

of Israel cannot but strike a sympathetic chord in this country, even though our last frontiers are delimited by snow and not sand. We have also been impressed by the way in which Israel -- itself a nation that has only recently emerged into the constellation of nations -- has proceeded to share its experiences and the fruits of its research and development with some of the other new nations that stand in such great need of the resources and techniques that will enable them to strengthen their economic and political independence.

The role which Canada played at the United Nations, in assisting the emergence of the new state of Israel and the restoration of peace to the Middle East is one that needs no rehearsing to an audience such as this. It is a role we are proud to have played and one which, I am sure, subsequent developments have justified. Since those early days, Canadian links with Israel have broadened and multiplied. It is just a decade since a Canadian Embassy was opened in Tel Aviv and a little more than that since an Israeli Embassy was opened in Ottawa. Over that decade or so, many distinguished Israelis have represented their country in Canada. And many Canadians have had an opportunity of witnessing at first hand the great Israeli experiment which has consisted in welding the remnants of the Diaspora into a proud and self-conscious national community. All this has played a part in deepening the bonds of understanding between our two countries. The impressive pace of Israeli economic development has also resulted in a situation where Israel is now our largest export market in the Middle East. This is quite remarkable for a country with a population of only two and a half million and an area that would allow it to fit comfortably into the confines of Lake Erie.

Canada has, of course, a keen interest in the whole of the Middle East. This is not surprising, considering that we have, from the beginning, played a major peace-keeping role in the area. This role has not always been easy, and it has involved a considerable commitment of Canadian manpower and funds over and above our assessed share of the costs incurred by the United Nations. One thousand of about 4,600 men serving with the United Nations Emergency Force in the Middle East are Canadians and 17 of about 100 officers serving with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Israel and its neighbours are likewise Canadians. We are happy, however, to continue our participation in these peace-keeping assignments in the knowledge that the Emergency Force and the Truce Supervision Organization play an essential part in maintaining stability and deterring conflict in the Middle East, a part which, I know, is fully recognized and appreciated by both Israel and by the Arab states in the area.

We very much hope that the time will come when these peace-keeping duties will no longer be necessary. We have, from the beginning, sought to support and encourage realistic and constructive initiatives looking towards a just and abiding settlement of the Palestine dispute. Pending such a settlement, we are concerned that nothing should be done which would not be compatible with the maintenance of peace and stability in the Middle East. It is part of that concern that there should be no recourse to threats aimed at the existence of Israel or any other state in that area. Canada's ability to play a useful role in the Middle East, whether as peace-keeper or as peace-maker, hinges,