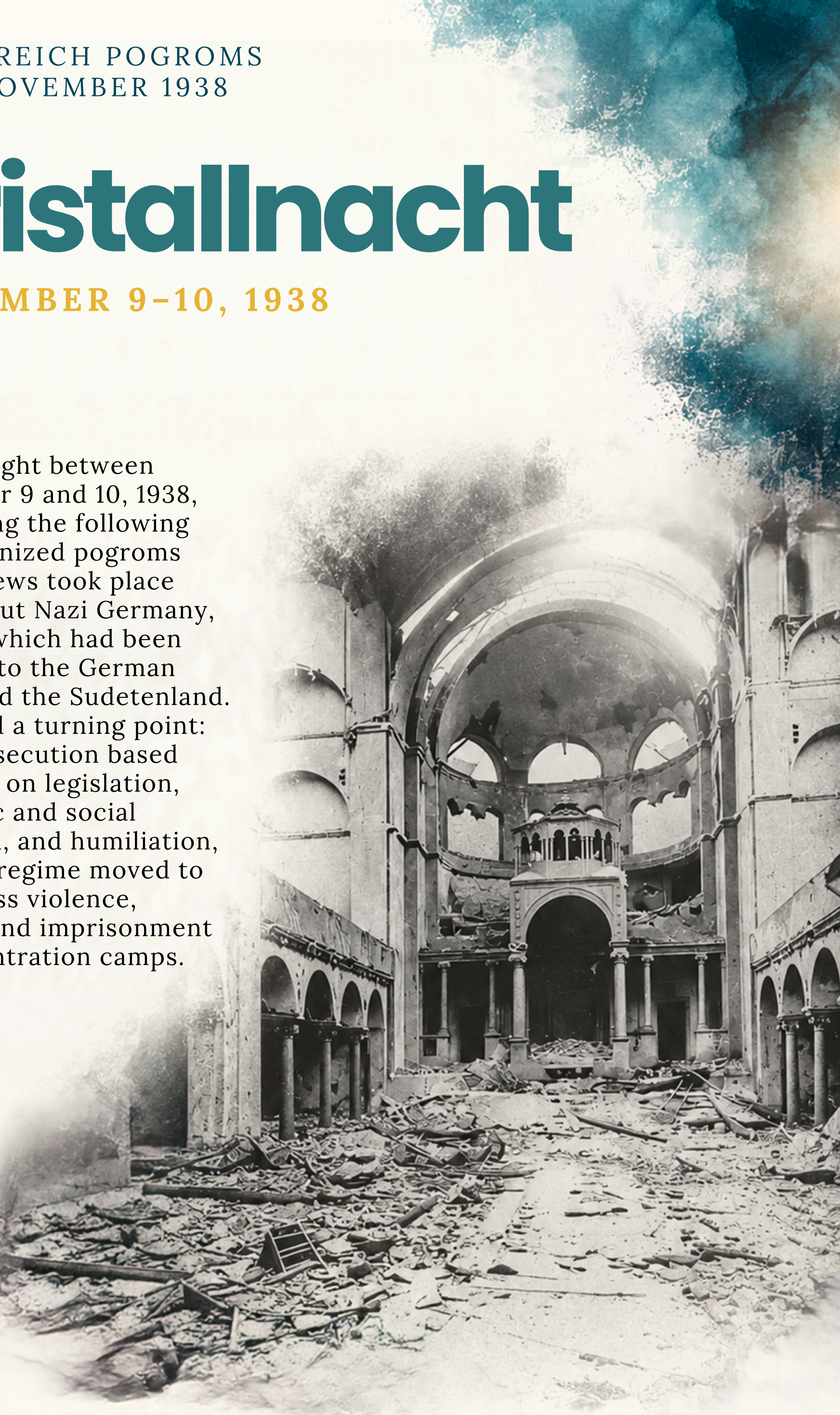


THE REICH POGROMS
OF NOVEMBER 1938

Kristallnacht

NOVEMBER 9–10, 1938

On the night between November 9 and 10, 1938, and during the following day, organized pogroms against Jews took place throughout Nazi Germany, Austria, which had been annexed to the German Reich, and the Sudetenland. It marked a turning point: from persecution based primarily on legislation, economic and social exclusion, and humiliation, the Nazi regime moved to overt mass violence, arrests, and imprisonment in concentration camps.



Kristallnacht

NOVEMBER 9–10, 1938



NOVEMBER 7, 1938

The pretext used by the Nazis was the assassination attempt on the German diplomat Ernst vom Rath in Paris on November 7, 1938, by Herschel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old Jewish youth whose parents were among thousands of Jews of Polish origin who had been deported from Germany at the end of October 1938 because they had originally immigrated to Germany from Poland but had not yet “regularized” their German citizenship.



NOVEMBER 9, 1938

Vom Rath died of his wounds on November 9. That evening, at a gathering of the Nazi Party leadership in Munich, Joseph Goebbels (Minister of Propaganda in Nazi Germany) delivered a speech that made clear to party leaders that anti-Jewish actions would not be stopped. Instructions were passed to members of the Nazi Party units, the SA and SS, and to party mechanisms, while the police and firefighters were instructed not to stop the destruction; firefighters intervened mainly when the fire threatened “Aryan” property.



91 MURDERED

Many hundreds of synagogues were set on fire and desecrated, thousands of Jewish businesses were looted and their windows smashed, private homes were destroyed, and sacred objects and Torah scrolls were damaged and burned. At least 91 Jews were murdered during the pogroms themselves, and the actual number of victims was higher when deaths connected to the violence and the persecutions that followed are included.



ABOUT 30,000 ARRESTED

About 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to concentration camps, mainly Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen. If they proved that they were able to obtain a visa to another country and leave Germany, they could be released from the camp. Their family members tried to secure their release at any cost.



THE VIOLENCE WAS NOT A SPONTANEOUS POPULAR OUTBREAK

It was organized and encouraged by the Nazi German regime, while parts of the population participated, others stood by and watched, and a few tried to help. In photographs from the events, bystanders appear again and again—neighbors and passersby looking at the burning synagogues, the destroyed shops, and the humiliated Jews. People who stood and watched what was happening from the sidelines.



THE VICTIMS WERE MADE TO PAY

After the pogrom, the Nazi German regime turned the victims into the guilty party: a collective fine of one billion Reichsmarks was imposed on the Jews of Germany, and they were required to bear the cost of the property damage themselves. In contrast, the perpetrators who smashed windows, set fire to and burned synagogues, shops, and Jewish homes, as well as those who murdered Jews, were not prosecuted for their actions. On the contrary, they received full amnesty without any prosecution because they had no “base motives for their excessive actions.” Responsibility for the destruction in the streets was placed on the Jews, and they were the ones forced to clear the rubble and were unable to claim compensation from the insurance companies that insured the buildings and equipment.



A NARROWING FUTURE

Additional exclusionary measures pushed Jews almost entirely out of economic and public life. For many Jews, November 1938 was the moment when they understood that there was no longer a future for them in Germany—but the possibilities for emigration were already narrowing.