



Greece

Country in southeast Europe. The Italians attacked Greece in 1940--1941. The Greeks were able to hold off the Italians, but when the Germans joined the struggle in April 1941, all of Greece soon came under Axis control. Greece was divided between the Axis countries Germany, Italy and Bulgaria. At first, the Germans delayed their attack on the Jews of Greece. One reason was that the Italians did not want to discriminate against the Jews.

This prevented the Nazis from separating the Jews from the rest of the population. Jews in the German section recognized this difference, and many escaped into Italian-occupied Greece. The Germans tried to halt this outflow by demanding that Jews wear the yellow badge. The Italians refused to require the Badge.

The systematic destruction of Greek Jewry, which began in early 1943, had three separate phases. The Jews of Salonika in German-occupied Greece were the first to be forced into ghettos for deportation. They were soon followed by the Jews in Bulgarian areas. The Italians repeatedly refused to deport the Jews living in their Greek territories, even though the Germans pressured them. The Italians knew what the Germans planned for the Jews.

On a number of occasions, the Italians announced that Jews in their territories would be brought into Italy proper, or could be concentrated together on the Greek islands. However, after Italy broke away from the Axis in September 1943, Germany seized all of Italian Greece.

Dieter Wisliceny and Alois Brunner directed the anti-Jewish actions in Greece on behalf of Adolf Eichmann. In October 1943, the full range of Nazi anti-Jewish laws was extended across the newly occupied territories. Jews were ordered to register themselves and their property — or be shot.

In March 1944, Jews living in Athens were rounded up and deported by the Wehrmacht and Greek police. They were sent to the extermination camps in Poland. The property of these Jews was distributed to the general population in order to improve relations between the occupiers and the occupied. Many other Jews—perhaps 2,000—had been hidden due to the activism of Rabbi



Barzilai and Christian Greeks. Many Jews in smaller towns and on the islands also avoided deportation as the warnings of Rabbi Barzilai and Archbishop Damaskinos echoed across the country. On the coastal city of Volos, for example, 752 Jews were hidden and 130 deported. However, 1,800 to 2,000 Jews from Corfu were deported to their deaths in June 1944, as were 1,700 to 2,200 Jews from Rhodes one month later.

A number of Greek Jews participated in the uprising in Auschwitz-Birkenau in October 1944. Others were among the inmates who blew up a crematorium at the death camp.

Of Greece's prewar Jewish population of some 77,000, at least 60,000 died in the Holocaust.