

Veteran Paratroopers



This is a photo of me (Jan Hanak) as the standard-bearer of veteran paratroopers in Zilina in 2002.

I was of the opinion that it was my responsibility to not only complain about the regime, but also to act. In 1989 the possibility of change began to be felt. But change don't come on its own. It depends on people. At that time I was working as an assessment physician at the Regional National Committee, Department of Social Affairs. At one meeting, at which the entire executive was present, the chairman and sixteen department heads, I spoke up about the need for change. The VPN had been created in Slovakia, which was promoting democratic elections, the cancellation of the leading role of the Party, freedom of religion and so on. I proclaimed that I was founding the Zilina branch of the VPN, and that I was asking for their cooperation. Whoever was interested in the making these changes could join. Alas, even the VPN was only composed of people, with all their characteristics. Many began to take advantage of it for their own ends.

It was similar to when during the time of the Slovak state they'd wanted to push the Jews out. The difference was in that back then they wanted Jewish property. The VPN was basically the same. They wanted to get rid of all the top Communists. Alas, not because they were Communists. They wanted their positions. I can become a director there, or there. They were pushing people aside just because they had a Party membership. In the meantime, there could have been those among them who'd been sticking their stamps on tiles somewhere. But no one looked into that. They also got rid of first-class experts who'd helped wherever they could. I took a stand against these methods. That's how I got into a conflict with the executive of the VPN and the governing coalition at the time. At that time the governing coalition was composed of the VPN, DS and KDH. They all wanted posts for themselves and their relatives. I didn't agree with this, and asked that they say what concretely the person they were letting go was guilty of. Many of them had families to support. They had years of courageous work behind them. Now we're to send them out on the street? Just because they had some sort of piece of red paper? Alas, one of those being installed also ended up in charge of the directorate for my profession, and I had my work cut out for me in order for me to not be kicked out either.