

incidents at Munkács and Ungvár on the previous day. Within three days, Hungarian troops were deployed along the Polish frontier, their objectives achieved and 12,000 sq. km of territory reclaimed for Hungary. Horthy had already despatched a fulsome message of gratitude to Hitler: 'I shall never forget this proof of friendship, and Your Excellency can at all times ever rely steadfastly on my gratitude.'<sup>21</sup> Eight weeks earlier, Horthy, giving an audience to the British and American Ministers in Budapest, had denounced the ambitions of 'the madman', Hitler: if Hitler provoked a war, Hungary would remain neutral and if German troops were to enter Hungary – 'We would fight them to the last ditch and start a European war!'<sup>22</sup> The Hungarian press, oblivious to such inconsistencies, concentrated on hailing a rare success for Hungarian arms, heaping praise on the Regent who, to all outward appearances, had single-handedly made it possible.

Hungary's revisionist agenda was by no means exhausted: the issues of Transylvania and of former Hungarian territory within Yugoslavia remained to be addressed. In the meantime, however, Hitler's designs on Poland posed an awkward dilemma for Hungary, especially since Teleki's hope that success in Ruthenia would appease the extreme right had not been realised: the elections in May 1939, produced 900,000 votes for the Arrow Cross, giving the party forty seats in Parliament and making it the second largest. Pressure on the government for an unambiguously pro-German policy was growing. Teleki and a majority of his ministers were nevertheless reluctant to incur the stigma of complicity in a German attack on Poland, Hungary's ancient friend and ally. Teleki was all too aware of the rapidity with which Hungary was painting herself into the Axis corner: Hungary's accession to the Anti-Comintern Pact had prompted the Soviet Union to sever diplomatic relations in February and her departure from the League of Nations in April had strained Hungary's relations with Britain and France. Support for German aggression against Poland, with whom both Britain and France had treaty ties, would extinguish such sympathy for Hungary as remained in the West. Urged by Mussolini in July to clarify Hungary's position in the event of a general conflagration, Teleki undertook, in identical letters to the Duce and the Führer, that Hungary would 'make her policy conform to the policy of the Axis'; but in a second letter, he stated that 'Hungary cannot, on moral grounds, be in a position to take armed action against Poland'. This assertion predictably provoked an explosion in the German Chancellery. Summoned to Berchtesgaden on 8 August, Csáky was subjected to a torrent of abuse from Hitler, who scorned the implication that Germany would need any assistance from Hungary in dealing with Poland and expressed incredulity that Teleki should write in such terms given that Hungary's territorial gains could not have been achieved without German help; there could be no question of German support for further revision. Browbeaten into a panic, Csáky disgracefully took it upon himself to say that his Prime Minister's letters should be considered withdrawn; on the following day Hungary's strongly pro-German Ambassador in Berlin, Döme Sztójay, delivered a formal *note verbale* revoking both letters. Learning of this, Teleki, who had not been consulted, immediately recalled Csáky to Budapest and reinstated the two letters; but the