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# Chapter 1

## Youth and the Corps of Pages

**N**OTHING LIKE THE HARSH CAWING OF STALIN'S "RAVENS" could be heard in Russia at the time of Vladimir Dzhunkovsky's birth. In a land where political winters are long and dark, 1865 was a bright, almost summery moment. The repressive reign of Nicholas I lay ten years in the past, and the country was in the midst of an era of reforms more profound than any since the time of Peter the Great.<sup>1</sup>

In 1861 Tsar Alexander II had abolished serfdom, at once breaking the chains binding man to master and giving the newly free the promise of land. Major changes followed the emancipation in rapid succession. In 1864 the tsar established institutions of local self-government, the *zemstvos*, in thirty-four Great Russian provinces. Elected by nobles, townsmen, and peasants, these institutions dealt with the economic problems of the rural areas and furnished services that the state had failed to provide. Russians gained an arena where they could publicly examine local needs and find solutions with minimal bureaucratic interference. In that same year came a new judicial system that promised to enshrine the rule of law with a more rational court structure, irremovable judges, open adversarial proceedings, citizen juries, and an easily accessible network of small-claims tribunals. The emancipation and the two reforms of 1864 marked the beginning of a freer and more pluralistic Russia. An empire of subjects seemed on the path to becoming a nation of citizens.

Still, the changes failed to satisfy everyone. Nobles lost free labor and a significant portion of their lands. Many mourned their diminished po-

sition in rural affairs. The peasants got their freedom but most of them tilled fewer acres than they had in bondage and often lost access to the nobles' forests and pastures. Their land came at a price, with "redemption payments" that were a heavy burden. They dreamed of "black repartition" that would bring the domains of the nobility, the state, and the imperial family into their possession.

The zemstvo and new court reforms also had flaws. Self-government institutions were limited in their scope and in their powers. Dominated by nobles, they imposed taxes that were resented by the peasants. They existed only at the province (*guberniia*) and county (*uezd*) levels, and there was neither a small zemstvo unit able to address village problems directly nor a national body that could voice local needs to the tsar and his officials in St. Petersburg. The new courts might be independent, but important areas such as family law lay beyond their reach. They barely touched the lives of the newly emancipated *muzhiki*, living in rural land communes and effectively segregated from the rest of society. Their peasant tribunals were guided by local customary law, rendering decisions that were often arbitrary, corrupt, and cruel.

Despite disappointments and misgivings, most Russians in the mid-1860s were prepared to wait; many expected the government to extend the reforms and correct the shortcomings of earlier legislation. But following an attempt on the life of the tsar in 1866, the pace of reform slowed, and the social and political limits to further transformation became more and more visible. Still, the vast majority of Russians revered their anointed autocrat, accepted the measures he decreed, and believed what holy writ and the laws of the empire declared—that they should obey his will "not only out of fear, but for conscience sake."<sup>2</sup>

At the dimly lit edges of the political stage hovered impatient men and women—mostly young, usually educated, often born to privilege—for whom no reform would suffice. They dreamed of a new order "unknown even in America," to be achieved by peaceful means if possible, by violence if necessary.<sup>3</sup> A few eagerly welcomed the prospect of shedding the blood of royalty and of others as well. "The day will soon come," the early extremist Petr Zaichnevsky predicted, "when we will unfurl the great banner of the future, the red banner . . . and move against the Winter Palace to wipe out all who dwell there." The goal was a "Russian Social and Democratic Republic," and, Zaichnevsky proclaimed, "anyone who is not with us is against us and an enemy, and . . . every method is used to destroy an enemy."<sup>4</sup>

Who should lead this revolution? In 1862, the dissident journalist Nikolai Chernyshevsky completed a novel that would inspire generations of radicals, *What Is to Be Done?* He traced a vision of socialism and introduced his “perceptive readers” to the character of Rakhmetov. Disciplined, physically and mentally tough, this “rigorist” was devoted completely to science and the people’s cause.<sup>5</sup> Later, Mikhail Bakunin and Sergei Nechaev advocated a tightly knit, underground conspiracy dominated by supermen whose dedication to the task of building a better world freed them from normal moral limits. Their *Catechism of the Revolutionary* presented a new hero: “a doomed man,” wholly absorbed by “a single thought, a single passion—the revolution.” His credo was simple: “everything that promotes the revolution is moral; everything that hinders it is immoral.” In the struggle for that glorious goal, he would “always be prepared to . . . destroy with his own hands everything that hinders its attainment.”<sup>6</sup> The few men and women who espoused such views believed that their revolution would solve all problems and usher in a bright future for mankind. They could not foresee where their dreams were going to lead and would have recoiled in horror before the global tragedy that, in time, their ideas and methods helped bring to pass.



Not even the faintest echo of the young radicals’ overheated rhetoric sounded in the comfortable St. Petersburg home of the Dzhunkovskys where, on September 7, 1865, Fedor Stepanovich and his wife, Maria Karlovna, welcomed Vladimir, their seventh child and fourth son. Theirs was a deeply religious household, devoted to the emperor and the dynasty. Vladimir’s father, a major general with a distinguished career, headed the chancellery of the inspector general of the cavalry, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, brother of Alexander II. The Dzhunkovsky family was noble but not a princely house or a clan that could trace its origins to the ancient Muscovite boyars. Still, its members had served both God and tsar since the late seventeenth century.

According to family legend, its progenitor was a Mongol prince, Murza-Khan Dzhunk, who had come to Moscow in the early sixteenth century as part of an embassy sent to Vasili III. Later, it was said, one of Dzhunk’s descendants, a local military leader (*voevoda*) named Ksendzovsky, held an estate in Galich—“Dzhunkovka,” from which the family name derived.

At some point, two major branches of the clan emerged: one Galician and Polish, the other Ukrainian, gravitating toward Russian service.<sup>7</sup> This early genealogy is probably a mix of fact and fancy. In nineteenth-century Russia, it was fashionable to claim Mongol or Tatar ancestry, much as Americans today take pride in the grandmother who was one-eighth Choctaw, Cherokee, or Nez-Perce.<sup>8</sup> The first clearly identifiable figure of the Ukrainian-Russian line was Kondratii Dzhunkovsky, a colonel from Chernigov, who lived at the end of the seventeenth century.

Kondratii's son Stepan entered the priesthood and during the early eighteenth century, his descendants—Semen Stepanovich and Semen Semenovich—served in the “white” or married parish clergy. Thus, despite long-standing claims, the Dzhunkovskys did not firmly establish their status as members of the nobility (*dvorianstvo*) until the 1840s. It would be based not on ancient lineage but on the career of Vladimir's grandfather, Stepan Semenovich Dzhunkovsky, a man of great ability and remarkable achievements, who put the priesthood behind him in favor of state service.<sup>9</sup>

Stepan Semenovich was born in 1762; he was educated in Kharkov and eventually specialized in agronomy. His clerical background and academic interest brought him to the attention of Father A. A. Samborsky, the very secular Orthodox priest Catherine II had placed in charge of her grandchildren's religious education. Samborsky, who had once studied agronomy in Britain, understood its importance, and in 1784 he convinced the empress to send Dzhunkovsky abroad so that he might deepen his knowledge of scientific agriculture.<sup>10</sup> The young man spent the next seven years traveling and studying in England, France, and Flanders, not only increasing his technical expertise but also mastering foreign languages. Upon his return to Russia, Stepan Semenovich was enrolled as a sergeant in the Preobrazhensky Guards, but his chief assignment seems to have been teaching English to members of the royal family.

When Paul I came to the throne in 1796, he promoted Stepan to captain and shortly thereafter permitted his transfer to the civil service with the corresponding rank of titled counselor. Dzhunkovsky's career quickly flourished, and he also began to play a significant role in the scientific life of the country. Under Alexander I, he occupied important positions in the newly formed Ministry of Internal Affairs and in 1811 took command of its Economic Department. Stepan became a leading figure in the influential Free Economic Society, serving as permanent secretary and editing its journal. The tsar regularly assigned Dzhunkovsky challenging tasks:

standardizing the empire's weights and measures, draining swamps on the outskirts of St. Petersburg, settling colonists, and solving a food supply crisis in the Baltic region. He accomplished all these successfully, while continuing to write scholarly articles on economics and agriculture as well as religious-philosophical works that showed the heavy influence of Enlightenment thought. Stepan Dzhunkovsky died in 1839, having gained the title of privy counselor, a rank that conferred nobility on him and his descendants, a status that was soon duly recognized by the Heraldry Office.<sup>11</sup>

Stepan Semenovich pointed his four sons toward state service. The eldest, Alexander, became a high postal official in St. Petersburg. Petr, the second, also served in the postal department in the province of Poltava. The third, Fedor (Vladimir's father), pursued a military career that led steadily upward and brought him into close contact with members of the imperial family. But the youngest son, Stepan, achieved the greatest fame or, more accurately, notoriety.

Deeply religious, Stepan's life became a spiritual quest that led him to Rome where he embraced Catholicism, joined the Jesuit Order, and entered the priesthood. But by 1833 Stepan had already left the Jesuits and moved to Paris where he embarked on an effort to bring about the unity of the Christian churches and reform Catholicism by, among other things, abolishing clerical celibacy. He spent a number of years as a missionary to the Eskimos, and in the early 1860s, his reform proposals rejected, he broke with Catholicism. In 1861 Stepan married an English woman in an Anglican ceremony, and five years later he reconverted to Orthodoxy. He returned to Russia and entered state service, employed in the educational committee of the Holy Synod.<sup>12</sup>

Stepan died in 1870, but many years later his specter would come back to haunt his nephew. In 1915 Vladimir, then the head of the empire's internal security apparatus, sought to warn Tsar Nicholas II of the danger that Grigorii Rasputin posed to the dynasty, only to be abruptly dismissed from office. Soon his enemies spread rumors of disloyalty, and one of them, citing as a kind of proof the strange career of his long-dead uncle, implied that the Dzhunkovsky family harbored a traitorous tendency.<sup>13</sup>



Neither treason nor nonconformity were to be found in the atmosphere surrounding Vladimir from his earliest days. Family circumstances breath-

ed loyalty and faith and were, at the same time, both secure and loving. Shortly after Vladimir's birth, his mother and father moved their large brood to a spacious apartment on the second floor of the barracks of the Horse Guards, directly above the chancellery where Fedor Stepanovich presided. Their new quarters were in the center of the city, close to major palaces and the offices from which the vast Russian empire was governed. Young Vladimir, called "Vadya" by his parents and siblings, spent his first thirteen years in this pleasant home and fondly remembered its high ceilings, large windows, bright commodious rooms, and enormous kitchen.<sup>14</sup>

Because Fedor Dzhunkovsky worked and lived in the same building, he was not a distant patriarch but a vital presence for his children. Vladimir remembered the door to his father's office always standing open except when important committees were meeting. Fedor Dzhunkovsky became ill as Vadya entered his teens and did not live to influence him as he grew to manhood. But his son always recalled him as the main pillar of the family, whom "we all adored, believed, and revered."<sup>15</sup>

Vadya and his siblings were equally devoted to their mother, Maria Karlovna (née Roshet), who played a central part in their moral and religious development. Although born a Lutheran, a faith she never renounced, she went regularly to Orthodox mass, knew well the liturgy and rituals of the church, and helped her children to master them.<sup>16</sup> But among the Dzhunkovskys, religion was not merely a matter of attending church or performing rituals, it was a genuine spirituality that suffused their being and dictated a code of behavior. Both Fedor and Maria cherished the family motto, *Deo et proximo*, and what it proclaimed: devotion to God and a concern for the needs of others. Vadya, together with his brothers and sisters, had a lifelong respect for the efforts of their mother and father to inculcate these beliefs. "If any of us did not strictly follow [the motto]," he recalled somewhat ruefully years later, "then it was not the fault of our parents, but of ourselves."<sup>17</sup>

Vladimir never wrote much about his religious ideas or the role of faith in his life. But, clearly, the spiritual and moral principles instilled in his youth lay at the center of his character and found expression both in his commitment to treating others well and in his genuine concern for decent behavior. His religiosity was strong and sincere, not colored by superstition, fanaticism, or narrow prejudice. Dzhunkovsky believed that his life was at all times in God's hands, that larger events unfolded for a purpose

not always clear to any human, and that he must try to do the right thing according to His lights, regardless of the personal consequences.

As the youngest in a large family, Vadya may have been something of a favorite, and he displayed a genuine fondness for all his siblings. He revered the oldest, Stepan, twelve years his senior, who graduated from the Corps of Pages and served in Warsaw as a cavalry officer. Vadya remembered that, after Stepan departed St. Petersburg, he would often go to his brother's room, try on some of the military gear he had left behind, and looking in the mirror, "dream of that time when I, too, would be an officer."<sup>18</sup> Even closer were his ties to Fedor, five years older, whose death from cholera in 1872 struck him a painful blow. "I greatly mourned my brother," Vladimir recalled, "in a childish way, of course, and for a long time could not adjust to the idea that he was no more. This was my first sorrow."<sup>19</sup> Many other family losses would follow.

In recalling his youth, Vladimir wrote less about his sisters, Evdokiia and Olga, and his brother Nikolai (Kolya). But this reticence belies their importance in his life. Since Kolya was just three years older than Vadya, there may have been something of an early rivalry between them, but later they would be devoted to one another, although often separated by distance. For his sisters, Vladimir always had deep affection, especially for Evdokiia, eight years his senior, who was almost a second mother to him. In the years to come, she would be her brother's most ardent and loyal supporter, a moral guide, and physical protector through difficult and dangerous days.

Vadya's early life experiences were fairly typical for a boy of his time and class: a wet-nurse who remained close for many years, a beloved nanny, a series of governesses and tutors he remembered almost as family members, despite the fact that, "far from being indulgent, [they] were very demanding."<sup>20</sup> Vadya possessed a robust constitution and was not greatly troubled by childhood illnesses, except that, as the result of a youthful accident, he broke a finger, and it was left bent and hard to move, a deformity sufficiently visible that during his imprisonment after the revolution doctors at his jail would note it as a distinguishing physical feature.<sup>21</sup>



Vadya obtained his earliest education at home from family and tutors, but his parents intended him to go to the Corps of Pages, an elite military

school attached to the Imperial Court. Founded in 1801, the Corps was open to the sons and grandsons of those who had attained the rank of lieutenant general or its civilian equivalent, privy councilor. All admissions required an imperial order, and prospective cadets also had to pass tests in a variety of academic subjects. In 1872 Vadya received the required permission from the tsar and so, much to his delight, could wear the uniform of the Corps of Pages, but without epaulets. The school's entrance examinations, however, turned out to be no easy matter; their rigor demanded substantial effort. Accordingly, in 1874 Vadya began a period of formal preparation at a small academy on Vasily Island, but two years later his sister Evdokiia took charge. He proved to be a poor pupil: "I made slow progress in my studies," he recalled, "and quickly exhausted my sister, who, despite my good behavior, became angry at me and began to despair." In May 1876 Vadya took the exams and did poorly, failing Russian language and natural history. He was allowed to re-test, however, and after a summer of further work, finally passed.<sup>22</sup>

The Corps of Pages had not been a serious educational institution in its early years, but by Vadya's time it provided a level of instruction equal to that at any gymnasium or *realschule* in the country.<sup>23</sup> The school was a strictly regimented place where cadets rose at six to drumbeat or bugle call and then proceeded to prayers, breakfast, and study hall. Lessons started at eight and continued until eleven; then came a break for exercise and lunch. Classes resumed between twelve and two in the afternoon, followed by physical activities—gymnastics, fencing, dancing, and singing—lasting until four. Chapel and dinner were next, succeeded by a two-hour study hall that began at six. At half past nine, the cadets retired for the night.<sup>24</sup>

The approximately 330 students in the school were divided into forms; the third through the seventh provided the regular programs, with two special senior forms above them. The number of cadets in each form did not exceed forty or fifty, and academic classes were small. Rigorous lessons emphasized rote learning as opposed to open discussion, and the general atmosphere of the school was hardly intellectual. Pages did not see high marks as the measure of success and usually disliked students they considered grinds. Living conditions, while comfortable, were spare. The mess hall provided decent food, but as one former page remembered, "cutlets and macaroni played a big role."<sup>25</sup>

Education at the Corps sought to shape young men for service as officers in the army and navy. Graduates enjoyed the right to enroll in

any guards' regiment they chose, even if there were no vacancies, a privilege that guaranteed more rapid promotions than could be obtained in regular units. Yet the training that pages received did not drum into them loyalty to the empire or devotion to the principle of autocracy. Reflecting on his years in the Corps of Pages, Dzhunkovsky's contemporary Petr Petrovich Stremoukhov marveled at the school's liberal atmosphere and the absence of anything resembling political propaganda.<sup>26</sup> Even the selection of teachers did not indicate a determination to instill "pure Russian values." History instruction was in the hands of a Pole, Rudolf Ignatievich Menzhinsky, whose son Viacheslav became the second head of the Soviet secret police. In his dry, pedantic style, the elder Menzhinsky even engaged in what might be considered a wry bit of subversion. When students referred to Catherine II as "the Great," he brought them up short. With legalistic precision Rudolf Ignatievich informed his charges that the empress (in Polish eyes the chief culprit in the criminal partitions that destroyed their country) was not entitled to the epithet, *Velikaia*—the Governing Senate had not formally bestowed it upon her!<sup>27</sup>

Given the family background of the pages, political indoctrination was unnecessary; the moral tone of the institution was far more important. Located in the former Vorontsov Palace, which housed the Knights of Malta during the reign of Paul I, the school had assumed many of the trappings of that order, most notably the white Maltese cross. Graduates received a bimetallic ring engraved with the words "hard as steel, pure as gold." Pages took the oath of the Knights to love the fatherland, defend the church and its teachings, protect the weak, show generosity to all, and everywhere, and always be fighters for good against injustice and evil.<sup>28</sup> Not all graduates embraced these chivalric values, but Dzhunkovsky did, since they conformed closely to those he had learned at home.

Vadya made a quick and successful adjustment to the Corps. The hazing of lowerclassmen by those above them did not trouble him much. The severity of this practice had greatly diminished by his time, and the more exotic forms of punishment prevalent earlier seem to have disappeared.<sup>29</sup> Vadya blended in easily. He was not a brilliant student, his classmate Stremoukhov recalled, but good looks coupled with charm and tact made it easy for him to get along well with others.<sup>30</sup> He developed a passion for gymnastics and excelled at the sport, acquiring an athletic build that would last a lifetime. Vadya's singing, on the other hand, was so bad that

his teachers excused him from class altogether once they determined that he could neither carry a tune nor hold a single true note.<sup>31</sup>

In many ways Dzhunkovsky was a model cadet, in one instance literally so, when he was chosen to model a new Corps uniform for Emperor Alexander III.<sup>32</sup> School officials also asked him to serve as a mentor for the son of the emir of Bukhara.<sup>33</sup> Still, Vadya did, on several occasions, breach discipline and wound up in the school's equivalent of the brig. Once he stood up to a tutor who was notorious for being angry and abusive to students; another time he helped a classmate on an examination.<sup>34</sup> In both cases, it seems he was motivated by his own sense of honor and fairness or by his sympathy for a comrade in trouble.

The empathy that Vadya frequently displayed for others was rooted not only in the religious and moral teachings of home and school but also in the pain and loss he and his family experienced during his formative years. Sickness and death had long haunted the Dzhunkovsky household. By the time he entered school, Vadya had already lost two siblings, and in the late 1870s his father began to suffer from an increasingly debilitating disease that forced him to retire from the army. In February 1879 Fedor Dzhunkovsky finally succumbed to his illness. At home at the time, Vladimir remembered being roused at five in the morning and coming to his parents' bedroom where his father lay. His mother and sisters knelt at the bedside. The young boy broke down: "I . . . could not bear to believe that all was at an end. My father wheezed . . . , the wheezing became slower and slower, then there was complete stillness—[he] . . . was no more."<sup>35</sup>

Shortly afterward, another blow fell; Vadya's beloved eldest brother, Stepan, also became sick and died unexpectedly. These two losses, coming in quick succession, had a profound impact on Vadya, who became so seriously depressed and unable to study that he failed his final exams.<sup>36</sup> Although Vadya's healthy disposition enabled him to recover eventually, these tragedies left their mark. They deepened his appreciation for the suffering of others, and this sympathy for those in distress would strongly influence his personal relations and, later, his practice as an administrator.



Dzhunkovsky's memoirs tell nothing of the books he read or the ideas that influenced him. As an early teenager he could not comprehend the rise of the revolutionary movement that shook the country in the late 1870s.

His loyal and conservative family and the atmosphere of the Corps gave him little basis for understanding the emerging political conflict. He had limited contact with workers and peasants and did not feel a sense of guilt toward “the people” that motivated so many of the radicals.

A year before his father died, terrorism first intruded in Vadya’s life. On January 28, 1878, a young revolutionary, Vera Zasulich, tried to assassinate Fedor Trepov, the St. Petersburg city commandant (*gradonachal’nik*), shooting him at point blank range. Vadya was at home eating dinner with his family when his father, pale and shaken, came in with the news. Fedor Dzhunkovsky was close to Trepov, and although it was Trepov’s flogging of a disrespectful student prisoner that had prompted Zasulich’s attack, Vadya’s father did not see the city commandant as a monster. The acquittal of the young terrorist at the end of her sensational trial came to all the Dzhunkovskys as a shock, “something completely unintelligible.”<sup>37</sup>

Zasulich’s shot triggered a volley of assassinations and other terrorist acts, most of them carried out by the People’s Will (*Narodnaia volia*), an increasingly bold and determined band of revolutionaries. As these violent outrages escalated, ultimately focusing on the tsar, Vadya and the other pages watched in horror. Even if the goal of the radicals—a democratic, socialist regime—had been explained to them, it would have made little or no sense. To their minds, monarch and nation were virtually identical, and the terror campaign was an attack on the fatherland itself. Thus Dzhunkovsky was chagrined when, after repeated attempts on his life, Alexander II began to travel through St. Petersburg accompanied by armed guards. That diminished the prestige of the emperor, he felt, and lowered the standing of the country as a whole.<sup>38</sup> The terrorists’ explosion of a bomb at the Winter Palace in February 1880 left fifteen-year-old Vadya and his classmates stunned, their patriotic feelings deeply offended.<sup>39</sup>

On the terrible day, March 1, 1881, when suddenly news came of a terrorist assault on the tsar’s person, Vadya and his family were visiting Evdokiia, by then a lady-in-waiting at the court, living in an apartment at the Mariinsky Palace. They rushed to the Winter Palace Square, joining a large, anxious throng. There they learned that the assassins had been successful and heard the fateful announcement: “The Sovereign Emperor rests with God. Alexander III has ascended the throne.” The people fell to their knees as one. Then, after about ten minutes, an unaccompanied sleigh, drawn by two horses, and bearing a tall, upright figure, sped from the Winter Palace, across the square, toward the arch of the General Staff

building and the waiting crowd. Dzhunkovsky remembered vividly the scene that ensued:

We looked. Yes: it was HE! Alexander III. . . . A kind of electric spark seemed to course through the crowd. Someone shouted: "The Emperor!" "Hurrah" sounded, and, in an instant, the multitude raced after the sleigh; hats flew into the air. My brother and I, drawn by the throng, ran as fast as we could to Nevsky Prospect. It was a wonderful, inspiring moment. A deafening "Hurrah" carried along the whole route to the Anichkov Palace. The lack of ceremony with which the sovereign, having just assumed the throne, in his first minutes as tsar, rode, completely alone, in an open sleigh, produced an enormous impression.<sup>40</sup>

What the young Dzhunkovsky saw in the traumatic hours following the assassination of Alexander II would have a lasting impact. On more than one occasion, he sought to emulate the new emperor's sangfroid in the face of danger, and he always maintained the greatest respect for the ruler known as the "tsar-peacemaker." In his eyes Alexander III was "a real autocrat in the ideal sense of the word," who showed that the essence of monarchy was "the subordination of [personal] interests and desires to a higher truth."<sup>41</sup> In 1894 fate placed him near the scene of the emperor's death, one of the few permitted to view him immediately after his passing. Kissing the still warm hand of the monarch he revered, Dzhunkovsky was unable to hold back his sobs. He felt a sense of loss akin to that he had suffered when his own father died.<sup>42</sup>

In the course of his life Dzhunkovsky undoubtedly came to know many of the great works of literature with which Russia has so generously endowed the world. He had a large personal library, and his memoirs clearly indicate a high degree of familiarity with important writers and their lives. But apart from a stated fondness for the poetry of Nikolai Nekrasov, Vladimir is silent as to his tastes. About the theater, however, he was unabashedly enthusiastic. His passion developed early and proved enduring. It became his chief entree into the world of the cultural elite, the basis of both solid friendships and life-saving support.

The play was not the thing that made the young Dzhunkovsky a theater lover. Rather, it was the face, figure, and talent of the great actress Maria Savina. Vadya was thirteen when he first saw the artist who would dominate the stage of St. Petersburg's Alexandrinsky Theater for decades.

He was smitten; soon all his spare cash went to buying tickets to her performances, although the cheapest seats were all he could afford. Obsessed with Savina, he hung about the stage doors whenever she performed. He found out where she lived and wandered nearby. Vadya learned where Savina went to church and attended services there, praying for a glimpse. When she appeared, his delight was indescribable.<sup>43</sup>

On the night Savina played in Viktor Krylov's comedy "The Prank" (*Shalost*), she scored a complete triumph. "The public went wild," Vadya remembered, "and I almost hurled myself over the footlights in ecstasy." After the performance he waited with a large crowd at the stage door. At last Savina appeared, carrying an enormous bouquet, and seated herself in a carriage. Standing close by, Vadya took courage, pressed forward, and asked his idol for one of the flowers. "She pulled out a pale yellow rose and gave it to me," he wrote later. "I seized the rose in trembling hands and kissed it. I was boundlessly happy." He took his treasure home and carefully put it away. Years later, he rediscovered the petals of that rose, tenderly preserved in paper amid the jumbled souvenirs of a lifetime. Dzhunkovsky's memoirs do not tell us what emotions this encounter with his past evoked, only that he burned "those dear witnesses of my first, pure, selfless love."<sup>44</sup>



In 1882 Dzhunkovsky finished the seventh form and with it the regular academic program of the Corps. He felt both relief and a sense of accomplishment. Now "an educated person," he looked forward to the two special forms where he would concentrate on military science and advanced mathematics. Under teachers from the Academy of the General Staff, he studied fortification, tactics, artillery, military administration and history, as well as law.<sup>45</sup>

As graduation approached, Dzhunkovsky began to consider carefully his military career. At first he inclined toward the artillery, but many friends urged him to enter the Preobrazhensky Guards, a prospect that seemed attractive, since service in the guards meant more rapid promotions. The Preobrazhensky regiment was expensive, however, and Dzhunkovsky had limited financial resources. The pension his mother received after his father's death was far from lavish, and the family had no landed property. Eventually, with some misgivings, Vladimir convinced himself



Grand Duchess Elizabeth in bridal attire. Hoover Institution Archive (HIA), Russian Pictorial Collection, envelope A(t).

that he could afford the regiment and requested assignment there.<sup>46</sup> This proved to be an important decision; it strengthened his ties with the ruling dynasty and opened unimagined opportunities.

Before he put off the court uniform of a page for good, a final duty remained. In June 1884 Dzhunkovsky was called upon to serve at the wedding of Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, Alexander III's brother, and Princess Elisabeth of Hesse-Darmstadt, a granddaughter of Britain's Queen Victoria. Later he recalled the brilliant ceremonies that surrounded the event as symbolic of a golden time, "when Russia was in the fullness of her power, [and] when the West not only paid attention . . . but trembled before her, feeling the extraordinary moral force of her monarch."<sup>47</sup> It was a fateful moment for Dzhunkovsky as well. In the course of these celebrations he first encountered two women who would have enormous consequences for his life: Sergei's new bride and her sister Alix, the future empress Alexandra. Elisabeth who, upon her conversion to Russian Orthodoxy in 1891, took the name Elizaveta Fedorovna, immediately attracted him with her beauty and charm. The younger Alix, however, left a different and much less favorable impression. Vladimir remembered that during the modest Lutheran wedding service that followed the elaborate Orthodox ceremony, the twelve-year-old "cried and sobbed hysterically, tears flowed from her eyes and there was no way anybody could calm her."<sup>48</sup> In the succeeding years, Dzhunkovsky and Elizaveta Fedorovna became extremely close, bound by faith, mutual affection, and respect. Alexandra, on the other hand, emerged as Vladimir's nemesis, and decades later her hysterical tendencies, noted at first sight, brought his administrative career to an end.