

Family Conflicts of Provincial Towns' Dwellers in the Russian Empire During the second Half of XIX Century and the Early XX Century

Gulnara Mansurovna Burdina

Kazan (Volga region) Federal University (Yelabuga Institute)
Kazanskaya st., 89, 423600, Yelabuga, Russia

Abstract: The article reveals peculiarities of intrafamilial conflicts in the circumstances of Russian provincial towns during the second half of XIX century and the early XX century. Based on the materials of regional towns of the Vyatka Governorate, various types of intrafamilial conflicts of the town dwellers are studied. The main causes of conflict situations in families are revealed. The influence of the history epoch and crisis phenomena in the society on the intensity of proneness to conflicts in a family is determined.

Key words: Conflict • Urban Family • Vyatka Governorate • Daily Life

INTRODUCTION

The modern stage of the historical science development is described with the occurrence of interdisciplinarity of historical research. Interdisciplinarity assumes collaboration of specialists in different areas of science who study the same problem but base on their own disciplinary methodology. Enrichment of the historical science with methodological and methodical bases of social and humanitarian sciences aided the occurrence of new research directions. Such directions can include the historical conflictology. Historical conflictology is a new direction of scientific search in history, which assumes interdisciplinary interaction with various social sciences, with psychology being prioritized [1].

Family as a social value, as a micro world, in which the formation of personality of a human begins and as the most ancient institution of human interaction has always been attracting the focus of researchers in many sciences-sociology, economics, law, ethnography, psychology, demography, history, pedagogy, etc. Each of them, according to its subject matter, studies the specific sides of family functioning and development. Integration of several scientific lines allows obtaining integral and all-round view of family development.

Interindividual family conflicts have been the important and inextricable part of intrafamilial communication at all periods of family existence. As family

is a complex sociocultural phenomenon, it includes both the factors of development and the sources of contradictions, conflicts and crises. When discussing family conflicts, psychologists separate two functions of a conflict-the positive function, which manifests itself in the fact that while being a form of opposition, a conflict is the source of development of family relations and the destructive role of intrafamilial conflicts, which results in family dissociation [2]. The American sociologist Lewis Coser emphasized that "a conflict is not always dysfunctional for relations, in which it takes place; often, a conflict is necessary for setting connections within a system" [3]. Psychologists point to the fact that the peculiar feature of family conflicts is their intensification against the background of the general social crisis [4]. The economic, social and industrial changes in Russian towns, which began during implementation of governmental reforms in the second half of XIX century, gradually affected intrafamilial relations.

The study of the peculiar features of intrafamilial conflicts during the period of transformation of the society in the circumstances of polyethnic peripheral region still remains a poorly explored topic. Therefore, revelation of the main causes of intrafamilial conflicts in the circumstances of reforming and modernizing the society in the period between the second half of XIX century and the early XX century is an important direction at studying the sociopsychological climate in the families of town dwellers during the studied period.

Body of the Work: Study of the available in the archive civil and criminal investigations concerning family conflicts at various periods of the XIX century showed that during the first half of the XIX century, conflicts related to the authoritarianism of parents with respect to their already married children were most common. Co-residence of several generations pre-determined occurrence of conflict situations in a family caused by interference of family members living beneath the same roof. For example, in Orlov one peasant beat his wife senseless and poured vitriol in her mouth for just having gone to bazaar while he was absent, which his parents did not like and told her husband she "had got loose" [5]. A mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law were mainly on bad terms if lived together. The dissatisfaction of the mother-in-law provoked frequent quarrels. In the suburban and peasant environment, such quarrels often resulted in court proceedings. Slander was one of the methods of retaliation to the offender. For example, permanent dissatisfaction with the daughter-in-law and long-running quarrel between Agrafena Ilyina and her daughter-in-law Akulina Gavrilova from Yaransk resulted in the following incident: Ilyina came to her neighbor Afanasyev and showed him the lower part of a pie, which was covered with some green substance. She told then that she had eaten the upper part of the pie the day before and intended to eat the lower part next morning. And there had been no green substance on that piece the day before. At that, Ilyina said she suspected the pie had been poisoned with vitriol surely by her daughter-in-law who intended to murder her as she and Gavrilova were at quarrel. Both women were interrogated in front of witnesses. During the interrogations, Gavrilova insisted she had not put any vitriol into the pie and Ilyina initially accused her daughter-in-law, but later confessed she had done it by herself, as she was "dissatisfied with her daughter-in-law" [6].

In the second half of XIX century, the number of cases of beating, abusing and refusing to support elderly parents by their children increased. For example, in her application, a peasant of the town of Yaransk Anna Lozilova said that her son Kirill permanently "encourages his wife to beat me and teaches his children to play various mean tricks at me" [7]. In some cases, co-residence of married children with their parents or with one of them resulted in continuous quarrels and conflicts. For example, as a respond to the complaint of his mother Malanya Zobina that she had been beaten and abused, a peasant from the city of Orlov Mikhail Zobin wrote the following petition, which in a few sentences manages to describe the whole phenomenon of co-residence of

elderly parents and grown-up children: "I am aware that my mother Malania Zobina pretended to have been beaten and abused by me, which I never did. On the contrary, my mother Malania Lukina has the most contentious temper and in our co-residence permanently presses me and my wife and almost every day causes various abuses, of which many neighbors are aware" [8].

Often, the intergeneration conflicts in merchant families took place whenever the grown-up sons showed intention to separate from their families with a share in capital. A writer of the second half of XIX century Dmitry Ivanovich Stakheev, a son of a merchant of 1st guild from Elabuga, I.I. Stakheev, in his works, many of which were autobiographic, described not only the merchants' way of life, but also the internal qualities of this social category. In his play "All familiar faces", which was the slightly amended story of the author's life, he described a conflict between a merchant and his son [9]. The son was going to marry and, in order to avoid asking money for family needs, asked to give him a business to conduct. This request was the cause of the conflict. The merchant kicked his son away. But he felt very bad about the break. As, despite all his anger and rough temper, he loved his son and understood that his son is the only heir of his, he pinned all of his hopes on him. As mentioned above, the story is autobiographic, but the author changed the end-piece of the story. Unlike Dmitry Stakheev who never met his father after the discord, his character came home because of the death of the father who passed away as he could not stand the discord in his soul. The father sincerely loved his son and wanted to live in complete concord with him, but the patriarchal traditions in the relations between parents and children, the indisputable power of the head of family over its members did not let the merchant to break the ice and heal the breach with his son. At that, as Wagner noted, "conflicts related to revising the law of family, property and succession were an integral part of the social, economic and cultural changes, which took place in the Russian Empire being reformed" [10].

Excessive drinking by the husband was a real catastrophe for a family and often led to impoverishment of the family. This phenomenon of a family life became ingrained in the everyday lives of the town dwellers to such an extent that many women did not conceal this fact and continued living with the alcohol addict, trying to do the housekeeping and grow up children unassistedly. An abstract from a petition of a philistine of the town of Yaransk to the teacher-inspector of Yaransk 3-class municipal college: "Because of extreme poverty, because of my husband's alcoholism, which has brought our

husbandry to complete decline, in view of the fact that our family consists of three little-aged and two grown-up members, I kindly ask the Pedagogical Council to release me from paying the contribution for teaching my son and let him continue the study" [11].

The most terrifying were the conflicts related to cruelty in a family. In most cases, that was torture of wives and children by husbands. Analysis of the archive files showed that cruel treatment of wives and children in the families of the town dwellers came en masse, especially if we take into account that not every woman dared to turn to the authorities for help, but only when the situation became hopeless. But the majority of the tried cases in the archive with regard to cruelty of husbands with respect to their wives contain petitions of the wives to the magistrates to assist in reconciliation with their husbands. No requests for living apart, let alone divorce, were mentioned, including those by the complainant. Authoritarianism in the intrafamilial relations was supported with the ultimate sophistication of the divorce procedure, even in cases of total psychological impossibility of co-residence of the spouses. This order was secured ideologically by the church and legislatively by the government. However, the fact itself that such cases were tried evidences the change of attitude of the society to the displays of violence in families. Foreign researches note that home violence was also a means of family control. Nevertheless, women started to defend their rights, filed complaints to courts despite multiple examples of uselessness of such complaints, which evidenced the growth of legal awareness and legal culture of women [12].

Strict ideological and legislative restrictions of divorces, which encouraged saving families, at the same time prevented new, probably happier marriages. Therefore, some women took the decision to take this serious step and leave their husbands for other men realizing that they could become subject for criminal punishment for the misconduct. The cases of wives leaving their husbands were very rare among the families of provincial town dwellers. Further resolution of such conflicts mostly depended on the tempers of both spouses. The petition of a philistine from the town of Orlov Peter Khalturin to a court investigator can be used as an example: "My legal wife Anna Khalturina has an affair with Stepan Parkhachev, has moved to him for residence and does not recognize me as the legal husband and when she enters my house, she takes my own property to him declaring she does not want to live with me and wants to murder me. I have witnesses. I ask to

oblige my wife to cease the intimate relationship with S. Parkhachev and deprive him of any right to keep her in his house" [13]. The court investigator resolved to dismiss the petition as the petitioner did not ask to punish his wife under the criminal law for her misconduct, but only solicited for cessation of the intimate relationship. The provided family conflict shows on the one hand the intention of the husband to restore his leadership over his wife and save the family according to the traditional view of family life and on the other hand the wife's mutiny against the authoritarian patriarchal order, which was set in the family and in the society and which made divorces almost impossible.

A peculiar feature of an urban family of the studied period was the fact that it was very sensitive to the changes taking place in the society, whether positive or negative. The development and sophistication of social relations in the early XX century, the economic instability of a family caused by the forced leave of the husband to seek earnings increasingly often brought families to crises. The State Archive of the Kirov Region has saved petitions of the town of Yaransk dwellers to release their sons from payment for studying in the municipal college by family-related circumstances during 1906. Among other petitions, there are many complaints of women regarding long-running absence of their husbands in the town by the reason of looking for a job, leaving their families destitute, which was confirmed by the certificates of the Town Police Supervisor [14]. Men left their families to find seasonal or agricultural jobs and often squandered or drank away the earned money. Women stayed alone with their children and old parents and could not handle the life situation, so they had to look for a job or, if they had any infants, send their elder children to work. Sometimes, when they could not get through the need, women filed complaints against their husbands to magistrates thus trying to force their husbands to provide for their families by means of power and law. The large number of cases surviving in the archive of cases containing complaints of women about the absence of their husbands and their refusal to provide for their families confirms that such situation in urban families in the late XIX and early XX centuries was a very common phenomenon. In many cases, even if the husband came home on weekends or holidays and did not refuse to provide for his family, but did not participate in housekeeping, it was also a cause of family conflicts. Hard financial position of the family made women to become more independent, which finally mined the historically settled authoritarian relations within a family.

The typical feature of intrafamilial conflicts, which took place in regional towns during the studied period, was their public nature. Family dramas unfolded in front of not only the family and their neighbors, but also the majority of town dwellers. A conflict, which took place in the town of Slobodsky in 1870 between the family of a philistine widow Maria Shmeleva (50 years old) and a widow of a soldier Gertruda Martynova (28 years old), is very illustrative in this respect. Gertruda was the matchmaker of Maria Shmeleva during the marriage proposal of her daughter and the non-commissioned officer Nikolay Kats, but later she was not invited to the bridal shower and the marriage, so she nursed a grudge. Therefore, on a suitable occasion, when guests arrived to the house of the couple, Gertruda came with her husband to the house of the non-commissioned officer, insulted the daughters of Shmeleva, thus causing a quarrel and scuffle with Maria Shmeleva. Gertruda did not admit her fault in the scuffle and, in order to excuse the obscenities towards the daughters of Shmeleva, she said that one of Shmeleva's daughters, Ekaterina, had initiated a rumor in the bazaar where she had been selling bread about intimate relationships between Gertruda and Nikolay Kats. Gertruda came to the bazaar to Ekaterina, provoked a quarrel and a scuffle with her. Then, after a while, an unidentified person smeared gates and doors of the non-commissioned officer Kats with tar, which also was taken as offense and derision. Multiple witnesses confirmed the story of the family of Maria Shmeleva and the magistrates resolved to punish Gertruda Martynova with a 10-ruble monetary fine in favor of the regional budget for arrangement of detention spaces. Thus, not only the members of the Maria Shmeleva and Gertruda Martynova's family witnessed the long-running conflict, but also many town dwellers. On the other part, this conflict demonstrates the significant role of abidance by the family rules and etiquette in the life of urban families. According to the family etiquette, it was considered mandatory not only to invite the matchmakers to pre-marriage events and to the marriage, but also to make mutual visits by the matchmakers during the first two or three years after the marriage of their children. Therefore, Maria Shmeleva can be admitted the originator of the conflict as she offended the matchmaker of her daughter Gertruda Martynova by not inviting her to the wedding ceremony, thus engineering a severe and long-running intrafamilial conflict. The conflict provided as an example also unveils another side of intrafamilial relations, which is characterized by the position of the husband of the accused Gertruda Martynova. Despite the rumors in the

town about the intimate relationship of his wife with Nikolay Kats, obscene behavior of his wife with respect to Shmeleva's family and being a witness of the quarrel and scuffle between them, Gertruda's husband when he was interrogated fully confirmed the words of his wife that she was not guilty in the conflict, thus protecting the family honor.

CONCLUSION

Having studied some typical conflict situations that arose in families of provincial towns dwellers of the Russian Empire in the late XIX - early XX century, we can identify the main causes and factors that encouraged intrafamilial conflicts: maintaining patriarchal traditions in the intrafamilial relations, their authoritarian nature; undue behavior of one of the family members (alcoholism, aggression and abuse); and poor financial position of a family. Generally, in the circumstances of transformation of the society during the late XIX - early XX centuries, intensification of intrafamilial conflicts took place due to the change and sophistication of socio-economic and spiritual relations. Change of traditional patriarchal view of interindividual relations within a family in the circumstances of small provincial towns progressed slowly, gradually, but steadily. The attributes of the changes in interindividual relations that started to take place in families, initially concerned families, in which grown-up married children lived together with their parents.

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