

Harry Fink As A Soldier



In this picture you can see me in the army barracks in Nitra. The picture was taken in 1955. As an employee of the Jachymov mines they didn't call me up for basic army service. Each year I got a sign: In the interests of the defense of the state, you will not be called up in the year XY for army service. When I got it the fourth time around, I said to myself, what the hell am I supposed to do? I was already 25, and boys went to the army at the age of 19. I had a friend of mine that was the commander of a military station in Carlsbad. I asked him what it was I should do? He told me that even so, I have to go do my army service, and that I should write them that I want to volunteer. Otherwise they'll keep on sending it to me, and I'll end up going into the army at the age of 30. And so I submitted a request, and in 1954 I started my army service in Rokycany. But I served eleven

months of my term in the worst unit, in Nitra. That was horrible army service, because it was a school for the training of automobile specialists, and every unit sent one or two people there. There were pilots, infantry, sappers, border guards, and they didn't know what they were supposed to do with us, so they gave us infantry training. And they really gave it to us, it was a terrible tragedy. Then, when I got back to my unit, that was a total vacation, but in Nitra, that was hard as nails. It was more than it was supposed to be. There they always put us on red alert on Friday late at night. They thought up horrible things, we had to pack everything up, they loaded us onto trucks and drove us off somewhere thirty - forty kilometers away, threw us out and said, 'Get your butts back into the barracks!' In the morning we'd arrive at the barracks, dog-tired, and right away: 'Whoever wants to go out on leave, do your cleanup duty, have a shower!' Of course no one wanted to. Everyone crawled into bed. I know the whole of southwestern Slovakia, we used to practice driving all over there. I'll never forget how in Komarno they were picking melons and had them stacked by the side of the road. We were a convoy of about thirty cars, and the first one stopped and like locusts we soldiers loaded all the melons that were on the road into our cars. Those were adventures! Or in Nitra we used to go to Hrnčiarovce, that's below Zobor, where it was all Hungarians living there, who grew strawberries. Our barracks and training grounds were close by. Well, when the strawberries began to ripen in the fields, oh boy. And the Hungarians, those were battles! Us with weapons and them having a go at us with rakes, that was an international conflict over strawberries. Up on Zobor, in August, when the grapevines were ripening and when they announced an alert in the barracks, there'd be only about 20 percent of the soldiers there, the rest were up on Zobor picking grapes. We had fun, it wasn't again all that bad, just that it was really tough. In 1956 I returned home.