

## Terrorism Goes on the Offensive

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**Comment:** Note the good title.

Dmitrii Karakozov's attempt on the czar introduced the concept of offensive terrorism

that would be pursued by the **People's Will** and that was sharply distinct from the defensive terrorism advocated by **Vera Zasulich** and Black Repartition. Karakozov's attempt was

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shocking to the Russian people in part because it was the first case of offensive terrorism.

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**Comment:** Note how the thesis is quite clear and nicely expressed (especially with the few tweaks I offer).

Offensive terrorism can be defined as violent acts against political targets that are intended to cripple the government or create confusion. Karakozov intended to initiate real freedom by

destroying the government by causing the death of the czar. In addition to perpetrating the assassination attempt, Karakozov distributed a statement, "To Worker Friends," using

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**Comment:** AWK: two "by's" in rapid succession.

propaganda and terrorism as equal tools. This was essentially the same policy the People's Will

set forth in their program. The group believed propaganda was necessary to achieve a true

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people's revolt; however, they also believed that using propaganda effectively in Russia was

impossible due to government control of political speech. Vera Zasulich, like Karakozov,

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**Comment:** Here a paragraph break is probably warranted, with a good topic sentence: "The offensive terrorism of DK and the PW should be distinguished from VZ's act." (Then you would dispense with the sentence in yellow.)

attempted to assassinate a government official. **A major difference was the motivation for the**

**attacks.** Zasulich committed her act not in the hopes of sparking a revolution, but as an act of

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revenge. It was precisely revenge for specific acts and murders to protect their group—defensive terrorism—that primarily motivated the attacks by Black Repartition. Land and Liberty split over

the issue of defensive terrorism v. offensive terrorism. Karakozov wrote, "I have decided to

destroy the wicked Czar and die for my people" ( Yarmolinsky 139). When Zasulich was

questioned as to her motivation for the shooting she responded, "For Bogoliubov" (Siljak, 8).

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**Comment:** Nice contrast rooted in sources. Hooray. Well done.

She was acting in response to a very specific incident involving a political prisoner. In contrast,

the program of the People's Will states, "The aim of such activity is to break down the prestige

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of Governmental power, to furnish continuous proof of the possibility of carrying on a contest

with the Government, to raise in that way the revolutionary spirit of the people” | Their terrorist acts were intended to spark a revolution among the people. | The fifteen years that followed Karakozov’s attempt was filled with tensions between the two terror policies. Land and Liberty was ultimately dissolved and divided into these two camps. Black Repartition and Zasulich rejected offensive terrorism. Karakozov’s attempt created a seemingly new tool for revolutionaries to use. People’s Will attempted to replicate Karakozov’s attack six times until they successfully assassinated the Czar. The contrast between offensive terrorism like Karakozov and the People’s Will, and defensive terrorism advocated by Zasulich represent the tension in revolutionary circles during the 1870’s that culminated in the division of Land and Liberty. |

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**Comment:** Once again: note direct evidence for the argument. And it doesn’t make the paper too long!

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**Comment:** Probably even a third paragraph should begin here.

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It should be clear that this is quite a good essay. To be sure, a few things could be improved. It really needs to be divided into three paragraphs (as I suggest in my marginal notes above). At several points the prose could be sharpened, streamlined, or made more precise. But the strengths of the paper far outweigh the weaknesses. These can be listed here: 1) The paper has a clear thesis, presented in a sentence that expresses the essence of the matter without being too long or convoluted. The thesis is sufficiently sophisticated to be interesting and sufficiently simple to be clear. The author also comes back to the thesis again at the end if a nice concluding statement. 2) The paper has a short, clear title that relates the essence of the essay. 3) The paper makes subtle but crucial distinctions between different phenomena (in this case Zasulich & defensive terrorism vs. Karakozov, People’s Will, and offensive terrorism) as opposed to indiscriminately lumping marginally similar things together in one pile. 4) The paper deploys concrete evidence on several occasions. Obviously, given the size of the essay it can’t offer a great deal. But the author clearly made careful & thoughtful choices about what evidence would best support his/her thesis. The paper thus remains well within the guidelines while also satisfying the need for evidence. 5) The prose is very clear and the essay is therefore easy—indeed a pleasure—to read. This essay earned a 94.

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**Comment:** Very effective summary statement.