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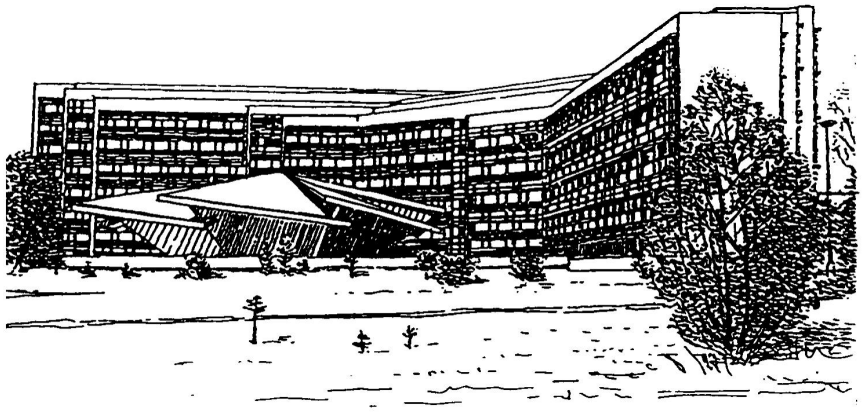

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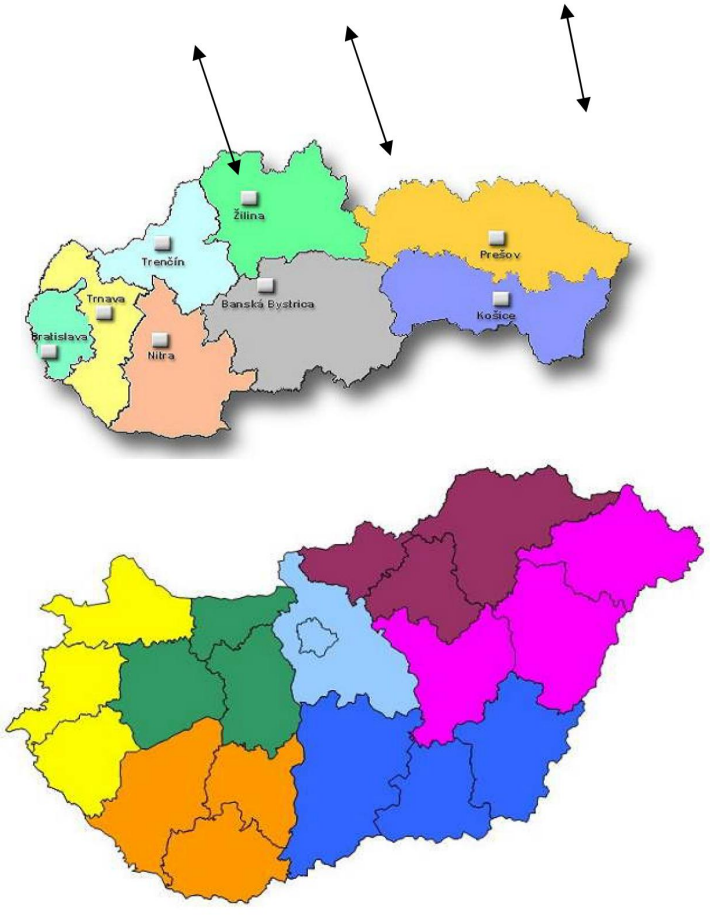
SLOVAK-HUNGARIAN FIRE FIGHTING CO-OPERATION OPPORTUNITIES ALONG THE BORDER

László Komjáthy – László Földi –

Fire was the man's friend but sometimes his enemy during the history. It is not accidental that fire-fighters train, develop their knowledge and technology day by day all over the world. They have to be ready in every moment to give their best in order to prevent evolvement of greater tragedies. They often face situations, when capabilities of on-scene units are not enough and it is inevitable to call for help to other fire-fighter units as reinforcements. If reinforcements came from a long distance, it would be very hard to speak about effectiveness and save additional valuables.



Colonies along the border are in even worse situation, where inland units can arrive only after considerable time. Citizens can not expect help from other directions because of the border. There is an effective fire-fighter unit within easy reach of them (who could bring effective help in a very short time) on the other side of the border in vain, because their help is not demandable, as the border is not yet traversable for fire-fighters. As to that, fire-fighter units close to the border would mean great help on both sides to the settlements to provide more effective fire protection especially in those regions, where responsible inland units are in great distance.

There are 10 crossing points along the 674 kilometres Slovak-Hungarian border (for example Győr, Komárom, Esztergom, Balassagyarmat, Salgótarján, Szendrő and Sátoraljaújhely), where Slovak or Hungarian fire-fighter units are stationed within 20 kilometres, who may arrive to accident sites ahead of the domestic units. Co-operation would provide safer fire protection for people along the border.

Today it is not possible, because there is no such agreement between our countries, which could regulate the fire protection co-operation, as the Hungarian governmental decree 212/1997 (XII.1.) is just for co-operation during catastrophes.

Why would fire fighting co-operation be necessary in everyday life?

- Because at present fire-fighter units can not be alarmed toward the territory of a neighbouring country;
- Majority of fire-fighter units on the opposite sides of the border has no continuous connection with each other;
- Time consumption to arrive the disaster site would be shorter, thus damages and costs smaller.

In order to reach this, governments of the two countries should make an agreement, giving the rights and opportunity to the self-governments of the settlements along the border (which operate the local fire fighting units) to call for help toward each other. This agreement should contain regulations for bilateral information exchange, alerting, life-saving, engineering rescue, modes and volumes of lend-lease and unrestricted border crossing of necessary equipment and personnel.

It is said, that "if somebody's house was burning, or someone's beloved suffered an accident and has to be saved, it is no matter, what language the rescuers would speak". But during an accident it is necessary to speak a common language on the site. Among the fire-fighters serving along the border there are a lot of bilingual, who can help to bridge over the language difficulties, because they all fight for a common goal, after all: to reach the accident site as soon as possible and provide help.

Bilateral agreement mentioned above is necessary to accomplish fire fighting co-operation, which could help in addition to create information exchange about fire-accidents and lessons learned, utilization of solutions of new fire extinguishing technical and tactical developments. We believe that this agreement would encourage professional experiences and human relationships of both sides, and the borderless fire protection is feasible.

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