

THE PHOBIA OF REPETITION AND THE FEAR OF UNKNOWN

Dmitry Bykov



DMITRY BYKOV is a Russian writer, poet, and columnist

Mass fear can be divided into two groups. There are conscious and somehow induced fears and then there are genuine fears, those deepest and often unreflected upon. As a rule, a person rarely admits to even having them. But sometimes it is unclear just what the difference is between a fear and a phobia. I would say that a phobia is largely something that we do not admit to having, and is something that dwells in the subconscious. Fears, on the other side, are more apparent and primitive. Here we have above all the fear of unemployment, of uselessness, the fear of poverty, the fear of political instability, and the fear for one's health which is now intensively promoted in society today with health increasingly becoming the main subject of TV and press programming.

Fear is forever floating on the surface and hence it can become a commodity but never a phobia. **Phobias can become objects of covert speculation, but, just as the majority is not aware of them, those in power, for example, are scarcely aware of them either.** For those in power are also intensely fearful and subjected to phobias. Ideally, the task of a politician in a normal

country is to work with a population's phobias, trying wherever possible to evoke a positive response. However, the ruling powers in our country are themselves living with a dreadful phobia of calling things by their proper name. Even Parfenov, who voices obvious things from time to time, regards it as a heroic deed, and something that even he was trouble with doing. This is in spite of the fact that he rarely says anything that most people, even children, don't already know. In his recent address, Dmitry Medvedev did everything possible to evade sore points of any sort. As a result, he found himself in a rather funny position when speaking of large families and about how wonderful the police is. This particular fear of auto-therapy – the fear of curing one's own complexes – is terribly endemic in Russia.

There are phobias that mainly have to do with a certain **horror of invincibility and the cyclical nature of things, of the fact that, no matter what reforms and reconstructions are applied to Russia, the country will inevitably fall back to its previous configuration;** the horror at the uselessness of any and all action, of the absurdity of any social activity. It is summarized by Oblomov's syndrome, who realized that it would be good to get up, yet nevertheless realized also that this action would invariably be in vain. Yet the Oblomovian state of mind, strictly speaking, is not laziness, as laziness is not a psychological malady. This predominant phobia is characterized by a fear of one's own lack of motivation: one has to act but does not know why. There is also a particular fear of death in this phobia, of a sensation of life's absolute uselessness with a lack of understanding as to why one has lived; one doesn't understand what has changed and is accompanied by a total lack of faith in the possibility to change anything. I think that in a great measure this prominent pho-

bia also touches on a fear of the future. **This is not a fear of any cataclysms but simply a fear of the unknown, of a total lack of understanding of the course of life.**

These fears are very peculiar to Russian society, because, if we are to be frank, the 21st century has become a century of national matrices, where it is now clear that **each country has its own path, which is very individual and hardly comprehensible if looked at from the outside.** As a result, the fears of contemporary American society are totally incomprehensible to an average person in Russia. Likewise, the fears of an average Australian in Christos Tsiolkas' novel *The Slap* are absurd for an average Russian. I suppose that the fears of an average Russian are already incomprehensible even in the Balkans and that the further you go the less sense they make to anyone. In Russia today we have a very individual influenza.

Take the fear of terrorism, for example. Terrorism is very different from any other phenomenon and the fear of it is accordingly quite unique. It pursues its own aims, it has different sponsorships, and it is organized quite differently. In America, it targets consumerist civilization. These actions are predominantly demonstrative in their nature. However, Russian terrorism has an entirely different geopolitical strategy. **I do not think that American terrorists plot to capture America but the Caucasian terrorists certainly plot to capture Russia.** And the idea of combating them in a united front is hopeless in every respect regardless of the purpose of such an alliance. The Second Front was possible in the 1940's but today these two absolutely different civilizations can not be bridged; there can be no understanding between them and no alliance. It is generally the case, after all, that the parasites that torment dogs are usually harmless for men. ■

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