

"ROYAL SOVEREIGN" IS H.M.S. AGAIN

In the Firth of Perth, the battleship "Royal Sovereign" under Russian command for the past five years - spends her last day under the Soviet flag. Manned by a smart Red Navy crew, the ship's return to her old Scottish base gives Britons an all too rare opportunity of meeting some Russians at first hand. In Edinburgh's City Chambers, officers from the Archangelsk are given a civic reception. With a chink of the Iron Curtain temporarily lifted, the Russians are quite embarrassed by the warmth of their welcome. They had been led to expect something quite different. As Commodore Petrashev signs the visitor's book, there are smiles and handshakes all round. In the words of Lord Provost Murray, visits like these will bring Britain and Russia closer in friendship and understanding.

For the handing-over ceremony, the Iron Curtain is clamped down again firmly. As Vice-Admiral Sir Ernest Archer goes aboard the "Royal Sovereign" to take over the vessel for the Royal Navy, reporters, photographers and newsreel cameramen watch the ceremony from a nearby tug, as their presence aboard had been banned by the Russians.

In the fading light, the Soviet ensign is lowered. Transferred to the Red Navy at the height of war as a gesture of Britain's friendship, the "Archangelsk" added fresh honours to her long tradition of service. Now, under the White Ensign, she is again H.M.S. Royal Sovereign. But not for long - for her trip to the breakers yard is near.

There are final honours to be paid aboard the ship. An inspection of the Guard of Honour, and a page of naval history nears its end.

With the majority of the Russian crew already transferred to their transport ship, there are no deck meetings between the two Navies. A destroyer's signal "Happy Return" is Britain's good-bye to the men of the Red Fleet.