

FSD2549 PIETARILAISTEN RAKKAUSELÄMÄKERRAT 1996

FSD2549 SEXUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHIES FROM ST. PETERSBURG 1996

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## Is there Sex in Russia?

In Finland, a country very close to us by its climate, geographical location and, supposedly, character, there is every eight years a large sociological survey concerning the sexual orientation, experience and discoveries of men and women in the land of Suomi. For us, this sphere was until recently outside the scope of glasnost, as the formula “There is no sex in the Soviet Union” was functioning by inertia. Judging by the mass of publications that today deal with sex and eroticism we have already understood that “there is even quite a lot of sex”. Now scholars from the St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences together with colleagues from the University in Helsinki have decided, as it is customary there, to believe in the algebra of harmony. For this purpose they have organized a competition for biographical essays on the theme: “Sex, love and sexuality in your life” (“Pol, liubov’ I seksual’nost’ v vashei zhizni”). The results of the competition will be decided at the end of July and will reward the winner with 1500 Finnish marks. The second and third prizes will receive 1000 marks and 500 marks, respectively. Special prizes will be awarded to other outstanding contributions.

The aim of the competition is to gather information about the place of love and sexuality, of love and sexual experiences, in a person’s life. The competition is open for everybody, regardless of sex, age, family situation, education and sexual orientation.

The spelling and the handwriting do not play a crucial role – the most important is an authenticity and sincerity in describing one’s personal love and sexual experiences. Write the text as you would tell it to a close friend. Do not try to make it appear beautiful or decent. Remember that real life and real feelings are often more interesting than literary, film and other wide-spread images.

The organizers would like you, when you take part in the competition, to write not only about the turning points in your sexual and love biography, but also about events that may seem insignificant. Please, describe not only facts, but also your feelings, worries, and hopes...

When writing about your life you can use words and assessments familiar to you, do not search for special terms or expressions. When referring to your relations with other people, you may call them by other names than their own, the important thing is that you talk about real persons and events. Try to cover all the periods of your life in your story: childhood love, ‘playing doctor’, the love and sexual problems of teenagers in the process of growing up: the first love and the first sexual experience (dates, hugs, kisses); when writing about adult life you may describe your first marriage, love relations and sexual adventures, sexual satisfaction, happy and sad events, your experience of contraception, problems of loneliness and the

search of a partner, and changes in love and sexual relationships having to do with ageing.

Depending on the period of life in question various problems having to do with love and sexuality will appear on the forefront: for example, how to deal with infidelity (one's own or that of a close person), what to do about unrequited love, what kind of compromises one should make in order to preserve the family, how to handle sex without love and love without sex, how to combine love and a professional career... Do not forget to write also about them!

Finally, although love and sexuality are to a large extent everybody's private (lichnoe) thing (or something between two people), there are nevertheless problems having to do with society: traditions, customs and prejudices, the problems for people with non-ordinary sexual orientations (neordinarnye seksual'nye orientatsii), everyday and material discomfort that make love and sexual relations more difficult; prostitution, sexual discrimination and inequality, harassment and sexual violence and so on. The organizers of the competition ask you to tell what precisely has influenced your love and sexual biography and to what extent.

Describe how your sexual life is unfolding today and what are your present joys and sorrows.

The organizers also ask you to present, on a most general level, the main events of your life: studies, changes of residence, professional changes, getting married, when your children were born, etc.

If you have decided to participate in the competition:  
-your text should not be longer than 50 pages of typed text or 100 pages in handwriting (with margins); -your essay should be sent to the address (...), marked 'Biographical competition'. Your biographies will be read by a qualified jury consisting of sociologists from the institutes who are organizing the competition. The material you have sent us will be used only for scientific purposes. Any kind of quotation of a biography (which will always preserve the anonymity of the author!) is possible only with your written consent, therefore do not forget to write whether you give the right to quote your biography in scientific literature.

The organizers of the competition guarantee the authors of the essays that the received information will be strictly confidential; nobody except for the members of the jury and the researchers will have access to it. You may write under your own name or using a pseudonym or a motto, and you may contact the organizational committee directly or through somebody you trust.

For additional information, on Tuesdays or Thursdays between 12 and 3 pm you may call the telephone number (...).