

# THE DIPLOMATIC MEASURES LEADING TO THE RE-INCORPORATION OF RUTHENIA

STATEMENT MADE BY

COUNT STEPHEN CSÁKY,

HUNGARIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, BEFORE THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
COMMITTEE OF THE HUNGARIAN PARLIAMENT

**O**n March 23rd., before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Hungarian Parliament, Count Stephen Csáky, Foreign Minister, made the following statement of his policy:

"Since the last meeting of the Committee the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary has increased by 11.000 square kilometres, the increase of population involved being 552.000 souls. This part of the country will be incorporated in the Kingdom of Hungary as a province enjoying an adequate territorial autonomy.

"Probably no Member of the Committee was surprised by the return of this ancient part of our country so much as by the unexpected rapidity with which the re-incorporation was effected. I desire to submit to you and to explain the matter for which the Premier has already promised the Lower House an explanation, — viz. why the Government was compelled with lightning rapidity — at practically a minute's notice — to undertake the considerable risk involved by the occupation of the territory known as Ruthenia?

"Before proceeding in the matter we had to renew the relations with the German Empire which had for years connected Hungary closely with that country. We had to keep awake the interest of Italy and then to create an atmosphere in the countries of our neighbours to the South — i. e. in Rumania and Yugoslavia — enabling the Governments of those two countries to regard with relative equanimity any

eventual action undertaken by the Hungarian State in Sub-Carpathia.

"At the same time we had to convince Poland that the Hungarian Government had never been in a position to relinquish the idea of incorporating in the Kingdom of Hungary the territory known as Ruthenia; and we had also to re-assure the Slovaks that the action of the Hungarian Government would be confined within certain limits.

*Our Relations with the German Empire More Cordial Than Ever.*

"Our relations with the German Empire are more cordial than ever. Reciprocal confidence has been restored. With the far-reaching goodwill shown by the leaders of the German Empire Hungary would never have advanced so far as she has on the path of consolidation; and all factors alike, both at home and abroad, must take very seriously the attitude expressed by the Führer of that Empire to the effect that Germany needs a strong, independent Hungary able as an independent factor to play an important role in the political life of the peoples of Central Europe.

"Conscious of the importance attached elsewhere too to independence, the Government has taken particular care not to ask anything from anyone in connection with the action in Ruthenia, determining on the contrary to carry out that action by having recourse exclusively to its own resources and to the national impetus behind it.

"In respect of the attitude of certain States we have been able to establish the fact that Yugoslavia's conduct was correct.

"Rumania unfortunately hesitated and did not display a more understanding attitude until I had called the attention of the Bucharest Government to the fact that the Hungarian Government was determined to take possession of Ruthenia by every means at its command, even if opposed. It is true, indeed, that I at the same time assured the Rumanian Government that, although our National Army was marching with practically irresistible forces also along the former Ruthenian-Rumanian frontier, the action was not aimed against Rumania, unless the Rumanian Army allowed itself to be dragged into taking hostile action against the Hungarian Army. I did not

however fail to warn Bucharest also that any unprovoked attack on the Hungarian troops meant war.

*Rumania's Incomprehensible Gesture.*

"The Hungarian Government still abides by its promise to avoid even the appearance of any military actions likely at any point to threaten the security of the Rumanian frontier. I cannot therefore refrain from regarding it as unfortunate that the Rumanian Government should nevertheless have carried out against us too very serious military measures for which there was no cause whatsoever, a decision on that Government's part which once more robbed it of a possibility of making a gesture towards every section of Hungarian public opinion — as had been done by Yugoslavia, for instance, — making the Hungarian masses realise that Rumania was sincerely desirous to strengthen the foundations of a rapprochement with Hungary laid with such zealous insistence and genuine conviction by M. Gafencu, Rumanian Foreign Minister.

"The behaviour of Rumania — at times vacillating, at others smacking of excessive energy — was incomprehensible. It was surely incomprehensible that she should first of all desire that the Hungarian troops should not occupy the part of Ruthenia lying beyond the Huszt-Felsőbisztra line — i. e. the larger half of the territory of Ruthenia —, notifying us at the same time that it would, to secure the defence of Rumania's interest, concentrate troops on the Rumano-Ruthenian frontier, though those troops would not cross the Ruthenian frontier until Rumania considered her interests to be in danger. And when I repudiated this hidden threat, the Rumanian Government informed me that Rumania would be satisfied with the surrender of the Lonka-Körösmező railway and with the transfer also of a few Rumanian villages lying in the neighbourhood of Mărmarosziget.

"I wonder whether the object in the mind of the Rumanian Government when it acted in this manner was to prove unequivocally that if it wanted to do so it could make itself extremely disagreeable?

"After having informed the Governments of the States

with which we are on friendly terms and also of those which are on friendly terms with Rumania of this behaviour on the part of the Rumanian Government, I simply ignored the demand, declaring however that — if Rumania showed a correct attitude, — I would be prepared to show the most benevolent consideration possible for the interests of Rumania affected by the new common frontier.

“But I also informed Rumania's friends that this promise did not apply to territorial concessions, for Hungarian public opinion would be unable to understand the motives impelling us to renounce a railway line in favour of Rumania, or to hand over to Rumania in exchange for 3—4 villages a slice of territory, disproportionately large in area, cut out of Ruthenia without any return being made and without even determining the principle on the basis of which Rumania demands from Hungary territorial concessions. And in conclusion I called Rumania's attention to the circumstance that we had promised Sub-Carpathia territorial autonomy and that we could not possibly interpret this promise to mean that we proposed to distribute slices of various sizes of the self-governing territory. I at the same time, however, endeavoured through the medium of Berlin, Rome, Warsaw, London, Paris and Belgrade, to re-assure Bucharest, repeatedly reiterating the promise I had made to the effect that, unless the Rumanian troops attacked the Hungarian troops, the Hungarian Government would avoid even the appearance of desiring to endanger Rumania's territorial security.

“The Hungarian Government proposes to continue to develop good neighbourly relations with Rumania and is prepared for direct negotiations in all questions affecting the common interests of both countries which may arise as a consequence of the new frontier — possibly in other questions too, though under no circumstances whatsoever in the event of a mobilised Rumanian army being massed behind the Rumanian negotiators.

“The Hungarian Government is most nearly concerned in the restoration in Central Europe within the shortest time possible of peace and understanding; and it is not in the least desirous of seeking for fresh complications. Our previous endeavours have indeed convinced the Yugoslav Government

that such is the case, that Government having displayed an attitude for which it deserves the sincere thanks of the whole Hungarian nation.

"We have succeeded in convincing Poland that the Hungarian Government never renounced the idea of the re-incorporation of Sub-Carpathia, — if only because by so doing at the present juncture it would have been guilty of abandoning the political principle of the self-determination of the peoples which it had professed for twenty years. The strengthening of our confidence in Poland was the source of that sincere and profound friendship which was responsible for the touching and spontaneous outburst witnessed at Verecke when the Hungarian and Polish troops first joined hands on the mountain ridge forming the common frontier of the two peoples.

*London, Paris and Washington.*

"London, Paris and Washington too realised that the lot of the Magyars living in Sub-Carpathia was becoming more and more intolerable and that even prior to the general elections the Magyar and Ruthenian inhabitants had to suffer a whole series of disabilities and outrages. The Volosin Government, as is well known, not only forbade the Magyar and Ruthenian parties to take part in the elections, but confined the leaders of those parties in concentration camps.

"Those Powers realised also that its being severed from the mother country had made Sub-Carpathia unviable while the arbitrary conditions were being maintained by the so-called Ukrainian Government — a government completely foreign to the autochthonous Ruthenian inhabitants — solely and exclusively with the aid of armed bands of terrorists and of the Czech army.. But what probably attracted the attention most of all the Great Powers alike was my warning to the effect that the Volosin Government was carrying out deforestation on a scale seriously endangering the supply of water of the Hungarian Lowlands and the distribution of the volume of water available, it being emphasised at the same time that this was no new invention on the part of Hungary, seeing that during the Peace Negotiations we already called

the attention of the Powers to the mortal danger threatening Hungary in this connection, so that a Chapter not to be found in the other peace treaties was included in the Treaty of Trianon. Articles 292 and 293 serve the purpose of protecting the flat districts of Hungary against the serious dangers arising from deforestation and from hydraulic measures of an inexpert character.

"When the antagonism between the Pozsony and Prague Governments came to a head and the conflict assumed dimensions awakening international interest, it became manifest to us that the Vienna Award might any moment become invalid. In other words, that the only legal basis upon which the so-called Carpatho-Ukraine had built its existence might become a thing of the past. We realised also that, in the event of the Czech State losing its authority in Sub-Carpathia, we should have to reckon with serious upheavals and perhaps even with a civil war in that province.

"Nor could those Powers have been ignorant of the fact that the events in Sub-Carpathia were being watched closely in other countries too, and that there was a danger that Hungary would only recover this ancient Hungarian territory in a mutilated shape.

"When, therefore, the autochthonous inhabitants began to raise their voices louder and louder in appeal for help to Budapest, — when certain members of the last of the Volosin Governments appealed for the assistance of the Hungarian Government, — when with the aid of Czech regulars the Sitch bands once more attacked the Hungarian frontier guards at Munkács, probably in the belief that thereby they would compel the whole Czech army of occupation stationed in Sub-Carpathia to make a stand and hold back the Hungarian army at least long enough to enable them to remove all the valuables and war material to be found in Sub-Carpathia — and, last not least, to enable the Sitch Guards to make their escape —, the Hungarian Government had no choice left but to undertake all risks and, trusting in the ancestral military prowess of the Hungarian soldier, — in the early days with deficient military equipment and with recruits who had had only six weeks training —, to accept the

challenge, to repulse the attack and with as little delay as possible to take possession of Sub-Carpathia.

"The tiny Hungarian army in a few days succeeded in so seriously threatening the veteran, splendidly equipped enemy that the latter begged for a truce. Our reply — as everybody knows — was to the effect that, if they laid down their arms, the enemy would be free to go. We also called upon the Volosin Government in its own interest — and in order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed — to summon the Terror Troops under its control also to surrender. The answer received was to the effect that Volosin had sent to Budapest, for the purpose of negotiation, a delegation headed by a Member of his Government, but had at the same time appealed to the German Empire for help, begging the Empire to offer his country the benefit of its protection. Volosin at the same time addressed a similar appeal to the Rumanian Government, and then — ran away.

#### *Marvellous Achievement of National Defence Army.*

"The Czech army — as everybody knows — was not prepared to comply with the demand for unconditional surrender; and as a consequence hostilities were continued.

"It is not my business to describe the marvellous capacity and military prowess of our national defence army. That has been done already by the international press, in particular by the German and the Italian press, and indeed by that of Western Europe too, and in days to come that prowess will be commemorated by Hungarian military history in terms far exceeding in eloquence anything I might be able to say. But, apart from having once more wielded their sharp-whetted and brightly polished swords in a manner worthy of their ancestors, our soldiers have also accomplished an important national mission. Inspired by the new national spirit, which has returned to the Hungarian nationality conception derived from the principles of St. Stephen which for centuries proved so effectual and in terms of which no importance whatsoever attaches to the language spoken by the citizens of the Hungarian Kingdom, — provided only those citizens are loyal and contented sons of the State —, they have treated the Ruthe-

nian people with a brotherly kindness which has effectively laid the foundations of a peaceful symbiosis of the two races based on reciprocal understanding destined to be lasting owing to the reciprocal conviction of interdependence.

"There can be no doubt that the political and military action carried out by us without any infringement of rights, with foresight and lightning rapidity and entirely without assistance from abroad, has once more enhanced Hungary's prestige. In addition our connections with our old friends have been made much closer, the Western European Powers have shown complete understanding of our procedure, there has ensued an improvement of our relations with Yugoslavia, and I cannot but hope that we shall be able to continue our endeavours towards an understanding with Rumania which during the course of our action in Sub-Carpathia — I would stress the point that it was not our fault — were suspended.

"With the re-incorporation of the Memel District territory which has been German for centuries has been restored to German possession. This was a triumph alike for the historical and for the ethnical principles. The Treaty of Versailles — on which that of Trianon was modelled — has once more been seriously repudiated. And indeed the Hungarian Government did not fail yesterday afternoon to embrace the opportunity to express its congratulations to the German Government on the fresh success achieved without bloodshed by the German Empire on the arduous path of reparations.

"Allow me further on the present occasion also to convey to Signor Mussolini our cordial and sincere esteem on the occasion of today's celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the first militant fascio.

"In conclusion I have one other thing to say: I do not believe that the peace of the world is in danger; it is becoming every day more and more manifest that the political power factors are becoming equipoised and that the Parties now facing one another will be impelled in the future to display a greater degree of understanding than that now in evidence for one another's legitimate interests."