



Farewell to Palestine

Last week, from gently-heaving transports in Haifa harbor, men of Britain's 40th Royal Marines in khaki shorts and green berets, took a last look shoreward. Alongside the transports, guns trained ashore, were the aircraft carrier H.M.S. Triumph, a cruiser and five destroyers.

From the shore came note by note the sound of a bugler blowing "last post." Over the port's headquarters building, the British flag on which the sun never sets slowly fluttered down. A lone figure standing on the docks saluted.

When sure that the last of his command had embarked, the lone figure, Lt. Gen. Gordon H. A. MacMillan, chief of British forces in Palestine, climbed aboard his launch and headed for the cruiser Phoebe. He was the last British soldier to leave the Holy Land.

"This," said a tank commander, "is what we've been waiting for." And so after 31 years of rule, the British left Palestine, weeks ahead of their Aug. 15 deadline.

Also hove-to in the harbor was the Israeli tugboat Reddy. As MacMillan's launch sped toward the Phoebe, the Reddy tooted an official send-off, chugged in to dock. Haifa, Palestine's largest port, capable of handling 6,000 tons of cargo a day, now was formally Israel's. With the port, the Israeli government laid claim to 46 impounded vessels and 18,000 tons of vital supplies left behind by the British.

Haunted. Left behind too was the touchy problem of peace between Arab and Jew. That was in the hands of U.N. mediator Count Folke Bernadotte.

On Monday, five days before his four-week Arab League-Israel truce expired, Count Bernadotte presented his plan for peace. It called for two states, Jewish and Arab, to be carved from the original 1922 Palestine mandate, which included now-independent Transjordan.

Three states would combine in a political-economic union to be administered by a central governing committee. Bernadotte, also took Liberties with the original U.N. partition scheme.

He suggested that Negeb in southern Palestine, be given back to the Arabs, in return offered western Galilee to the Jews. But it was his proposal for Jerusalem, the thorniest problem of all, that drew the greatest fire from Tel Aviv, Israeli capital.

Bernadotte suggested that the Holy City be incorporated within Arab territory, with Jewish residents to enjoy autonomy. To Israelis, the idea was "astounding."

Reaction in both Jewish and Arab quarters to the "peace" plan was immediate and unanimously unfavorable. The military committee of the Arab League voted in Cairo to reject the plan. In Tel Aviv, the Israeli government did likewise.

At week's end, Bernadotte left the peaceful Aegean island of Rhodes and headed for Tel Aviv, seeking an extension of his truce. Without it, the Holy Land soon again would be ablaze with bombings and gunfire.