

Declassified US document sheds light on British, US intelligence on Holocaust: [Daily Edition]

Jelinek, Pauline. **Jerusalem Post** [Jerusalem] 03 July 2001: 06.

Abstract (summary)

The translated copy of a November 1941 dispatch filed by a Chilean diplomat serving in Prague, tells of German plans to eradicate the Jews, the National Archives and Records Administration said yesterday.

"Warnings from the allies to the Jews of Europe of a planned genocide never came," said Thomas H. Baer, another panel member. "The Nazi murders depended on secrecy and subterfuge. Warnings would not have stopped the Holocaust, but they could have saved lives."

They said the despatch was prompted by a decree to be issued by Nazi Germany on November 25, 1941, announcing that Jews who had left Germany and were living abroad could not be German subjects and that all remaining assets of these Jews automatically were forfeited to the Reich.

Full Text

WASHINGTON - A declassified US intelligence document sheds new light on the longstanding question of how much Western nations knew about Hitler's plans for the Holocaust and when they knew it.

The translated copy of a November 1941 dispatch filed by a Chilean diplomat serving in Prague, tells of German plans to eradicate the Jews, the National Archives and Records Administration said yesterday.

"It has been decided to eradicate all the Jews and send some to Poland and others to the town of Terezin, whilst looking for a more remote place," Chilean consul Gonzalo Montt Rivas wrote to his government.

British intelligence officials got a copy of the dispatch and turned it over to Americans by late March 1942, archives officials said.

The report was delivered to David Bruce, head of the Secret Intelligence Branch of the Coordinator of Information, a predecessor to the Office of Strategic Services and Central Intelligence Agency. He forwarded it to an administrative assistant to William J. Donovan, who served as Coordinator of Information, but there was no indication on the document whether other Americans may have seen it.

"The next question is why our government - not to mention the British - did nothing in response," said Elizabeth Holtzman, a former US congresswoman and member of a panel overseeing declassification of wartime records.

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The document was part of a release last month of 400,000 pages of OSS records by the Interagency Working Group, a group that coordinates the government-wide effort to declassify federal records related to Nazi and Axis war crimes.

During German occupation, Prague was no longer a capital of a country and most foreign diplomats had departed. But the Chilean consul was able to resume his post because of friendly relations between Nazi Germany and neutral Chile, archives official said.

"His location and good connections provided a unique vantage point for discerning the Nazi agenda and actions in Nazi-occupied territories, a perspective not afforded to most Western diplomats," the archives office statement said.

They said the despatch was prompted by a decree to be issued by Nazi Germany on November 25, 1941, announcing that Jews who had left Germany and were living abroad could not be German subjects and that all remaining assets of these Jews automatically were forfeited to the Reich.

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