

## In memoriam Dr. István Boros (1891—1980)

by Z. KASZAB, Budapest

On the 24th June, 1980, we stood with a heavy heart around the coffin — at the honorary grave donated by the city of Pécs — of DR. ISTVÁN BOROS, the late Director General of the Hungarian Natural History Museum.

He lived 89 years, maintaining his intellectual liveliness to the very last. Only a few years before his death, he lectured on the problems of Darwinism before a large audience in the Zoological Section of the Hungarian Biological Society.

Since his early youth he was passionately interested in natural sciences. He studied under professors of European renown, like DR. G. ENTZ sr., and S. GORKA, on the faculty of natural history—geography of the P. Pázmány University of Sciences. Zoology had the greatest appeal, and he wanted to be a research worker. However, his expectations came to nought by the outbreak of World War I; he was conscripted in 1914 and soon fell into Russian captivity. He spent several years as prisoner of war in the Eastern regions of the Caspian Sea, but he obtained permission to make zoological observations and collections beyond the confines of the camp. After many vicissitudes, the remains of his material still enrich the collections of the Natural History Museum. DR. BOROS even detected a new species, later dedicated in his honour as *Trigonoscelis borosi* (Coleoptera: Tenebrionidae).

Indeed, after his release from the camp, DR. BOROS went to reside in Ferghana where, together with SESEPEROW, an ornithologist, he founded a Natural History Museum. He worked on divers scientific problems, but mainly on the herpetology of Central and Inner Asia and on the philosophical aspects of Darwinism.

He returned to Hungary in 1922 and settled in Pécs. The narrow circumstances of that time did not allow the evolvement of his calling and he had to take a high-school teacher's post. His articles on methodology in teaching chemistry were published in didactic journals of the physical and chemical sciences. In 1933 he lost his position owing to his leftist attitude and was forced to go underground.

After 1945, he held political offices; he was Lord Lieutenant of the County Baranya, then worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until 1949 when he was appointed Director General of the Hungarian Natural History Museum. He was head of this institution from 1 August, 1949 till 29 July, 1960.

During the first years of his directorship he had to fend for his scientific and technicians' staff in the thorny political conditions of personality cult weighing heavily on nearly every human endeavour. On the other hand, long-range scientific and cultural programs were launched, the museum was able to obtain new and modern equipments and installations for its invaluable collections, and the overall natural history survey of the country and the publications of the scientific results also began. DR. BOROS laid special stress upon the increase of the cultural activities of the museum, and it was during his directorship that the big exhibition, "The Living World of Africa", "The World of Minerals and Rocks", "The Evolution of Earth and Life", "The Evolution of Plants" and "The Origin of Man" had been made and

opened to the public. And it was he, too, who started our travelling exhibitions on their way, promulgating natural science information in the regional museums and culture centres of dozens of Hungarian towns.

In the autumn of 1956 a terrible blow befell the Hungarian Natural History Museum. During the events of those days a considerable part of our scientific collections and exhibitions were consumed by fire and irreplaceable items annihilated. After the saving of the remaining collections, the substitution of materials and displays absorbed the energies of the entire staff for years.

DR. I. BOROS organized and directed all these tasks with great zeal until his retirement in 1960. Though aged 69, it was in the fullness of his intellectual and physical powers that he had to leave the chair of the Director General — an occasion deplored by nearly the entire staff. He was still brimming over with activity and plans to be realized. He withdrew to Pécs, but his lifeline to the museum was never severed and he worked as a special research officer until his death.

He was greatly respected for his extraordinarily panoramic knowledge and knowhow, for his true humanity and his firmness in every adverse situation. The eleven years during which he led our institution — personally facing every risk and bearing the brunt of every difficulty — will be memorable in the history of the Hungarian Natural History Museum. We have lost a great man, and will treasure his memory.





**Dr. István Boros**  
(1891—1980)

