

### III THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

In the Arab-Israeli dispute, Canadians like others face the difficult task of assessing an issue based on two interpretations of deeply-rooted historical experiences. The problem is exacerbated because both sides appear to have right, or an element of right, on their side. **This report frequently records opposing perceptions held by the parties involved in the Arab-Israeli dispute as these are important if one is to understand the positions which each has adopted.**

For most Jews, the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 represented the fulfillment of a Biblical prophecy. The Zionist movement, a dynamic expression of Jewish nationalism propelled particularly by vicious persecution in Eastern Europe, sought a national home in Palestine for the Jews. In 1922 the British, who were formally granted a Mandate for Palestine by the League of Nations, restated the Balfour Declaration\* which declared that the British government "view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people".

But there were major obstacles to this objective, not the least being that in Palestine at the time the Arabs, both Moslem and Christian, constituted 92 percent of the population and owned 98 percent of the land. They bitterly opposed the Balfour Declaration and Jewish immigration. Meanwhile, Jews especially from Europe were making their way to Palestine in increasing numbers. Both Jews and Arabs, each for different reasons, became concerned to see an end to British mandatory control. Violence and guerrilla activity became increasingly commonplace.

In Palestine, by 1947, Britain, faced with an increasing Jewish population, growing civil strife and international pressure to end its Mandate, referred the question of Palestine to the United Nations. A United Nations Special Committee, UNSCOP, was established to report on the situation. Its majority report led to the UN partition plan of 1947, endorsed by UN Resolution 181, which proposed that Palestine be divided into two states, one Jewish and one Arab, with Jerusalem as an international zone, administered by the United Nations. The Jews accepted the plan, but the Arabs did not. In April 1948, when the British relinquished their Mandate, the Jews proclaimed the existence of the state of Israel within the UN partition plan borders. Palestinian Arabs, supported by the forces of neighbouring Arab states, attacked the new state. By the time the hostilities ended with an armistice in 1949, both Israel and Jordan had extended their borders. Israel had occupied additional territory, including West Jerusalem, not in the original UN plan, and Jordanian forces had occupied a large portion of Palestine west of the Jordan River including East Jerusalem, an area which Jordan proceeded to annex in 1950. This step was recognized immediately by Britain and later by Pakistan but it did not secure further

\* A letter written in 1917 by the British Foreign Secretary to Lord Rothschild acting for the Zionist Federation.