

Hirschler, Rene

(1905--1944), Chief Rabbi of Strasbourg who engaged in welfare activities in southern France during World War II.

France fell to the German army in mid-1940, and was subsequently divided in two: northern France was occupied by Germany, while southern France remained unoccupied, but was taken over by the Vichy government, which collaborated with the Germans. Both when the war first broke out in September 1939 and after the division of France, many Jews from the north fled south, trying to escape the Germans. Hirschler set up a sorely needed welfare system for those Jews. Furthermore, he tried to unite the various Jewish welfare organizations under one umbrella organization, in order to better serve the refugees' needs.