

Kristallnacht

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Synopsis

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"It did not take long before the first heavy gray stones came tumbling down, and the children of the village amused themselves as they flung stones into the many-colored windows. When the first rays of a cold and pale November sun penetrated the heavy, dark clouds, the little synagogue was but a heap of stone, broken glass, and smashed-up woodwork." (Eric Lucas' description of the destruction of a synagogue during Kristallnacht) </p> <p>On the 40th anniversary of Kristallnacht, Germany's night of broken glass, then-chancellor of Germany, Helmut Schmidt, spoke of its legacy: "The German night, whose observance after the passage of 40 years has brought us together today, remains a cause of bitterness and shame. In those places where the houses of God stood in flames, where a signal from those in power set off a train of destruction and robbery - of humiliation, abduction, and incarceration - there was an end to peace, to justice, to humanity. The night of 9 November, 1938, marked one of the stages along the path leading down to hell." </p> <p>The hell that Schmidt spoke of was the persecution and attempted elimination of the Jewish people from Europe itself, as envisioned by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi leadership, whom he brought to power in Germany during the 1930s. On the night of November 9, 1938, an organized show of force against Jewish businesses and private homes occurred throughout German cities and recently annexed territories in Austria and the Sudetenland. This night would mark a turning point in the lives of not only Jews but all people of the time, marking a clear new path of violence, destruction, and persecution for Jews throughout Europe in the years to follow. </p>

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