

19 SEP 1940 11734
DOSSIER NO. X a. 7 48.

MEMORANDUM.

His Majesty's Government have taken note of the communication which Your Excellency made on September 17th concerning the occasions on which aircraft of the Royal Air Force have flown over Swiss territory. The Swiss Government appear to have mis-interpreted the terms of His Majesty's Government's note of September 7th, and to have given a somewhat incorrect and incomplete presentation of it in the communiqué which was issued in Switzerland on 10th September.

If the Swiss Government consider that the assurances contained in that Note are insufficiently categorical, it would seem to follow that they expect the Royal Air Force to refrain from undertaking bombing forays against military objectives in Italy unless these can be certainly accomplished without crossing over Switzerland. In present circumstances such certainty cannot be presumed, as His Majesty's Government's note of September 7th made clear; and it would appear, therefore, that His Majesty's Government are being invited to abandon altogether their air attacks against Italy.

If this is indeed the attitude of the Swiss Government, then His Majesty's Government must observe that they are engaged in war against enemies who have not hesitated to disregard neutral rights whenever it has suited their purpose to do so. Germany has invaded and occupied five neutral countries without a scintilla of justification, because she considered that her conduct of the war would be thereby assisted. It was by invading the neutral Low Countries that Germany was able to establish herself in Northern France, and it is from that area and from the Low Countries themselves that the present indiscriminate air attacks on this country are being conducted





It is clear that if it suited her purpose Germany would not feel herself debarred by any considerations whatever from similar action in other cases. Italy, who joined Germany as an ally in the hope of securing advantages for herself from two nations who had no cause of quarrel with her, and has profited from the German invasion of neutral countries, must be considered to have given her full approval to the German violation of neutrality. Moreover Italy has consistently infringed Spanish neutrality during the flight of her aircraft to attack Gibraltar, and has continuously violated Greek neutrality in daily reconnaissance flights over the Aegean Sea.

His Majesty's Government are exposed to the consequences resulting from such enemy violation of neutrality. They are unable to accept the position whereby they would be debarred from action which, while it may involve flying over neutral territory, is not in itself of a nature to cause injury to the neutral concerned and may well be regarded as being at most a technical violation of its rights.

No country has done more by its example for the cause of liberty and of democratic institutions than the Swiss Republic. His Majesty's Government understand and appreciate the difficult position of the Swiss Government and the pressure to which they are subjected, but they are convinced that only through an allied victory can Switzerland fully regain her liberty of action and preserve her independence, her institutions, and her neutrality for the future.

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

18th September, 1940.