

An Open Letter to Potential Women of November

Ingrid Hrubaničová

Dear Women who were there, dear female journalists who with your sense of objectivity and with your language creativity may enrich the beauty and variety of our Slovak language.

I turn to you almost in the last moment. You have certainly noticed that lovely phrase “the men of November” introduced to our mother tongue by the media as their gift to the upcoming celebrations of the anniversary. We don’t know the exact list of these men, we don’t know the exact time period that the word “November” denotes (but at least we remember that it means November 1989). So who are the men of November? Those who were standing on the tribunes after November 17 1989 hosting the meetings or those who had been in prison shortly before November 17 and did not stand on the tribunes? Or just those who in November were making their speeches and they make them to these days or those who made their speeches in November, but do not make them nowadays? Those who were standing on the tribunes but in the meantime have passed away or just those who are still alive? Only those from the tribunes in Bratislava or also those from Košice, Bystrica and other places? We don’t know exactly who they were.

What we know is that there were men there – that’s beyond doubt. But I can’t believe that there wouldn’t be a single woman there. I myself remember at least two or three of them; maybe we could find some more. It is not possible that the rest would be just standing at their kitchen stoves, cooking dinners for their husbands and would rush in to tell them – engaged in “exciting discussions” – those “exciting news” about November 17 events in Prague just like Miroslav Kusý recalls: “During our exciting discussion our wives came in to tell us exciting news they had just heard on the radio: in Prague the police had crushed a big demonstration that had allegedly used the International Students’ Day for a protest against the government. So, for some of the Velvet Revolution started in Pukanec” (iŽurnál, 18. 10. 2009).

Therefore I ask you, dear women – the then students, workers, farmers as well as members of the working intelligentsia – to recollect what you were doing in November 1989 and give your testimony. And I ask you, dear female journalists, to look for such women, dig in your archives, fill out that “white spot” of our history, you still have two weeks to do that. And in

case everything failed, in case you couldn't find a single "righteous", write at least a few sentences about Hana Ponická.

Translated by **Eva Riečanská**

The text was originally published in the daily SME, *Komentáre* on November 5th 2009. In a response to this letter a feminist organization ASPEKT started to collect and publish memories of women engaged in November 1989.

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