

Jaffa---'Ghost City'

Important Arab Center Is Deserted, Sealed Off by Strong Jewish Forces

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JAFFA, May 8—Jaffa, largest Arab city in Palestine a few days ago, now is a forsaken hostage of the Jewish state.

If it were not for British tanks and artillery—all due to leave next Saturday—a corporal's guard of Jews could march through Jaffa today without firing a shot.

Sandbagged Arab gunposts are deserted. Less than 100 Arab civilians can be counted in the streets. They are the hungry, impoverished remnants of a population which numbered 90,000 until two weeks ago.

The Jews control the territory around Jaffa to a depth of 10 miles. No Arab vehicles can enter or leave the city without passing within close range of Jewish machine guns and mortars.

A few score Arab refugees are boarding two small coastal sailing vessels in the ancient harbor, the last of an Arab exodus unequaled in the modern history of the Holy Land.

Along docks, where once Lebanese cedar was brought to build Solomon's Temple, \$10,000,000 worth of foreign imports are under guard of Royal Irish Fusiliers. They have shot 22 Arab looters in the past two nights.

FULL WAREHOUSES

"The Jews will take over here in five minutes when we pull out," said a junior officer of the Fusiliers. "They will find goods worth a King's ransom. Most of it was consigned to Jewish merchants in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, but never got delivered because of the Arab boycott."

Six warehouses protected by the Fusiliers are jammed with everything from Australian butter and English chocolate to American electric refrigerators and German symphonic records.

Jaffa's remaining inhabitants, who now scarcely exceed 2000, are near starvation. At the French Hospital on Jaffa Hill, Catholic sisters are caring for the sick, wounded and orphans. Nowhere else in the city is there any public relief for victims of the undeclared war.

Under the United Nations partition plan of last November, Jaffa

was to be an Arab enclave in the Jewish state. Virtually deserted at present, it is likely to become a talking point for Jewish diplomats in future peace negotiations with the Arab powers.

Jaffa, even more than Haifa, typifies Arab military weakness, unpreparedness and disunity.

British military observers say the battle of Jaffa pitted 2000 commando-trained Jews of Irgun Zvai Leumi against 250 Iraqi volunteers. The Irgun offensive smashed ahead for five days through Jaffa's Manshieh quarter, a narrow Arab strip flanked on one side by the sea and on the other by tall Jewish apartments in Tel Aviv.

BRITISH MOVED IN

Then an internal Arab quarrel developed, and Jaffa's Mayor demanded the removal of the Iraqi commander. Fawzi Bey al Kaukji, Syrian chieftain of Arab volunteer forces outside Jaffa, ordered the commander to leave. He did, but his men went with him.

To save the territorial status quo until the end of the mandate next Saturday, the British intervened with Comet tanks and batteries of 25-pounder guns. The Irgun spearhead was smashed.

So in the end it was the British, not the Arabs who kept the Jews out of Jaffa temporarily.

But the Jews have mopped up Arab resistance along the Jaffa-Jerusalem highway virtually to the Lydda airfield, the most important in Palestine.

The airport, 11 miles southeast of Jaffa, is deserted. Arab shepherds graze their flocks along the runways.

Except for Gaza in the south, the Arabs have no adequate Palestine port left. Off Tel Aviv 16 big ocean-going freighters are discharging thousands of tons of supplies for the Jewish state.

Motoring across Arab populated Palestine from the Jordan river to Jaffa, I have seen no signs that the Arabs retain any military punch. Perhaps 150,000 Arab townsmen now are refugees, but the peasants cling to their land, regardless of their fear of Jewish arms.