

Katarína Löfflerová In The Office



This picture was taken in 1926, when I worked in an office one summer. In 1926, I 'brigaded' [did temporary work] in the summer breaks at an insurance company in Bratislava. I was an active tennis player then, and my parents decided I should work and they would pay for my tennis racket. The 'brigading' wasn't paid work at that time, they just said, 'thank you very much.' So we didn't get money, but my parents bought me a tennis racket. That's how they taught me to value my work. It was an administrative kind of position. Apparently, my father got me the job, since Bratislava was a small town where everybody knew each other. It was enough to ask: Can my daughter do a little 'brigading' at your firm? Another time I worked somewhere else in the summer, but then I got paid two hundred crowns for it.

After school, I got a position in the Klinger factory, in the foreign department. It was an Austrian factory, which was quite a large plant here in Bratislava, where 220 employees worked. Here in Bratislava, they produced two things, garden hoses and straps. A lot of English knowledge was required, since the products were primarily exported to India. The entire correspondence was in English. My boss was a Czech from Prague, who spoke English like he spoke Czech. If I hadn't known English, he wouldn't have let me work for him. I had to type his English letters as fast as he dictated them. I really had to know English.

One of my uncles was a member of the board of directors, and he brought me in. We worked a lot. We worked on Saturdays back then. It was a very good learning experience. Everything happened in German. Because I had gone to a gymnasium and not the School of Commerce, I couldn't take shorthand. I learned that, and picked it up very fast, they were very pleased with me, I just couldn't read it. There was an older colleague, and she read my own shorthand to me. I was there for years, all the way up until they threw me out. Germans took over the factory, and kicked out some of us for being Jewish. The head engineer was Jewish, one of the directors was, too. I was thrown out near the end, because I was employed in the export department, and the Germans needed my English knowledge, too.