

Mr. Pearson:

I think it might have been difficult because it was only in the last two or three weeks that the French Government has stated very frankly and fully its policy in Algeria and it was to that statement of policy not very long ago, a few days ago, that the American Ambassador pledged his support and sympathy.

The Middle East

Press:

I would like, Mr. Pearson, to ask you a question on the Middle East. Some time ago, you told the House of Commons that the situation in the Middle East wasn't quite as serious or as explosive as it would appear. I was wondering how you could reconcile that position with the American initiative to reconvene the Security Council or do you feel that the Arabs or the Israelis are deliberately depicting the situation as bad as possible just for the sake of obtaining arms?

Mr. Pearson:

I do not think I said that the situation wasn't serious. I did say, the other day, that I do not think, to use your expression, that it was quite as explosive as it was a week or ten days before. Fundamentally, it is serious. When I said it wasn't quite as explosive, I meant that, about ten days or so ago, things looked very black indeed out there with the dismissal of Sir John Glubb, with the massing of troops on the border and with incidents. It was felt at that time that we were right on, if I may put it that way, the margin of disaster. I think there has been an improvement since, and the worse forebodings of that time, ten days or so ago, have not been, thank God, fulfilled. There has been an easing of tension in the last few days but the situation is very, very serious. There is no doubt about that. The reference of the matter to the United Nations Security Council is not, as I see it, an indication of a deterioration of the situation but an indication of the realization of members of the United Nations that the Organization should now do something about it.

Press:

Well, if the situation has not deteriorated, Mr. Pearson, I think it seemed to some of us at least that it was almost uniquely coincidental that Canada, the