

# IN MEMORIAM

## Loreida Raudsep

*7 May, 1922 – 13 November, 2004*

On November 13, 2004 folklorist Loreida Raudsep, a former member of the Folklore Sector of the Institute of Language and Literature, passed away in Tallinn. The younger generation of folklorists has probably never met her, or read any of her few works.

After retirement she rarely visited the institute, even though she lived in Tallinn, but never found her way to Tartu, either to conferences, or to work at the archives.



Loreida Raudsep was born on May 7, 1922 in Narva in the family of artisans. She was educated in Tallinn, in the 5th Elementary School and later in the Tallinn Secondary School No. 4, which she graduated in spring 1941.

The Soviet occupation of the 1940 brought a critical change to the young woman's life. Like many others she became fascinated by the idea of communism, the bright and blissful future in a society free of oppression. Loreida Raudsep joined *Komsomol*, the youth wing of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and became the secretary of the primary organisation. During the war she evacuated to Russia, working in *kolkhozes*, teaching Estonian children in an elementary school of Moscow Oblast, and was actively involved in the administration specialised in taking care of the families of the Soviet military in Moscow, later also in Tallinn. During 1946–1948 she worked as an inspector in the Estonian SSR Ministry of Social Insurance.

Loreida Raudsep continued her education on Russian language courses in Moscow, and in 1943–1944 at the Department of Language and Literature at the Moscow University. However, Loreida Raudsep received her degree in late spring 1952 from the University of Tartu. The freshly graduated folklorist was transferred to the Folklore Sector of the Institute of Language and Literature, where she worked as a researcher until January 1983.

When Loreida Raudsep started out at the institute at the age of 30, it had just been transferred from Tartu to Tallinn, further away from the archives. The Tallinn sector was an academic research institution, whereas the new role of the Literary Museum was collecting and systematising folklore material. The Soviet division of study areas determined the newly graduated researcher's field, which was unfortunately not the best suited for her abilities.

Instead, Leida Raudsep chose folk humour, or to be more specific, church and minister jokes, a topic more to her liking. Her most important achievement was the type and variant catalogue *Antiklerikale estnische Schwänke. Typen- und Variantenverzeichnis* (Tallinn, 1969, 244 pp.), published in German for the International Fenno-Ugric Congress in Tallinn. The catalogue is based on material from all Estonian folklore and dialectal files until the year 1960, and also on printed sources. The publication includes the total of 427 types, represented by 3.069 text variants. Next to compiling the printed catalogue, Loreida Raudsep also managed to publish two articles: *Kirik ja ristiusu õpetus eesti rahvaloomingu pegelduses* [Church and Christianity Reflected in Estonian Folk Poetry] in the second volume of the collection of articles on the history of religion and atheism in Estonia *Religiooni ja ateismi ajaloo Eestis. 2*, and *Eesti rahvaluulekogudes leiduvad meieisapalve paroodiad* [Parodies of the Lord's Prayer in Estonian Folklore Files] in the sixth volume of the collection of institute proceedings (*Keele, kirjanduse ja rahvaluule küsimusi*).

After compilation of the type catalogue, she continued studying church and antireligious humour in the research group lead by Eduard Laugaste; the group had been established by the then President of the Academy of Sciences of ESSR, Arnold Veimer. The research group set out to study reflections of class struggle in folklore (especially in songs of servitude); Loreida Raudsep's topic fit-

ted well among these themes. The group work resulted in two collections, both of which included articles on jokes: type monograph *Miks tuli kirikhärrat seljas kanda. Naljanditüüp AT 1791* [Why the Priest Had to be Carried. Joke Type AT 1791], and an article on the collection, publishing and study of folk jokes *Rahvanaljandite kogumine, publitseerimine ja uurimine Eestis* [Collecting, Publishing and Researching Folk Humor in Estonia] in collections *Saaksin ma saksa sundijaks* [If I Were the Landlord's Pacemaker] (Tallinn, 1976) and *Kui ma pääsen mõisast* [When I Will be Free from the Landlord] (Tallinn, 1983), respectively. Plans for completing the candidate thesis on manifestations of the comical in folk humour were never fulfilled.

The main research goal of the entire Folklore Sector of the Institute was, however, the compilation of a comprehensive treatment of Estonian folklore. Under the lead of Richard Viidalepp the overviews *Eesti rahvaluule ülevaade* [Overview of Estonian Folklore] (Tallinn, 1959) and *Эстонский фольклор* [Estonian Folklore; in Russian] (Tallinn 1980) were published. For the former, Loreida Raudsepp compiled chapters on folk singers, folk songs (calendar and family ritual songs, love songs, songs about home and childhood, children's songs, songs about sounds), and on proverbs and phrases. In the publication in Russian, where the number of authors was considerably larger, only treatments on storytellers and folk humour are by Loreida Raudsep.

For the biographic lexicon of Estonian literature *Eesti kirjanduse biograafiline leksikon* [Bibliographical Lexicon of Estonian Literature] (Tallinn, 1975), compiled at the Institute of Language and Literature, Loreida Raudsep wrote 25 articles about folklorists (Oskar Kallas, Selma Läht, Ingrid Rüütel, Ingrid Sarv, etc.), folk singers (Els Mikiver, Miku Ode, Puru Liisu, etc.), as well as folklore collectors (Emilie Poom, Jaan Sandra, etc.). These articles have also been used in the later, improved editions of the lexicon (1995 and 2002).

In 1947 Loreida Raudsep joined the CPSU. She had been a member of the university party bureau as a student, and during almost all her institute years, she was the head of the institute's party organisation, either as a secretary or acting officer. She was a sincere and dedicated communist, and helped the directors Eduard Päll and

Endel Sõgel to keep the institute on the “ideologically correct course” as prescribed by Komsomol authorities.

Ideologies change people’s lives and turn fates into tragedies. Loreida Raudsep’s fate may seem tragic in this sense, but ideologies come and go, and what is left of a person is the work she or he has done. Loreida Raudsep’s contribution to Estonian folklore studies is the catalogue of church and minister humour, and an article on the historiography of Estonian jokes, as well as folklore collected on fieldwork expeditions in the late 1950s.

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