

## What Was I Doing in the Year Eighty-nine?

**Mária Štefánková**

Well, what was I doing? I was 38, had a family, three children, my job, garden, translations...I was busy as much as I could. The first crucial change of that year for me personally was that in the spring I started a new job: after fifteen years of working for the publishing house Smena I swapped its backwaters for the editorial staff of the literary magazine Slovenské pohľady. There it was already bubbling a little. We had the feeling of cautious revolutionaries and lived in the expectation of SOMETHING DIFFERENT. We found it brave to have published a short story by Martin M. Šimečka! And what a heroic deed it was for Milan Šútovec to take part in the funeral of Dominik Tatarka where it was swarming with secret police agents! Although it was not a matter of life and death, but it was still an existential matter. And the bubbling was growing louder. A young shy man came to our office right from the dissent and brought an article, review, a note...I don't even know what it really was, but we published it. A few weeks after, I saw the same man speaking from a tribune. Suddenly, our office became busy – many people took advantage of its strategic location downtown and would drop by for a chat, a cup of coffee or tea, or to ask for the magazine which at that time became very popular and each new issue would be sold out instantly...if we had a few spare issues we would give them out, but the closet with the very last remaining issues I would protect with my own body ☺.

And then it all broke out. The euphoria, enthusiasm, hectic activity, unity of the nation in the square. Many ideas came to life at our office, any decisions were made; the protagonists of the revolution such as Fedor Gál, Peter Zajac, Eugen Gindl, Peter Tatár, Kornel Földvári, Agnes Snopko and others would come there....and some colleagues from the editorial staff were later active in high politics: Rudolf Chmel, Milan Zemko, Milan Šútovec...I had the feeling I was standing right at the cauldron in which history was being cooked and I knew all “cooks“, I was on first-name-terms with them...and on my way home riding a streetcar I was looking out of the window into the dark thinking about what I would cook so that it would be as fast as possible and in large amounts, and whether I was going to watch the demonstrations on TV while doing my laundry, ironing a few pieces, checking my kids' homework, and catching up with some proofreading...or whether I was going to feed my kids, dress them in warm clothes and take them back downtown to the square to join those thousands of enthusiastic people so that my kids would get that irreplaceable feeling of eyewitnesses of those breathtaking changing to whom none will ever preach about how it all had happened. And usually I did the latter.

Translated by **Eva Riečanská**

**Mária Štefánková** – editor in the publishing house and literary magazine, an author of children literature.