

## RESTAURANTS AND PROSTITUTION IN THE 1920S

The legislation of the Republic of Estonia prohibited the mediation of prostitution. Sex business increasingly moved into restaurants and bars. Tallinn's dining places were very common to have special "offices" where one could privately enjoy a meal and a drink and also have private meetings behind locked doors. Such places were highly suitable for prostitution. The City Council banned lockable offices in 1927, but gradually the restaurant keepers still found ways to keep the rooms.

## CABARET AND LADIES' ORCHESTRAS

After the First World War, cabaret and ladies' orchestras arrived in Tallinn, and soon became associated with prostitution. One of the capital's most famous cabarets was called *Must Kass* (Black Cat), founded in 1920. *"The night before last, too, when the nightlife in the rest of the locales had already died down, Must Kass had it still going on in full swing. People were whipping dance moves to the shrieking orchestral sounds between the tables, intoxicated guests were jabbering a variety of songs, women of questionable occupation competed for attention at the tables, and waiters carried extra loads to the already burdened tables, demanding payment up front."*

The restaurant *Evald* lured customers in with a ladies' orchestra. In the case of *Evald*, not only the ladies' orchestra was suspected of prostitution, but the place itself was also a well-known site of sin. It was said that even *Evald's* flower sellers were actually prostitutes, and that members of the ladies' orchestras received up to six clients per evening in the "offices".

In Kadrioru Park, there was a restaurant called *Pavillon de la Plage*, with numerous closed "offices" and hotel type rooms on the second floor. *Pavillon de la Plage* was a favourite place for English naval officers during the War of Independence. It was so popular that when the restaurant was closed, a representative of Great Britain in Tallinn, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Pirie-Gordon sent a letter to the Supreme Commander of Estonian forces, General Laidoner, asking for the *Pavillon de la Plage* to be reopened. Laidoner, however, did not wish to deal with such a problem, and Gordon's request was forwarded to the City Government.

In the 1930s, an increase in the level of restaurants and hotels could be seen. In this light, prostitution was also reduced in those institutions. The prostitutes rather moved about in the streets. Prostitution concentrated into certain regions of Tallinn. One of these was Raekoja Square, the streets of Dunkri and Nunne, and Kalamaja. A similar region was the streets of Viru and Uus as well as Narva mt.