

7/18/72 Comment on tonight's TV news

If CBA and NBC didn't have exactly the same items, it was so close to identical there is no distinction. This was remarkably true of even the editing, where both had exactly the same clips of the McGovern appearance at Mt. Rushmore, the difference being in camera angle only.

Both opened with exactly the same dubious interpretation of what each called the day's major news, angled as a major Russian diplomatic defeat in Egypt. Sadat asked them to get out, lock stock and troops.

Were I Comrade Spirodovich (Hoppe influence: Spiro da witch) I'd say not so in my instant analysis. Russian getting out of Egypt would be equivalent in its disastrous effects to a US pullout from Vietnam say in 1969. It would be a major benefit, aside from the saving in enormous cash costs.

Besides that, it can't happen. Sadat needs the technicians, at least some, too much. I just don't believe the announcement as aired.

Maybe troops and most advisers, but I think some remain indispensable.

What may be a clue is how much of a hassle there is on the more advanced planes said to still be piloted by Russians, things like that. I find myself wondering of the Russians have trained enough Egyptians to man the missile sites.

Many things could underlie this. My hunch is that there is a breach because the Russians are insisting on restraint while internal forces are driving Sadat to war. I don't think the Russians want this and I don't think they want to be caught in it. There are no longer the advantages for them in Egypt there were when Dulles rejected the Assam Dam and the US had forced Israel to become a satellite in the border of the Soviet heartland. There is now a US liability there and no Soviet gain to be made.

This may, in fact, be a clue to Egyptian war plans. From my limited experience in that part of the world, I'd not want to start a war in July or August, no matter how adjusted to the close to intolerable days there might be. They are hard, harder for fighting. When the weather moderates war will be easier for both sides.

If the Russians feel war is inevitable and if they want to get out, they can easily take steps that impel Egypt to ask it.

I think it premature to think this means the end of Russian aid, or that it means Egypt can now turn to the US for military aid. The Russians, short of a total break, have an interest in maintaining a balance. There is now no reason for the US to spend money it needs too urgently for other things on helping the Arabs. Even a new Nixon administration will want other things too much to spend any significant sums that way.

But it is interesting to me that the spot analysis of the media is so spontaneously the same wrong way. Of course, the seed could have been planted officially, but that doesn't mean they'd both go for it the same way.

If we really don't know the story, not that the listener would learn this from the TV handling, one of the possibilities, whether or not probable, from their angling and selection of what was aired, is that with reduced supplies Egypt might be impelled to cool it a bit. That wasn't suggested. Only a major diplomatic defeat for the Russians was "news". If everyone has a new headache, only a Russian headache was even suggested.