

THE NATIONAL FIREFIGHTERS' UNION IN SLOVAKIA BETWEEN 1900 AND 19501

PAVOL TIŠLIAR

*prof. PhDr. Pavol Tišliar, PhD., Department of Ethnology and Museology,
Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava. Gondova 2, P.O.BOX 32,
814 99 Bratislava, pavol.tisliar@uniba.sk*

Abstrakt

*Príspevok sa zaoberá náčrtom dejín dobrovoľníckej hasičskej jednoty na Slovensku. Opisuje vznik, organizáciu, organizačnú štruktúru a činnosť hasičských zborov. Hasičské zbory na Slovensku vznikali na základe hasičských spolkov už od polovice 19. storočia. Vznikali prakticky trojakého charakteru: platené, odborné hasičské zbory, ktoré si mohli dovoliť väčšie a bohatšie mestá; dobrovoľné, ktoré fungovali na základe schváleného štatútu a na spolkovej základni, vydržiavané nielen z členského, ale aj pravidelným prispievaním miestnej samosprávy; povinné, ktoré vznikali v prostredí, kde nebola možnosť vytvoriť hasičský spolok a kde zároveň nebol dostatok financií na organizovanie profesionálnej hasičskej služby. Najbežnejším a zároveň najživejším spôsobom organizácie hasičskej služby sa na Slovensku stal dobrovoľný spolkový základ, ktorému je aj venovaný tento príspevok. Po vzniku Československej republiky bol v roku 1922 vytvorený celoslovenský združujúci orgán, **Zemská hasičská jednota na Slovensku**, ktorý úspešne pracoval až do roku 1951. Charakteristické pre celú sústavu hasičskej jednoty bol jeho dobrovoľnícky, čestný a nehonorený charakter, ktorého cieľom bola záchrana a ochrana obyvateľstva a majetku pred požiarom, ale aj inou katastrofou.*

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Kľúčové slová: dobrovoľné hasičské zbory, Zemská hasičská jednota na Slovensku, Slovensko, 1900 – 1950

Abstract

*This paper outlines the history of the volunteer firefighter corps in Slovakia. Fire brigades were first formed in Slovakia in early 19th century, typically in one of three scenarios: as professional fire brigades, usually only in larger and richer cities; as voluntary firefighter associations, civic societies with by-laws and fee-paying membership, but also supported by the local government; and mandatory fire brigades which were formed in communities where neither a professional, nor a voluntary fire brigade could be maintained. Voluntary firefighter associations soon became the most typical fashion in which fire brigades were organized and they are the primary subject of this paper. After the formation of Czechoslovakia, a National Firefighter Union in Slovakia (**Zemská hasičská jednota na Slovensku**) was formed in 1922 which continued to exist until 1951. For its entire existence, it maintained its voluntary and honorable character and a mission to protect the public from fires, natural disasters and other calamities.*

Keywords: voluntary firefighter associations, **National Firefighter Union in Slovakia (Zemská hasičská jednota na Slovensku)**, Slovakia, 1900 -- 1950

Fire brigades in Slovakia before 1918

Since time immemorial, societies have recognized the need to organize an efficient response to fires which especially in pre-modern times threatened not only the property of inhabitants, but also their life and limb and often the very existence of the community itself. In pre-industrial Kingdom of Hungary, firefighting was – in addition to being generally recognized as a civic duty – primarily the responsibility of local guilds whose specific duties in this regard were outlined in public safety and firefighting regulations which were adopted by city councils. In order to provide for an organized and efficient response to fires, such statutes would often give guilds the right to conscript civilians in case of emergencies (Fuzák, 1972, pp. 14-15; Hronec, 2008, pp. 8-9).

First volunteer fire brigades in Slovakia began to be formed in late 1840s at a time when the entire Kingdom of Hungary underwent a number of significant societal changes, largely as a result of the dissolution of feudal relationships and the onset of industrialization. One such change involved the dissolution of guilds and guild organizations in 1872. This was a direct consequence of the gradual industrialization of Kingdom of Hungary which sent all guilds on a sharp decline starting in late 1840s. With the dissolution of guilds, many of the functions they fulfilled shifted to the cities and villages (Dubovský, 1998, p. 9), including

firefighting. In 1888, the Royal Ministry of the Interior issued the public safety and firefighting order no. 53,888 B.M. which mandated that all cities, towns and villages form a fire brigade and provide it with all necessary equipment. Fire brigades that came about as a consequence of the order were of three types. In larger cities, permanent professional brigades were mandated on the logic that such cities could afford them and since here the risk of larger and more devastating fires was higher, this necessitated a quick professional response. In smaller towns and villages, volunteer fire brigades were to be formed, organized as civic societies generally referred to as firefighter associations and financed not only through membership fees, but also through contributions by the town or village itself, since the brigade provided a public service. And finally, in communities too small to be able to afford either of the two options, the order established a general firefighting duty for all males aged 20 – 40 with permanent residence in the community, a provision which remained in force well into the interbellum period (Dubovský, 1998, p. 11; Hronec, 2008, p. 10). The most practical and easiest of the three options was the formation of local volunteer firefighter association which had been quite common even before the dissolution of guilds and especially starting in early 1870s.

The oldest fire brigade in Slovakia was formed in 1847 in Prešov while the second oldest one came to existence in 1863 in Spišské Vlachy. By the end of 1860s, other firefighter corps were instituted in Bratislava (1867), Tmava (1868), (Šišmiš, 1984, p. 21) Nitra (1869) and Košice (1870). The first few of such brigades were professional and created in a reaction to major devastating fires (Fuzák, 1972, pp. 16-17), the one in Bratislava was the first volunteer firefighter association in the territory of the present-day Slovakia. As such, it had both active and supporting members, as well as a roster of honorable members. Active membership was reserved for citizens of Bratislava aged 19 and older who would take part in firefighting action and regular trainings. Supporting members were chiefly responsible for the financial, logistical and technical support of the brigade – even though active members paid fees as well, they were much lower than those for supporting members. And finally, honorable membership was conferred upon those who had made a significant contribution to the brigade and/or the city (Dubovský, 1998, p. 11; Kamenický, 2004, pp. 99-100; Hronec, 2008, p. 12).

The by-laws of all fire brigades were subject to approval by the Royal Hungarian Ministry of the Interior. In order to streamline the process as new fire brigades were formed, in 1870 the *Hungarian National Firefighter Association* (*Magyar Országos Tűzoltó Szövetség*) was formed in Soprony which served as an umbrella organization for all fire brigades in Hungary until the dissolution of the Empire. The first general assembly of the Association met in 1871 in Pest

with 925 fire brigades from the Kingdom of Hungary as well as other countries represented. In 1878, the Royal Hungarian Ministry of the Interior decreed that all voluntary fire brigades were obligated to become members of the Hungarian National Firefighter Association. (Dubovský, 1998, pp. 11-12). In the 1870s, voluntary fire brigades were formed all over Hungary to such extent that they gradually became some of the largest public associations with tens of thousands of members (Dudeková, 1998).

In Slovakia at the turn of the 20th century, voluntary firefighter associations became another vehicle for the spread of national political consciousness as many prominent members of the Slovak national movement (P. Daxner, P. H. Vajanský, P. Mudroň, P. Reuss and others) were active volunteer firefighters (Šišmiš, 1984, p. 22; Dubovský, 1998, p. 27). The very existence of fire brigades in the territory of current Slovakia provided an important venue to establish and develop Slovak as a language capable of serving the needs of their command structure in both spoken form as well as in writing, e.g. in the training manuals written for the benefit of voluntary firefighter associations by P. Daxner or J. Kohút (Bendík, 1972a, pp. 23-24).

Along with the increase in number of voluntary firefighter associations, the 1890s see the growth of professional fire brigades, especially in larger cities. In 1894, a 6-man professional fire corps was formed in Bratislava, originally as a part of the voluntary fire brigade. The professional fire corps grew gradually and in 1907, it was joined by a professional medical rescue (Samaritan) service. The firefighter association in Bratislava was therefore renamed to *Voluntary Firefighter and Rescue Brigade (Dobrovoľný hasičský a záchranný zbor)*. Professional fire brigades were formed in Košice (1874), Rimavská Sobota (1883), Banská Bystrica (1904) and elsewhere; in all these cases, there was a tight cooperation with the local voluntary firefighter association (Hronec, 2008, pp. 12-13).

Fire brigades in Slovakia in the interbellum period

Firefighter associations in the territory of pre-WWII Czechoslovakia were primarily organized under the auspices of the *Union of Czechoslovak Volunteer Firefighters (Zväz dobrovoľného hasičstva československého)* which was formed in 1919. This Union, however, only included respective firefighter unions from the Czech lands, Moravia and Silesia, as there was no comparable organization in Slovakia. After the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Slovak fire associations ceased to be members of the Hungarian National Firefighter Association which resulted in a leadership vacuum. The primary task of the

Slovak firefighter corps was therefore to fill that vacuum which resulted in the formation of the *Slovak National Firefighter Union (Zemská hasičská jednota na Slovensku)* in 1922 with headquarters in Martin (where it remained until the Union's dissolution in 1950s).

In 1928, the National Firefighter Union began the construction of the so-called *Firemen's House (Hasičský dom)* which in addition to serving as the central headquarters of the Union also housed a number of auxiliary organizations which grew around the Union, such as an insurance company (*Asekuračné poisťovacie oddelenie*), a publishing house with a distribution center (*Hasičské nákupno-predajné nakladateľské družstvo*) and a credit cooperative (*Hasičská vzájomná pokladnica*) (Hronec, 2008, pp 14-16; Šišmiš, 1984, p. 23; Bendík, Hvizdák, 1972, p. 31; Trimaj, 1972, pp. 42-48).

The primary task of the *National Firefighter Union* immediately after its formation was to reorganize the firefighter corps and introduce a stable command structure. To that end, it began to institute firefighter unions in every county starting in 1922/1923 (Dubovský, 1998, p. 48) and, despite considerable difficulty, ultimately succeeding to do so in every administrative region of Slovakia by 1931 (Bendík, Hvizdák, 1972, p. 33). This resulted in the creation of a three-level command and administration structure with the national HQ, steering committee and the general assembly on top to which individual county firefighter unions answered which in turn oversaw individual fire brigades. By 1933, there were 79 county firefighter unions in Slovakia, (Bendík, Hvizdák, 1972, p. 34) i.e. one in each administrative county. They were supported not only by membership fees (collected from individual local firefighter associations), but also through small subsidies from the respective county administration.² Local voluntary firefighter associations and their fire brigades were the lowest organizational units in the *National Firefighter Union* (Hronec, 2008, p. 15). By 1933, there were 2981 such associations, i.e. one in nearly every permanent settlement, with 67,679 active members and 2,336 rescue workers (or, in contemporary parlance, Samaritans) total. (Bendík, Hvizdák, 1972, p. 34). These figures leave no doubt as to the fact the volunteer firefighter corps was one of the largest public associations in Slovakia. Membership in individual associations and brigades, as well as any leadership roles and ranks, was voluntary, honorable and without remuneration. (Dubovský, 1998, p. 48).

The primary purpose and mission of the National Firefighter Union was to support, promote and advocate for police rescue, firefighter and medical rescue

² MVSR-Štátny archív v Košiciach, pobočka v Rožňave (henceforth: ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava), f. Okresná hasičská jednota v Dobšinej, 1939 – 1941 (henceforth: f. OHJ Dobšiná), shelf mark 18/1939.

services in Slovakia and support all institutions tasked with the above, as well as with any activities aimed at protecting the public against fires, natural disasters and other calamities, but also to publicly promote insurance and its importance for the national economy. Furthermore, in addition to provide training for their active members, fire brigades and their county unions were tasked with providing education and training for the new generation of firefighters. To achieve these goals, the National Firefighter Union published training manuals and other related materials, provided training and education for its active members as well as the public and organized public exercises. One of the special missions of the Union was to support firefighters and their family members in case of injury or death, using trusts set up for this particular purpose,³ such as the *Survivors and Dependents Fund of the National Firefighter Union in Slovakia (Posmrtná podpora Zemskej hasičskej jednoty na Slovensku)* which provided its services during the entire existence of the Union (Z galérie., 1972, pp. 117-118).

The membership in the National Firefighter Union was in principle confined to county firefighter unions which would send delegates to the Union's general assembly. The general assembly, which in addition to county delegates also included members of the Union HQ and supporting members, was the highest governing body of the Union. It met once a year to vote (by simple majority) on various issues, including budget, membership fees and yearly reports, as well as to elect the commander general, members of the Union HQ and the executive board (including stand-ins).⁴

The executive board of the Slovak National Firefighter Union was elected to implement the decisions of the general assembly, manage the properties of the Union and exercise oversight over all administrative, technical and auxiliary divisions of the Union. Members of the executive board were elected by the general assembly and included county union delegates, commander general and his seconds-in-command, master-at-arms (who was responsible for maintaining the firefighting equipment in proper working order and who supervised trainings and compiled training materials), treasurer, accountant, auditors, committee chairs (organizational, technical, Samaritan etc.) and legal and health advisors. The executive committee met twice yearly to elect the comptroller, the secretaries (who were in charge of membership records for all county unions and also managed the Union archives), the treasurer and the accountant, committee members and the legal and health advisor.

The Union HQ consisted of the commander general and his seconds-in-command, the comptroller, the secretaries, the committee chairs, the legal and

³ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Dobšiná, shelf mark 68/94.

⁴ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Dobšiná, shelf mark 68/94.

health advisors and the chair of the auditor board. Its role, in addition to representing the Union, entailed managing the financial affairs of the Union, preparing the budget, supervising the activities of individual county unions and drafting the administrative and service regulations to the executive committee's approval. Whenever necessary, an executive committee – consisting of the commander general, the comptroller, the secretary and the treasurer – was convened and tasked with the implementation of the decisions made by the Union HQ.

Within the organizational structure of the National Firefighter Union, administrative divisions played an important role. They were created for various purposes, not only on the national level, but also in individual county unions, so for example the organizational divisions were responsible for various tasks related to the organizational structure of the Union, the technical division was in charge of all equipment-related issues and the cultural division was primarily responsible for training and education of the corps members.

County firefighter unions were primarily tasked with coordinating the activities of local firefighter associations as set out in the county union's by-laws. Like their national counterpart, county union's consisted of the general assembly, executive committee⁵ and administrative divisions and they were led by county union HQ. Their primary role included submitting proposals for the financial support of members and their families and submitting proposals for honorable membership; in their controlling capacity, county firefighter unions conducted regular audits in local fire associations.⁶ Additionally, county unions were responsible for preparing and conducting county and district exercises and trainings. For that purpose as well as additional administrative tasks, firefighter counties were divided into districts (5 – 6 towns) with a district supervisor assigned to each district.⁷

Local volunteer firefighter associations were the fundamental building blocks of the entire organization. They were formed as apolitical associations governed by their own by-laws. Their members wore uniforms and enjoyed the status of a public servant when exercising their firefighter and rescue duties. Consequently, in order to become a member, one had to take an oath of office and make it through a trial period which lasted 3 to 6 months. Most fire associations also had a junior corps for youth aged 14 – 18.

⁵ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. Okresná hasičská jednota v Rožňave, 1928 – 1938 (henceforth: f. OHJ Rožňava), no shelf mark. The county firefighter association, in addition to officers identical to those in the National Firefighter Union, also included a special officer responsible for anti-gas protection.

⁶ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Dobšiná, shelf mark 68/94.

⁷ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Rožňava, no shelf mark.

The primary mission of every firefighter association was to assist with the fire prevention and firefighting duties in their respective locality and to support all institutions tasked with the protection of life, limb and property. The specific mission of the fire brigade was then to protect life, limb and property of all citizens from any calamity affecting the locality and its environs, such as fires, floods, cave-ins and collapsed buildings, but also industrial accidents, mining accidents and railway accidents.⁸

The National Firefighter Union in Slovakia was quite successful in implementing its goal right from the start, not only as far as its organizational aims were concerned, but also when it comes to its primary mission which involved training and education. Barely a year after its founding, the Union began to publish a newspaper *Hasičské listy*; in 1925, it launched its Hungarian version *Tüzoltók Lapja* aimed at the numerous Hungarian-speaking firefighter associations in the South of Slovakia and 1931 saw the first issue of the magazine *Hasičská svojpomoc*. The Union also published two book series: *Odborná knižnica*, founded in 1925, which included various professional publications, manuals and training guides aimed largely at voluntary firefighter associations in Slovakia; and *Hasičská halierová knižnica*, founded in 1942 as a supplier of cheaper training and professional materials (Bendík, 1972b, pp. 50-53).

One of the crucial roles of the National Firefighter Union was to organize professional trainings for firefighters. Starting in 1931, month-long officer trainings began to regularly take place in the *Firemen's House* (Hasičský dom) in Martin. These trainings were primarily aimed at secretaries and supervisors of county firefighter unions, district supervisors and chief training officers of local fire associations (Hronec, 2008, p. 16). The officer trainings would take place if at least 25 participants signed up whereby the participants must have completed at least three years of education at a secondary school (as evidenced by official records) and at least five years of active firefighter service. If a participant had completed a county-level firefighter training (duration of at least three days), three years of active firefighter service were deemed sufficient as a condition of entry. The officer training was free of charge for all participants and the actual costs were covered by the Union.⁹

Cooperatives founded by the National Firefighter Union were an important source of income for the Union, as the membership fees forwarded by local firefighter associations to their respective county unions and then on to the National Firefighter Union were far from sufficient to cover the costs of running

⁸ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Rožňava, no shelf mark. By-laws of the Voluntary Fire Association.

⁹ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Rožňava, shelf mark 970/1935.

the organization. At the time of founding of the Union, the minimum membership fee was 1.70 Kč, of which 1.0 Kč was used to finance the *Firemen's House*, 0.20 Kč was put towards the orphan funds and 0.15 Kč was used to pay the membership fees in the Czechoslovak Firefighter Union in Prague. As a result, only 0.35 Kč remained to cover the costs of running the Slovak National Firefighter Union which amounted to some 23,100 Kč total while the yearly costs of the Union averaged 250 – 300,000 Kč. And while in later years, the membership fee was increased,¹⁰ it still could not cover even the basic administrative costs. This forced the executive board to create a number of cooperatives which included a credit cooperative, a trading co-op and an insurance cooperative. The last one was the most helpful in financing the Union's activities as it had a franchise contract with the Moravian *Firefighter Mutual Insurance (Hasičská vzájomná poisťovňa)* and its offices in Bratislava which allowed it to offer insurance contracts, through which it was able to contribute up to 163,000 Kč to the Union treasury.¹¹

While the 1920s were dedicated to building and expanding the organization, especially on the county and leadership level, the 1930 marked a period of rapid expansion in all aspects of the National Firefighter Union's mission. These years were marked by two events which affected the Union in a number of ways. The first such event, one with a largely positive impact, was the order of the State Administration in Bratislava dated March 1st 1933 which established the Fire Police in Slovakia and assigned the National Firefighter Union an advisory role in all matters related to firefighting. Consequently, all townships were obligated to consult the Union when compiling their firefighting regulations (Hronec, 2008, p. 15). The other significant event, one that impacted the Union in a negative way, was the redrawing of southern borders of Slovakia in the late 1930s (Hetényi, 2011; Hetényi a), 2007, pp. 93-111; Hetényi b), 2007, pp. 58-67; Janas, 2008; Janas, 2007) when in 1938 and 1939, the National Firefighter Union lost 752 local associations with 16,738 members in 28 county unions and 16 county unions were lost as a whole (Výročná správa..., 1939, p. 2). By the time the subsequent redistricting of Slovakia was complete in 1939, the Union counted 59 county unions with 2,414 firefighter associations with 55,536 total active members (Výročná správa..., 1940, pp. 2-3).

In 1938, the official name of the National Firefighter Union was changed from *Zemská hasičská jednota na Slovensku* to *Krajinská hasičská jednota*

¹⁰ In 1940, the basic membership fee was 5.20. Kp. ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Dobšiná, no shelf mark., firefighter association budget 1941, unsorted funds.

¹¹ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Dobšiná, no shelf mark. A memorandum on the granting of a charter to the Bratislava branch of the *Hasičská vzájomná poisťovňa* insurance house in 1939.

na Slovensku.¹² The new name was unused until 1942 when the organization's name was changed to *Slovak Firefighter Association (Slovenský hasičský zväz)*, although another name change (to *Firefighter Association of the Slovak Republic – Hasičský zväz Slovenskej republiky*) had been contemplated two years previously.¹³ The same period saw a number of changes in the internal structure of the Union which was caused by the aforementioned redistricting and involved the creation of province firefighter unions (Bratislava, Nitra, Trenčín, Zvolen, Tatry and Šariš-Zemplín) which were overseen by the province supervisor and province commander.¹⁴ The internal structure of the Union remained the same after the name change and so it still contained four divisions – organizational, technical, cultural and Samaritan.¹⁵ With the establishment of province unions, however, the delegates to the four divisions were elected in province assemblies by delegates from county unions.¹⁶

The activities of firefighter associations came to a slump in the late 1930s, largely due to the decline in public funding, which led to reduced training time and serious lack of equipment.¹⁷ Additionally, a great number of active members and leaders were drafted in 1938/1939 which also drastically reduced the Union's options:¹⁸ in that period, no firefighter days, no county firefighter fairs and no traditional county exercises took place (Bendík, Hvizdák, 1972, p. 36). Additionally, there was a pressure to merge the firefighter associations with the Hlinka Guard, but the leadership of the Union was successful in preventing that (Výročná správa..., 1940, pp. 2-3). When WWII broke out, the National Firefighter Union was tasked with coordinating the civilian anti-aircraft defense (CAAD) which meant both coordinating firefighting response teams and training firefighters as well as civilians in CAAD response.¹⁹

¹² ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Dobšiná, shelf mark 2/1939, shelf mark 58/94, shelf mark 1880/1940, unsorted funds.

¹³ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Dobšiná, shelf mark 68/94, proposal dated August 15th 1940.

¹⁴ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Dobšiná, shelf mark 82/1940, unsorted funds.

¹⁵ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Dobšiná, shelf mark 68/94, the proposed by-laws of the Firefighter Union of the Slovak Republic was debated as early as 1940.

¹⁶ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Dobšiná, shelf mark 68/94.

¹⁷ For example, the county firefighter union in Dobšiná filed a complaint stating that in the years 1938-1940, it had not received any funds from the government which seriously impeded their mission. ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Dobšiná, shelf mark 58/94, unsorted funds; see also idem, shelf mark 18/1939.

¹⁸ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Dobšiná, no shelf mark. Minutes of OHJ Dobšiná dated June 18th 1939.

¹⁹ ŠA Košice, p. Rožňava, f. OHJ Dobšiná, no shelf mark. Minutes of OHJ Dobšiná dated June 18th 1939.

After the liberation, the organizational structure of the Slovak firefighter corps had to be rebuilt once again. County associations were formed again in counties previously occupied by Hungary, such as Rimavská Sobota, Levice, Želiezovce, Šahy, Rožňava and Košice. With the restoration of Czechoslovakia in 1945, the national union of firefighter associations was restored as well under the name *The Union of Czechoslovak Firefighters (Zväz československého hasičstva)* which included the National Firefighter Union in Slovakia. The restoration of Czechoslovakia resulted in the abolishing of wartime administrative divisions, i.e. provinces, and with them province firefighter unions were dissolved as well. For a brief time after the establishment of regions as the largest administrative units in 1949, there were preparations made to create regional firefighter unions. But with the adoption of the Fire and Disaster Response Act 62/1950 and its accompanying government decree 135/1950 both volunteer firefighter associations and professional fire brigades were brought under the auspices of the newly established national committees. This finally led to the dissolution of the National Firefighter Union in Slovakia which was confirmed at the final session of the Union's general assembly on September 16th 1951 in Bratislava (Bendík, Hvizdák, 1972, pp. 38-40).

In the first half of the 20th century, the National Firefighter Union was one of the largest voluntary civic organizations in Slovakia counting among its members tens of thousands of her citizens from nearly every town and village. In addition to serving its primary purpose, to protect people and property from fires and other calamities, it also created a complex administrative and organizational structure. That structure, despite its complexity, has made it possible for the Union to not only serve its members, but also interact and engage with the public in general. And finally, we would like to highlight one crucial aspect of the volunteer firefighter corps, which is its volunteer nature and the risk its members undertook on daily basis protecting life, limb and property from fires and other calamities, including at time of war. It is to them, their service and those who continue it to this very day that we wish to dedicate this paper.

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