

FRUNZE: THE SOVIET CLAUSEWITZ
(1885 - 1925)

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THE SOVIET CLAUSEWITZ
1885-1925

by

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To the Memory of my Father

P R E F A C E

Alongside the names of such giants of Soviet history as Brezhnev, Khrushchev, Kirov, Kosygin, Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky, the name of Mikhail Vasil'evich Frunze may seem to be out of place. In spite of a most impressive flowering of Western scholarship on various aspects of the Soviet Union, the figure of Frunze remains relatively undeveloped. It is, in fact, quite possible to produce a history of the Soviet Union in which he is not mentioned. It has been done several times.¹

The Western neglect of Frunze is not duplicated in works produced in the Soviet Union. There, Frunze is almost invariably treated as a major figure and is popularly regarded as one of the great strategists of the early days of the Soviet republic. He holds, as well, a high place in the ranks of the "Old Bolsheviks."

How are these contrasts between the Western and the Soviet scholarly positions to be explained?

Several factors account for the high position occupied by Frunze in Soviet historiography. He was a military hero. He had a long record of revolutionary activity. He died at an early age and did not become involved in the purges and other excesses of Stalin's later career. In short, Frunze's short, active life and his contributions to the revolution suited him almost ideally to the role of historical hero.

Western scholars have neglected him, probably, for a number of reasons. First, he appears to have been primarily a military figure and Western scholarship is only now overcoming a strong predilection against military figures (except, of course, the "Great Captains"). The role of the military figure in political affairs has been poorly appreciated until most recently.

¹ Those Western histories which do mention him generally relegate him to a position of minor attention. One of our most respected historians, writing a multi-volume history of the USSR, refers to him as "M. P. Frunze" in the earlier volumes. See Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923* (New York: Macmillan, 1951-1953), I, p. 304.

Second, Frunze does not seem to be a very exciting or original person. Western scholars have tended to view him only in the shadow of Stalin or Trotsky and have not turned the light fully on Frunze. Third, he did pass from the scene in 1925, that is, after the seizure of power and the Civil War and before the intensification of the Stalin-Trotsky struggle and the purges. Fourth, as a military man he has been overshadowed in Western writings by Trotsky, Tukhachevskii, Voroshilov, and even Budennyi, and as a political figure by Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, and many others.

This study attempts to describe Frunze's activities and theoretical writings in order to make possible an evaluation of his true historical and political significance. He certainly deserves more attention than he has been given in past Western scholarship. He deserves it, if for no other reason, because of the frequency with which his name and activities are cited in current Soviet literature. He exerts an influence on the Soviet Union today and the extent of that influence is little appreciated or understood in the West. Obviously, that influence is not so great as the influence of Lenin, for instance, but it exists and deserves some attention.

In attempting to determine Frunze's significance, this study first describes his life and activities. Then a description of Frunze's debates and writings on the unified military doctrine and other doctrinal matters follows. A recounting of some of the more important Civil War campaigns in which he participated is included. The appendix contains translations of some of his more important writings which are not elsewhere available in English.

The plan of the study is culminated with an evaluation of Frunze as a theoretician. Where there are direct indications of his influence on Soviet military doctrine or on Soviet action, such indications are pointed out. No attempt has been made to give credit to Frunze for influence which can not be clearly demonstrated, even though there may be a suspicion that such influences exist in some instances.

In no case is this study conceived as a brief for Frunze. In attempting to rescue him from a relative obscurity, this study does not desire to transform him into some sort of towering giant of Soviet and world history. It is hoped that Frunze's contributions, his originality, his influence, and his significance will become clear in the pages to follow without gilding or embroidering.

A word about the arrangement of the study itself may be appropriate at this point. It is concerned chiefly with military doctrine. Military doctrine, even that produced by the greatest names in the field, abounds in truisms, trite phrases, obvious statements, platitudes, and tautologies. (Both Suvorov and Mao Tse-tung, for instance, have advised against losing

battles.) The military doctrine considered here is no exception, even when it flows from the mouth of a brilliant Trotsky – and especially when it comes from Frunze. Nevertheless, it has been necessary to follow several lines of thought. This course sometimes becomes tedious and, it is feared, boring. The reader is asked to bear along compassionately in these instances in the hope that, at the end, a clear and nearly complete understanding of the essential points (and interpretations) will finally emerge.

A minute examination of Frunze's doctrine is particularly important because his thought developed and was refined in a frictional contact with the emery of Trotsky's counterarguments.

This study, then, has a three-fold purpose.

First, it is designed to provide information on Frunze's activities and writings in order to fill a lacuna now existing in Western scholarship.

Second, it hopes to examine Frunze's activities and writings in order to attempt to place him properly in history and political science.

Third, it modestly present itself as an attempt to contribute to and encourage the study of military thought in general.

These three purposes find their justification, it is submitted, within the broad field of political science. Past separations of politics and military affairs may have had some meaning, but a continuing compartmentalization is daily becoming more and more meaningless.

It is not accidental that the great outpouring of Western scholarship on the Soviet Union has been accompanied, in recent years, by an increasing number of works on military affairs (e. g., Garthoff, Erickson, Whiting, Wolfe, Fedotoff White, Dinerstein, Clemens, and others). The Western interest in military affairs can hardly be separated from Western interest in the progress of communism. Whether the development is welcome or unwelcome to the scholarly community, it is now a fact that a study of military affairs is coming more and more within the scope of political science. It is hoped that this effort will stimulate others to inquire more competently and more thoroughly into the relationships between military and political affairs.

Anyone who has done research on the Soviet Union knows of the dangers of reliance on Soviet sources. The Soviet habit of rewriting history is too well known to need further comment here. It is necessary, however, to remark that most of the work on this study was done, *volens volens*, in Soviet sources. This is especially true in the case of biographical and military details because of the paucity of such information in Western sources. This forced reliance on Soviet (including Stalinist) materials makes necessary a continuing vigilance against distortions. An attempt has been made to

maintain such vigilance and, in some of the more violent cases of obvious distortion, attention is called to the fact in the body of this study.

It is also appropriate to note that the nature of this work has compelled the writer to utilize Marxist and Soviet terminology in several cases. Such terms as "imperialist," "bourgeois," "class," and "proletarian" are frequently used. Their utilization should not imply their acceptance as reliable and accurate terms. They are employed here in an attempt to remain faithful to the letter and flavor of the historical setting in which they were used by Frunze and others with whom this study is concerned.

I could scarcely let pass the opportunity to express my appreciation to many persons who have helped me with my work.

My gratitude to Henry L. Roberts, formerly of the Russian Institute of Columbia University and now at Dartmouth College, is profound and sincere not only for his advice and counsel but also for his warm and sympathetic understanding. Professor Roberts maintains the highest standards of scholarship and is able, at the same time, only poorly to conceal his lively sense of humor.

I am also most grateful to Alexander Dallin who has encouraged me in this project and who has given me the advantage of his experience and judgment in commenting on earlier drafts.

My debt to several other persons is also considerable. I should mention, as a minimum, Colonel Rodger R. Bankson, USA; Daniel Bell; Pavel Bogachev, Director of the Lenin State Library in Moscow; Zbigniew Brzezinski; Walter C. Clemens, Jr.; Michael Dankewych; William T. R. Fox; Baymirza Hayit; John N. Hazard; my brother, John Clayton Jacobs, the last of the Renaissance men; Colonel Kenneth E. Lay, USA; Garé LeCompte; Elmer Plischke; Serge Shewchuk; and Lawrence Ziring.

None of these persons, of course, bears any responsibility for errors of fact and interpretation which remain in this work.

In the course of my studies, I have received financial assistance from the Ford Foundation, the Russian Institute of Columbia University, and Mrs. Frederick Lewis Allen. This help is deeply appreciated.

I know of my debt, as well, to many persons whose names do not appear here. I hope that they will not be offended if I let this impersonal expression of gratitude serve where a more detailed notice would have been more proper.

W. D. J.

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A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Any given system of transliteration, it has been remarked, is satisfactory only to its creator. With some optimism, the present system of transliteration is designed to be satisfactory to all those who have worked with Russian language sources in libraries in the United States.

In an attempt to obtain a maximum of clarity and a minimum of apparatus, a variation of the Library of Congress transliteration system has been used here.

The variations include:

Ligature marks are omitted.

Single Russian letters which are transliterated into English by more than one letter are given initial capitalization only.

Both the soft sign and the hard sign are transliterated as '.

Some proper names which are now well-established in an English transliteration are used in the common English version rather than in a strict transliteration. Thus, Trotsky is used rather than Trotskii, but Tukhachevskii and not Tukhachevsky.