# Athens

Capital of Greece. Italian troops occupied Athens in April 1941; at that time, 3,500 Jews lived in the city. The Italian occupying authorities did not enact any anti-Jewish measures. They were generally friendly to the Jews, and spurned attempts made by the *Gestapo* to put anti-Jewish laws into effect. However, the Italians could not stop the *Gestapo* from arresting Jewish leaders and plundering libraries and archives. During the rule of the Italians, many Jews from the German- and Bulgarian-occupied regions of Greece fled to Athens; the city's Jewish population grew to 8,000–10,000.

The Allies invaded Italy in September 1943; five days later the German army occupied Athens. SS officer Dieter Wisliceny soon arrived and set up a *Judenrat*. The Jews were made to register and much Jewish property was confiscated. The first transport of Greek Jews to Auschwitz left Athens on April 2, 1944. Another transport arrived at the camp on June 6.

Many well-known Greeks objected to the Germans' treatment of the Jews, including Archbishop Damaskinos. As a result, the church protected hundreds of children, the police gave out false identity papers, and citizens hid Jews and helped them escape. In general, the Greek tendency was to aid its Jewish population.