

## WHO WERE THE PROSTITUTES?

Prostitutes were generally from the lower classes and their education was short. According to a survey by Tallinn Morality Office, it turns out that out of the 60 women questioned, only 1 had graduated from high school. 4 had been in secondary school, 8 were elementary school graduates. There were 36 that had attended an elementary school for a few years, and 11 women had no school education at all.

The lion's share of prostitutes operating in Tallinn came from elsewhere than Tallinn. In 1920, 24 prostitutes were from Tallinn, 33 from other Estonian cities, 402 from rural areas, and 26 from abroad. With the improvement of Estonia's economic situation, the standard of living also improved and the number of prostitutes decreased.

The vast majority of prostitutes had previously worked in professions requiring low qualifications. In 1920, prostitutes in Tallinn were divided according to their former professions as follows: 31.6 percent had been handicraft workers, 20.2 percent factory workers, 16.6 percent house maids, 9.6 percent had been in business services, 17 percent without office, and 5 percent otherwise.

With the arrival of the so-called "silent era" in the second half of the 1930s, the analysis of social problems in print was reduced. Reportedly, the last serious attempts at the time to investigate the social background of prostitution here came from the years 1925 and 1930, when harlots registered in larger Estonian cities were surveyed and the requisite data were requested from them with the help of local authorities.

The clearest results revealed in the surveys:

- the number of prostitutes was in constant change (continuous registration of new ones and deregistration of old ones);
- prostitute mortality was much higher than the total mortality of women in the same age group;
- on average, a quarter of prostitutes were born in the same city they were registered in; a large part of the rest had come from the surrounding county;
- by marital status, approx. 9/10 were single and 1/10 were married;
- the majority of prostitutes belonged to the age group for 20-39 years;
- 94% had been infected by sexually transmitted diseases;
- 90% were "alcohol drinkers" (from today's point of view, probably alcohol abusers).

The women who became tired of the dirty life were able to return to normal life through the shelters created for harlots, which, however, were not popular, because the regime was harsh in those and the women were treated badly. In Tallinn, St. Olav's Church offered them refuge.