral N.K. Krabbe, who would thenceforth be recognised as the "director" of the Naval Ministry (he died in 1876 and was replaced by S.S. Lesovsky), while Konstantin retained the title of General Admiral, and the status of "principal and highest chief" of the fleet, relinquishing his ministerial rights.⁷⁹³ He had desired to take this step in 1859, but the State Council had refused to permit it, just as it had refused his bid to introduce merit based promotion.⁷⁹⁴ Thus it seems unlikely that he acted in anticipation of the Polish Viceregency. Still, the fact that both his change of position and Mikhail's coincided with the beginning of the Miliutin reforms suggests a voluntary (or defensive) grand ducal response to modernization, even given Konstantin's credentials as a reformer. Krabbe was loyal to Konstantin, and it is clear that the grand duke did not cease to exercise a strong influence over the Naval Ministry.⁷⁹⁵ Kipp remarks, for instance, that he took a direct and "beneficial" interest in ongoing reform.⁷⁹⁶

Mikhail's reputation was certainly not on a par with Konstantin's. He resisted change as often as he supported it, and could not be called a member of the progressive camp. Alexander seems to have wanted his youngest brother to take a hand in the reforms. He clearly recognised the importance of maintaining the dynasty in a position of military leadership, and if reform was necessary, then the grand dukes must be associated with it. Konstantin, of course, required no encouragement, and Nikolai was better left to a conventional military career, but Mikhail's involvement in the modernization process could be nurtured. In 1856 he was vice chairman of the commission for the improvement of the military, and a member of the committee for the examination of Baltic and Black Sea fortifications. Both of these bodies exposed him to discussion of the important military issues of the day, while giving him a place in the preliminary reform effort.

⁷⁹³ Kipp, "Konstantin", *MERSH* v.17, 1980, pp 160-162; *Voennaia Entsiklopediia*, "General' Admiral", p. 226.

⁷⁹⁴ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, p. 220.

⁷⁹⁵ Fuller, *Strategy*, p. 282.

⁷⁹⁶ Kipp, "Konstantin", *MERSH*, p. 160-162.

Without maintaining any illusions about Mikhail's status as a reformer, or even as a talented general, it is arguable that, on balance, he made a positive contribution to the military. As Commander of the Caucasian Military District he performed well, in large part due to his recognition of his own limitations, and willingness to leave strategic considerations to the men who were qualified to make them.⁷⁹⁷ It was in his capacity as a grand duke (i.e., a stand-in for the tsar), not as a military professional, that Mikhail excelled, and, while his career might have been held up as an example of the value of a symbolic dynastic presence within the military, it could not have provided much in the way of support for the apportionment of responsible military positions to grand dukes -- the very issue which was edging toward conflict. Moreover, as demonstrated by Nikolai, unless the grand dukes recognised the limits of their authority and competence, it was dangerous even to bestow restricted posts upon them.

In 1862, Nikolai was appointed chairman of the committee to review troop organization and preparation. Zaionchkovsky writes: "such a chairman, not distinguished even by ordinary capabilities, was in no way fit to head this [committee]". Therefore measures concerning the training "were either prepared away from the committee, or submitted... by the War Minister directly".⁷⁹⁸ In fact, whether or not Nikolai was as incompetent as his detractors have portrayed him, he undoubtedly would have hindered reform had not Miliutin and his allies found it possible to work around him.

Between 1863 and 1869, Alexander's brothers were consulted on subjects ranging from reform of the military courts (Konstantin) and the organization of the wartime army (Mikhail), to the adoption of new firearms (Nikolai). In February 1873, Nikolai and Mikhail made a last attempt at recovering some of their pre-reform authority when an *ad hoc* committee was convened to undertake a

⁷⁹⁷ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 74; Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1 pp 121, 123.

⁷⁹⁸ Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, pp 184-185.

comprehensive review of Russia's armed forces. The emperor presided, and all of his brothers participated, along with his two eldest sons. A conservative grand ducal bloc might have been formed but for the presence of Konstantin, who made his preference for Miliutin's position clear. Meanwhile, Nikolai and Mikhail deluged the tsar with oppositional memoranda, writing in favour of the restoration of the corps system.⁷⁹⁹

Meanwhile, Alexander composed his own pro-corps proposal. Zaionchkovsky states that "the grand dukes" applauded their brother, leaving us to wonder whether Konstantin was included in this collective. Certainly it would have been difficult for him to oppose, let alone denigrate, a proposal which came from the emperor, but, as Chairman of the State Council, he would soon prove to be one of Miliutin's greatest allies. As for the emperor's proposal, Miliutin was distraught at the prospect of seeing twelve-years' work destroyed, but could only state his opinion that the implementation of the change was impossible. Fortunately, the General Staff agreed with his assessment, forcing the tsar to reconsider. The matter was decided on 24 March, when Miliutin went to the palace to give his report to Alexander. Just as he was reaching his conclusion, the tsesarevich, Nikolai, and Mikhail entered [note Konstantin's absence]. The emperor explained that he had invited them to appear "in order to talk over the proposed organization of the army one more time".⁸⁰⁰

Miliutin made the best of the situation, insisting that if corps commanders were revived, they must be fitted into the existing system, and Alexander agreed. There was still a great danger, however. Everything hinged upon whether the revived corps commanders would be subordinate to the district commanders, the War Minister, or, as before, the emperor alone. The latter two would mean the district was reduced to an administrative entity. Mikhail and Nikolai, in a concerted attempt to preserve grand ducal tradition and privilege, "insisted" that only non-royal corps commanders should be subordinate to district commanders, and Alexander was

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid., pp 109, 130-31, 175-176, 293, 295, 297-298.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 299.

"inclined" to support this. At the final meeting, however, he declared that he had decided in favour of Miliutin. All corps commanders would be subordinate to district commanders. Bariatinsky made a last-ditch effort to change Alexander's mind, but his speech was supported by no one, and Mikhail and Nikolai, in the face of their brother's resolve, abandoned their objections.⁸⁰¹ The Miliutin reforms had survived, and, for the time being, Russia, theoretically, had no unaccountable military positions held by grand dukes except that of General Admiral.

The next great battle centred upon the introduction of universal conscription. In 1870, Alexander announced the government's intention to adopt this measure, and instructed Miliutin to prepare a draft proposal. Three years later, a special session of the State Council was convened to discuss conscription law. The tsar's brothers and eldest sons once again represented the dynasty. This time, however, Konstantin presided, thus signalling Alexander's support of the proposal.⁸⁰²

The reactionary camp's attempt to seize the initiative was not entirely successfully. Konstantin rushed to Miliutin's aid against the aggressive tactics of Dmitry Tolstoy.⁸⁰³ When the War Minister fell prey to laryngitis, the grand duke undertook to speak for him, a gesture which seemingly both amazed and touched Miliutin.⁸⁰⁴ With the firm alliance of the two men thus established, the opposition was unable to get a foothold. In his diary, Konstantin wrote despairingly of Shuvalov's insistence that all students were revolutionaries and nihilists who presented a danger to uneducated soldiers should they be integrated into the troops. He was especially distressed when Mikhail showed signs of joining the "strongly frightened minority".⁸⁰⁵

The grand dukes would not be directly affected by the universal conscription law. After all, their dynastic duty already made military service compulsory. But,

⁸⁰¹ Ibid., pp 299-303.

⁸⁰² Miller, *Dmitrii*, pp 194-95, 219-20.

⁸⁰³ Ibid., pp 221-222.

⁸⁰⁴ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 1, p. 79.

⁸⁰⁵ Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, p. 323.

insofar as it threatened to change the very fabric of military service, it had the potential to impact their future role profoundly. The crux of the matter lay not so much within the adoption of universal conscription itself, as in the details of its implementation. Miliutin insisted that the officer corps should receive educated non-noble volunteers. Conservatives opposed this bitterly, fearing that any such meritocratic measure would represent the imminent marginalization of the nobility.⁸⁰⁶ Universal conscription promised the creation of a much more egalitarian, professional, and national-minded officer corps, one, indeed, in which Romanovs who were not serving on the basis of their qualifications and adhering to the regulations, could hardly be welcome. Whether or not any of the grand dukes, or the emperor, considered this potential for erosion of the grand ducal military role (and, by implication, the legitimacy of the dynasty itself), two of them, Alexander and Konstantin, were willing to commit themselves to the passage of Miliutin's version of the reform.

On December 3rd, only days after the first reading of the Imperial Manifesto embodying the new law, Alexander gathered Konstantin, Miliutin, Krabbe, State Secretary Solsky, and the tsesarevich in order to express his support of the statute, reminding them that many looked upon the measure as one which signalled the "democratization of the army". This time it was Nikolai and Mikhail who were conspicuous by their absence. They could be excluded, though the tsesarevich certainly could not, lest a split between the tsar's court and the heir's come about. Konstantin and Miliutin took advantage of the moment to reiterate their own views, and to warn Alexander against the influence of the Tolstoy faction.⁸⁰⁷ When they parted they went directly to the State Council session, during which Tolstoy tried to attack the new law, but Konstantin once again used his authority as chairman to silence him,⁸⁰⁸ a strategy which he would follow until, on 1 January, 1874, the

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 328; Miller, Dmitrii, pp 197, 224.

⁸⁰⁷ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 1, pp 107-108.

⁸⁰⁸ Miller, *Dmitrii*, pp 223-225.

Universal Service Statute was officially promulgated. Thus, seventeen years before the birth of the last Romanov grand duke, Russia moved one step nearer to the emergence of a professional military.

Section Four: The Last Generation of Romanov Grand Dukes

I. Military Education

Miliutin, with Konstantin's help, had indeed succeeded in ridding the army of some of its most anachronistic practices, but the victory would be hollow without the establishment of a professional ethos to support the reforms. Regulations alone could not stop a grand duke like Nikolai from abusing his authority so long as he enjoyed imperial favour. Indeed, one suspects Alexander was glad to have one brother who thumbed his nose at modernization. The more Russia's educators sought the inculcation of professional principles into the future service elite, however, the less likely it would be that the Romanovs would be able to flout regulations without provoking conflict. And the more young Romanovs were themselves integrated into the military schools, the less likely they would be to treat their colleagues' demands with contempt.

Education changed profoundly during Alexander's reign. Tolstoy succeeded in limiting university matriculation to gymnasium graduates, an act which negated much of the value of earlier advances. During the reform period, however, Russia's educational institutions were awash in "liberal idealism". The training received by future members of the ruling elite was designed to inculcate the idea of serving "something beyond their own self-interest and more abstract than the mere person of their sovereign".⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰⁹ Lieven, *Rulers*, pp 119-120, 199.

Rudiger, dismayed by officers' performance during the Crimean War, led the way within the military sphere, advocating education with an emphasis upon the fostering of flexible, knowledge-based leadership, and Miliutin, once established as War Minister, embraced his plan to replace the elite cadet corps with more practical and accessible junker schools.⁸¹⁰

The corps themselves were torn by internal ideological conflict. Lieven writes:

"Corps authorities were less confident about imposing the old values, and cadets less willing to accept them. Authority wavered and was uncertain, its zigzag course inevitably causing trouble through its mixture of insecurity, concession and repression."⁸¹¹

Cadet revolts were endemic from 1858 into the early 60s, culminating in a serious Moscow "mutiny" in December 1862 which broke down official resistance to the virtual destruction of the corps.⁸¹² Thereafter they were divided into two parts -- military *gymnasia* for boys, offering only general studies, and specialised military schools for young men. These latter were open to all *gymnasia* graduates, and to those holding equivalent qualifications.⁸¹³ Military *gymnasia* programmes lasted from four to seven years, with students graduating at sixteen or seventeen.⁸¹⁴ When he entered a military school, the cadet was considered a soldier, subject to military authority and discipline. The schools were "designed to teach well-educated young men the skills needed by an officer up to the rank of colonel".⁸¹⁵ Successful completion of the two or three year courses entitled the graduate to a commission. Because these institutions remained overwhelmingly noble, many of the graduates possessed the social background to obtain a place within the Guards. Those who did not were usually qualified to matriculate at a military academy, of which Russia had three (General Staff, Artillery and Engineering), together representing the most competitive and prestigious rung on the military educational ladder.⁸¹⁶

⁸¹⁰ Miller, *Dmitrii*, pp 91-93, 106.

⁸¹¹ Lieven, *Rulers*, pp 96-97.

⁸¹² Ibid., p. 97; Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 120; Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, pp 221-222.

⁸¹³ Miller, *Dmitrii*, pp 115, 119; Lieven, *Rulers*, p. 97.

⁸¹⁴ Miller, *Dmitrii*, pp 126, 129.

⁸¹⁵ Lieven, *Rulers*, p. 97.

⁸¹⁶ Miller, *Dmitrii*, pp 123, 125.

Meanwhile, the junker schools flourished, producing "the great bulk" of Russia's officers. With their emphasis upon "real qualifications for admission", they contributed greatly to the evolution of the officer corps, and added to the development of a professional, state-centred ethos.⁸¹⁷ Progressives had cause to be pleased with the attitude in the former cadet corps as well. Intellectual training and independent thinking were now looked upon as desirable things.⁸¹⁸ The while these young men were being encouraged to think, however, and were forming a conception of themselves as guardians of their nation's destiny, the autocrat remained their master, a situation which produced confusion. The older generation may have felt the sting of transition externally, but the younger one absorbed it.

Lieven writes:

"The young Russian nobleman of the 1860s and 1870s was probably freer and of a more complex nature than his father, but also quite probably less secure, less self-confident in his values and in his treatment of others, and more tortured."⁸¹⁹

The young grand dukes also faced a world very different from their fathers'. Moreover, they, too, if they were sensitive and intelligent, would internalise something of the mercurial nature of their age. To be sure, this was a generation of Romanovs unlike any other. Alexander's Russia encompassed seven imperial households, and each *pater familias* was allowed to raise his sons as he saw fit. Indeed, Konstantin noted only one instance wherein he and Alexander discussed "the future of the new generation of grand dukes", with no specific reference made to the repercussions of family growth.⁸²⁰

Himself a member of the largest Romanov generation, Aleksandr Mikhailovich recognised the importance of this issue, writing:

"With the natural exception of the heir apparent and his three sons whose future lay in the direction of the throne, all the other young male Romanoffs expected to make a career in the army and anticipated strenuous competition from their own cousins."⁸²¹

⁸¹⁷ Ibid., pp 135-136.

⁸¹⁸ Lieven, *Rulers*, p. 97.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., p. 87.

⁸²⁰ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, 4 Dec., 1860, p. 283.

⁸²¹ Alexander, *Once*, p. 42.

As head of the family, Alexander, though he may have foregone his right to supervise his nephews' education, must necessarily bestow honorary colonelcies and determine each boy's regimental enrolments. Since multiple enrolment continued to be the rule, and since the tsar never showed any inclination to spite or slight his brothers, it can safely be assumed that he allowed the father's preference, if one was indicated, to be included in the mix. We have, as an example, a letter of 19 August, 1858, in which he congratulates Konstantin on the birth of a second son (Konstantin Konstantinovich), and informs him that he is enrolling the boy in one cavalry, one infantry, and one naval unit (all Guards),⁸²² thereby providing Konstantin with three prestigious options for his son, the last of which would allow him to prepare the boy to follow in his own footsteps.

The discontinuation of the practice of bestowing important posts upon minor grand dukes could scarcely be avoided given the conditions which prevailed during Alexander's reign. Even overlooking the fact that those posts traditionally awarded to Romanovs, were, for the most part, already occupied, they were too limited in number to provide for the emperor's own sons, let alone his nephews. Moreover, to award such a post to a child in the aftermath of the Crimean defeat and against the backdrop of reform would have made a poor impression.

So far as the early education of the grand dukes was concerned, it remained more or less unchanging. English women ruled the nurseries, whence boys departed at the age of seven. Tutors and *vospitateli* were chosen in accordance with the desires of one or both parents. Within the tsar's household, Maria Alexandrovna, as noted, oversaw the children's upbringing. Tiutcheva praised her relatively broad mental horizons. Unfortunately, however, her lack of self-confidence made her emotionally unsteady. She worshipped Nicholas's memory, but was unable to live up to such a stern role model. The notion of a sacred imperial duty appears to have plagued rather than strengthened her. When her seventh child, Sergei, was born in 1857, she was

⁸²² Konstantin, *Perepiska*, (Alex. to Kon., 19 Aug., 1858), p. 66.

consumed by a sense of impending doom, voicing her fears that the baby would drown in the baptismal font, and the dynasty itself would suffer some great catastrophe. Her foreboding is more understandable when viewed in the context of the mood surrounding the christening -- a lavish affair which included a banquet for eight hundred guests, each of whom received an expensive gift. Given the poor state of Russia's finances at that time, such extravagance provoked "great dissatisfaction" among the public.⁸²³ Sergei, after all, was not a tsesarevich but a fifth son, and it is not unreasonable to assume that some subjects were already alarmed at the proliferation of grand dukes.

The empress appears to have been especially sensitive to criticism. Herzen's open letter made her weep. She was not blind to the merit in his call for a practical programme of grand ducal education, and passed the "letter" along to Tiutcheva, who shared her opinion that, although Herzen was a scoundrel, there was much truth in what he said. The empress proclaimed that she, "better than anyone", understood "all the weak aspects, all the insufficiencies, and the imperfection" of the traditional programme, but could do little to correct them. She clearly longed for a way in which to reconcile her devotion to Nicholas with her own, more modern and gentle sensibilities. If only a man could be found who somehow combined intellectualism with a "a strong will, firm principles, faith and uncorrupted morality", she would gladly strike down "all obstacles" to bring him to her sons.⁸²⁴

An interesting parallel exists between Maria's recognition of the need to broaden grand ducal education, and the movement to provide a well-rounded education to Russia's cadets. Likewise, the similarity between her own educational ambitions and those of Paul's widow are noteworthy. Maria did not possess her predecessor's strong will, but she did what she could within her own limitations, pressing

⁸²³ Tiutcheva, *Pri Dvore*, v.2, pp 84, 103, 129, 139-141.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.*, v.2, pp 181-182.

Alexander, for instance, to allow their eldest son to attend an algebra class at the Pages Corps, during which the boy was not distinguished from his peers.⁸²⁵

With regard to the children themselves, the tsarevich undeniably received special treatment. Miliutin writes: "All care, all parental tenderness, was concentrated on the first-born heir to the throne..."⁸²⁶ Alexander did take a direct interest in Nikolai's education, and Maria favoured him to the extent of having "neglected" her other children.⁸²⁷

Nikolai was educated singly, while Aleksandr and Vladimir shared a tutorial staff, as did Sergei and Pavel. Aleksei, who had been singled out for a naval career, shared lessons with his cousin Nikolai Konstantinovich, also a young mariner. Four months after his seventh birthday, Aleksei moved to a yacht anchored near the Winter Palace.⁸²⁸ He and Nikolai made their first sea voyage in 1860 when they were both ten years old, and Konstantin proudly recorded in his diary that they had stood their first evening watch.⁸²⁹ Aleksei's *svospitatel'* was a certain Admiral Pos'et, chosen from amongst the gentleman of the emperor's suite. Pos'et, according to Witte, was a good-hearted but stupid man, and his career would be plagued by embarrassing blunders.⁸³⁰ In this respect, he appears to have represented a considerable step down in tutorial quality from the distinguished von Litke who had instructed Konstantin. Nikolai's *vospitatel'*, R.A. Mirbach, a mathematics instructor seconded from the Naval Cadet Corps, likewise was a mediocrity. At the time of his appointment he held the rank of captain, extraordinarily modest for an imperial overseer, and he would not reach admiral's rank until 1887.⁸³¹

⁸²⁵ Grebelsky, *Dom*, p. 147.

⁸²⁶ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 4, 4 Oct., 1882, p. 155; Peretts, E.A., "*Iz dnevnika E.A. Peretts*", *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, v. 8, 1925, p. 150 (Konstantin Nikolaevich's opinion cited).

⁸²⁷ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 79.

⁸²⁸ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, (Alex. to Kon., 20 Jan., 20 April 1857) pp 17-19, 27.

⁸²⁹ Ibid., diary, 20 July, 3 Aug., 1860 pp 259, 261.

⁸³⁰ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, pp 250-252.

⁸³¹ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, p. 371.

Witte calls the education given Aleksandr and Vladimir "ordinary",⁸³² and Tiutcheva relates that Sergei and Pavel were supervised by a naval officer, Admiral D.S. Arsen'ev, who possessed a strong pedagogical background.⁸³³ The boys were not enrolled in the equipage or otherwise prepared for a naval career, and Arsen'ev's appointment therefore suggests a certain indifference toward the military component of their upbringing.

Aleksandr and Vladimir studied "military science" with the St. Petersburg Cadet Corps, presumably in the same way their uncles had (i.e., on a very restricted basis). Their principal military instruction came from General N.F. Egershtrom, a professor at the Artillery Academy, formerly attached to the tsesarevich (it was he, indeed, who arranged Egershtrom's appointment,⁸³⁴ another indication of parental indifference). Egershtrom thought the boys unmotivated, and gave them poor marks. Vladimir was so plump and indolent that his brothers called him "fatso".⁸³⁵ Clearly, the rigour and patriotic fervour of Lamsdorf and Nicholas's regimes had little part in the upbringing of Alexander's sons. Tiutcheva remarks that Maria tried to maintain a dutiful severity with the boys, but here again she was seemingly not the equal of Paul's determined wife.

Tiutcheva was herself dissatisfied with this state of affairs. She identified very strongly with the Russian Empire, a thing which, ideologically, put her in much the same position as Dmitry Miliutin -- both were committed to autocracy, but neither could blind him/herself to the failings of individual autocrats, or resist the modern instinct to shape the course of the state in accordance with his/her own interpretation of its welfare. Indeed, she is credited with having fought to cement Konstantin Pobedonostsev's place within the imperial household,⁸³⁶ an act of immeasurable significance.

⁸³² Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, p. 408.

⁸³³ Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore*, v.2, pp 221-222.

⁸³⁴ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 88.

⁸³⁵ Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore*, v.1, p. 12.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*, v.1, p. 12.

Pobedonostsev began his career with the imperial children as law tutor to the tsesarevich, and it is hardly surprising that he won Tiutcheva's approval. She was not, like him, an "unyielding reactionary", but they shared a reverence for indigenous Russian culture, a cherished vision of the ideal autocrat, and an unwavering devotion to the state. Pobedonostsev joined martial attributes like "'resolution in action'" with "'a comprehensive and far-seeing intellect'" within his ideal rulership mix.⁸³⁷ Certainly, none of the Romanov sovereigns would have disapproved of the idea of a thinking autocrat. Nicholas, as noted, allowed his eldest son to be tutored by Speransky, so there was nothing unprecedented in Pobedonostsev's attachment first to Nikolai, then, in 1865, to Aleksandr, though it was the unbending conservatism, not the intellectuality, of the tutor which guided Alexander III.

Pobedonostsev, like Tiutcheva, could not help but endeavor to guide the course of state, and, in taking this duty upon themselves, both made a largely unprecedented effort to nurture the intellectual and political awareness of the younger grand dukes, whom they clearly regarded as shapers of Russia's future. Tiutcheva even took a hand in tutoring Sergei and Pavel, a thing which defied Romanov tradition, since boys past seven were supposed to be instructed only by men. When she left the Winter Palace, she corresponded with the young men, "acted upon them in the spirit of Slavophilism, and acquainted them with Slavophile publicism".⁸³⁸

Pobedonostsev played a similar role with Vladimir, Sergei and Pavel,⁸³⁹ ensuring that they were exposed to the great Russian literature of their day, arranging to have Dostoevsky introduced to them, and even persuading Konstantin to hire the man as tutor in contemporary history and literature to his sons.

⁸³⁷ Lincoln, *Romanovs*, pp 604-605; see also Pobedonostsev, K.P., *K.P. Pobedonostsev i ego korrespondenty*, Moscow, 1923, and *Pis'ma Pobedonostseva k Aleksandru III*, Moscow, 1925-26.

⁸³⁸ Tiutcheva, *Pri Dvore*, v.1, pp 18-19.

⁸³⁹ *Ibid.*, v.1, p. 12; see also Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*, p. 75.

Dostoevsky's conservative philosophy and his chauvinistic vision of Europe's future corresponded to Pobedonostsev's own views, and he, no less than Tiutcheva (and, one might even argue, Herzen), appears to have regarded the large and vigorous new generation of Romanovs as a political target of opportunity.

The Konstantinovich grand dukes followed the tsar's sons in the dynastic hierarchy, and, Konstantin, unlike his brother, was very involved in their upbringing, preferring that they should follow him into the navy. He must have realised how unlikely it was that any of them would succeed him as General Admiral since Aleksei Aleksandrovich had been singled out for a naval career. Even so, he may have thought it wise to try to establish a specialist niche for his descendants. In the event, not one of the Konstantinovich sons would make a naval career. Fate intervened to prevent the eldest and youngest from ever realizing this goal, and the middle two, though they followed their maritime programme into early adulthood, so greatly preferred land-based service that they succeeded in persuading their father and the tsar to allow them to transfer to the army,⁸⁴⁰ thus proving the practicality of multiple enrolments.

Like their Alexandrovich cousins, the *Konstantinovich*i adhered to the form of traditional grand ducal education, while enjoying a much less severe training regimen than their predecessors. Neither the tsar nor Konstantin had the inclinations of a martinet, and neither was primarily a warrior at heart. Indeed, Konstantin's second son (Konstantin) would be better known for his literary efforts than for his relatively modest service career.

The *Konstantinovich*i were not, generally, well served by the men chosen to oversee their upbringing. One of Nikolai's tutors was dismissed on grounds of being a "Jacobin" when his young charge was overheard quoting from a revolutionary song, and Vyacheslav's *vospitatel'*, a Cossack officer, was a man with a serious drinking problem.⁸⁴¹ If low quality educational staff impacted the

⁸⁴⁰ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, pp 145, 153.

⁸⁴¹ Ibid., pp 137, 157.

boys' upbringing, however, they surely had more to worry about in the domestic and political turmoil which plagued their parents' lives. After having endured the disruption caused by the Annenkova affair -- a situation which left him reluctant to return home -- eldest son Nikolai was next confronted with the family's displacement to Poland, the attempt on his father's life, and the relentless public criticism and hostility surrounding Konstantin's name. His brothers were too young to understand what was going on, but Nikolai at thirteen, could not have been entirely shielded. One can only wonder how a bright boy would have internalised such antipathy, especially in relation to his own future role and his Romanov identity. That Nikolai, as a young adult in 1874, would steal jewels from the empress, and thus entirely alienate himself from the family, surely reflects somewhat upon these early traumas.⁸⁴²

Konstantin's household was not the only one to produce currents destructive to dynastic cohesiveness. Nikolai, like his uncle, Konstantin Pavlovich, was never able to reconcile himself to the marriage which had been forced upon him. His wife, who was prone to religious hysteria, fell under the sway of a charlatan priest who anticipated Grigory Rasputin.⁸⁴³ A fatal wedge was driven between husband and wife, and they fought so bitterly that their sons were forced to take sides, choosing to defend their mother against attacks from their father's suite.⁸⁴⁴ In their maternal uncle, the Duke of Oldenburg, they found an alternative father figure, becoming more attached to this side of the family than to their father's kin.⁸⁴⁵ Thus, while the *Konstantinovichi* studied, travelled, played, and served with the emperor's sons,⁸⁴⁶

⁸⁴² Almost all Russian political memoirs from this period describe Nikolai's crime. For a summary of the affair see Chavchavadze's *The Grand Dukes*.

⁸⁴³ Bogdanovich, Aleksandra Viktorovna, *Tri poslednikh samoderzhitsa. Dnevnik, 1880-1912*, (E. Vavilov, ed.), Moscow, 1924, p. 145; Danilov, Yu. N., *Veliky kniaz' Nikolai Nikolaevich*, Paris, 1930, p. 20; Witte also has much to say about this subject.

⁸⁴⁴ Danilov, *Nikolai*, pp 20-21.

⁸⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁸⁴⁶ see, for instance, *Brokgauz & Efron Slovar'*, "Konstantin. Konstantinovich", v. 58, pp 651-652; Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 2, 14 Oct., 1876, p. 99.

their Nikolaevich cousins formed no such connection. So far as their early education was concerned, we know little about it (another indication of their isolation from court), though it surely conformed to tradition. Of the tsar's brothers, Nikolai Sr. was the most martial, and this was something of an advantage to Nikolai Jr, future commander-in-chief of the Russian Army, who spent his childhood in close contact with the troops.⁸⁴⁷

Mikhail's household was free of the turmoil and scandal which plagued his older brothers, but his blind devotion to dynastic tradition and the cult of the autocrat presented its own set of difficulties to his sons, who were subjected to the same kind of rigid discipline which had marked the upbringing of Nicholas and Mikhail Pavlovich. If they had lived in St. Petersburg, their interaction with their less beleaguered cousins might have pushed Mikhail toward a softer regimen. In the event, however, they were as isolated by their distance from the capital as the Nikolaevich sons were by domestic schism.

All but two of Mikhail's sons were born in the Caucasus. Fourth son Aleksandr never even set foot in European Russia until he was twelve! Small wonder, then, that the *Mikhailovichi*, each of whom bore a Georgian nickname, felt "somewhat estranged" from their relatives and surroundings when they left the Caucasus as young men.⁸⁴⁸ They were proud of their "wild" Caucasian heritage, and clung to it as an important part of their identity within an expanded dynasty which placed them at the bottom of the succession hierarchy.

There was no real effort to tie the Mikhailovich grand dukes to the region. While it was desirable to maintain a strong Romanov presence there, it was not desirable that this presence should develop into the exclusive patrimony of one branch of the family, thus undermining the cohesion of both dynasty and Empire. Mikhail's sons were enrolled in guards units, and none of them would return to serve in the Caucasus. Nonetheless, Aleksandr's memoirs attest to the strength of this link in the

⁸⁴⁷ Danilov, *Nikolai*, p. 8.

⁸⁴⁸ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 183.

brothers' own sentiments, as do, to an even greater extent, the letters sent by Georgy Mikhailovich to his daughter Nina during the First World War, many of which contain references to the Caucasian region as his true "*rodina*".⁸⁴⁹ Indeed, Nina, who was very close to her father, would marry a Georgian prince. Whatever knowledge of Caucasian culture the boys may have picked up, however, their education was strictly traditional. Duty and service reigned supreme in Mikhail's ethos. There were no intellectual Tiutchevas, Dostoevskys or Pobedonostsevs shaping his boys' thought.

Aleksandr's memoirs provide us with what is, surely, the most detailed and critical account of grand ducal education available. His initiation into the Romanov military cult at age seven was both thrilling and devastating. He rejoiced at the sight of the uniform and sword which were bestowed upon him, but quickly realised the demands which they brought. Mikhail made the link between these things and the boy's heritage of service very clear, informing Aleksandr that he would have to work hard to "deserve the honor" of donning his new acquisitions. Indeed, service would begin immediately with his transfer to the spartan quarters occupied by his elder brothers. Aleksandr responded to this news by bursting into tears, and his Cossack *diadia* suggested that if the tsar found out about this outburst, he would announce publicly that his nephew was unworthy of his honorary command. Aleksandr was so alarmed that he instantly repented, shuddering at the thought of having "very nearly disgraced my entire family".⁸⁵⁰

Mikhail's first concern was that his sons should understand the significance of their royal status. Aleksandr writes: "...we had to remember that a grand duke should never show the tiniest weakness in the presence of his inferiors". The boys had no contact with non-royal children, and, not until their father went to war in 1878 were they allowed to make walking excursions beyond the palace walls. They

⁸⁴⁹ Georgy Mikhailovich, *Correspondence, 1911-1918* (unpublished), passim.

⁸⁵⁰ Alexander, *Once*, pp 12-13.

met and conversed with local citizens whose relative poverty shocked them and, in so doing, "had the effect of upsetting all our previous plans and ambitions". Their tutors disapproved of the emotions thus aroused, and the walks were discontinued.⁸⁵¹

Mikhail granted the tutors permission to slap the boys or strike them with rulers. The necessity of instilling strict discipline clearly outweighed considerations of royal dignity in this instance, though, like Nicholas, he reserved the right to administer thrashings. Aleksandr noted that all the ruling houses of Europe shared the conviction that their sons should be "beaten into the realization of their future responsibilities",⁸⁵² and certainly a number of his near contemporaries, the future William II, for instance, received harsh treatment at the hands of tyrannical overseers.⁸⁵³ But there are no extant descriptions of beatings within any of the other *Romanov* households, a phenomenon which Tiutcheva surely would not have overlooked.

Ultimately, Mikhail may have been an unpleasant father, but he was attentive. Unless called away from Tiflis, he visited the boys' "quarters" nightly and prayed that they would become "good Christians and faithful subjects of Russia" (note the elevation of state over tsar. It is possible that Aleksandr misremembered his father's words but, even so, his own perspective is significant).⁸⁵⁴ He was, moreover, an excellent example of dutiful behaviour. The frivolous youth of the 1850s had grown to shoulder tremendous civic responsibility, and was determined to maintain high standards of etiquette in his own household. *His* sons would not be permitted to conduct themselves laxly or avoid serious conversation. Grand dukes must be able to hold their own among men of consequence. Thus the boys, from childhood on,

⁸⁵¹ Ibid., pp 25, 36.

⁸⁵² Ibid., p. 12.

⁸⁵³ see: Nelson, *Soldier*, pp 348-351.

⁸⁵⁴ Alexander, *Once*, p. 20.

participated in formal banquets where they were instructed to take "a vivid interest" in the discussion of politics.⁸⁵⁵

Mikhail undoubtedly considered it more desirable for a grand duke to be a glib interlocutor, than an intellectual. There was one anomaly in his sons' education, however -- the two eldest boys received instruction in classical languages, though these were scarcely subjects Nicholas would have considered important, either for grand dukes or for cadets. Mikhail's behaviour thus appears uncharacteristic, and his motives obscure. At any rate, one wonders if a link existed between Miliutin's insistence that the new military *gymnasia* must not include classical languages, and the grand duke's decision to omit these from his boys' programme, beginning with third son Georgy, who left the nursery in 1870.⁸⁵⁶

This anomaly notwithstanding, the boys were raised to be soldiers -- a thing which was taken for granted in the Tiflis household. Even the priest who heard Aleksandr's first confession spoke of the day when he would emerge as "a great commander", and Georgy was punished when he admitted before guests that he wished to be a painter. Within the military realm, the *Mikhailovichs* appear to have possessed more freedom of choice than their father and uncles (or even most of their cousins) had. Mikhail, like Konstantin, strongly favoured his own branch of the service. Thus the boys received intensive artillery training, often supervised by their father himself. But they knew they had other options. "My choice...", wrote Aleksandr, "lay between the cavalry commanded by my uncle Nicholas, the artillery supervised by my father, and the imperial fleet headed by my uncle Constantine".⁸⁵⁷ It is interesting to note his perception that he could only have entered a branch of the service headed by a Romanov -- a thing which harked back to the Muscovite conception that no member of the ruling house could submit to the authority of an "ordinary mortal".

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 16-17.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 15-16.

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid., pp 14-18.

In addition to intensive artillery training, the boys learned firearm and bayonet skills. Mikhail was determined that his sons should be able to cope with campaign conditions, and every night would create a din outside their room, believing that "future soldiers should [learn to] sleep despite the most terrific noises".⁸⁵⁸ Of course, such fanaticism had its price. When youngest son Aleksei died in 1895 it was rumoured that Mikhail had worked him to death, ignoring the boy's frailty, and forcing him to stand watch through all kinds of harsh weather as part of his naval training.⁸⁵⁹ Thus we are presented with a scenario in which a harsh interpretation of grand ducal duty *may* have contributed to the premature demise of a Romanov.

None of Mikhail's boys would grow up to be great commanders. Sergei would receive an inspector generalship, and Aleksandr would labour to build Russia's fledgling airforce. The others would have only modest military careers. But the upbringing prescribed by their father would succeed splendidly in one way -- with the exception of Aleksei, all the boys embraced the patriarchal/warrior outlook traditional to the Romanovs. Here was an acceptable way for affection starved children to express love and enthusiasm, i.e., by identifying themselves with the units to which they were attached in particular, and to the community of "warriors" in general. They memorised the names of generals holding the Order of St. George, not because they had been so instructed but because they found pleasure in the military cult.⁸⁶⁰ They were ecstatic when the Russo-Turkish War broke out. Eleven year old Aleksandr envied his eldest brother, assuming that Nikolai, who, at eighteen, was old enough to go, would receive the opportunity to "cover himself with glory".⁸⁶¹ One might also suppose that Nikolai's position as adjutant to Mikhail, providing grounds for the forging of a close father-son bond in an atmosphere of paternal encouragement, held great appeal.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid., pp 15-16, 20.

⁸⁵⁹ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, p. 190.

⁸⁶⁰ Alexander, *Once*, pp 27-28.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid., pp 27-28.

Aleksandr's own moment of glory was enough to arouse the jealousy of sixteen year old Mikhail Mikhailovich. The younger boy's Crimean regiment passed through Tiflis *en route* to the front, and, to his great joy, he was required to review the men whom he dreamed of addressing as "my glorious brethren" (his father would not permit it). After the review, Mikhail sneered: "They seem to be pretty tired, those soldiers of yours." This, of course, was a personal slight, since Aleksandr shared his brother's conception that the members of the regiment were, indeed, *his* soldiers.⁸⁶²

In fact, while Aleksandr dreamed of glory at the head of a family-regiment, a quiet dynastic revolution had already taken place with the entry of Nikolai Konstantinovich and Nikolai Nikolaevich, Jr. into professional military schools.

Russia's military schools were open, without examination, to *gymnasia* and university graduates.⁸⁶³ In 1876 class exclusivity was revoked, but the majority of entrants continued to come from the nobility.⁸⁶⁴ The artillery and engineering schools usually claimed the brightest boys, while the cavalry school and Pages Corps were the most socially prestigious.⁸⁶⁵ Applicants to the Artillery, Engineering, and General Staff Academies had to be officers with at least two years of service behind them.⁸⁶⁶

The Romanovs maintained patriarchal links to these institutions. During Alexander's reign, Mikhail Nikolaevich was honorary vice-President of the Artillery School, founded by Mikhail Pavlovich, and Vladimir Aleksandrovich was an honorary member. Mikhail was also an honorary member of the schools of engineering and military medicine, and the General Staff Academy. This phenomenon is scarcely worth noting, however, in comparison to the integration of Konstantinovich, Nikolaevich, and Mikhailovich grand dukes into the schools. The

⁸⁶² Ibid., pp 31-32.

⁸⁶³ Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 124.

⁸⁶⁴ Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, p. 240.

⁸⁶⁵ see Lieven, *Rulers*, 84-120.

⁸⁶⁶ Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, p. 234.

absence of Alexander's sons from this list bears witness to the connection between grand ducal matriculation and dynastic expansion. The sons of the junior branches of the family were compelled to adapt to service modernization, and to seek professional advantage over one another, while their Aleksandrovich cousins were not.

Nikolai Konstantinovich was the first grand duke to enrol as a fully matriculated student at an institution of higher education, to wit, the General Staff Academy.⁸⁶⁷ He was followed by his cousin, Nikolai Nikolaevich, Jr., who took matters a step further by entering the engineering school while yet an adolescent. Boys usually enrolled there at fifteen, sixteen, or even seventeen years of age, but Nikolai was much younger, graduating at sixteen.⁸⁶⁸

His attendance undoubtedly resulted from a combination of factors. He was a very capable and motivated boy. His father was Inspector General of Engineers and may have envisioned securing this position for his son. Finally, family difficulties made it expedient to place the boy in a programme which would demand his full attention. His younger brother, Petr, would also enter the school, and it was he, rather than Nikolai, who succeeded their father to the inspector generalship.

The artillery and engineers were branches of the service which required a high degree of professional competence. Their officers "constituted an educational and intellectual elite" within the army, but they were not "socially exclusive", being genuinely meritocratic.⁸⁶⁹ Thus, not surprisingly, these bodies harboured a disproportionate number of progressive-minded officers. Even more progressive and elite, however, was the General Staff, a development which was nothing short of incredible considering how Nicholas's antipathy had retarded the Academy only a short time before his grandsons entered.⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁷ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 2, 23 Mar., 1876, p. 33.

⁸⁶⁸ Danilov, *Nikolai*, p. 22.

⁸⁶⁹ Mayzel, Matitiah, *Generals and Revolutionaries, the Russian General Staff During the Revolution: A Study in the Transformation of a Military Elite*, Osnabruck, 1979, p. 20.

⁸⁷⁰ Rich, "Imperialism", p. 624.

The significance of the event was not lost on the military elite when, in 1876, Nikolai Jr. underwent his final examination. The young man's father and maternal uncle were joined by a throng of spectators, including the War Minister himself. Moreover, it was with genuine pride and pleasure that Miliutin, who pronounced Nikolai's performance "very satisfactory", witnessed this milestone, writing in his diary: "It remains to hope that the knowledge gained by the grand duke at the Academy will impart a serious direction to his life and service, and that he will become a capable man..." He then went on to note what benefit the Romanov presence would have on the once derided Academy and on the General Staff itself.⁸⁷¹

It would be interesting to know whether Nikolai Sr. directed his son to the Academy, or merely permitted him to attend. The elder grand duke was the antithesis of everything the Academy stood for, being a general of the old school. Indeed, although Nikolai Jr. was never openly estranged from his father, relations between them were reputed to be chilly, and there may have been an element of rebelliousness in the youth's preference for the General Staff, which he entered upon graduation, thereafter displaying staff insignia on his uniform even when engaged in other forms of service.⁸⁷² It is also possible, however, that Nikolai Sr. realised the necessity of establishing the young generation of Romanovs as professional military men.

Even before Alexander's reign the Academy offered its students a curriculum encompassing "a degree of sophistication and depth unrivalled in almost any other Russian institution of higher learning".⁸⁷³ Miliutin broadened this programme yet further, adding such non-military subjects as law and psychology, and expanding

⁸⁷¹ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 2, 23 Mar., 1876, p. 33.

⁸⁷² Danilov, *Nikolai*, p. 23.

⁸⁷³ Rich, "Imperialism", p. 625.

the course from two years to three.⁸⁷⁴ Indeed, many of the faculty members left university posts to teach there.⁸⁷⁵

Entrance requirements were raised and admission became "extremely difficult and competitive". An officer could not even apply until he had completed four years of service. His entrance examination was followed by first and second year exams which weeded out many, and of those who graduated, only the best were offered careers in the General Staff.⁸⁷⁶ A.A. Ignat'ev, himself a prominent *genshtabist* during Nicholas II's reign, demonstrates how deeply the meritocratic principle ran in the Academy when he relates how General Sukhotin (who headed the programme in the 1890s), displayed his "*demokratizm*" by arranging the students in alphabetical order when they were presented to him, rather than by regiment, thereafter snubbing the Guards officers.⁸⁷⁷ The establishment of a meritocratic elite within the Russian army was a significant development indeed. Mayzel writes:

"Competition on academic achievement was by itself a rather new value in the army life of the Russian officer, and more so when it pushed aside other values (such as noble birth or wealth) in determining one's status and became the only way for advancement... Life in the Academy erected these merits into overriding social values, superseding previously held ones and serving as the basis for friendship, for professional, social and political associations."⁸⁷⁸

The academy's exclusivity ensured its prestige. The General Staff itself was a small, but increasingly influential elite, one which would soon enjoy "more power and prestige than the Guard".⁸⁷⁹ By the time the First World War erupted, the ascendancy of the *genshtabisty* was clear, with twenty of twenty-two front commanders coming from the General Staff.⁸⁸⁰ The two military geniuses of Alexander's own reign, Skobelev and Dragomirov, were both *genshtabisty*, and it is hard to believe that this would not have impressed any youth who was serious about

⁸⁷⁴ Mayzel, *Generals*, pp 26-27, 32-33.

⁸⁷⁵ Rich, "Imperialism", p. 626.

⁸⁷⁶ Mayzel, *Generals*, pp 16-17, 23, 26, 32.

⁸⁷⁷ Ignat'ev, A.A., *Piat'desiat' let v stroiu*, Moscow, 1950, v.1, p. 122.

⁸⁷⁸ Mayzel, *Generals*, p. 29.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid., 16-17; see also Rich, *Colonels*, p. 152.

⁸⁸⁰ Mayzel, *Generals*, p. 41.

pursuing military glory. Indeed, Nikolai Jr. would model himself upon Dragomirov.⁸⁸¹

Finally, because it was so difficult to enter and complete the Academy, because there was considerable resentment toward *genshtabisty* both in the Guards and in the regular army, these men tended to be clannish and very proud of their background, with General Staff identity emerging as the *primary* identity of graduates. Mikhail Lemke, who spent most of the First World War at headquarters, would describe the *genshtabisty* there as "the priests of the General Staff",⁸⁸² aptly expressing an outsiders perception of these men as a mysterious and closed society.

The patriarchal principle, which continued to hold the rest of the army together, was as devalued in the General Staff as merit was esteemed. Students at the Academy wrote long essays wherein they were "required to have a critical approach to military events in which their teachers [had] played a major role". In the realm of history, the iconoclastic Peter I was venerated, and Nicholas criticised! Whatever flaws it might have had, the Academy was very effective at producing men "trained as intellectuals to perform intellectual work, to teach, to educate and spread ideas", thus making them especially valuable to a modernizing society.⁸⁸³ Of course, these were the qualities usually associated with malcontents in Russia. And, indeed, a decision by the crown to halt or curtail the modernization process seemed guaranteed to arouse the resistance of the General Staff, especially given the dynamism which was inculcated into the students. Here were men, (Nikolai Jr. included), who meant to make their mark on the world, and if there was one quality the graduates did absorb it was a willingness to act. Ignat'ev remembered an instructor who would loudly proclaim: "For war, the man of will is required above all!" And in his opinion neither school nor family life fostered will and firmness in Russia's young

⁸⁸¹ Danilov, Nikolai, p. 25.

⁸⁸² Lemke, M.K., *250 dnei v tsarskoi stavke*, Leningrad, 1920, Intro (no page number).

⁸⁸³ Mayzel, *Generals*, pp 26-27, 29, 32-33.

aristocrats.⁸⁸⁴ As for the dynasty, we have already noted that traditional autocratic philosophy permitted the tsar alone to exercise "will".

Many *genshtabisty* did not subscribe to the "myth" of the "Lord's annointed" underlying traditional autocracy, preferring "the myth of the army". Mayzel writes: "The idea that the army served the country was a stronger, more powerful political motivation, than the older idea of service to the autocrat."⁸⁸⁵ Feoktistov, who taught history at the Academy, looked upon it as a hotbed of radicalism, noting that:

"the quick shift from the Nicholaevan regime to the new order of things reflected ruinously not only upon the students, the young officers, but [also] on the professors... suddenly, under the influence of the new ideas, the Academy completely changed... And with the old patriarchalism and discipline undermined, people like Captain S.I. Servakovsky, hanged by Murav'ev for his participation in the Polish uprising, were produced."⁸⁸⁶

Obruchev was another case in point. So, too, Ignat'ev. As a child cadet, an adolescent page, and a neophyte Guards officer, he had revered the tsar. After having graduated from the Academy, however, he found that this was no longer the case. Of course, he grew up during the reign of the awe-inspiring Alexander III, and left the Academy during the reign of Nicholas II, and himself admits that the latter's meekness made a negative impression upon him, insisting, nonetheless, that the real catalyst was the influence of his Academy fellows, men who, for the most part, came from outside the Guards and viewed the tsar with indifference. Ignat'ev began to see things through their eyes, and was stricken by the childish fuss which surrounded the dynasty and its obsolescence as an institution.⁸⁸⁷ In fact, "revolutionary ideas" were diffuse in all the military schools. Zaionchkovsky describes incidents involving students of the General Staff Academy and the Engineering Academy in the early sixties.⁸⁸⁸ And one has only to look at contemporary diaries, such as that kept by A.V. Bogdanovich, to find numerous

⁸⁸⁴ Ignat'ev, *Piat'desiat*, v.1, pp 120, 140, 145.

⁸⁸⁵ Mayzel, *Generals*, pp 56-65.

⁸⁸⁶ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, pp 97-98.

⁸⁸⁷ Ignat'ev, *Piat'desiat*, v.1, p. 122.

⁸⁸⁸ Zaionchkovsky, *Reformy*, v.1, pp 221-222.

examples of arrests involving officers from the elite technical branches of the service.⁸⁸⁹

How much of the new thought was absorbed by the young grand dukes who attended military schools -- particularly the three who entered the General Staff Academy, with the intense group identity fostered there? To what degree was progressive thought embraced as a legitimate manifestation of professionalism? The grand dukes lived at home while attending the Academy, and received special treatment. None of them, for instance, had been a real serving officer in the army prior to admission. That said, the three Nikolais (Konstantinovich, Nikolaevich, Jr., and Mikhailovich) were recognised as intelligent men even by those ill-disposed toward the Romanovs. Nikolai Jr., despite his youth, finished third in his class at the Academy and received a medal for academic achievement.⁸⁹⁰ Nikolai Mikhailovich, a distinguished historian in later life, likewise graduated with honours.⁸⁹¹ More significantly, all three stood out from among their kinsmen. The troubled Nikolai Konstantinovich spent his adult life as an exile in Central Asia. Nikolai Jr. joined his fellow General Staff generals in forcing Nicholas II's abdication in 1917, and Nikolai Mikhailovich earned a reputation as a free-thinker, a "socialist" and a dynastic gadfly.⁸⁹²

Meanwhile, hand in hand with the integration of grand dukes into the military schools came the shift toward much slower Romanov career advancement. Konstantin remarks in his diary that when, in 1860, his son Nikolai and Alexander's son Aleksei, both aged ten, successfully completed a course of examinations, the emperor wished to promote them to the rank of ensign. Konstantin managed to persuade him, however, that, in a modernizing Russia, a

⁸⁸⁹ see, for instance, Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, pp 14, 57, 92, 284, 452.

⁸⁹⁰ Danilov, *Nikolai*, p. 22; Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 2, 1876, p. 42.

⁸⁹¹ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 171.

⁸⁹² See Nikolai Mikhailovich, Grand Duke, *La fin du tsarisme: Lettres inédites à Frédéric Masson (1914-1918)*, Paris, 1968, and "Zapiski N.M. Romanova", *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vols. 47-49, 1931.

grand duke's standing "must depend solely upon service".⁸⁹³ Thus the tsar postponed a promotion which, by the standards of the previous generation, would have been taken as a matter of course, and by the standard of the generation before that, would have appeared so absurdly modest as to be an insult to grand ducal dignity.

We do not possess complete information about grand ducal promotions thereafter, but we do know that Nikolai Jr. earned his commission in the traditional way, receiving it only upon graduation from the engineering school. The three to five year advantage this gave him over his non-royal peers represented a fairly insignificant acceleration. A.A. Ignat'ev notes that his father, by entering a unit (the LG Hussars) in which promotion was consistently rapid, was able to reach the rank of colonel by the time he was twenty-seven.⁸⁹⁴ Of the grand dukes who would have been his contemporaries we know, for instance, that Sergei Mikhailovich was still a colonel at the age of thirty-one (1900)! The ambitious Nikolai Jr. received his first regimental command (requiring the rank of general) at age twenty-eight (1884). But the tsar's son Vladimir, though nowhere near as capable as Nikolai, received command of a corps at thirty years of age (1877). Nikolai did not receive his first corps until he was thirty-nine. One would assume that dynastic growth and military modernization combined to bring about this slowing of advancement for junior members of the family.

Russia's grand dukes would continue to enter military schools -- primarily the engineering, naval, and cavalry institutions, though Andrei Vladimirovich matriculated at the Military-Juridical Academy during the reign of Nicholas II.⁸⁹⁵ Like their predecessors, Alexander III's sons remained outside of these institutions. The last grand duke to enrol was Dmitry Pavlovich, who attended the cavalry school. He did not graduate with honours, and when, in 1914, he embarked for

⁸⁹³ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, 4 Dec., 1860, p. 283.

⁸⁹⁴ Ignat'ev, *Piatdesiat*, v.1, p. 15.

⁸⁹⁵ Grebelsky, *Dom*, p. 151.

East Prussia with his regiment, he was still only a cornet, though indisputably a favourite of the tsar. Thus by the time of Nicholas's abdication, though the number of grand dukes had dwindled, the professionalization of the military was clearly reflected to an increasing extent within Romanov service.

The best "route to career success" within the Russian army of the twentieth-century was "simultaneous admission to both the most technically modern and the most archaically tradition-bound groups of the... officer corps", i.e. the General Staff and the Guards. The result of this "important paradox", however, was "the blurring of distinctions that previously defined 'progressive' and 'traditionalist' factions".⁸⁹⁶ This phenomenon certainly applied to Nikolai Nikolaevich, Jr., as we shall note in our concluding chapter. But the grand dukes as a whole, even without General Staff affiliation, likewise found themselves, during Nicholas II's reign, increasingly compelled to seek some kind of functional balance between the tradition-bound dynasty and the demands of a state oriented service establishment which sought to maintain Russia's great power status in the modern world.

II. Alexander II's Reign Concluded, 1863-1881

In April 1866, the first attempt was made on the emperor's life. Konstantin rushed to convince Alexander that he must not turn to reaction, but met with little success. Indeed, Alexander summoned his brother's nemesis, Katkov, and proclaimed "I know you, believe in you, and consider you as my own."⁸⁹⁷ Worse still was the ascendancy of Murav'ev, who secured Tolstoy's appointment as Minister of Education in 1866, choosing him because he was "an irreconcilable enemy of [Konstantin] and Golovnin".⁸⁹⁸

⁸⁹⁶ Rich, *Colonels*, p. 152.

⁸⁹⁷ Harcave, *Years*, p. 205.

⁸⁹⁸ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 171.

In truth, however, a threat as dire as the revolutionary movement was looming for the dynasty -- that of internal corruption and diminishing prestige. By the end of Alexander's reign, his eldest brothers had both abandoned their wives and set up house with mistresses, and Nikolai's wife had moved to Kiev with her iconoclastic priest.⁸⁹⁹

Of course, the emperor could not readily condemn his relatives' behaviour since he was involved with Aleksandra Dolgorukaya, whom he married in May 1880, soon after the empress's death. The couple had three children, and Alexander showed little concern for the opinion of his kin. Indeed, at a family gathering he asked his little boy if he would "care to be a grand duke",⁹⁰⁰ and this at a time when the young Romanovs, seeking to establish careers for themselves, had begun to look resentfully upon one another.

Meanwhile, the effects of parental bad behaviour were beginning to emerge in the attitudes and conduct of the sons. Vladimir and Aleksei were accused of conducting "obscene orgies" in Paris,⁹⁰¹ and Aleksei had already fathered his own illegitimate son, amid rumours that he had secretly married his mistress.⁹⁰² He would never contract a dynastic marriage, and his reputation as a playboy would lead to a serious slur upon the dynasty when, in 1908, Duma member Vladimir Purishkevich proclaimed that the grand duke's mistress had proved "more expensive [to Russia] than [the naval loss at] Tsushima"!⁹⁰³

The tsesarevich himself sought to contract a morganatic marriage during his father's reign, and during his own reign three of his cousins made such attempts, with Mikhail Mikhailovich following through. During Nicholas II's reign, three grand dukes (Pavel Aleksandrovich, Kirill Vladimirovich, and Mikhail Aleksandrovich) openly defied the tsar by marrying unsuitable partners.

⁸⁹⁹ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, p. 164.

⁹⁰⁰ Alexander, *Once*, p. 51.

⁹⁰¹ Ignat'ev, *Piat'desiat'*, v.1, p. 490.

⁹⁰² Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 115.

⁹⁰³ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, p. 446.

That Nikolai and Konstantin Nikolaevich did not insist upon marrying their mistresses, however, demonstrates that they still respected dynastic boundaries. Alexander behaved extremely recklessly in contracting a non-traditional marriage, but, as tsar, was within his rights to do so. His relatives, however, revealed encroaching disaffection when they willingly sacrificed their status as members of the dynasty to marry in defiance of the emperor's will.

It was believed by some that Alexander's impropriety may have contributed materially to the reactionary inclinations of the tsesarevich and his brother Sergei.⁹⁰⁴ Alternatively, Nikolai and Petr Nikolaevich were drawn away from their traditionalist father and their Romanov kin by their desire to spend as much time as possible with their mother in Kiev.⁹⁰⁵

The most dramatic of the grand ducal scandals was the discovery of Nikolai Konstantinovich's thievery. Alexander did what he could to minimise dynastic damage by bypassing criminal prosecution and bringing the young man before a commission which pronounced him insane. He was stripped of his military rank and exiled to Orenburg where he lived under police surveillance.⁹⁰⁶ Konstantin was dissatisfied with this outcome, and pressed Alexander to restore his son's service status and dynastic rights. The emperor appealed to Miliutin for advice, but, despite his friendship with Konstantin, the War Minister could not approve. After all, if Nikolai was truly insane, it certainly would not do to readmit him to service, and if his insanity was false, it would be the worse for the dynasty to harbour a criminal.⁹⁰⁷

Finally, there were political factors complicating Nikolai's case. His crime, as noted, suggested dynastic disaffection, and the most potent means which remained to him to express his displeasure was the adoption of a revolutionary stance. Thus,

⁹⁰⁴ see, for instance, Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*, pp 211-212, Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore*, v.2, pp 221-222.

⁹⁰⁵ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, pp 162-163.

⁹⁰⁶ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, pp 138-139; Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, pp 224-225.

⁹⁰⁷ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 1, 15 July, 1874, p. 212.

while living in Samara in 1879, he associated with political exiles,⁹⁰⁸ and certain "imprudent remarks" which he made were reported to Alexander "as proofs that he was a dangerous revolutionary". He was quickly removed to Tashkent, where he sought to establish "some sort of political alliance with a man jailed for revolutionary nihilism", and proclaimed himself "a republican by sympathy and a socialist by profession".⁹⁰⁹

Scandal and disaffection were not the only important backdrops to dynastic evolution, however. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, as the first military conflict to involve a large, multi-generational contingent of grand dukes, and the first to see a grand duke appointed Supreme Commander, merits examination. On the positive side, it presented the young Romanovs a crucial opportunity to place themselves within the Petrine scenario. Thus, of Alexander's sons, Aleksandr, Vladimir and Aleksei received important commands, and Sergei was attached to his two eldest brothers.⁹¹⁰ Nikolai Mikhailovich served his father (who was Commander-in-Chief of the Caucasian front), and Nikolai Nikolaevich, Jr., was a General Staff officer.

On the negative side, Nikolai Sr.'s appointment (as Supreme Commander) provoked a complex power struggle, with the tsar, the tsesarevich, and the War Minister all seeking to undermine his authority. Miliutin, in his quarrel with the C-in-C and other members of the imperial family, represented a professional service establishment locked in awkward rivalry with the dynasty over the future shape of the Russian military. Meanwhile, Nikolai, Alexander, and Aleksandr competed with one another for present and future ascendancy.

Nikolai, as Commander of the Guards and St. Petersburg Military District, the army's premier post, was the natural choice for Commander-in-Chief. The tsar was on good terms with him, but himself had reason for wishing to be the most

⁹⁰⁸ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, p. 19.

⁹⁰⁹ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 140.

⁹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

conspicuous Romanov in this campaign. The Crimean defeat, and the subsequent nationalist outcry, had undoubtedly harmed his *amour-propre*, beyond which he appears to have retained a burden to prove himself worthy of his father. Throughout the war he insisted that Nicholas appeared to him in dreams, a thing which not only gratified his own longings, but allowed him to claim the moral high ground in his struggle with Nikolai.⁹¹¹

The C-in-C, for his part, complained that Alexander's presence placed him in a "horribly difficult" position. He felt constrained by his brother's scrutiny -- so much so that, when the tsar arrived at headquarters in May 1877, Nikolai's closest colleague, General Dmitry Skalon, remarked that he was "already not his own man", adding "only a half-prince [*pol-kniaz'ia*] remains". Alexander himself declared: "the primary orders must be made in My name, through you..." He then proceeded to issue commands of his own, sometimes without even notifying his brother, and officers appealed to him directly, bypassing Nikolai.⁹¹²

An angry exchange of letters ensued, with Nikolai pointing out the drawbacks of the tsar's presence with the army, and Alexander accusing him of desiring his ouster. In response to the grand duke's chagrin, Skalon remarked: "I know your relationship to the sovereign well, and that you are, by conviction, a slave to his will and, in accordance with the will of the sovereign-father, [are] an unquestioning servant of the brother emperor."⁹¹³ But he maintained that, had Nikolai possessed the "character" to stand up to the tsar from the beginning, everything would now be fine.

He was certainly not the only officer to feel immense frustration with the effects of dynastic wrangling upon the war effort. Russia's commanders were offended by Nikolai's patriarchal attitude, and ready to confront him with their grievances.⁹¹⁴

⁹¹¹ Skalon, D.A., *Moi vospominaniia, 1877-1878 gg*, St. Petersburg, 1913, p. 206.

⁹¹² Ibid., pp 102, 105, 176, 331.

⁹¹³ Ibid., pp 179, 190.

⁹¹⁴ Ibid., pp 357-358.

The public, too, took a negative view of this display of Romanov martiality. They disapproved of Alexander's interference, and openly expressed their "indignation" at the large-scale involvement of the grand dukes, a thing which made it seem "as if the whole campaign is only being carried out in order to give the members of the ruling house an opportunity to adorn themselves with the George's Cross".⁹¹⁵ Thus, at a time when the dynasty had gathered its largest ever contingent of serving officers, Russia's educated citizenry were far from convinced that Romanov military activity was even legitimate!

The General Staff, at the forefront of this conflict, directed its anger primarily toward Nikolai. He was, after all, not only a grand duke, but the highest representative of rigid traditionalism within the army. Moreover, years of fighting for reform had molded these men into an aggressive collective, of a type never faced by the likes of Konstantin Pavlovich.

Not surprisingly, Miliutin and Nikolai viewed one another with suspicion. The grand duke complained that the War Minister was trying to make him the scapegoat for campaign difficulties which really sprang from the inadequacies of the General Staff, which body was itself seeking to turn Alexander against him by whispering that he wished to marginalise the tsar.⁹¹⁶ By July 1877, Miliutin was not only complaining about Nikolai's performance, but second-guessing him, together with the emperor and tsesarevich.⁹¹⁷ And here, indeed, was a delicate state of affairs.

Nikolai's rivalry with the tsesarevich represented a second front in his struggle to maintain his integrity as C-in-C. Aleksandr lacked his uncle's experience, but coveted his predominate role, and, like the *genshtabisty*, recognised the advantage to be had by exploiting the strain between his uncle and his father. Thus, in October 1877, Nikolai was informed by an envoy from the tsar that the 3rd Grenadier Division was to be immediately transferred to the tsesarevich's command, though

⁹¹⁵ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 2, 24 Sept., 1877, p. 225.

⁹¹⁶ Skalon, *Vospominaniia*, pp 196, 244.

⁹¹⁷ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v.2, 10, 22 July, 1877, pp 197, 201.

this left him with no reserve force. He did, however, dispatch a message to the heir, *requesting* that henceforth Aleksandr should "address him in all matters relating to command of the troops, or, if he found [Nikolai's] arrangements to be improper and erroneous, then [he should] take command of the army [himself]"!⁹¹⁸ This type of passive aggressive behaviour recalled Konstantin Pavlovich's negotiations with Nicholas, being one of the few strategies available to a grand duke facing the authority of an imperial better.

Aleksandr was even willing to make overtures to the *genshtabisty* if, by so doing, he could undermine Nikolai -- this notwithstanding the fact that he and his uncle shared a conservative orientation. The centre-point of their dispute was the Guards Corps. Aleksandr thought it should be his. Nikolai placed one of his own favourites, Iosif Gurko, at its head. Meanwhile, the emperor secretly agreed to give the Corps to Aleksandr, with Gurko as his chief of staff. When the moment of transfer arrived, however, the tsesarevich refused to accept Gurko, appointing, instead, the ultra-progressive General Obruchev, whose animosity with Nikolai was well-known. Not surprisingly, the C-in-C refused to accept this, resorting to considerations of merit (Gurko had a great deal more practical experience than Obruchev) and patriotism (Obruchev's past behaviour was treasonous, while Gurko had served his country heroically). After "long and sharp" telegraphic negotiations with the tsar, he prevailed at last in January 1878.⁹¹⁹

Miliutin, for his part, was cautious in relation to the heir. He was present at the emperor's headquarters in September 1877 when Vladimir arrived as an envoy from his brother, and watched with trepidation as the young man took his father aside for a "prolonged conversation". Soon thereafter, Alexander stated his decision to transfer the Guards Corps to the heir, and the 1st Guards Infantry Division to Vladimir. Moreover, the next day, the tsar began discussing the possibility of taking over the supreme command himself. Miliutin wrote: "It was clear that the grand

⁹¹⁸ Skalon, *Vospominaniia*, pp 336-337.

⁹¹⁹ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, pp 380-381, 408.

duke had come with the express object of reinforcing the written words of the heir," to wit, that if the emperor would only take charge, all would thereafter go smoothly. In such dire circumstances, the War Minister had no choice but to defend Nikolai, who may have been a grand duke and a traditionalist, but *was* a military professional in the sense of being a serious and skilled commander. Miliutin, indeed, held a grudging respect for him.⁹²⁰

Aleksandr and Vladimir were quite another matter. Miliutin was struck by their failure to grasp "all the difficulties of our actual situation".⁹²¹ They were appalled by Nikolai's caution, and eager to press the attack without reference to troop strength or other such considerations. The War Minister, who lamented the concessions already granted to the brothers,⁹²² was thus greatly relieved when Alexander refused to seize the mantle of command at his sons' urging (thereby avoiding the catastrophic error committed by his grandson, Nicholas II, in 1915).⁹²³

Though he managed to survive this threat, Nikolai was placed under such great stress during the war that his health suffered. He continued to insist that if Alexander or anyone else was dissatisfied with his performance he was willing to step down,⁹²⁴ and, in the end, that was exactly what happened. The tsar, still quarrelling incessantly with his brother, appointed Totleben to take over the supreme command, with Nikolai declaring himself too ill to carry on, and the army and public left to speculate as to what had really precipitated the transfer of power.⁹²⁵

The war brought both Nikolai and Mikhail tremendous prestige, as they were promoted to field marshal, the army's highest rank, and one which would not be bestowed upon any tsarist general again. For Nikolai, however, this honour came at

⁹²⁰ see, for instance, Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v.2, 16 Oct., 1876, p. 101.

⁹²¹ Ibid., 2 Dec., 1877, p. 254.

⁹²² Ibid., 24 Sept., 1877, p. 225.

⁹²³ Ibid., 11-12 Sept., 1877, pp 220-221.

⁹²⁴ see, for instance, Skalon, *Vospominaniia*, p. 335.

⁹²⁵ see, for instance, Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 3, 21 Jan., 27 Mar., 1878, pp 16-17, 36-37.

a great price. His relationship with Alexander never regained its former benignity, and the enmity with the tsesarevich persisted as well.

Nikolai, in typical fashion, blamed Alexander's entourage for his loss of favour. Even before the end of the campaign he anticipated great difficulty upon his return to St. Petersburg, lamenting: "they [i.e., the tsar's lieutenants] don't know what to do [with victorious and popular commanders]", and remarking that the same was true in nature. Male bees fertilised the queen and then were killed.⁹²⁶ And, indeed, the tsar was reputed to have been jealous of his brother's image as a war hero, the moreso when an article appeared in the French journal "*Nouvelle Revue*" in 1880, crediting Nikolai with the campaign's successes, and blaming Alexander for its failures.⁹²⁷ Though Nikolai's name was not attached to the piece, he was believed to be its author (a thing which he denied), and the emperor was furious.⁹²⁸

Finally, in August 1880, the tsesarevich won a spectacular victory when Nikolai was stripped of his position as Commander of the Guards and St. Petersburg Military District, with the district itself being given to Aleksandr, and the Guards Corps to Vladimir (the two parts were reunited under Vladimir's command in 1881).⁹²⁹ Nikolai retained his inspector generalships, but the loss was nonetheless humiliating. Konstantin tried to aid him by asking Miliutin to support a resurrection of the State Council's Department of Military Affairs. The original had been abolished as an anachronism in 1864, at Konstantin's own urging. He now intended that Nikolai should be named chairman of the revived agency. But Miliutin could not tolerate such a backward step, and informed Konstantin that, when it came to "service matters", he never allowed personal considerations to influence him. He would be forced to resign if the matter went any further. Faced with this ultimatum, Konstantin relented.⁹³⁰

⁹²⁶ Skalon, *Vospominaniia*, p. 197.

⁹²⁷ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, p. 36.

⁹²⁸ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 4, 25 June, 1881, p. 88.

⁹²⁹ Ibid., 12 Aug., 1880, p. 266.

⁹³⁰ Ibid., 4, 8 Dec., 1880, pp. 284-285.

So far as the younger generation of Romanovs was concerned, the war did indeed provide them with the enhanced credibility conferred by the Order of St. George. None of the tsar's sons would have impressive military careers, however, and the real break-through of the campaign was the emergence of Nikolai Nikolaevich, Jr. as the family's rising star. Having already distinguished himself at the Academy, he now bested his cousins on the battlefield and, in addition to his Order of St. George (fourth class), received a gold sabre bearing the inscription "for courage".⁹³¹

It was already clear that Nikolai was exceptionally capable, added to which his nearly Petrine height and commanding presence made him an object of admiration. To some, however, these qualities seemed ominous. Aleksandr Mikhailovich, describing his first meeting with Nikolai (whom he regarded as the principal rival of his eldest brother) responded with derision to his cousin's heroic posture, writing: "All during dinner [he] kept such an erect position that I expected each moment to hear the bars of the National Anthem." The "feud" between the two Nikolais (Mikhailovich and Nikolaevich) "brought a sharp note of discord into the relations between the younger members of the imperial family".⁹³² In truth, however, it was not the *Mikhailovich* who had the greatest cause to worry about Nikolai. The celebrated Skobelev, a man known for his own ambition, observed Nikolai closely during the Russo-Turkish War and remarked of him: "If he lives long enough, his ambition to mount the throne will become obvious to all. This will be the most dangerous man for the reigning emperor."⁹³³ In the event, Empress Aleksandra Fedorovna would spend the last years of her husband's reign in terror of this very phenomenon.⁹³⁴ Where Nicholas II was humble in appearance, Nikolai was

⁹³¹ Danilov, *Nikolai*, pp 24, 26.

⁹³² Alexander, *Once*, pp 41-42.

⁹³³ Vocikov, V.N., *S tsarem i bez tsaria: Vospominaniia posledniago dvortsovago komendanta Gosudaria Imperatora Nikolaia II*, Helsinki, 1936, p. 120.

⁹³⁴ Nicholas (II) and Alexandra, *The Nicky-Sunny Letters, 1914-1917*, Gulf Breeze, 1970, 1915 passim.

majestic. Where Nicholas showed himself unprepared to adjust to the demands of the twentieth century, Nikolai managed to cloak himself in an aura of imperial tradition, even while he sought to forge a coalition with Russia's political moderates in the summer of 1915 (thereby following the example of Konstantin Nikolaevich in grasping the mechanism of real political bargaining).⁹³⁵ Consistent with his General Staff roots, he never lost sight of practicality, razing the "old [i.e., Nikolai Sr.'s] system" of cavalry training to the ground when he succeeded his father as Inspector General of Cavalry in 1895.⁹³⁶ Finally, when it became clear that Nicholas was leading Russia to ruin, he joined his General Staff colleagues in demanding the tsar's abdication.⁹³⁷

If anyone but Skobelev foresaw Nikolai's future role as a dynastic spoiler, however, their remarks have gone unnoted. During Alexander III's reign, public attention focused upon the tsar's brothers, who held numerous important governmental and military posts. Meanwhile, Nikolai moved steadily forward, ascending from regimental to brigade to divisional commands before his uncle's death in 1894, but attracting little notice outside of military circles.

As his reign drew to a close, Alexander II began increasingly to rely upon his sons to provide the kind of support which he had once received only from his brothers. The tsesarevich's presence became ubiquitous, and Vladimir took up Senate and State Council seats, appearing alongside his brother at conferences of note, and sitting in on ministerial reports.⁹³⁸ Aleksei was included in the deliberations of the naval ministry, and appointed to the State Council.⁹³⁹ Thus,

⁹³⁵ see, for instance, Spiridovich, A.I., *Velikaia voina i fevral'skaia revoliutsia, 1914-1917*, New York, 1960, v.3, pp 154-159; Danilov, *Nikolai*, pp 14-15; Vocikov, *S tsarem*, 149, 234, and passim.

⁹³⁶ Danilov, *Nikolai*, p. 33.

⁹³⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

⁹³⁸ Konstantin, *Perepiska*, (diary) passim. Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, passim.

⁹³⁹ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 3, 9 Jan., 27 Mar., 1880, pp 201, 237.

Konstantin not only suffered the backlash of a society no longer receptive to progressive idealism, but faced rivalry and opposition from within the dynasty.

One major bone of contention was the post-war formation of a Russian Volunteer Fleet under the aegis of Pobedonostsev and Aleksandr. Konstantin resented this, and the battle which ensued was "bitter and pervasive", with Pobedonostsev's choice of an assistant director of the fleet, Captain N.M. Baranov, lending fuel to the fire.⁹⁴⁰ Baranov was a renegade naval officer, dismissed from the service in 1879 for submitting falsified reports (an accusation which was hotly contested). Both before and after his dismissal, Baranov wrote articles for *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, lambasting the Naval Ministry, and Pobedonostsev's censors never interfered.⁹⁴¹

Bumping into Baranov at a reception, Konstantin called him a "scoundrel", and he replied that he was not the kind of man who ordinarily let an insult pass, but he never allowed himself to quarrel with French courtesans or grand dukes. The implications of this slur, at a time when the dynasty was struggling with impropriety, were clear. Baranov had erred by biting the hand which fed him. Alexander expelled him from the Suite, and forced him into retirement. But he remained a favourite of the tsesarevich, who may have considered the blow to dynastic prestige deserved, and his career revived during the reign of Alexander III.⁹⁴²

Meanwhile, the internal difficulties which plagued the dynasty were compounded by the terrorist campaign which sought to destroy it. An 1879 attack upon an imperial train, mistakenly believed to be occupied by the tsar, was followed by an 1880 bombing of the Winter Palace. This latter attempt brought Mikhail and his family back to the capital for good, and immersed even the children of the imperial family into an atmosphere of distrust and paranoia.⁹⁴³

⁹⁴⁰ Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*, pp 132-133, 135.

⁹⁴¹ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 386; Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*, p. 137.

⁹⁴² Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, pp 268-269.

⁹⁴³ Alexander, *Once*, p. 47.

The Winter Palace explosion (5 February 1880) led to the formation (on 9 February) of the Supreme Administrative Commission under the leadership of M.T. Loris-Melikov, Minister of Internal Affairs. He was given unrestricted authority to stamp out disorder, but directed to look for means of broadening public support for the regime, particularly by involving "conservative elements" in government.⁹⁴⁴ Certainly, none of the grand dukes stepped forward to play the role of "hangman" and "vice-emperor" assumed by Loris-Melikov, and there is little to indicate how Nikolai and Mikhail or their sons felt about him, but Konstantin, along with the remainder of the "liberal bureaucrats", was "very sympathetic". Indeed, he, Miliutin, and Abaza would be counted amongst Loris-Melikov's "closest political allies", and their influence upon him was significant.⁹⁴⁵ (In fact, Loris-Melikov, who befriended the notorious Baranov, was also initially popular with Pobedonostsev, Katkov, and their followers).⁹⁴⁶

Thus Konstantin, through his influence upon Loris-Melikov, sought to maintain a firm hand in the direction of affairs in spite of the problems which beset him. His progressive principles remained strong. In 1874, he sided with Miliutin in favour of government "indulgence" toward disaffected students,⁹⁴⁷ and in April 1878, against the backdrop of outrage created by Vera Zasulich's acquittal, he resisted a proposal to form juryless courts.⁹⁴⁸ In 1879, he fought against the autocratic powers of Russia's Governors-General, decrying the abuses carried out by these men in their fight against local sedition. In 1880, he staunchly supported a broadening of zemstvo function.⁹⁴⁹ Most importantly, he backed the reform of autocracy itself through the introduction of limited popular representation.

⁹⁴⁴ Zaionchkovsky, P.A., *Krizis samoderzhaviã na rubezhe 1870-1880-kh godov*, Moscow, 1964, p. 91; Harcave, *Years*, p. 233; Hosking, Geoffrey, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917*, London, 1997, p.337.

⁹⁴⁵ Zaionchkovsky, *Krizis*, pp 98-99, 145.

⁹⁴⁶ Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*, pp 140-141; see also Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 3, 10 Feb., 1880, pp 217-18.

⁹⁴⁷ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 1, 3 Nov., 1874, p. 171.

⁹⁴⁸ Ibid, 3 Apr., 1878, pp 41-42.

⁹⁴⁹ Zaionchkovsky, *Krizis*, pp 69, 138.

Valuev was the first man to present a proposal for representation to the emperor. In his plan, submitted in April 1863, he suggested that certain zemstvo members should be integrated into the State Council, their role there being "merely consultative".⁹⁵⁰ No action was taken, and Konstantin embraced the cause himself, collaborating with S.N. Urusov in 1866 to produce a plan for the formation of a "special assembly of deputies", the members of which would be chosen by the nobility and the zemstvos. Konstantin insisted that no diminution of the autocratic power would result. These groups already possessed the right to petition the tsar. All he was suggesting was that the government should consult with them whenever explanations of the petitions were required.⁹⁵¹

This effort, too, went unheeded though the issue refused to fade away. In 1874, the reactionary Count Shuvalov suddenly proposed that representatives should be summoned from around the Empire to discuss agricultural and economic issues. To Miliutin's dismay, Konstantin supported this project, which was "seemingly so liberal". The War Minister's suspicions proved correct, however. Konstantin had assumed that Shuvalov meant to convene an assembly of zemstvo members, when in fact he planned an exclusively noble gathering.⁹⁵²

In 1879, Miliutin composed his own project, envisioning the transformation of the State Council into "a kind of Western European legislative body", wherein half the members would be elected by the zemstvos. It would not be able to initiate legislation, and the tsar would retain a veto, thus safeguarding autocratic prerogative.⁹⁵³ This proposal likewise failed, though it is interesting as an indication of the mindset of Russia's military professionals. In any event, by the end of the year, the War Minister was ready to advise Konstantin that no simple measure like the summoning of zemstvo deputies to the State Council was going to make a positive difference. He even declared: "Given the current mood [of the country], it

⁹⁵⁰ Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 151.

⁹⁵¹ Zaionchkovsky, *Krizis*, pp 14-15, 78.

⁹⁵² Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 1, 19 Feb., 1874, pp. 140-141.

⁹⁵³ Zaionchkovsky, *Krizis*, p. 80.

would be very ill-timed for the emperor to raise the question of any reform having a liberal character." Following their discussion, he wrote in his diary: "The grand duke did not contradict me and, apparently, he agreed with my view."⁹⁵⁴ Soon thereafter, however (in January 1880), growing unrest led Konstantin to revive his own, much more modest proposal. Alexander discussed the matter with him on 13 January, proclaiming his intention to introduce some form of limited representation on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his accession.⁹⁵⁵

He asked Konstantin to chair a special conference on this matter. A series of four secret meetings followed, during which Konstantin collaborated with E.A. Peretts to broaden his proposal, stating now that the purpose of the assembly of deputies should be "preliminary discussion of new laws and not [merely] action on zemstvo or gentry petitions". Urusov, his former collaborator, reacted angrily to this liberalization, insisting that the implementation of such a measure would be viewed as "a gift or a concession", making the government appear weak. Nor were the other participants any more receptive. Moreover, the tsesarevich attacked his uncle's proposal.⁹⁵⁶

On 29 January, the group's final session, Alexander arrived to direct the proceedings himself, but the death knell of the proposal had already been sounded by the heir and his allies in the previous meeting, and the emperor declined to go over their heads.⁹⁵⁷ Finally, one year later, in January 1881, Loris-Melikov submitted his own proposal for steps toward the introduction of an elected consultative body. A discussion group was convened on 5 February, with the emperor once again present. Also returning were Konstantin and the tsesarevich. This time the proposals were generally approved, and initialled by Alexander on 1 March, 1881, with a session of the Council of Ministers set to consider them on 4

⁹⁵⁴ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 3, 3 Dec., 1879, pp 186-187.

⁹⁵⁵ Zaionchkovsky, *Krizis*, pp 84-85.

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid., pp 84, 86-88.

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 90.

March.⁹⁵⁸ Later that day, the emperor was killed by terrorists, and so, too, was the new legislation. The reign of Alexander III had begun.

III. The end of Imperial Russia and Beyond⁹⁵⁹

On 8 March, 1881, one week after the tsar's assassination, Alexander III convened a meeting to discuss the future of the Loris-Melikov legislation. Konstantin and Mikhail attended, the former speaking heatedly, and the latter vaguely, in favour of the act's retention. Vladimir insisted that Russia could only move forward, never back, a thing which so delighted Konstantin that he embraced his nephew. Alexander refused to make an immediate decision, however, and, while they waited, Loris-Melikov, Miliutin, and Konstantin all expressed their readiness to "exit the [political] scene" should reaction prevail.⁹⁶⁰

In the event, Konstantin was not nearly so willing to retire as he had claimed. With the quashing of the legislation, rumours spread to the effect that he would be dismissed from the State Council and replaced by Mikhail. On 20 March he resigned, though only under coercion. In fact, he had expected to lose the General Admiralty, but was surprised to be asked to leave the State Council, insisting that he and Alexander had never clashed over politics (!): "Therefore I could in no way have anticipated that he would remove me from general affairs of state."⁹⁶¹ After more than two decades, his career had come to an ignominious end, and his

⁹⁵⁸ Hosking, *Russia*, p. 338, Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 4, 8 March, 1881, p. 32.

⁹⁵⁹ Useful sources on Alexander III's reign include: Zaionchkovsky, Petr, "Aleksandr III i ego blizhaishche okruzhenie", *Voprosy Istorii*, 41, no.8, 1966; Zaionchkovsky, Petr, *The Russian Autocracy under Alexander III*, Gulf Breeze, 1976; Whelan, Heide, *Alexander III and the State Council: Bureaucracy and Counter-Reform in Late Imperial Russia*, New Brunswick, 1982.

⁹⁶⁰ Peretts, E.A., "Iz dnevnika", pp 133, 148-49; Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 4, 8, 16 Mar., 1881, pp 33, 36, 41; Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*, p. 155, 158-160; Konstantin Nikolaevich, Grand Duke, "Iz dnevnika vel. kn. Konstantina Nikolaevicha", *Krasnyi Archiv*, v. 8, 1925, p. 151.

⁹⁶¹ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, 19-20 Mar., 18 June, 1881, pp 43, 86.

disillusionment at finding himself suddenly "superfluous" was as bitter as Konstantin Pavlovich's had been.

It was no small thing for a member of the imperial family to fall into such a state. But, like his uncle, Konstantin had burned his bridges with *both* the new tsar and the Russian public. He had always treated Alexander patronizingly, beyond which, his progressive principles and illegitimate family could only rouse his nephew's animosity.⁹⁶²

So far as the public were concerned, Konstantin had never recovered from his defeat at Murav'ev and Katkov's hands in the public-relations battle of 1863, and never managed to shed the negative connotations associated with assertive grand ducal political activity. In the last years of his brother's reign, he had been linked strongly with the terrorists in rumours which spread throughout the capital. And In the aftermath of the Winter Palace explosion, malicious voices pointed out that Konstantin had been away in Kronstadt at the time.⁹⁶³ The tsar's death brought a culmination of these stories, the worst of which alleged that the grand duke had been involved in the assassination plot!⁹⁶⁴ Finally, when Konstantin's resignation from the State Council was announced, Miliutin noted that the public were pleased, with many still proclaiming that he had been "the hidden core of the plots against the late emperor".⁹⁶⁵

On 11 May, Konstantin departed for self-imposed Crimean exile, declaring that, as "a man of self-respect", he could not remain in St. Petersburg. In June, Miliutin headed south, and found Konstantin established on his estate, clothed in a plain shirt and trousers instead of the naval uniform which he had worn since early childhood. This, he remarked sardonically, was the appropriate costume for an "imperial

⁹⁶² Konstantin, *Perepiska*, 14 July, 1861, p. 330 and passim; Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 59; Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 4, 16 Oct., 1882, p. 156. (opinion of Mikhail Nikolaevich cited).

⁹⁶³ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, pp 13, 28, 31; Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 3, 10 Feb., 1880, p. 218.

⁹⁶⁴ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, p. 47.

⁹⁶⁵ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 4, 20 Mar., 1881, p. 44.

hermit". Konstantin admitted, that he felt himself a man "disgraced", to which Miliutin replied that the real tragedy was not the superfluous state which both of them were forced to endure, but the awful situation inflicted upon Russia by the reactionary policies of Alexander III.⁹⁶⁶ He thus defined himself and the grand duke as patriotic martyrs.

In August, Konstantin celebrated his fiftieth anniversary as General Admiral, with a naval delegation travelling to the Crimea for the occasion. He then wrote a farewell letter to his subordinates, and his career in Russia's service reached its end. He died eleven years later in 1892, aged sixty-four. Nikolai had predeceased him by one year, though in other ways, despite Alexander's animosity toward him, he had fared better than Konstantin.⁹⁶⁷ Posing no political threat, he was permitted to carry on with his inspector generalships, though he, too, spent his last years as an imperial hermit in the Crimea.⁹⁶⁸

Mikhail was the only one of Alexander II's brothers to thrive during the reign of Alexander III. Konstantin had rejected the notion that his brother would replace him as chairman of the State Council, believing that Alexander was afraid to empower any of his uncles. He thought it more probable that Vladimir would receive the post. His assessment overlooked one crucial factor, however: Vladimir was himself a strong-willed man, while Mikhail had a lifelong reputation as one ready to subjugate his will to the crown. To Miliutin and Konstantin he declared that, despite his recognition of the regime's grave shortcomings, he would not defy the emperor, seeking, rather, to "lessen the severity of [the imperial] judgement" where he could.⁹⁶⁹

The grand duke's reputation as chairman was far from laudatory. Feoktistov called him "remarkably stupid".⁹⁷⁰ A.A. Polovtsov called him "cowardly".⁹⁷¹ And

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid., 11 May, 18 June, 1881, pp 73, 86-87.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid., 25 June, 20 Aug., 1881, pp 88, 105.

⁹⁶⁸ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 69.

⁹⁶⁹ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 4, 25 June, 1881, 16 Oct., 1882, pp 88, 157.

⁹⁷⁰ Feoktistov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 257.

⁹⁷¹ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 76.

he is dismissed by modern historians as a nonentity. Amongst those who esteemed him, however, were Sergei Witte, and the liberal-minded Aleksei Ignat'ev, who praised his knowledge of "the whole Petersburg service world".⁹⁷² Ultimately, given Mikhail's performance in the Caucasus, it is unfair to overlook his contribution to the life of the Russian Empire, and unlikely that he was either stupid or cowardly, but his natural tendency to perform as a facilitator rather than a leader ensured that he would never be able to shape the proceedings of the State Council as Konstantin had done.

In fact, the tsar's preference for unambitious and/or unpopular relatives emerged as one of the compelling problems of the regime. While Mikhail floundered with the State Council (suffering two strokes, the last of which left him partially paralysed, but nonetheless retaining his position), Aleksei Aleksandrovich, a man with "no political ideas of his own" and, in general, "no serious ideas at all", wrought havoc with the navy (he was appointed General Admiral in 1888),⁹⁷³ and Sergei Aleksandrovich, with his patronizing and reactionary behaviour aroused hatred as Governor-General of Moscow. Moreover, the dynasty could no longer count upon the unconditional approval of any segment of the educated public with regard to grand ducal service. The Metropolitan of Moscow was incensed with Sergei's appointment, remarking to Bogdanovich that, since the grand duke was not a "mere mortal", he could hardly be expected to make himself accessible to ordinary Muscovites.⁹⁷⁴

On the positive side, Alexander endeavored to end the scandalous conduct which had eaten away at dynastic prestige, demanding respect and obedience from his numerous relatives.⁹⁷⁵ Punishment followed infractions, and the tsar sometimes placed his own brothers under arrest.⁹⁷⁶ To combat grand ducal "overpopulation" he

⁹⁷² Ignat'ev, *Piat'desiat'*, v.1, p.69.

⁹⁷³ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, p. 310.

⁹⁷⁴ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, p. 135.

⁹⁷⁵ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, p. 164; Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 92

⁹⁷⁶ Gavriil Konstantinovich, Grand Duke, *V mramornom dvortse*, New York, 1955, passim.

was willing to allow the members of junior branches of the family to marry morganatically, if they renounced the dynastic rights of their offspring, but he would not endure defiance. When Mikhail Mikhailovich wed illegally he was expelled from service, deprived of his appanage income, and forced into exile.⁹⁷⁷

In his determination to force the dynasty into a well-defined and dignified mold -- a reasonable goal given the readiness of the public to pounce upon any perceived Romanov flaw -- Alexander faced the difficulty of trying to impose discipline without engendering disaffection. By far the most drastic measure which he took (indeed, the most dramatic taken by any tsar since Paul's reign), was his sharp curtailment of Romanov eligibility to receive grand ducal title and privilege. From 1886 onward, only the children and grandchildren of Russia's tsars could claim these things. Great grandchildren were excluded. Thus, with a simple modification of Paul's 1797 statute, all the future offspring of the Konstantinovich, Nikolaevich, and Mikhailovich grand dukes were reduced to the second tier of the family. Konstantin was awaiting the birth of his first grandchild, and it was widely believed that Alexander's antipathy for his uncle contributed much to his decision to take this step.⁹⁷⁸ In fact, however, it is likely that the tsar would have behaved just as abruptly in the face of an imminent Nikolaevich or Mikhailovich birth, nor was the measure an unreasonable one given the problems already faced by the younger generation of grand dukes, and the potential for future instability.

During Alexander's own reign, the most prominent of the younger generation of grand dukes was Vladimir. Forced by the terrorist threat to isolate himself at Gatchina, the tsar relied heavily upon his brother in the tumultuous months after their father's death.⁹⁷⁹ Miliutin believed that Vladimir exercised an "overwhelming influence" over "affairs". He had nothing to say about the grand duke's political

⁹⁷⁷ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, p. 137.

⁹⁷⁸ Chavchavadze, *Grand Dukes*, p. 62

⁹⁷⁹ see, for instance, Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, pp 56, 60, 67; Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 4, 8 Mar., 1881, p. 36.

tendencies, but remarked with displeasure his "excessive self-confidence".⁹⁸⁰ And, indeed, Vladimir slipped readily into the traditional second son's role with the public, who soon began to gossip about his thirst for power and his maniacally ambitious wife (Maria Pavlovna).⁹⁸¹ Unlike his namesake predecessors, however, Alexander III showed himself unwilling to tolerate an assertive brother indefinitely. With his maturation as emperor came signs of strain in the fraternal relationship, and Vladimir was offered the Viceregency of the Caucasus, a post which would have ensured his long term removal from the capital (he refused it).⁹⁸²

Meanwhile, Konstantin and Miliutin, joined occasionally by Mikhail, commiserated with each other in the Crimea. The three gathered for an informal discussion on 4 October, 1882, during which:

"The grand dukes frankly stated their opinion of the abnormal state of affairs which prevails today -- the effort to destroy everything existing in our state structure, not for improvement or reparation, but simply in order to return to the former order of things -- an order already tested and found unworkable."

Miliutin himself lamented what he perceived as the irrationally spiteful attitude of the tsar and his brothers toward the progressive principles of their father's reign, attributing it to the late tsar's favouritism toward his doomed eldest son (though his marriage to Dolgorukaya might have borne as great an impact).⁹⁸³ The most noteworthy aspect of the conversation, however, was the grand dukes' willingness to criticise their nephew's government and accuse him of leading Russia astray. This was something which Konstantin Pavlovich, for all his resentment and rebelliousness, would not have done, and something Konstantin Nikolaevich eschewed during his brother's reign. That the tsar was, in this instance, perceived as antithetical to the state, and that his uncles, one of whom remained active within the government, were willing to speak thus of him in the presence of Miliutin, boded ill for the future of the dynasty, not because of any actual threat from the uncles, but

⁹⁸⁰ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 4, 10 Mar., 1881, p. 37.

⁹⁸¹ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, passim, see, for instance, p. 76.

⁹⁸² Ibid., 107-108, passim.

⁹⁸³ Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, v. 4, 4 Oct., 1882, p. 155.

because the family itself, through outside forces and connections, had clearly grown *aware* enough to nurture such critical sentiment, as dynasty and state began to drift apart. Too, Alexander's disenfranchisement of the grand dukes' future grandchildren undoubtedly contributed to their sense of betrayal, and it could certainly be argued that this measure, along with Konstantin's humiliating retirement, marked the beginning of the dynastic dissolution which plagued Nicholas's reign, sowing lasting seeds of suspicion between the centre and the peripheries.

In the event, Alexander's strength and forcefulness raised Russia's prestige abroad and negated much of the damage which might otherwise have been done by his attempt to end autocracy's role as an "agency for political and social progress".⁹⁸⁴ In this respect he resembled Nicholas I. Still, the failure of the Loris-Melikov legislation did not reflect well upon him. Bogdanovich, who was far from liberal, noted her own disappointment and that of her acquaintances, citing, for example, the declaration of a prominent Guards infantry general that Russia was moving toward a constitution and if Alexander continued to resist, the people would justly force it from him!⁹⁸⁵ It needed only the advent of a new "tsar-cripple" to thrust the dynasty into crisis, and Nicholas, lacking his father's natural authority and Alexander II's far-sightedness, proved to be such a man.

When Alexander died suddenly in 1894, it was widely felt that the dynasty had lost the one thing which could ensure its cohesiveness. Nicholas found it difficult to impose his will upon his uncles and cousins, most of whom were older and more experienced than he. Thus Witte wrote that, under the young tsar, the "whole imperial family" fell apart.⁹⁸⁶ And Pavel Aleksandrovich complained openly to his military colleagues that family squabbles had become endemic because no one feared Nicholas. Others believed that Nicholas was simply being bullied by his uncles.⁹⁸⁷

⁹⁸⁴ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, pp 410-411; Miller, *Dmitrii*, p. 5.

⁹⁸⁵ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, p. 150.

⁹⁸⁶ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, p. 165.

⁹⁸⁷ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, p. 204.

When members of the family misbehaved in Paris and Monte Carlo, Nicholas refused to bring them to account, responding angrily to those who reported their indiscretions. Meanwhile, Alexandra Bogdanovich and the members of her salon clucked over each new report of Romanov debauchery, viewing these as evidence that the dynasty was, indeed, in a state of advanced degeneration, with Russia's prestige in Europe suffering the consequences.⁹⁸⁸

The first grand ducal "renegade" to emerge under Nicholas was widower Pavel Aleksandrovich, who lived in Berlin with his mistress for about a year before thumbing his nose at the emperor by marrying her in 1902. As a result, he was not only stripped of his service and dynastic rights and exiled, but deprived of the custody of his legitimate children. On the other hand, he was allowed to return to Russia with his second family in 1914, obtained titles for them, had his privileges restored, and received a military command.⁹⁸⁹ Moreover, the two other grand dukes who married against the tsar's will, Kirill Vladimirovich and Mikhail Aleksandrovich, though punished like Pavel, were reabsorbed into the family in very short order. Notions of dynastic duty which had shown signs of strain in the nineteenth-century had thus, in the twentieth, been almost entirely replaced with feelings of personal entitlement. Moreover, when the emperor did attempt to discipline a grand duke, he was invariably set upon by other members of the family, sometimes individually, as when Vladimir defended his son Kirill by resigning his service posts in 1905, sometimes collectively, as when Vladimir, Aleksei and Pavel all threatened to abandon their duties if Sergei Aleksandrovich was penalised for his role in the coronation disaster of 1896.⁹⁹⁰

In most cases, ordinary Russians seem to have approved of Nicholas's attempts at punishment, and were incensed when grand ducal licence was perceived to go

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid., pp 204, 250, 253, 267.

⁹⁸⁹ see Nicholas's correspondence with Pavel in: *Nikolai II i velikiie kniaz'ia: Rodstvennie pis'ma k poslednemu tsariu* (V.P. Semennikov, ed.), Leningrad, 1925.

⁹⁹⁰ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, p. 203.

unheeded. The coronation incident was only the first of many debacles which the public interpreted as a grand ducal assault upon their own sensibilities and/or the well-being of the state. The tumultuous 1904-1905 period was particularly damaging to grand ducal image and dynastic cohesion, with Vladimir, as Commander of the Guards and St. Petersburg Military District, implicated in the "Bloody Sunday" massacre, and Aleksei, as General Admiral of the Navy, implicated in Russia's catastrophic loss at Tsushima.⁹⁹¹ These posts, along with that of Governor General of Moscow held by the reviled Sergei, had been distributed not by Nicholas himself but by Alexander III, and the results of his poor judgement were profound.

In the aftermath of Tsushima, Aleksei was jeered on the streets, and his palace was reportedly vandalised. He resigned from the navy and fled the country with his mistress.⁹⁹² The post of General Admiral, a mainstay of the dynasty since the reign of Catherine II, was permanently abolished, despite the fact that there were yet two grand dukes (Aleksandr Mikhailovich and Kirill Vladimirovich) serving in the navy.⁹⁹³ This, assuredly, was an victory for advocates of military professionalism, though it did not go far enough for many. A certain lady-in-waiting informed Bogdanovich of her opinion that, in order to "calm society", it was necessary to "diminish" the power of the grand dukes, "so that they would be answerable before the law".⁹⁹⁴

Aleksandr Mikhailovich was also implicated in the loss at Tsushima through his involvement in the expansionist enterprises which brought Russia into conflict with Japan, and he, too, went abroad in the aftermath of the debacle, retiring from service for a time. Sergei Aleksandrovich had no involvement in naval affairs, but the contempt with which he was held in Moscow had reached disastrous proportions.

⁹⁹¹ Sablinsky, W., *The Road to Bloody Sunday: Father Gapon and the St. Petersburg Massacre of 1905*, Princeton, 1976, p. 209.

⁹⁹² Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, pp 297, 316, 320, 348.

⁹⁹³ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, v.1, p. 310.

⁹⁹⁴ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, pp 320.

Rumours of outrageous sexual misconduct plagued him. He was horrified at Aleksei's fate. And, in disgust, he joined the grand ducal service exodus in December, 1904, after which his palace, too, was vandalised. Vladimir resigned out of protest over his son's banishment, and Konstantin Konstantinovich, Head of Military Education, left his post for a short time in response to his own frustrations.⁹⁹⁵

Sergei's death in February, 1905, at the hands of a revolutionary terrorist, was a terrible blow to the family, but it might certainly be argued that dynastic turmoil, with a significant number of grand dukes not only angry at the tsar, but willing to abandon service, was a far more potent threat to long-term dynastic survival than attack from without. Whatever their feelings about state versus tsar-centred ideology, the disaffected grand dukes were clearly unwilling to accept the demands of tradition (and law, as per the 1797 statute), to wit, that they must subjugate their own will to the tsar's. Added to this was the readiness of the public to attribute many of Russia's woes, including the revolutionary movement itself, to the grand ducal collective.⁹⁹⁶ It is an extraordinary man, indeed, who can face such antipathy without giving way to anger and scape-goating on the one hand, or self-recrimination on the other.

The 1905 revolution complicated things further, precipitating a dynastic crisis of identity. There were few citizens who looked with approval upon the middle road accepted by the tsar. Those on the left considered the reforms grossly inadequate. Those on the right believed Nicholas's regime to be hopelessly corrupted and desired a return to the pre-1905 past. Nor were they willing to bow unconditionally to the will of the sovereign (any more than the recalcitrant grand dukes), and all couched their personal discontent in patriotic terms. Ignat'ev notes, for instance, how his father, a member of the emperor's suite and the State Council, dreamed of a "strong" tsar who could restore the "monarchist order", and proclaimed that the only

⁹⁹⁵ Ibid., pp 323, 348, 353.

⁹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 320.

solution was a "civil revolution" with patriotic citizens marching upon Tsarskoe Selo, supported by the soldiers of the Guard!⁹⁹⁷

It was against this backdrop that Nikolai Jr. emerged from obscurity. He took over Russia's premier military position, abandoned as it was by Vladimir Aleksandrovich, and threw his moral weight behind the effort to persuade Nicholas to grant a constitution. Legend has it that Nicholas asked him to accept the dictatorship of Russia, to which he replied by drawing a pistol and threatening to kill himself if the constitutional concessions were not granted.⁹⁹⁸ Whether or not this version of events is correct (and Nikolai was a volatile man), he played a crucial role in the events of 1905, advising Nicholas at a time when the other grand dukes had, for the most part, forsaken him. Most observers, knowing little about Nikolai, had assumed he was as "reactionary" as his late father,⁹⁹⁹ and, to be sure, there were few who would label him a liberal (though Danilov, his closest ally, had been called an "arch red" and a republican).¹⁰⁰⁰ His foes on the right solved the mystery to their own satisfaction by placing him within the context of the second son's role, so recently vacated by Vladimir. In their eyes he was a power-hungry opportunist.¹⁰⁰¹

In fact, there was little doubt but that Nikolai was ambitious. His sincerity, however, was never disproved by his behaviour, and it seems, indeed, to have been precisely his paradoxical nature, allowing him to embody his own "fractured period of Russian history", which underlay his success.¹⁰⁰² As a child, he was "schooled" in the cult of autocracy. As a young man he was immersed in the progressive and state-centred General Staff Academy. Thus, though he writes grandiloquently, there is surely a vein of truth in Danilov's summation of the grand duke's character:

⁹⁹⁷ Ignat'ev, *Piat'desiat'*, v.1, p. 22.

⁹⁹⁸ Mehlinger, Howard and John Thompson, *Count Witte and the Tsarist Government in the 1905 Revolution*, Bloomington, 1972, pp 43-44;
Rediger, A.F., "Zapiska A.F. Redigera o 1905 g.", *Krasny Arkhiv*, XIV, 1931, p. 8.

⁹⁹⁹ Mehlinger & Thompson, *Witte*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Bogdanovich, *Dnevnik*, p. 452.

¹⁰⁰¹ Spiridovich, *Revoliutsiia*, v.3, pp 160-162; Voikov, *S tsarem*;
Sukhomlinov, V.A., *Vospominaniia*, Berlin, 1924, passim.

¹⁰⁰² Danilov, *Nikolai*, p. 17.

"Only a man who has crossed over, under the influence of real life, from a child's naive faith in the purity of autocratic monarchy, bound up [in his eyes] with the greatness of the Motherland, to the gradual recognition of the right of the people to determine their own fate... can fully understand the personality of the grand duke and his position, full of suffering because of the old, jaded ideals, and internal struggle between the old which is passing away, and the new which is coming into being. The Russian people instinctively perceived the oscillation of these strings in Nikolai, and therein lay his popularity."¹⁰⁰³

The path from champion of the October Manifesto to hero of 1914 was not without pitfalls for Nikolai, however, one of which highlighted once and for all the public's unwillingness to accept the legitimacy of grand ducal service so long as it remained indivisible from grand ducal privilege. On 27 May, 1908, the President of the Duma, Aleksandr Guchkov, delivered a speech in which he attacked the Council of Imperial Defence, a body formed at Nikolai's initiative in 1905, with the aim of establishing a comprehensive defence policy, removed from the excessive bureaucracy and inter-ministerial rivalry which had plagued military administration.¹⁰⁰⁴ In Guchkov's opinion, the shocking "disorganization" of Russia's military was, in fact, the fault of the grand dukes, who stood at the head of artillery (Sergei Mikhailovich), engineering (Petr Nikolaevich), and military education (Konstantin Konstantinovich), with Nikolai presiding over the Council itself and thereby over his cousins. "If there's nothing wrong with this state of affairs", he railed:

"if it could even be considered natural and just for individuals possessing no accountability to serve in the army, bearing all the burdens in peacetime and all the danger in war time in their capacity as unit commanders, then it nonetheless remains to state, that posting them at the head of responsible important branches of the service is absolutely abnormal."

It was imperative to acknowledge the grand dukes' "unaccountability", and imperative "to recognise our impotence in the struggle with these persons". He concluded by remarking that if the government felt itself justified in demanding "grave sacrifice in the national defence" from the people, "then we are justified in

¹⁰⁰³ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Perrins, Michael, "The Council for State Defense, 1905-1909: A Study in Russian Bureaucratic Politics", *Slavic and East European Review*, 58 (3), 1980, pp 396-397.

addressing those few unaccountable individuals, from whom we must demand a complete refutation [of grand ducal privilege]".¹⁰⁰⁵

In fact, the Council had accomplished a great deal,¹⁰⁰⁶ and its abolition "may well" have contributed to Russia's strategical difficulties during the First World War. So far as Nikolai's own sincerity was concerned, Michael Perrins writes:

"For all his faults, the Grand Duke was concerned to raise the efficiency of the Russian army and bring some degree of Imperial control to bear on its rambling bureaucracy. That his measures failed... was due more to the inability of senior officers to accept compromise than to any desire to confuse or reduce the effectiveness of those chains of command which naturally exist in all armies".¹⁰⁰⁷

Years later, when summoned by the Provisional Government, Aleksei Polivanov (Assistant War Minister from 1906 to 1912, and War Minister from 1915 to 1916) would testify that the grand dukes had, indeed, "brought harm to the development of Russia's armed forces", but "only because of the scandals and controversies which tended to surround them and not through their alleged incompetence."¹⁰⁰⁸

In fact, Guchkov was motivated "not so much" by the Council's faults, as by a desire to increase the Duma's influence over military policy.¹⁰⁰⁹ His strategical sense was impeccable. This unprecedented challenge to grand ducal legitimacy not only "created a sensation", but won support across the political spectrum.¹⁰¹⁰ In the Duma itself, he was "breathlessly applauded" not only by the left wing, but by "much of the centre and the right".¹⁰¹¹ Indeed, ultra-reactionary deputy Vladimir Purishkevich had himself been considering an attack upon grand ducal influence, informing Bogdanovich on 24 May of his intention to remind the Duma of the late

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Stenograficheskii otchet gosudarstvennoi dumy*, (P.A. Zaionchkovsky ed.) Tretii sozyv, Sessiya 1, Chast' 3, pp 1598-1600; see also, Guchkov, A.I., "Iz vospominaniia A.I. Guchkova", *Poslednia Novosti*, Paris, nos 5616-5668, Aug. 9 - Sept. 30, 1936, and *Rech'i po voprosam gosudarstvennoi oborony ob obshchei politike, 1908-1917*, Petrograd, 1917.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Perrins, "Council", p. 396.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibid., pp 391-392.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 394.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 393.

¹⁰¹⁰ Pinchuk, Ben-Cion, *The Octobrists in the Third Duma, 1907-1912*, Seattle, 1974, pp. 66-70.

¹⁰¹¹ Hosking, Geoffrey, *The Russian Constitutional Experiment: Government and Duma, 1907-1914*, Cambridge, 1973, p. 79.

Aleksei's incompetence as General Admiral. In April, Bogdanovich herself had declared that the growing hatred for the regime was, in fact, the fault of the tsar's relatives.¹⁰¹² Thus it is not surprising that Guchkov, in formulating his attack, had dismissed the possibility of repercussions from the throne, convinced that he would win the approval of "the army and the people".¹⁰¹³

The question arises as to what the grand dukes had done to arouse such entrenched animosity. Aleksei and Sergei had been dead for several years, but their memory clearly lingered. Nikolai had hitherto been associated in a positive light with the issuance of the October Manifesto. Petr Nikolaevich, Sergei Mikhailovich, and Konstantin Konstantinovich may, justifiably, have been resented by Russia's military professionals, but they were neither political nor public figures of note. The *Vladimirovichi*, Dmitry Konstantinovich, Mikhail Aleksandrovich and Georgy and Nikolai Mikhailovich held no positions of significance, and Dmitry Pavlovich was still an adolescent. Aleksandr Mikhailovich, hitherto an object of political resentment, had largely retired from the scene, as had Vladimir Aleksandrovich, who would, at any rate, die in 1909. Mikhail Mikhailovich and Pavel Aleksandrovich lived abroad. Finally, there was little love lost between branches of the family, with the *Vladimirovichi* and *Nikolaevichi* particularly at odds with each other, a fact which belied the public fear of a grand ducal "camarilla". Thus, it seems reasonable to speculate upon the existence of a continued popular tendency to use as scapegoats for the failings of the emperor, and/or as an outlet for festering antipathy toward the institution of autocracy itself.

How were the grand dukes to adjust their self-image in light of this hostility? Nikolai, who was dismissed from the chairmanship of the Council of Imperial Defence in July 1908, vented his anger at Nicholas, noting that he had tried to speak to the tsar about the failings of the Council as early as 1907. The public could not be blamed for their attitude toward grand ducal service since they lacked complete

¹⁰¹² Bogdanovich. *Dnevnik*, pp 443-446.

¹⁰¹³ Hosking, *Experiment*, p. 79.

information, and since the regime itself had done *nothing* to refute Guchkov's accusations. He concluded by lamenting that grand ducal prestige had been "fatally" compromised, clearly implying that the tsar himself had delivered the Judas kiss.¹⁰¹⁴

Nikolai would enjoy a surge of popularity during the First World War, with the public redirecting the bulk of its animosity toward the empress and Rasputin and again embracing the emperor's larger-than-life uncle as an heroic figure.¹⁰¹⁵ The military threat thus seems to have revived the Petrine ideal, which Nikolai met admirably, not only by his commanding presence, but by his willingness to fight for the establishment of a publicly acceptable and accountable government coalition. The more his popularity grew, however, and the more he cultivated ties with moderate politicians, the more of a threat he became to the emperor. At least this was Alexandra's view of the matter, and, at her urging, Nicholas assumed the post of Commander-in-Chief himself in August 1915, sending Nikolai off to quasi-exile in the Caucasus, where he presided as Governor General.¹⁰¹⁶

If the empress believed she had quashed the last vestige of grand ducal will, however, she was greatly mistaken. Dmitry Pavlovich soon emerged as one of the conspirators in the assassination of Grigory Rasputin. His motives, so he proclaimed, were purely patriotic. Indeed, when the assassination failed to bring Nicholas to his senses, he briefly considered launching a *coup d'etat* as the only

¹⁰¹⁴ *Nikolai II i velikie kniaz'ia*, (Nikolai to Nicholas, no date), pp 27-29.

¹⁰¹⁵ Danilov, *Nikolai*, p. 16.

¹⁰¹⁶ On Nikolai's popularity and political efforts, see the memoirs of his foes, Vocikov and Sukhomlinov, his supporter Danilov, and the more neutral Spiridovich, von Lemke, and A.A. Polivanov (*Iz dnevnikov i vospominanii po dolzhnosti Voennogo Ministra i ego pomoshchnika, 1907-1915*, Leningrad, 1924). Also of interest are the unpublished memoirs of Prince Vladimir Emanuilovich Golitsyn, Nikolai's a.d.c. from 1914-1917. Articles of interest include: Cherniavsky, Michael (ed.), *Prologue to Revolution, Notes of A.N. Iakhontov on the Secret Meetings of the Council of Ministers, 1915*, Englewood Cliffs, 1967; Graf, Daniel, "Military Rule Behind the Russian Front, 1914-1917: The Political Ramifications", in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, no. 22, 1974; Jones, David, "Nicholas II and the Supreme Command: An Investigation of Motives", *Study Group on the Russian Revolution Sbornik*, no. 11, 1985.

means remaining to save Russia from the destructive tendencies of the regime.¹⁰¹⁷

Moreover, the family rushed to Dmitry's support against Nicholas and Aleksandra, producing a petition which demanded his exemption from punishment, and signalling the final demise of dynastic unity.¹⁰¹⁸

Both Dmitry and Nikolai looked upon themselves as servants of the state, and when the revolution occurred, both were eager to find places for themselves within the new order. Dmitry, in exile in Tehran, dispatched a telegram to Prince L'vov, pledging his "complete readiness to support the Provisional Government".

Meanwhile, in a conversation with the British Minister, he advocated "unconditional submission to the Provisional Government" as the only "honourable" course of action for patriotic Russians.¹⁰¹⁹ In the event, though Alexander Kerensky, in a speech to the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies, praised Dmitry as the "first [man] to fight against tsarism",¹⁰²⁰ the government was unwilling to sanction his recall, a thing which shocked the grand duke, who expressed his indignation that he should be viewed with contempt in Russia "just because I bear the surname Romanov".¹⁰²¹

Meanwhile, Nikolai, having joined his General Staff colleagues in demanding Nicholas's abdication,¹⁰²² prepared to resume his position as Commander-in-Chief, this time under the authority of the Provisional Government. He, too, had sworn his allegiance to Russia's new rulers, signing a document which read: "On this day I take an oath of loyalty to the Fatherland and to the New State Order".¹⁰²³ Ultimately, however, his relationship with the Provisional Government proved as ephemeral as

¹⁰¹⁷ Dmitry Pavlovich, *Diaries*, MS Storage 76, the Houghton Library, Harvard, v. 1, book 6, pp 52-53, 75 (entries for 16 and 24 December, 1917).

¹⁰¹⁸ See, for instance, Marie, Grand Duchess, *Education of a Princess*, New York, 1930, p. 179.

¹⁰¹⁹ Dmitry Pavlovich to Pavel Aleksandrovich, 23 Apr., 1917, in *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, v. 30, 1928, p. 207.

¹⁰²⁰ Steinberg, Mark, and Vladimir Khrustalev, *The Fall of the Romanovs*, New Haven, 1995, pp 135-136.

¹⁰²¹ Dmitry Pavlovich to Pavel Aleksandrovich, 23 Apr., 1917, in *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, v. 30, 1928, pp 207-208.

¹⁰²² See Vocikov, *S tsarem*, Danilov, *Nikolai*, and Spiridovich, *Revoliutsiia*.

¹⁰²³ Vocikov, *S tsarem*, p. 284.

Dmitry's. Despite General M.V. Alekseev's assertion that Nikolai would be a help, not a hindrance, to the new government, Prince L'vov asked him to resign for the good of the country. He yielded, and Alekseev himself (like Nikolai a *genshtabist*) received the post.¹⁰²⁴ Mikhail Aleksandrovich's abdication, marking the final dissolution of Romanov rule, was, according to Danilov, the real reason behind L'vov's change of heart in relation to Nikolai.¹⁰²⁵ Thus, while the grand duke was willing to serve in a non-monarchist Russia, Russia would not accept him in that capacity.

Finally, perhaps the most notorious act of grand ducal collaboration to occur during the first revolutionary crisis, was Kirill Vladimirovich's march to the Duma beneath a red flag, there, along with his whole naval unit, to swear allegiance to the new regime.¹⁰²⁶ Many who fled Russia would never forgive him for this perceived betrayal, a thing which did not hinder him, while himself a refugee, from continuing to seek a role in Russia's future. Dmitry and Nikolai likewise refused to accept their alienation from the service of the motherland. To have done so would have been to abandon the identity which they had nurtured from childhood.

Nikolai's political programme, as revealed in a 1924 interview with the director of the Associated Press, called for the "protection of the sacred rights of the individual and of civil freedom". He also insisted that the peasants must be allowed to keep the land which they had confiscated, and the government must protect the interests of the workers. As for the legitimacy of his own leadership, he wrote:

"I seek nothing for myself and, as an old soldier, can only say, that I am prepared to devote all my strength and life to the service of the Motherland. But I will only consider it possible to stand at the head of a national movement when I am convinced that this decision can be taken in agreement with the desire of the Russian people."¹⁰²⁷

¹⁰²⁴ Ibid., p. 285.

¹⁰²⁵ Danilov, *Nikolai*, p. 16.

¹⁰²⁶ see Voeikov, *S tsarem*, p. 250, and Kirill Vladimirovich, Grand Duke, *My Life in Russia's Service, Then and Now*, London, 1939, pp 208-209.

¹⁰²⁷ Roberts, E., "Conversation of His Imperial Highness, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich with E. Roberts, director of the telegraphic agency, The Associated Press, April 1924", Bakhmetev Archive, Columbia University, File on Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, Jr.

Thus his Romanov status was deemphasized, and stress placed upon his status as a service veteran. What form the future government would take he did not say, though he never spoke of assuming a crown. His followers, indeed, sought the support of all factions of the emigration, describing themselves as men who had cast aside all "differentiation of political beliefs".¹⁰²⁸

Meanwhile, Dmitry and Kirill *did* advocate the restoration of the dynasty, though what they proposed was not a return to traditional autocracy. Rather, they intended to build an "alliance of the tsar and soviets",¹⁰²⁹ insisting, like Nikolai, that the Russian people would have to confirm the accession of all new leaders, and would, as a matter of course, retain land and freedom. Despite its monarchist orientation, their group, the Young Russia Party, was above all else a nationalist organization. Dmitry, who had praised Kerensky in September 1917 as a man who "loves his motherland ardently",¹⁰³⁰ rebuked his fellow exiles for not celebrating the accomplishments of the Soviet Union under Stalin!¹⁰³¹ Ultimately, both men demonstrated an unwavering need to realise the spiritual and practical reabsorption of tsar and state into a single entity which would forever secure the glory of Russia.

IV. Conclusions

There are many ways of looking at the Romanov grand dukes, and many ways of interpreting their behaviour. One might, of course, examine each individual against the backdrop of his own time and gain valuable, though strictly limited, insight. One might take a moralistic view of the grand ducal collective, or seek to

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁹ Hayes, Nicholas, "Kazem-Bek and the Young Russians' Revolution" in *Slavic Review*, v. 39, no. 2, 1980, p. 205 (Kirill quoted).

¹⁰³⁰ Dmitry, *Diaries*, v. 1, book 5, pp 5-6.

¹⁰³¹ Dmitry Pavlovich, Grand Duke, *K molodoi Rossii!.. Rechi predsedatelia glavnogo soveta Mladorosskoi Partii velikogo kniazia Dmitriia Pavlovicha*, Izd-vo Mladorosskoi Partii, Paris, 1937, p. 5 and passim.

weigh the totality of grand ducal service. The modern historical consensus has veered decidedly toward a negative assessment of the grand dukes, with certain individuals, most notably Konstantin Nikolaevich and Konstantin Konstantinovich, treated as happy exceptions. But how can one form any opinion at all when no attempt has been made to define the grand ducal experience itself?

Of course, the grand dukes were far from uniform. They had different political opinions, different talents, different shortcomings. It is, nonetheless possible to identify several illuminating trends within their education, ideological development, psychological development, and service, which allow one to place them within an analytical context, and thereby begin to draw conclusions about their role.

Three currents flow into our analysis: the social, the service-based, and the dynastic. More could be added, of course, but these three are essential. In taking a chronological approach to our subject, we have allowed them to become rather diffuse, but each will now be summarised in turn, granting them, it is to be hoped, the clarity which they deserve.

The social current flowed forth from the Russian public. Initially, the nobility had the most direct interaction with the dynasty. Peter I bound them to the service of the Russian Empire by denying a part in imperial glory to any man who did not hold service rank. His immediate successors flattered their servitors' sense of self-importance. So, too, did Catherine II. When her son, Paul I, chose to challenge the elite servitors, he paid for his rashness with his life. Many of Paul's foes justified their behaviour, which must otherwise be called treasonous, through professed devotion to the welfare of the state. At the same time, far from rejecting the dynasty, they invested great hope in the tsesarevich, Alexander, believing that he would gratify their political aspirations through the granting of a constitution. The progressive nobility continued to desire this end, and many of their less progressive brethren, while supporting autocracy, paradoxically continued to look upon themselves as protectors of the state's welfare. They were gradually joined in this outlook by a growing professional class.

The Decembrists of 1825 embraced a patriotic, state-centred rationale, and the reformers of Alexander II's reign accepted autocracy only because they believed that it could still function as a progressive force. By the time Nicholas II succeeded to the throne in 1894, few educated Russians still looked upon the dynasty as an entity whose interests were identical, or even compatible, with the state's, a phenomenon which created great conflict for those grand dukes who themselves nurtured a state-centred ethos. Even without this latter quality, however, the grand dukes, as representatives of the dynasty, must necessarily suffer from public resentment of the autocratic system. But they also suffered from that degree of autocratic sentiment which the public retained, and it was this paradox which made their position especially difficult. Beginning in 1858 with Herzen's open letter to Maria Aleksandrovna about the shortcomings of Romanov education, the public took it upon themselves to critique grand ducal role. Murav'ev and Katkov achieved a great success with their effort to villify Konstantin Nikolaevich, and it is significant that they chose to portray him as an unpatriotic figure, just as Herzen had portrayed Mikhail Pavlovich as a man alienated from Russia. Thereafter, public outrage flowed freely, rising from any number of occurrences: the large-scale involvement of grand dukes in the Russo-Turkish War, various grand ducal scandals, grand ducal involvement in the Russo-Japanese War, the coronation disaster of 1896, and on and on. Naturally, there were instances wherein the outcry was abundantly justified, but there was also much in the way of paranoia, hysteria, and malice.

If it suited the public to have larger-than-life grand dukes such as Konstantin Pavlovich, Konstantin Nikolaevich, and Nikolai Nikolaevich, Jr. as idealised counter-weights to the ruler, it also, paradoxically, offended them to see these men succeed too well. The traditional conception of the passive grand duke lingered. It was reassuring, after all, to have a strong ruler and a unified dynasty. Thus any grand duke who failed to assert himself before the public could expect to be sneered at as a parasite or nonentity, but any grand duke who achieved public prominence would, without fail, face constant accusations of treasonous ambition. Konstantin

Nikolaevich, as we have noted, was even rumoured to have had a hand in his brother's death!

The two-faced nature of the public perception arose quite predictably from the process of political and social transition, which created a sense of ambivalence toward the dynasty. It also owed much to the frustrating ambiguity of the grand dukes themselves, whose own attempts to adapt to the changing and conflicting demands of state and dynasty were often incomprehensible to the public. Naturally, the grand dukes were perplexed, and often demoralised, by what they viewed as unfounded criticism, especially when their devotion and value to the Empire was questioned.

Particularly impacted by public hostility were those grand dukes who fell into the role of the 'second son', or most prominent junior male relative of the heir or ruler. These were men whose natural energy, drive, and forcefulness fitted them for an important role, but threatened to encroach upon the ruler's public stature and creative monopoly. Accusations of treasonous ambition dogged the Empire's 'second sons', in some cases tainting their image from early childhood. Jealous courtiers sought to push these men away from the ruler, often by deliberately fanning the flame of suspicion. Meanwhile, the public inclination to first idealise, then villify grand dukes who asserted themselves held true with particular force in the case of 'second sons'. In all cases, it had the potential to make a significant impact upon the behaviour of the targetted grand duke, who might be led either to defy, or to placate his direct accusers and/or public opinion at large. The relationship of an individual grand duke to the public could also be greatly complicated by the ruler's decision to use him to test the waters of reform, to carry out a sensitive task, or implement a sensitive policy which might otherwise taint the image of the sovereign himself. 'Second sons' were often chosen in these instances, since their energy fitted them to act vigorously, and a decrease in their popularity might be desirable from the standpoint of the throne.

All of these factors must be considered in any thoughtful assessment of the grand dukes. And, certainly, in order to attain the weight of validity, any conclusion drawn about grand ducal role must include acknowledgement that grand ducal successes were not necessarily embraced, or even desired, by the Russian public.

The service-based current was in many ways very similar to the social. Here, too, there was a gradual shift toward a state-centred ethos, which took root with greater vigour and intensity amongst Russia's servitors than it did among the public at large, and also had a greater impact on the grand dukes, whose service role was immensely important to their imperial identity.

A service role did not become a grand ducal necessity until the reign of Peter I, whose own example very forcefully established the Romanov military mission. Thenceforth, to reject a service role would have been to reject both state and dynasty. The acceptance of this basic Petrine principle did not ensure, however, that its *spirit* would be honoured in perpetuity. Peter's meritocratic ethos clashed with the Muscovite image of the Romanov as demi-god. After all, a demi-god could scarcely be expected to demean himself and his exalted family by accepting the authority of an ordinary mortal commander. Nor was this issue ever consciously resolved, and the resulting ambiguity explains much of the confusion surrounding grand ducal military appointments, with little or no distinction made in the secondary literature between honorary, temporarily inactive, or wholly active posts (incorrect attribution of posts is another common problem, with Konstantin Pavlovich, for instance, consistently identified as the Viceroy of Poland, a title which he never officially bore). Naturally, it is impossible to judge grand ducal role and performance without understanding the nature of the service they rendered and the posts they held.

Catherine II did not choose to emphasise the dynasty's military mission, and she bestowed the post of General Admiral upon her heir purely in an honorary sense. Paul's attitude about service was entirely different from his mother's, however. He

wished to revive Petrine principles and roust *amateurs* from the elite military units. He did *not* restore Romanov service to a purely Petrine footing. Indeed, it was Paul who declared that the Order of St. Andrew, awarded to all Romanov males at birth, would thenceforth automatically elevate its holders to general officers' rank. But he *did* insist that his sons receive active military posts with some reference to their actual abilities. Thus, although their very un-Petrine rank ensured that they must be placed at the head of their units rather than integrated into them, they were guided by military mentors, a thing which allowed them to take a practical approach to their service, and, more importantly, they were held strictly accountable for the performance and well-being of their units. Finally, a crucial distinction was drawn between the heir, who *did* receive a grand post (the general inspectorate of infantry) without particular qualification, and his younger brother Konstantin, who was not permitted to receive the general inspectorate of cavalry during his father's lifetime, being forced, rather, to gain necessary experience as the commander of a cavalry regiment. Paul knew that his elder son, as ruler, would not play a role which was primarily military, but clearly intended that grand dukes should play a genuine military role. This vision included his youngest son, Mikhail Pavlovich, who was named general-feldzeugmeister at birth, not in an honorary, but a temporarily inactive capacity, with the intention that he should learn the necessary skills for his post as he grew. Alexander I shared his father's service ethos, and Paul's widow, recognizing military service as a necessity, instructed her sons to learn its requirements well and perform with real competence -- not as conventional officers but *en grand*. Thus, although they were not to hold sinecures, they were still not meant to become integrated into the service establishment.

Nicholas I, whose devotion to his Petrine heritage was conscious and pronounced, *did* envision the partial integration of the grand dukes into the military service establishment, perhaps reacting in part to the disastrous alienation between officer-corps and dynasty demonstrated by the Decembrist uprising. The rank bestowed upon grand dukes by the Order of St. Andrew was henceforth treated as

honorary. They were enroled in guards regiments at birth, a common practice with the sons of the nobility, denoting that when they reached service age they would actually serve *in* (rather than merely standing above) the designated units (albeit in practice this service was quite brief so far as Nicholas's sons were concerned). They drilled with the cadet corps on a regular basis and, although their climb up the table of ranks was greatly accelerated, they did, at least, start at the beginning and actually make the climb.

Under Alexander II, a new distinction was drawn between the sons of the emperor and the sons of the grand ducal households. The former advanced through the ranks with the same rapidity that their uncles had. The latter, being numerous, and realizing that there were scarcely enough grand military appointments to guarantee exalted positions for their Aleksandrovich cousins, let alone for themselves, began to seek genuine professional distinction through matriculation into the Empire's elite military schools. Their superior qualification notwithstanding, the rate of promotion slowed for these junior grand dukes until, in 1914, twenty-two year old Dmitry Pavlovich went to war as a mere cornet!

Meanwhile, the grand dukes' relations with their service-colleagues were, as ever, ambiguous and complex. Beginning in 1836, and culminating with the Miliutin military reforms of the 1870s, the positions traditionally occupied by grand dukes -- corps commands and general inspectorates -- fell under the authority of the War Ministry (with the exception of the general inspectorates of cavalry and rifle regiments). But the fact that grand dukes at all times enjoyed the right of direct access to the emperor allowed them to circumvent the War Minister's authority in many instances. Grand ducal participation on the battlefield likewise presented serious difficulties to non-royal commanders who were forced to find an impromptu balance between the royal prerogative and professional obligation of their grand ducal 'inferiors'. Even when instructed by the emperor to treat these men as ordinary officers, they often proved reluctant to do so, fearing the consequences of grand ducal injury or imperial wrath.

When, in 1908, Aleksandr Guchkov denounced this state of affairs very forcefully in the Duma, demanding that if grand dukes wished to serve, they must entirely renounce their royal prerogatives, his words met with overwhelming approval from the service establishment and the educated public. This was the culmination of more than a century of private complaints from Russian servitors, who were becoming more and more professional, practical, and state-centred in outlook. In the civil service, too, with the entry of Konstantin Nikolaevich very forcibly upon the political scene in the 1860s, non-royal professionals reacted with horror and resentment to what they regarded as the unjustified intrusion of a royal *diligente*, whose presence could only bring chaos. Many of them also feared him as a powerful rival to their own ambitions, but presented their complaints in the guise of professional criticism.

The grand dukes, of course, did not view themselves as *amateurs* or *diligentes*. Beginning with Konstantin Pavlovich, who accompanied Suvorov's troops to Italy and Switzerland in 1799, they were at pains to prove their genuine service merit, and at times they did so very well, though little has been written about their successes, either on or off the battlefield. Nicholas I's whole-hearted attempt to inculcate his sons with the Petrine service ethos and the martial virtues of discipline, patriotism, and devotion to duty, made this effort even more imperative in defence of their honour. For the next generation, immersion in the military schools -- particularly the General Staff Academy -- exposed them to the idealistic, meritocratic, nationalistic, and even anti-tsarist sentiments of the professional service elite. Thus, an attack like Guchkov's, which went beyond specific complaint of service abuses to portray the grand dukes as an entity not only alienated from, but actually harmful to, the state, cut directly to the core of their identity (similar accusations had been made during the Russo-Turkish and Russo-Japanese wars, but Guchkov's Duma forum lent particular weight to his attack).

Once again, the grand dukes were placed in an impossible situation. Those who were not seen to render real service to the state, in full accordance with the service

regulations, were dismissed as meddlers and parasites, with their very identity as men integrally linked to the state rejected. But they could not shed their demi-god status and the prerogatives which accompanied it without renouncing the dynasty (and they certainly could not remain in Russia if they took that step). Moreover, they themselves were as much children of their age of transition as their colleagues were, witnessing the ascendancy of a meritocratic professional service elite (primarily the General Staff) to rival the traditional Guards, and harbouring within themselves impulses which pulled them in both directions. Finally, there was considerable doubt whether their service-colleagues, or the public, truly wished to see the emergence of working grand dukes, reduced to the level of ordinary mortals and integrated into the service establishment. Certainly, Grand Dukes Nikolai Nikolaevich, Jr. and Dmitry Pavlovich believed that, after the revolution *had* stripped them of their royal prerogatives, they would be able to continue their service careers on a strictly professional basis. Both men learned quickly that Russia would never accept them as anything other than grand dukes.

Naturally, none of this excuses grand ducal service abuses, but, as we have already noted in relation to the subject of social considerations, the difficult, paradoxical situation in which the grand dukes were placed, must be regarded as an essential component of in the interpretation of their historical role.

Our last current is the dynastic one itself. The Romanov dynasty underwent several significant changes between the time of its emergence in 1613 and its fall in 1917. We have already noted one of the most important of these -- Peter I's establishment of the dynastic military mission, a thing which was consciously reinforced by Paul I and Nicholas I, and taken for granted by Alexander I, Alexander II, Alexander III and Nicholas II.

Paul's 1797 Statute on the Imperial Family established a succession law based firmly upon male primogeniture and provided much needed definition to grand ducal status. But the most profound dynastic changes (succession crises aside) occurred

during the reign of Alexander II. These were threefold. Firstly, the dynasty experienced a rapid and unprecedented expansion, with four fecund junior branches of the family established by the end of the reign and the promise of more to come. Secondly, Alexander allowed a loosening of imperial etiquette which adversely impacted dynastic harmony. And, lastly, with each *pater familias* permitted to oversee his own children's education, with one major branch of the family established in the Caucasus, and with domestic turmoil wielding an isolating influence upon some of the young grand dukes, a significant decentralising effect was produced.

Expansion produced the threat of marginalisation, which prompted the sons of the junior branches of the family to compete with one another for a limited number of exalted service posts. Almost all of the grand dukes who came of age in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century (excepting, of course, the emperors' own sons), entered professional military schools, and their exposure to strong state-centred sentiments, when combined with a sense of encroaching dynastic marginalisation, in some cases clearly inclined them toward investing their own identity primarily in their service role. Likewise, a charismatic grand duke might seek to form an independent bond with some sector of the public (e.g., Konstantin Pavlovich and the Poles), a thing which strongly violated autocratic tradition and threatened dynastic unity. Finally, rapid expansion of the dynasty appears to have alarmed the public themselves, thereby increasing their intolerance of any perceived grand ducal excesses.

The loosening of etiquette, by allowing the members of the imperial family to interact more freely with the aristocracy in general and the courtiers in particular, cleared the way for several disastrous grand ducal scandals. Another effect appears to have been an increasing rejection by the grand dukes of the demi-god role which was essential to Muscovite autocratic tradition. The grand dukes, too, often wished to be members of their modern age, and resented the constraints of tradition. In 1820, Konstantin Pavlovich carried through the first grand ducal divorce, under

unique circumstances involving his voluntary renunciation of the throne. Thereafter, Alexander II and two of his three brothers took conspicuous mistresses, damaging imperial prestige, and the next generation were even more forward in their demands, insisting upon their right to marry morganatically. A steady and accelerating weakening of their sense of traditional dynastic duty is thus readily perceivable. Marginalisation may well have contributed to this phenomenon, especially when, in 1886, Alexander III decreed that Romanovs belonging to junior branches of the family could no longer pass grand ducal status on to their own sons. Finally, the domestic improprieties of Alexander II and his brothers produced a markedly negative effect upon some members of the younger generation, with the Nikolaevich sons drawing away from their father and toward their maternal uncle, and several of the Aleksandrovich sons bitterly rejecting their father's reformist policies as part and parcel of his moral corruption. One disaffected Konstantinovich son was even banished to Central Asia for thievery!

Decentralisation arose primarily from the rapid expansion of the family. Alexander II could scarcely have supervised the upbringing and education of all his nephews, or have kept all his brothers in the capital. Mikhail Nikolaevich raised his six sons in the Caucasus, whence they developed a strong Caucasian identity and a sense of 'otherness' in relation to their St. Petersburg cousins. Meanwhile, domestic turmoil drew the Nikolaevich sons to their mother's home in Kiev, and they, too, spent much of their youth far from the environs of the throne.

Thus there were several forces at work, chipping away at Romanov identity and opening the door to individual disaffection and dynastic disharmony. In addition to those factors already noted, it should be mentioned that the grand dukes who grew up during the reigns of Alexander II and Alexander III certainly would have been at least somewhat exposed to the bitter public criticism falling upon their fathers, and would, too, have been impacted by the shadow of the revolutionary movement, both

of which factors might prompt them to look beyond the dynasty for ground upon which to form their own identity.

By 1882, Konstantin and Nikolai Nikolaevich (Sr), both largely disenfranchised by Alexander III, were themselves sufficiently disaffected to speak openly of their nephew as a man whose policies were inimical to the Russian state, which body claimed their greater allegiance. In 1904 and 1905, several grand dukes walked away from their service posts out of frustration with public criticism and lack of support from Nicholas II, thus turning their backs upon both state and dynasty. In 1908, Nikolai Nikolaevich, Jr. became furious at Nicholas II for having refused to defend the grand dukes against Guchkov's attack in the Duma. He did not blame the public for the intense criticism which he and his cousins faced, remarking, instead, that ordinary Russians could hardly react otherwise when they saw the emperor all but disowning his relatives. He and Dmitry Pavlovich, both products of Russia's military schools, placed their state-centred service identity ahead of their dynastic identity in the years of turmoil which followed, and both took professedly patriotic actions which were deemed harmful to the dynasty -- Nikolai joining his General Staff colleagues to demand Nicholas II's abdication, and Dmitry participating in the assassination of Rasputin. Indeed, Aleksandr Kerensky even went so far as to call Dmitry the first man to fight against tsarism! Certainly the dynastic forces which contributed to such phenomena in the lives of the grand dukes cannot be overlooked, any more than the related social and service-based currents which we have already noted. When considered together, they strongly undermine many of the preconceived notions presented in pre-revolutionary and modern, Russian and western works touching upon the grand dukes.

In closing, if there is one thing which this work seeks to emphasise, it is the complexity of the grand ducal experience. Most readers will have been familiar with the reforming activities of Konstantin Nikolaevich as an example of 'good' grand ducal behaviour, but how many knew of Mikhail Pavlovich's role as Dmitry Miliutin's mentor; were familiar with the many letters in which Nicholas I, far from

lambasting his brother Konstantin, appealed to him for every kind of advice; realised that three grand dukes attended the General Staff Academy during its idealistic 'golden age'; suspected that Dmitry Pavlovich was an intense nationalist, ready to embrace the Provisional Government when it seemed the best course of action for the state?

Through misunderstanding or incomplete knowledge of the grand ducal service role and the forces, both external and internal, which acted upon the grand dukes, historians and contemporary observers have, in the past, often overestimated grand ducal power (e.g., labeling the bureaucratic reformers the party of the Grand Duke Constantine), and underestimated collective grand ducal impact upon both dynasty and state. One must, likewise, always recall that those who were loudest in criticising the grand dukes, often did not really wish to see them integrated into the service establishment or successful as shapers of the state.

Much work remains to be done on the history of the Romanov dynasty. This study has not even attempted to take a comparative look at other European dynasties, or to develop the role of the grand duchesses, the peasants' perception of the non-ruling members of the dynasty, the cultural, economic, and religious life of the grand dukes, or the full weight of public opinion, both within and outside the court. Finally, it must be noted that the purpose of this work has not been to exonerate, or apologise on behalf of, the grand dukes, but to give them their due as men who were, though often pushed away by external forces, genuinely connected to and significant to the Russian state. This was true because of their service role (whether for good or ill), and because of their own conception of themselves as men defined to a large extent by their duty to the state (whether realised or not). If some small gain has been made in understanding, or a foundation, however modest, established for the further development of research into the grand ducal experience in Russia's history, then this work, like the grand dukes themselves, has managed to find its place.

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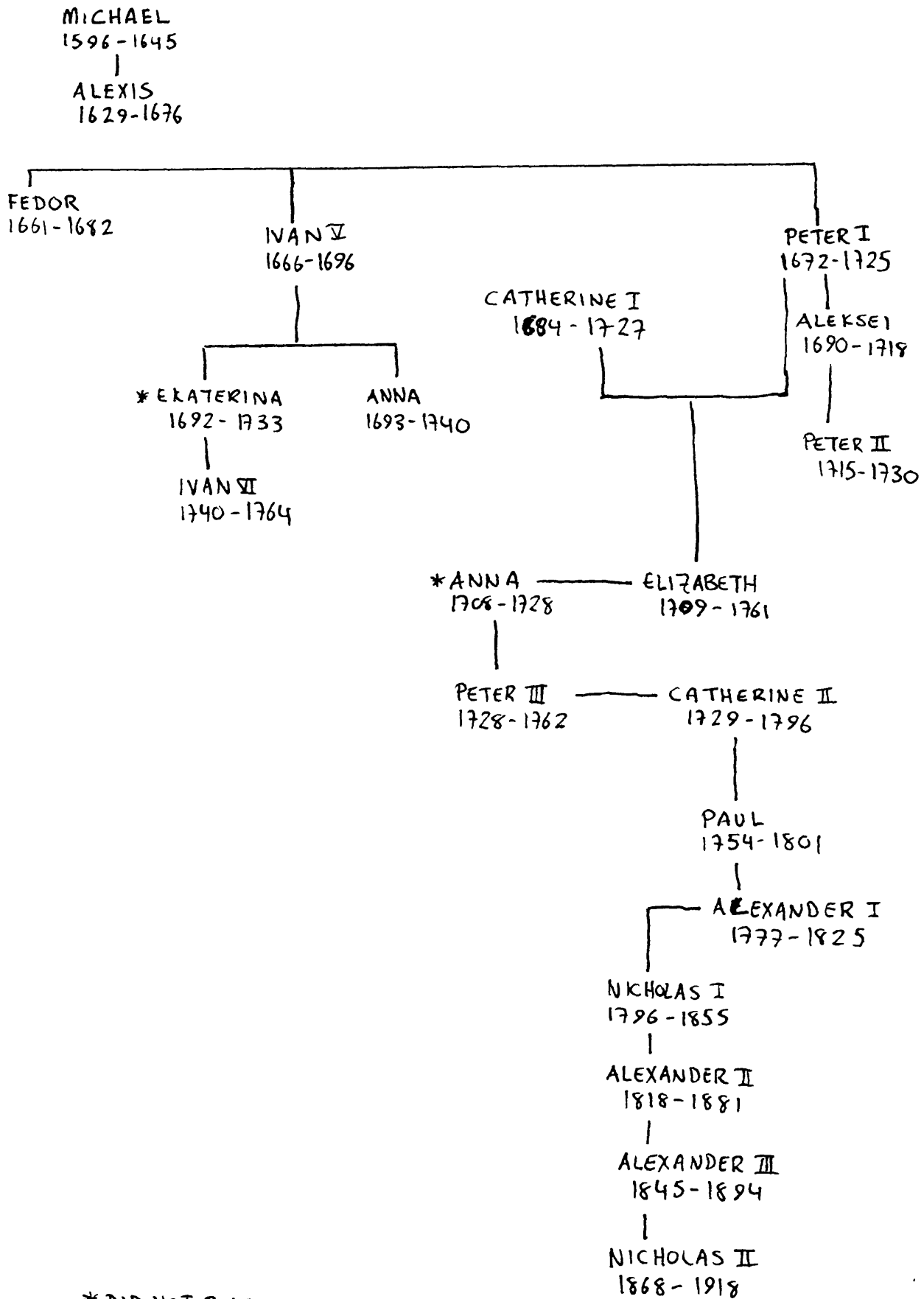
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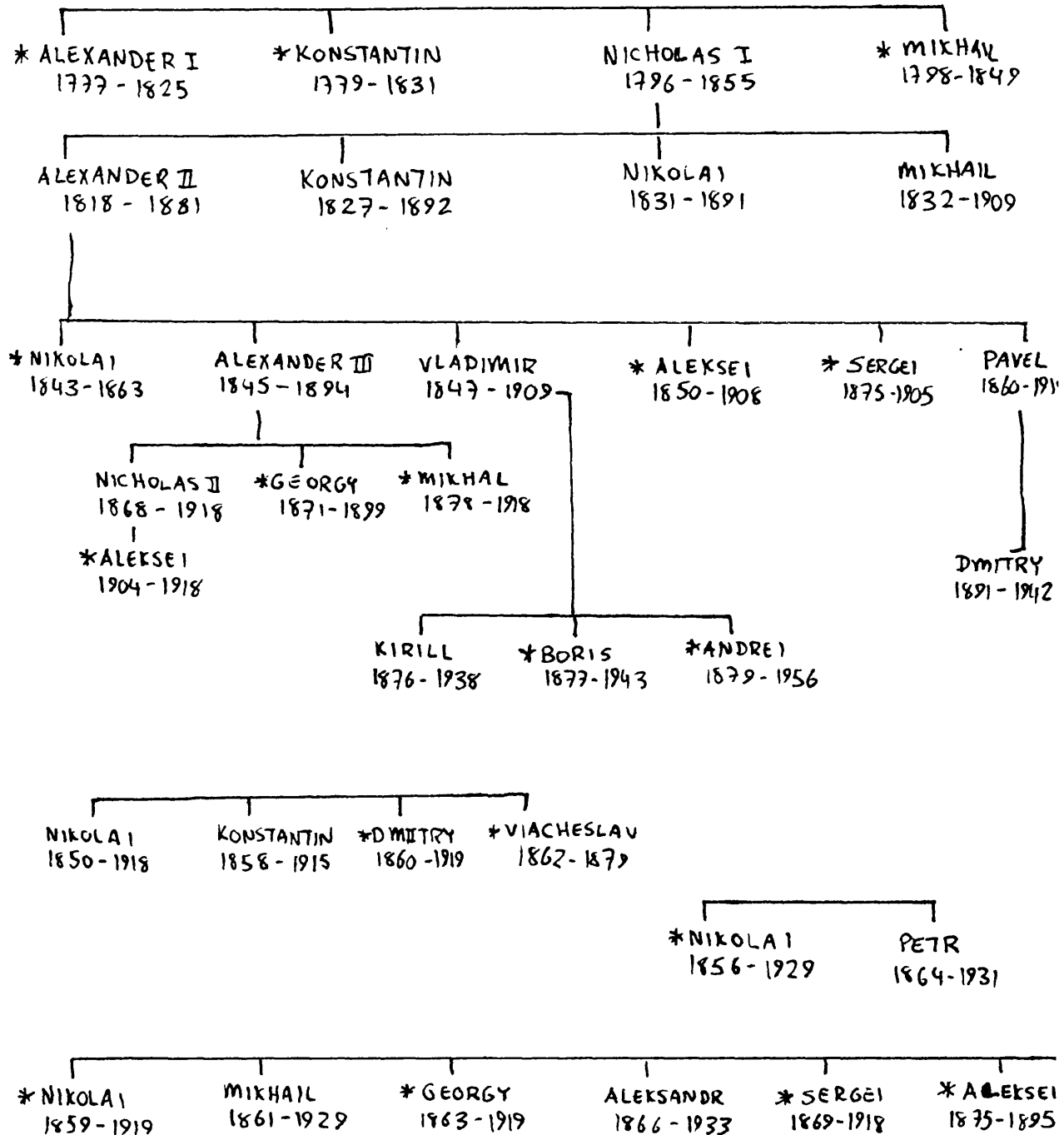
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ROMANOV SUCCESSION



ROMANOV GRAND DUKES FROM PAUL I

PAUL I, 1754-1801



* NO LEGITIMATE MALE ISSUE



Konstantin Pavlovich, 1779-1831



Mikhail Nikolaevich, 1832-1909



Konstantin Nikolaevich, 1827-1892



Nikolai Nikolaevich, Sr., 1831-1891



Aleksei Aleksandrovich, 1850-1908



Nikolai Konstantinovich, 1850-1918



Nikolai Nikolaevich, Jr., 1856-1929



Sergei and Pavel Aleksandrovich



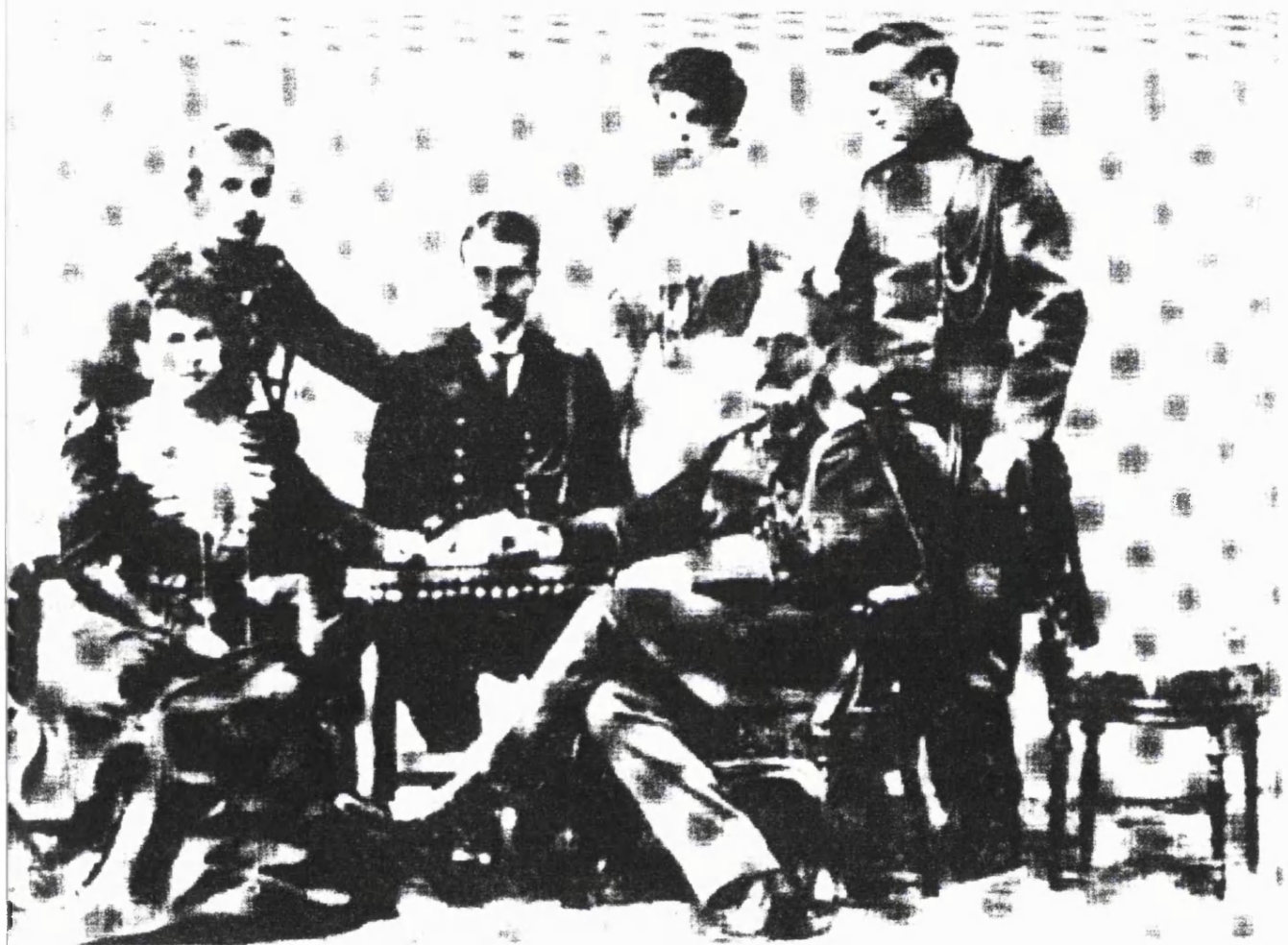
Georgy Mikhailovich, 1863-1919



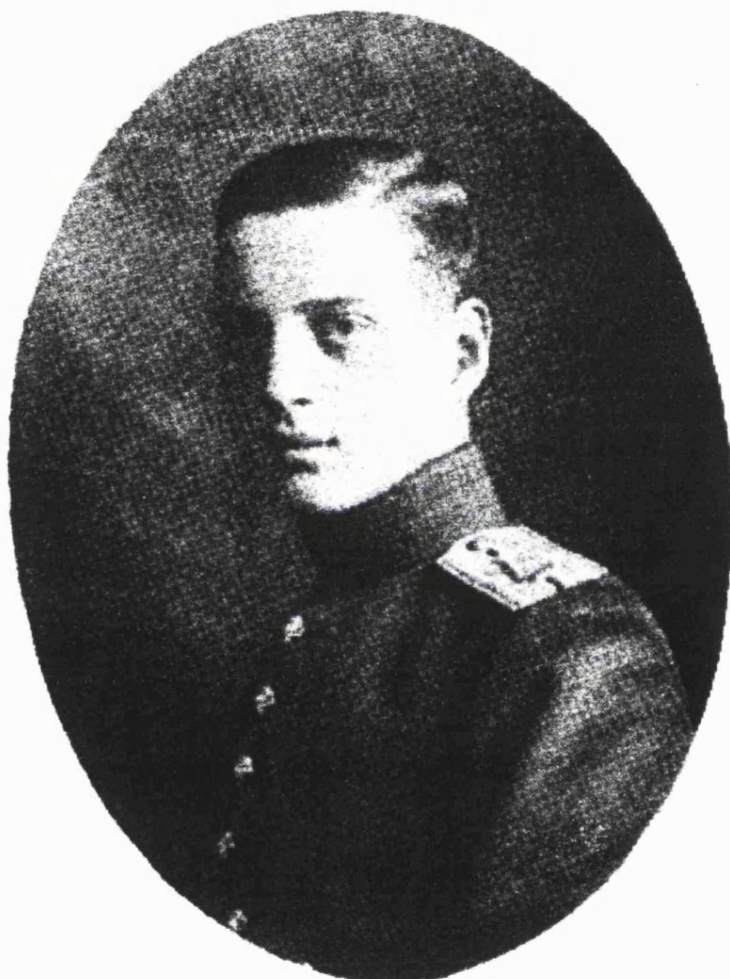
Alexander Mikhailovich, 1866 -1933



Sergei Mikhailovich, 1869-1918



The Vladimirovichi and Vladimir Aleksandrovich



Dmitry Pavlovich, 1891-1942

