

BORAH

A GIFT FROM HUNGARY

By MARIAN McKENNA

The author used a phase of Borah's work as the subject for her doctoral dissertation at Columbia University, and for the past seven years has been working on a full-scale biography of the Idaho senator. The material for this article turned up during her research for the biography, which is scheduled for publication next fall. Dr. McKenna teaches history at Hunter College in New York City.

~ 1932 ~



THE BORAH BOOK AND ITS SLIPCASE

Angus Johnson photo.

LATE IN OCTOBER of 1931, the Premier of France, Pierre Laval, paid a state visit to President Hoover in Washington. Laval, the President of the French Council of Ministers, was referred to as "the Zola of continental politics"; he came here to discuss a security pact, war debts and the world depression. Accompanied by his daughter, Mlle. Josée, he was entertained at a formal White House dinner attended by eighty-five guests including the full diplomatic corps, had private talks with the president, was the guest of honor at a stag party given by Secretary Stimson, and was finally feted at a farewell reception at the French embassy.

When Secretary Stimson visited him earlier in Paris, Laval had expressed the desire to talk with Senator Borah, chairman of the important Foreign Relations Committee and

the man regarded abroad as second in importance only to the President. When Stimson returned to Washington, he not only laid the foundations for the Hoover-Laval talks but also made possible the fireside chat between the Premier of France and the Lion of Idaho after his dinner party.

While Laval was engaged in high-level talks with Hoover, the French journalists who accompanied him to Washington requested a press conference with Senator Borah. These correspondents were under the impression that Borah was the dictator of American foreign policy, and that no matter what tentative agreements were reached, it would be imperative to have the Borah stamp of approval. Once again Stimson helped to arrange the conference which was set for October 22.

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THIS SENSATIONAL GROUP INTERVIEW was characterized by Frazier Edwards as "the most dramatic press conference held in Washington in recent times." Seated at the head of the oval table in the Foreign Relations Committee room (because his office was not large enough) Borah conferred with two score or more French journalists, promising them at the outset to be "frank, if not diplomatic." He cautioned them that he was expressing his personal views, not those of the Senate. Addressing the Senator as "Monsieur Secrétaire," or "Monsieur Ministre" they aimed a barrage of provocative questions at him touching upon all the matters which would arise in the Hoover-Laval talks. Borah flung back determined and unequivocal replies. The most important point he made was a repetition of what he had always said: he told the French press that Europe must consent to a peaceful revision of the Versailles treaty, and the equally harsh treaties of St. Germaine and Trianon, which were holding Germany, Austria, and Hungary in economic subjugation—or there would be another war in Europe.

Pressed for a more explicit statement on just what sort of treaty revisions he would propose, and in what manner, Borah made some rather drastic suggestions: he wanted the Polish Corridor and Danzig returned to German control; if possible to do so, he wanted to "change the situation with reference to Upper Silesia" by arbitration; moreover, Borah wanted to reconstruct a Greater Hungary, restoring her ancient boundaries as they were before the Treaty of Trianon, which awarded three-quarters of her former territory, including the province of Transylvania, her richest wheatlands, to Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and even Austria. Borah reiterated his hostility to any security pact or plan for collective security because to him it meant "making eternal the status quo."

Borah knew he was speaking to Europe at the invitation of its own press and he made the most of the opportunity. He was cheered in Berlin and Budapest, jeered in Paris. Laval, in conference with Hoover, was given a hurried and fragmentary account of the interview. The newspapermen had rushed directly to him to obtain his comment. The short, swarthy, cigarette-smoking peasant from Auvergne stated acidly:

"I have not come to Washington to engage in polemics with Senator Borah and to discuss the revision of the Versailles Treaty. Tell the journalists not to be disturbed by the words of a senator which represent only his . . . opinion." Within a few hours after Laval's statement, Borah's interview became an international incident. Later, after he had read an accurate translation of Borah's interview, Laval apologized for his abrupt statement.

Most of the newspapers in France at first refrained from comment. Not so in Germany where the press was generally favorable, the nationalistic *Reichsbote* declared:

BORAH RIPS MASK OFF FRANCE'S FACE

The ultranationalistic *Kreuz-Zeitung* observed:

A FROST FELL ONE SPRING NIGHT . . .

While Borah's remarks created a sensation in European capitals, press reaction here was mixed. The *Milwaukee Journal* railed in sarcastic terms at "the high wind from Idaho." The *Baltimore Sun* joined the *New York Herald-Tribune* in deploring Borah's "high school formula for rebuilding the European continent." The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* shuddered at "this exhibition of poor taste," while the *New York Evening Post* apologized to the departing Frenchman for this "wanton overriding of the proprieties by a responsible statesman."

Seasoned observers, however, failed to register surprise or shock. Both David Lawrence in his *Washington Letter*, and Walter Lippmann in the *New York Herald-Tribune* felt that Borah had done a distinct service in expressing to Europe a growing public opinion in this country. In reply to the *New York Times* which charged Borah with trenching upon the constitutional powers of the president, the *New York Nation* said: "However vague, Borah was several times clearer and more forceful than his chief who . . . indulged only in beautiful platitudes that got nowhere and gave us no inkling of what he thought about anything. . . ."

NOWHERE was the reaction to Borah's remarks so wildly enthusiastic and fruitful of results as in Budapest. There the Borah interview became a "cause célèbre." This,



of course, was because Borah had asserted that Hungary was crucified by the terms of the Trianon Treaty (which the United States did not ratify). He prescribed now its revision where it abraded the quick of nationalism and affronted the logic of economics. Ever since 1919, Borah had been the champion of bleeding Hungary, denouncing in numerous speeches the viciousness of the whole Versailles system, but never before had his views been given such worldwide publicity as in 1931 when Laval's hot words reached the editorial desks on the Quai d'Orsay.

Hungary chose a unique, heartwarming manner by which to reward her champion for his bitter fight against the imposition of the Trianon Treaty and his persistent demands for its revision. Borah was made the recipient of an unusual honor from the people of Hungary—the gift of a book whose every line represents the work of Hungarian hands.

IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE to reproduce the beauty and worth of this book either by words or camera. The cover is hand-tooled calfskin. The slip case containing it is bound in the same material and has a plate glass insert in its top. The volume weighs eighteen pounds. Most of its pages are illuminated in the very elaborate but very beautiful style of the Middle Ages. All the messages in the book are hand-lettered in black or colored ink on parchment and hand-tinted. All but two pages are decorated. The messages and documents are reproduced first in Hungarian, followed by excellent idiomatic English translations. American printers, at the time it was received, declared the book was lettered by machine but investigations later showed all the lettering on its one hundred pages was laboriously hand-penned. The album also contains a map of inlaid woods representing the boundaries of Hungary before and after World War I. An appraisal in 1932 set the value of the memorial volume at ten thousand dollars. Thus, out of gratitude, Borah was the beneficiary of one of the most unusual works of art brought to this country in the 1930's.

The actual work of lettering, tinting the illustrations in colors which today have lost none of their vividness, and illuminating

the manuscripts of the collected greetings took more than two years, and represents the efforts of artists and at least two officials from each county in the provinces of Hungary. Victor Drozdy, a former member of the Hungarian Parliament and editor of *Az Iras*, a Hungarian weekly published in Chicago, was in Budapest on a visit and brought the valuable album to Borah personally September 25, 1932, when he returned to this country. Borah, in turn, presented the irreplaceable art treasure to the Idaho Historical Society in Boise for safe keeping and display.

The first page of the book carries the portraits of Louis Kossuth, Hungary's well loved patriot, Senator Borah, and Viscount Rothermere, an eminent British publisher, who once said of Borah: "There is no man whose name is more respected in Europe for independence of judgment and breadth of view. . . ."

The second page restates the resolution through which the album was realized and a description of its contents. At a general meeting of the Municipal Council of the (Hungarian) Royal Free City of Debrecen, held December 11, 1931, it was voted unanimously that a letter of greeting be addressed to Senator Borah in appreciation of his having, on the occasion of the French Premier's visit to the United States, raised his voice against the injustice of the peace treaties. It was further resolved to invite the other municipalities of the country to join in the greeting and to have all responses to this invitation bound in one volume to be forwarded to the Senator through the Hungarian Readjustment League. There was a widespread, general response from all over Hungary. As if in mute response, there are also recreated the coats of arms of those municipalities included in the territories severed from the motherland. Thus all the Hungarian municipalities of past and present were symbolized as indissolubly united in their faith in the resurrection of Hungary. As one unit they paid homage to the man who "has championed Hungary's just cause."

The third page bears the felicitations of Herozeg Ferencz, President of the Hungarian Revision League, to Senator Borah as Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in Washington, U.S.A.:



SZABOLCS · ÉS · UNG · KÖZL ·
GAZGATÁSILAG · EGYELŐ ·
RE · EGYESÍTETT · VÁRMIE ·
GYEK · TÖRVÉNYHATÓSÁ ·
GÁTOL ·

FROM · THE · COUNTY · CO ·
UNCIL · OF · THE · TEMPORA ·
RILY · UNITED · COUNTIES ·
OF · SZABOLCS · AND · UNG ·

2170/1932 K.sz



SZEPATOR ÚR! | MR. SEPTATOR,



zeréves dícső
multu Nagyna-
gyarország
gyik legnagyobb
azonban a



n behalf of the
County Council,
as well as of ev-
ery single inhab-
itant, of a county
formerly one of
the largest in the
whole of pre-Tri-
anon Hungary, but now
sadly mutilated

által-
szinten megcsontított ö-
si vármegyeje törvény-
hatóságának és minden-
egyik lakosának képvis-
eletében, melyen meghat-
va, hála felt szívvvel mon-
dunk köszönetet az Ame-
rikai Egyesült Államok ve-
zérfőnökének

aki - állapotságában
jelentéktelen szerencsét-
len hazánk igazát és jo-
ait férfias nyíltsággal és
ántorithatatlan meggyő-
ződéssel magáévá tette.

Trianonban meg-
alázott nemzetünkötl dör-

our
most grateful apprecia-
tion of the fact that as
one of the leading
statesmen of the U.S.A
you were pleased to es-
pouse openly the cause
of this downtrodden and
unfortunate nation
and to express your
convictions with manly
frankness.

Although Trianon

Angar Johnson photo.

BLACK AND WHITE REPRODUCTION CAN DO ONLY SCANT JUSTICE TO THE BLAZING COLORS OF THE BORAH BOOK. THE PAGE REPRODUCED ABOVE IS ONE OF THE FEW ON WHICH THE HUNGARIAN ORIGINAL AND ENGLISH TRANSLATION APPEAR IN FACING COLUMNS: ORDINARILY THE TRANSLATION IS ON THE SUCCEEDING PAGE. THE CAMERA HAS UNAVOIDABLY DISTORTED THE PAGE SLIGHTLY.

The Hungarian Readjustment League, to which belong counties, towns, villages, social leagues, chambers of agriculture and farmers' organizations, industrial corporations, commercial organizations, laborers, craftsmen, tradesmen and merchants, public and private employees, jurists, physicians, professors, chemists, teachers and students, Catholic priests, Protestant clergymen, Jewish Rabbis, churchmen, scientists, artists, poets, journalists, soldiers, officers, the whole Hungarian nation whether in dismembered Hungary or beyond her present boundaries, men and women without respect of class or social position, who declare the Peace of Trianon to be: a cruel, senseless and intolerable dictate unworthy of the civilization of the Twentieth century and out of keeping with the democratic progress of the nations, and which, besides bringing economic ruin to Hungary and upon the whole Danube basin has made international reconciliation impossible by dividing the nations into two classes, victors and vanquished.

Furthermore, the League declares that you, Mr. Senator, have earned the gratitude and respect of the whole Hungarian nation, when true to the noble traditions of the United States of America, with manly candor you took sides against the unjust treaties and for the rights of humanity and justice.

(signed)

Budapest, 15 March, 1922.

Next follows a magnificent full page illustration from the Municipal Council of Budapest, proving her solidarity with all the other Hungarian towns. Budapest's greetings read in part:

The moral force of the Hungarian nation will be triumphant only if it is adequately supported and that support will be forthcoming if the great nations realize the magnitude of the injustice done to us. You, Mr. Senator, are the representative of one of the greatest nations on earth, and it has filled us with hope for a brighter future to see that you are aware of that injustice. On behalf of the capital town of Hungary we tender our most grateful thanks and pray you, in the interests of humanity, to continue the struggle for justice to Hungary.

There are similar greetings from the Town of Baja, which gave Stephen Turr to the Italian war of Independence, and from the Corporation of Debrecen, the eastern capital of "mutilated Hungary." Its 117,000 inhabitants invited Borah to come and see Hungary for himself.

Your attitude to us is a promise that good sense will finally triumph and that even in the midst of this general crisis the conviction will prevail that the Treaty of Trianon must be modified and that Hungary who has been devastated after having fought a thousand years in the service of Western culture must be released from the clutch under which she is being strangled.



The next page reproduces an impressive seal and conveys compliments from the Municipal Council of the Royal Free Borough of Győr:

... We believe ... that your sagacious attitude, based upon a wide knowledge of international politics in proclaiming the need for a revision of the peace treaties in the interests of European consolidation will help to bring public opinion to see that the Hungarian nation, living as it does in the heart of Europe, is an important factor in international economics and in civilization and that it would be to the interests of the whole world to preserve that race.

There were similar messages from the towns of Miskolc, Pecs, and Sopron, which declared:

Your words are an echo of American public opinion. The strong will, patriotism and honesty of American citizens have made your nation the first in the world. The United States have a decisive voice in world politics. The United States have always been the champions of justice and liberty. Mr. Senator, your sense of justice and your brave and candid statements have inspired you a place in the hearts of eight million Hungarians.

The Royal Free Borough of Szeged, the second largest town in Hungary, bravely announced:

From the cradle to the grave we will not cease to demand justice for Hungary.

At a meeting the populace held that day, it was reported an enthusiastic crowd with one voice called upon God to bless Borah and his work.

Banya, Bacs Bodrog, Bekes, Bihar and Szekesfehervar joined other towns in sending greetings. Bihar, dismembered as a result of the Treaty of Trianon, expressed gratitude that:

In the most critical period of oppression Borah raised his voice to the Premier of France whose country consistently and relentlessly enforced a policy which has been the means of preventing the restitution of Hungarian rights.

The counties of Borsod, Gomor, Kishont, Csanad, Arad, Torontal, Csongrad and Tejer added their names to the long list. Tejer's representatives observed:

There are times when living means suffering and grief, and although today, a decade removed from Trianon, the night of our grief and suffering is as black as ever, yet we perceive on the far distant horizon a ray of light proclaiming the dawn of a justice that breaking through our prison walls will dispel the darkness and let in the sweet pure air of liberty.



FALL, 1957

The county of Hajdu, founded in 1197, informed Borah:

All over the world the cruel peace dictates are working havoc, and their fruits are to be found in the present serious economic crisis, the appalling spread of unemployment, moral and political upheavals, and the catastrophic retrogression in culture and civilization which marks our era. And over all this the Red Menace keeps its loathsome watch and works steadily to foster disintegration. Europe is in flames and its fires are likely to ignite and destroy the Western hemisphere as well.

Heves, Szolnok, Nograd, Tolna, Vas, Veszprem, Zala and Zempten completed the impressive list of Hungary's towns and counties which responded to the call of Debrecen and joined in honoring Borah. Their greetings were followed by the crests of those municipalities lately severed from Hungary, entirely or partly given to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Rumania or Austria in 1919.

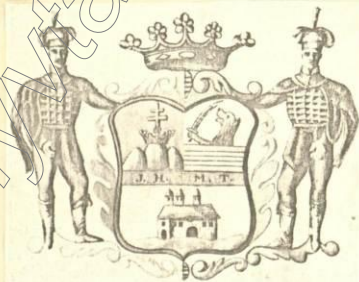
This book was a grateful gesture on the part of the freedom-loving Hungarians to one of Hungary's greatest friends. Idaho's people should cherish it always, and not merely because it is a valuable work of art. More precious yet is the spirit in which it was conceived, executed and freely given.

THE LOVE OF FREEDOM burns deeply in the breasts of Hungarians. That love shines



through the vivid illustrations and words of eloquence in the book sent to Senator Borah. A thousand years of oppression have not succeeded in extinguishing its flame. In recent times it has flared up and burned brightly, casting a ruddy glow, like a ray of hope for all the free world to see. There have been few occasions to rejoice since the iron curtain was shut down over half of Europe. The partitioning of Hungary in Borah's time was as nothing compared to the brutal, methodical suppression of Hungarian resistance by Soviet Russia's overwhelming might. While the once proud city on the Danube looked to her former idol for help in her last agony, we, "her champions of justice and liberty," were forced to stand by in shame and helplessness.

In the light of recent events Hungary's gift to Senator Borah takes on a new and deeper significance. Thumbing through its thick parchment pages we are forced to ponder over past events and the fate the future holds for us all. It is good for us to turn, now and then, to those inner things, "those intangibles that are the real treasures free men possess." To all those who love their freedom above all earthly gifts, this lovely book will serve as a source of inspiration.



TEMES VÁRMEGYE

Ansagar Johnson photo.

THE CLOSING PAGES OF THE BORAH BOOK
SILENTLY DISPLAY THE ARMS OF HUNGARIAN
TOWNS AND TERRITORIES LOST THROUGH THE
TREATY OF TRIANON.