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ALEKSANDR UL'IANOV: DARWINIAN TERRORIST

Aleksandr Ul'ianov's apparently suicidal behavior after his arrest for participating in the plot to assassinate Alexander III in 1887, "The Second March First," remains puzzling. Terrorists, of course, need not be suicidal. Aleksandr Ul'ianov's roles in the terrorist group that formed in St. Petersburg University in January 1887 did not include a suicide mission. He helped make the bombs, but he was not designated a bomb thrower (metal'shchik, in the parlance of revolutionary terrorism). The role of bomb thrower carried with it the likelihood of death and the three men who took that role knowingly accepted a suicide mission. There is evidence that Aleksandr had planned to emigrate and continue his revolutionary career in Europe; and there is further evidence that he rationally calculated about the timetable for the planned act of terrorism and future acts; but at the same time he behaved oddly, showed, at the very least, poor judgment, and at some point after the failure of the assassination attempt decided to engage in an act of self-sacrifice. Ul'ianov, however, did not think of his action as suicidal even though he rejected legal defense and failed to write a contrite letter to the Tsar that might have saved his life. The theoretical ideas that he used to explain his actions and psychological turning points will be explored in an effort to explain Aleksandr's decisions.

Aleksandr Ul'ianov's revolutionary career lasted only a few months and he wrote only two surviving pieces immediately relevant to that career. Even these two writings were collective efforts, in the first case, of indignant students who had been herded by the police and Cossacks on Nov 17, 1886 during a procession to the Volkovo cemetery to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Nikolai Dobroliubov's death and were protesting both their treatment and the arrests and expulsions of their comrades from St. Petersburg University; and in the second case, a hastily contrived program for "The Terrorist Fraction of Narodnaia Vo-

1. My first effort in this direction was undertaken in connection with Lenin's career in Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin: The Intelligentsia and Power (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1990), ch. 2. Shortly after that heretofore closed archives were made accessible. I have seen the relevant documents in Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii, hereafter cited as GARF and Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no Politicheskoi Istorii, hereafter cited as RGASPI. Most of the important documents and memoirs have been published in Pervoe Marta 1887 g., ed. A. A. Shilov (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1927); and A. I. Ul'ianova-Elizarova, ed., Aleksandr Il'ich Ul'ianov i de-lo 1 Marta 1887 g. (Moscow-Leningrad: Gos. Izd-vo, 1927). The most recent scholarly analyses I have seen are Mikhail Kheifets, "On ne mog postupit' inache?" Nota Bene, no. 1 (Feb. 2004), 243-82; and Mikhail G. Shtein, Ul'ianovy i Leniny, semeinye tainy (St. Petersburg: Izd. Dom "Neva," 2004). Thanks to Anna Geiftnan for alerting me to Kheifets's article.