

E 2200 London 44/7

*Le Ministre de Suisse à Londres, W. Thurnheer,
au Ministère britannique des Affaires étrangères¹*

Copie

N X.A.7.1940

London, December 18th, 1940

The Swiss Minister presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and regrets to have to inform him that a new and very grave violation of Swiss neutrality by the Royal Air Force took place during the night of December 16th/17th.

Several British bombers repeatedly crossed the Swiss frontier in the neighbourhoods of Basle, Laufen and Les Rangiers between 11.0 p.m. and 12.45 a.m. At 11.10 p.m. these planes dropped bombs on the station of the Swiss Federal Railways at Basle and on the neighbouring districts. Fifteen or sixteen 250 lb high explosive bombs and more than fifty-three incendiary

1. *Annotation de Thurnheer en haut à gauche*: Am 19. Dez. 40 persönlich Lord Halifax übergeben.

18 DÉCEMBRE 1940

1035

bombs were dropped, causing a number of deaths and injuring many people. Considerable material damage was also sustained.

This very serious bombardment of the Swiss town of Basle is the more incomprehensible in that there was a full moon and that the ground was covered with snow, thus affording perfect visibility.

The Swiss Federal Council protest against this renewed bombardment of a Swiss town and ask for full reparation of the damage done².

In view of the continuous breaches of Swiss neutrality they must insist that active measures now be taken to avoid any repetition of these deplorable incidents.

ANNEXE

*Le Ministre de Suisse à Londres, W. Thurnheer,
au Ministère britannique des Affaires étrangères³*

Copie

N X.A.7.1940 CJ/nb

London, December 19th, 1940

You will remember that during our interview to-day I mentioned the fact that the Swiss Radio Station at Beromünster had announced a new violation of Swiss neutrality by the Royal Air Force, which occurred last night.

On my arrival back at the Legation from the Foreign Office, I found a cable from the Swiss Government informing me that during the night of December 18th/19th, between the hours of mid-night and 1.17 a.m. about ten British aircraft, flying in three groups, crossed the Jura mountains between La Chaux-de-Fonds and Les Verrières and then the Alps between Collon and the Simplon. Italian anti-aircraft batteries came into action at Varèse and Milan.

Five groups of aircraft returned across Switzerland between 1.50 a.m. and 3.55 a.m. crossing the Alps between the Simplon and the Great St. Bernard, and the Jura mountains between Basle and Neuchâtel. The night was perfectly clear, with fog up to 800 metres, only, offering good conditions for navigation.

The Swiss Government have asked me to protest anew against this breach of Swiss neutrality. They are especially astounded by this fresh incident committed two days after the bombardment of Basle. They wish me to inform the British Government that under these conditions indignation amongst the population is growing⁴.

2. *Le Conseil fédéral avait décidé de protester lors de sa séance du 17 décembre 1940; cf. E 1004.1 1/404, N° 2026.*

3. *Annotation de Thurnheer en haut à gauche: Am 19. Dez. 40 persönlich Lord Halifax übergeben.*

4. *Le 24 décembre, Thurnheer remettra une nouvelle note de protestation après le bombardement de Zurich dans la nuit du 23 décembre 1940.*