

Bombing: Aerial: Civil Populations

1135/10/39

1135/9

BRITISH EMBASSY,
WASHINGTON D.C.

September 3rd, 1939.

No. 369.

Sir,

I have the honour under instructions from His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to inform you that the following declaration has been made on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government:-

" The Governments of the United
"Kingdom and France solemnly and publicly
"affirm their intention should a war be
"forced upon them to conduct hostilities
"with a firm desire to spare the civilian
"population and to preserve in every way
"possible those monuments of human achieve-
"ment which are treasured in all civilized
"countries. In this spirit they have
"welcomed with deep satisfaction President
"Roosevelt's appeal on the subject of
"bombing from the air. Fully sympathising
"with the humanitarian sentiments by
"which that appeal was inspired they have
"replied to it in similar terms. They had
"indeed some time ago sent explicit
"instructions to the commanders of their
"armed forces prohibiting the bombardment
"whether from the air, or the sea, or by
"artillery/

INDEX

The Honourable

Cordell Hull,

Secretary of State of the United States,
Washington, D.C.

-2-

"artillery on land of any except strictly
"military objectives in the narrowest sense
"of the word. Bombardment by artillery on
"land will exclude objectives which have no
"strictly defined military importance; in
"particular large urban areas situated
"outside the battle zone. They will further-
"more make every effort to avoid the
"destruction of localities or buildings
"which are of value to civilization. As
"regards the use of naval forces, including
"submarines, the two governments will abide
"strictly by the rules laid down in the
"submarine protocol of 1936 which have been
"accepted by nearly all civilized nations.
"Further they will only employ their aircraft
"against merchant shipping at sea in conformity
"with the recognised rules applicable to the
"exercise of maritime belligerent rights by
"warships. Finally, the two allied governments
"reaffirm their intention to abide by the
"terms of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 pro-
"hibiting the use in war of asphyxiating or
"poisonous or other gases and of bacteriological
"methods of warfare.

" An enquiry will be addressed to the
"German Government as to whether they are
"prepared to give an assurance to the same
"effect.

"It/

" It will of course be understood
 "that in the event of the enemy not observing
 "any of the restrictions which the Govern-
 "ments of the United Kingdom and France
 "have thus imposed on the operations of
 "their armed forces these governments reserve
 "the right to take all such action as they
 "may consider appropriate".

I have the honour to be,
 with the highest consideration,
 Sir,
 Your most obedient,
 humble servant,

(SDD) LOTHIAN.