West Knew of Holocaust in March 1942

The West may have been informed about Nazi Germany's plans for the Holocaust months earlier than previously thought.

"It has been decided to eradicate all the Jews," says a newly declassified document believed to have been obtained by British and American intelligence by March 1942.

Previously, historians have generally judged that the West didn't learn until August 1942 that the Holocaust was happening.

The newly declassified document is the translation of a dispatch in which the Chilean consul in Prague, Gonzalo Montt Rivas, told Chilean officials of a German decree that Jews living abroad could no longer be German subjects and that their property would go immediately to the Nazis.

In the memo written Nov. 24, 1941, Montt described the decree as follows:

"The Jew [residing abroad] loses German nationality immediately. . . . The fortune which the Reich obtains in this manner will serve to solve the questions in connection with Jews," he wrote in Spanish.

Then, interpreting the decree and other developments, he reflected: "The German triumph [in the war] will leave Europe freed of Semites."

The dispatch was obtained by British intelligence agents and an English translation ended up in American files by March 20, 1942.

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