

Central Consistory of The Jews of France

(*Consistoire Central des Israelites de France*), representative body of French Jewry, established in 1808, which was historically responsible for Jewish religious life in France.

When Germany occupied France in mid-1940, the *Consistoire* moved its headquarters from Paris to Lyons, in the unoccupied zone. At first, the *Consistoire* leadership counseled French Jewry to cooperate with the anti-Jewish restrictions set in place by the Vichy government, in order to preserve their dignity. At the same time, the *Consistoire* protested the racial laws, and opposed the establishment of the Union of French Jews, an organization set up by the Vichy government to represent French Jewry.

The *Consistoire* was not dissolved by the Vichy authorities; throughout the war it kept its synagogues open and promoted welfare activities. In October 1943, when the SS intensified its campaign to deport Jews from France, the *Consistoire* agreed to join forces with immigrant and Communist Jewish organizations in order to present a united front against the Nazis. In 1944 the Representative Council of French Jews was established, headed by *Consistoire* president, Leon Meiss. This new umbrella organization represented all of French Jewry until the liberation of France. (For more on Vichy, see also France.)