respectively. When Csáky visited Berlin in January, 1939, he promised Hitler, for good measure, that Hungary would rearm, encourage good relations with Romania and Yugoslavia, limit her revisionist aims to predominantly Magyar regions, conclude a ten-year economic agreement with Germany and, perhaps most significantly to Nazi ears, set about resolving the 'Jewish problem'.

Csáky's forecast of Hungarian policies was realised in part on 4 May 1939, with the passage through Parliament of the Second Jewish Law, which tightened the screw on Hungarian Jewry and significantly increased its civil disabilities. No Jew could now acquire Hungarian citizenship, stand for municipal office or (unless his or her family had lived in Hungary since 1867) vote in municipal or national elections. The Jewish 'quota' in the professions, established by the First Jewish Law, now shrank to 6 per cent; and in the financial and commercial sector, to 12 per cent. The new law potentially put the livelihood of as many as 250,000 Hungarian Jews at risk; however, since the economy, already under strain, could not sustain the loss of its most productive human resource, application of the law never became more than patchy. The hardest hit were those Jews whose activities made only an indirect contribution to the health of the economy – in the professions, offices and the media. According to one estimate,[20] by 1942 300,000 Hungarian Jews had been deprived of their livelihood and were dependent on the charity of the Jewish community. As events were to show, however, Hitler would not regard the creeping impoverishment of Hungarian Jewry as an adequate solution of the 'Jewish problem'.

Although still determined to secure Ruthenia and aware that this could not be achieved without German acquiescence, Horthy now underwent another of his recurrent bouts of nervousness that Hungary was edging too close to the Reich: Imrédy, whom he had appointed largely because of his good connexions in the West, had fallen increasingly under the spell of Hitler's success and Nazi showmanship. The Regent therefore used the coincidental discovery of apparent evidence that the anti-Semitic Imrédy had Jewish antecedents to shame him into resigning and to appoint the veteran Count Pál Teleki to the premiership in his place. Teleki, whose pro-Western sympathies had firmer roots than Imrédy's, nevertheless regarded the acquisition of Ruthenia as his government's first priority and used his expertise as an academic geographer to develop a public case for the reunion of Ruthenia with Hungary on environmental grounds – uncontrolled deforestation in Ruthenia was causing serious flooding of the Alföld by the River Tisza. When Hitler's widely anticipated dismemberment of Czechoslovakia began with an engineered pro-Nazi coup in Slovakia on 10 March 1939, Teleki decided that Hungarian troops should march into Ruthenia as soon as German troops crossed the Czechoslovak frontier. He informed the Italian and the Polish governments of this intention. Accepting that it would be more troublesome to rein in the Hungarians than to unleash them, Berlin signalled acquiescence in the operation, subject to stringent requirements for the protection of German interests in Ruthenia. When, therefore, the German army marched into Prague on 15 March, occupying Bohemia and Moravia, Hungarian forces simultaneously invaded Ruthenia, having provoked border