



M. V. Frunze

1925

## Mikhail Vasilievich Frunze

Within a four-month span, three of Voronsky's close acquaintances died. The first, Mikhail Frunze, had known Voronsky since they had spent time in prison together in 1907, where Frunze was awaiting execution. They worked closely together in Ivanovo from 1918 to 1920, although Frunze spent much of his time at the front. In Moscow, Voronsky's daughter remembered that Frunze brought them a huge sack of millet in 1921, which kept them from starving in the famine then raging.

Despite Frunze's insistent advice that Voronsky leave the Opposition in 1923, their cordial relations remained. He defended Voronsky, critically, during the debates leading up to the party resolution on literary policy in June 1925. And there is some evidence that Frunze was against using the forms of reprisal being prepared by the Stalin faction of the party against members of the Left Opposition.

In January 1925 Frunze replaced Trotsky as Commissar of the Revolutionary Military Council. In October 1925 he died after an operation to repair an ulcer that unfortunately had already healed. Frunze had not wanted to undergo the operation, but it seems that Stalin insisted. Speculation that Stalin wanted Frunze out of the picture during the Fourteenth Party Congress in December 1925 is as yet unconfirmed. So, too, are suspicions that Frunze was deliberately murdered on Stalin's orders. Pilniak's reworking of certain details given to him by Voronsky into the "Tale of the Unextinguished Moon" led to Voronsky's first party reprimand and almost cost him his position as

---

From *Krasnaia nov'*, no. 9 (1925): pp. 277–279.

editor of Red Virgin Soil.

There is no doubt that Frunze's death was not only a great personal loss, but a serious political blow to Voronsky.

## 1

**T**HE FIRST SNOWFALL on the Kremlin has spread a soft shroud over the fresh new grave. Frozen clods of earth have sealed tightly and for all time the remains of this rare hero of the revolution, this noble and dear comrade, this comrade-in-arms and friend of the workers.

The nameless yet worldwide truth of our rich and dangerous modern revolutionary epoch found in his personality one of its finest incarnations.

He was our pride, our hope, our defense and our celebration.

Inside him beat a courageous, fearless and kind heart. He combined within himself the irreconcilability and audacity of a fighter, the calm reasonableness and tact of a military commander, strategist and leader, with the broad and passionate human feelings of love and friendship. He loved this world of stubborn textile workers, and generations of metalworkers; the world of the incomparable and unique Bolshevik underground, of professional revolutionaries; the world of red-starred armies and peasant-shirted labor—and they also firmly loved him, respected him and believed in him.

His life was truly heroic. Petty egotism was something alien to him. He knew the full value of revolutionary heroism, he was always on the move, his word was matched by deeds, and he loved what people call the trials of fate. It was about him and people like him that the famous proletarian artist wrote his *Stormy Petrel*, *The Song about the Falcon* and the legend about Danko, for the man who has just died was a harbinger of the storm. He knew the happiness of battle and had the right more than others to say: "I fought well ... I saw the heavens ..." And it could be said that "his heart burned with the flames of a desire to save his people, to lead them out onto an easier path, and in his eyes one could see the sparks of that powerful fire."

But he was not a romantic zealot. The party of the revolutionary proletariat taught him to combine heroism and bravery with reasonable calculation. That is why he struck such mortal blows against enemy forces and triumphed so often. Victory was his companion. Moreover, he had the inherent talents of a warrior; it is no accident that he loved weapons and military affairs so much.

His life was heroic, bold and selfless, but what was most captivating in him was the ease and simplicity with which he met danger. These qualities reached a childlike immediacy in him. He knew the value of revolutionary duty, but this word didn't define him personally; he acted so naturally and directly in performing the heroic.

Comrade and friend!

Yes, he was a comrade of which there are few. He was able to stand up for people, for their hopes and ideals until the very end. Here he showed no mercy for the enemy, or for traitors and renegades. But he knew how to be a friend. Invested with the full power and gravity of the military might of the republic, he remained just as accessible and unchanged as a person right up until the last. There was something that was comfortable and homey about him, as if he were an old and well-known friend. At the summit of power some of our most outstanding and most remarkable people govern and lead by creating around themselves an atmosphere of admiration and authority. Others are strong on discipline, some on efficiency and practicality, and still others on diplomacy and adaptability, and so forth. Comrade Frunze created around himself an atmosphere of firm, sincere and gratifying cooperation. Discipline, authority, tact and efficiency all flowed from this cooperation. It is well known how closely tied the deceased was with the textile workers of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk region. These were the ties of revolutionary fighters, but fully permeated with friendship. For this reason they remember him so well and so faithfully there.

He was straightforward and open. He was spiritually too rich to beat around the bush. Nature had endowed him with one great gift: a generous instinct for life. More than once these great powers saved him from death in difficult and dangerous situations, more than once they suggested a true and exact movement of the hand or eye, of thought or feeling. In vain did the tsarist oppressors try to stifle them in him; nor could excessive work that was beyond human strength, or family sorrows keep him down—the forces of life were inexhaustible in him. They didn't betray him even in the last days of his life: he, who had never known hesitation in battle, on a horse, with rifle or mauser in hand, experienced certain doubts before his operation. His great instinct for life proved to be on the mark here as well.

Now, in the brief and hasty words of an obituary, there is neither time nor place to tell about the wonderful and complex life of this man. But it will be

done. The months awaiting execution; fateful years followed by new, long and exhausting exile years as the prisoner of traitors and the autocracy's police; then the underground military circles on the old front; then serving as the first revolutionary leader of the Minsk militia, Mikhailov-Frunze, who subdued General Evert and the staff of the Western Front to the will of the revolutionary people; and then participation in the October Moscow battles with rifle in hand near the Metropole; then seizing an armored car with another comrade during the days of the left SR putsch; then battles near Kinel and Ufa; then capturing the Orenburg cossacks; then routing Tostov in the Ural steppes; then the legendary Perekop; then fighting all alone against a band of Makhno's troops; all this and much much more will be remembered, written down and retold, for the glory and achievements of the deceased are the glory and achievements of the workers and peasants of our party.

Yes, it will all be done, but what a difficult, what an immeasurable, what an absurd loss! It can not be compensated with words of praise, or with volumes of memoirs.

The white mourning stone lay down here.  
Weeping grass now grows at our feet.

There will be pure and crystalline nights above the Kremlin, there will be sunsetless summer skies which are more purple than battle standards, there will be the moist, vital shiver of stars at night, but the stars of his eyes have been extinguished forever. The ancient law of death and decay is as yet inevitable and insuperable.

Please forgive these feeble lines—they are an homage of grief over one we have lost in such an unreal and unexpected way.