

Excerpt from the Interrogation of Dr. Paul Schmidt
at Nürnberg, Germany, on 28 March 1946.

After having been duly sworn the witness testified
as follows:

Q. Did you, on the morning of September 3, 1939, receive the
British ultimatum to the German Government.

Yes, that is correct.

Q. To whom did you hand that ultimatum?

A. On the morning of the 3rd the British Ambassador, at about
two or three o'clock, had telephoned the Reich Chancellor,
where I was to go with the Foreign Minister, to be available*
was given that the British Ambassador had received instructions
from his government, according to which, at exactly nine
o'clock a.m., he would have to make important announcements to
the Foreign Minister on behalf of the British Government. He
asked, therefore, to be received by Ribbentrop at that time.
He was given the reply that he personally would not be available
but that a member of the Foreign Office, in this case I,
would be given authority to take his place and receive the
announcement from the British Government and through the British
ambassador. That is how it happened that I, at nine o'clock
in the morning, received the British ambassador in Ribbentrop's
office. My invitation to sit down was turned down by Henderson,
and standing he read to me the well known ultimatum of the
British Government, addressed to the German Government, accord-
ing to which, unless certain conditions were met on the part
of Germany, the British Government would at eleven o'clock
that morning consider themselves at war with Germany. After
we had exchanged a few farewell words, I took the document
and went to the Reich Chancellery.

Q. And to whom did you give it there in the Reich Chancellery?

A. I gave it to Hitler. That is to say, I found him during
conference with the Foreign Minister in his office and I
translated the document into German for him. When I had
completed my translation, there was at first silence.

Q. Was Hitler alone in that room?

A. No, as I said before, he was in his office, standing together
with the Foreign Minister. And when I had completed my trans-
lation, both gentlemen were absolutely silent for about one
minute. I could clearly see that that development of things
was by no means agreeable to them. For some time Hitler
sat in his chair deep in thought and he looked in front of

* available
for possible conferences, and the information was given

him, looking rather concerned. Then the silence was ended with a rather sudden question of his addressed to the Foreign Minister, and he said "What are we going to do now?" Subsequently they began to discuss the next diplomatic steps which were to be taken, whether this or that ambassador would have to be recalled, and so forth, and I, of course, left the room since I had nothing else to do. When I entered the anti-room, I had seen some members of the cabinet and higher officials who had assembled there to whom, upon their questioning looks when I had entered, since they knew I had seen the British Ambassador, I could only say that no second Munich conference would take place.

When I left again, I gathered from the anxious expression on their faces that my remark had been understood. When I now told them that I had just handed over a British ultimatum to Hitler, a very depressed silence fell upon the room. The faces became very serious suddenly. I still remember that Goering, for instance, who stood in front of me, turned to me and said, "If we lose this war, then Heaven help us." Goebbels stood in a corner by himself and had a very serious, if not depressed, expression. That atmosphere of depression was prevalent with all those present, and that was something which I considered most remarkable for the first day of the war in that anti-room of the Chancellory, and it is still today in my memory.

- Q. You didn't have the impression, therefore, that these men expected a declaration of war?
- A. No, I didn't have that impression.
- Q. Witness, did you have an opportunity to observe just how Ribbentrop reacted to the news that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor?
- A. I didn't have a direct opportunity, no, but the Foreign Office knew generally that the Foreign Minister, just like the whole Foreign Office, was completely surprised by the news of Pearl Harbor. As far as I am concerned, that impression was confirmed by news regarding a member of the press section. The press section had department concerning itself with radio news, and in the case of important news, the official on duty had orders to inform the Foreign Minister personally and at once. When the first news regarding Pearl Harbor was received by that section of the press, the official on duty considered it important enough to report to his chief, that is to say, the chief of the press section, who in turn intended to pass it on to the Foreign Minister. But, as I was told, the Foreign Minister turned him down rather harshly and he said that that was surely some invention of the press

Def. Doc. No. 1450

or some "red herring", and that he didn't wish to be disturbed by our press section with stories like that.

After that, a second and third new bulletin regarding Pearl Harbor was received, I think a Reuter report, and that had been received by that department. At the stage the chief of the press section gathered his courage together, in spite of the order not to disturb the Foreign Minister, and informed him of this news.