

## Beriha

The postwar movement of 250,000 survivors of the Holocaust to Displaced Persons' camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy. Their aim was to reach the Mediterranean and Black Sea coasts, so that they could set off for Palestine. The Hebrew word *Beriha* means "flight" or "escape."

The first stage of the organized *Beriha* began in 1944 when groups of Jewish partisan survivors decided that they wanted to go to Palestine. They had heard that they could reach Palestine by way of Romania, but when that avenue failed, these groups gathered in Lublin. They were joined there by Jews who had found refuge in the Soviet Union during the war. In January 1945 survivors from the Warsaw Ghetto also joined them.

Soon, the *Beriha* gained a budding formal structure under the leadership of Abba Kovner. The group traveled west to Italy, where the Jewish Brigade had set up a central aid agency for survivors. The two groups got together in July 1945, at the same time that the *Beriha* leadership in Poland began sending survivors to Italy. By August, about 15,000 survivors had arrived in Italy. However, only a restricted number of people could leave for Palestine from Italy, so the stream of survivors from the Soviet Union was directed towards Displaced Persons' camps in Germany. Survivors from other countries were sent either to Italy or Germany. The flight from Poland was motivated mainly by antisemitism, peaking with the Kielce pogrom of July 1946.

The first Jews from Palestine arrived to help organize the *Beriha* in September 1945 and tie it to the Aliya Bet organization. The *Beriha* movement was funded by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Once in Italy, the survivors were taken to the south of the country to wait for boats to Palestine. Those ships that evaded the British blockade of Palestine landed secretly and successfully. However, those ships that were detected by the British were sent to Cyprus, and their passengers put into detention camps until the State of Israel was established in 1948. At that point, the *Beriha* was also dismantled. (see also displaced persons, Jewish.)

