

Union of French Jews

(*Union Generale des Israelites de France*, UGIF), organization established by the Vichy government's Office of Jewish Affairs to consolidate all the Jewish organizations of France into one single unit.

The UGIF was set up on November 29, 1941 in response to German demands. The organization actually consisted of two autonomous councils, one in the occupied zone under Andre Baur and one in the unoccupied Vichy zone under Raymond-Raoul Lambert.

The Jews of France were assured that the purpose of the UGIF was to furnish social aid for the Jews---and indeed the union set up orphanages and other social services. However, it was frequently forced to yield to German and French demands for money, cooperation with mass arrests, and names of Jewish resistance activists. Those leaders who refused to cooperate were arrested themselves and sent to concentration camps. Despite this, some members of the UGIF, especially in the unoccupied zone, took upon themselves to proactively resist German policy. For example, the southern UGIF intervened to halt the deportation of foreign Jews seeking refuge in their zone. It succeeded in illegally evacuating many children and adults from French internment camps. Welfare and other forms of assistance were provided by the UGIF until it was dissolved in 1944. (For more on Vichy, see also France.)