

Vassilis Lentzos

Vassilis Lentzos, born Jan. 4, 1930 in Ioannina, (Central Western) Greece, describes his experience as a Greek Christian during the Italian/German occupation, 1941-44. His family comprised of his parents and 4 siblings (2 daughters and 2 sons), him being the youngest. They lived on 27 Eakidon Street. His father was a mason. Vassilis was a taxi driver for 40 years.

The family had no Jewish friends, because their house was a couple of kilometers (far for these days), from the Castro (Castle)/Old Town, where the majority of the Jews lived. There were no distinctions between Jews and Christians. The Jews were merchants and had their stores, selling cloths, fabrics, china, etc, primarily on Anexarticia Street.

The Italians were relatively friendly and interacting with the locals. The Germans were not friendly at all. They were tough, and everybody was afraid of them. After a while (Vassilis does not remember dates), the Germans marked the Jewish homes and stores with the Star of David. Sometime later, one cold morning, the Germans gathered all Jews in the area of Kyra Frosini. From there, guarded by German soldiers and Greek policemen, they paraded them to the Church of Agios Nicolaos, where they put them on 50 – 100 army trucks and shipped them out. Vassilis observed this from some distance, because the roads were closed by the Greek Police. He did not recognize anybody. There were few Jews who escaped by hiding in friends' houses and/or joining the partisans in the surrounding mountains

When the Jews left, local people looted and eventually occupied their homes and stores. The very few Jews who came back claimed their property, sometimes escorted by Police. The only person he knew before the occupation and saw after it was Salvador, who had joined the partisans.