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August 1, 1991

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Interview with Anthony Lake, October 28, 1977.

(He had)

Lake worked with the National Security Council under Henry Kissinger, ~~with~~ ^(He had) ~~specific~~ responsibility for Vietnam. He feels that Kissinger and Nixon when they came into office had a common view of the world, ~~the~~ though not a precise strategy. Lake feels that this is natural and desirable. ~~just~~ ^{He} thinks it takes about a year of an administration being in office really to work out a strategy, ~~and~~ ^{He} thinks that this was the case with the Nixon administration. He says that he thinks that Nixon and Kissinger came in with a lot of thoughts, a lot of views of ^a ~~the~~/general kind on issues, but they then had to think through a strategy which they in large part did. After all, Lake says, circumstances change rapidly in foreign affairs and to go in with a prethoughtout strategy would not be a very effective way of dealing with the problems that arise. Lake points out that the Nixon doctrine, the structure of peace, the pentagonal balance ^(were) where all strategies ^(that) had emerged after Nixon had been in office for some time, ^(u) although these reflected the view of the world that Nixon and Kissinger had brought with them into the administration.

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As far as Vietnam goes, Lake feels that Nixon hoped to accomplish a lot through the Moscow connection, and later through Peking as well. Lake thinks that the agreement that was finally worked out in 1973 for withdrawal from Vietnam could have been achieved much earlier, but he acknowledges that Kissinger differs with him on this. Lake says that the Nixon and Kissinger strategy, such as it was, ^{was} set forth in the various state of the world messages. He thinks that it was not a necessarily a coherent, unified strategy, but he is not critical of them for this. ^{He} says that any single strategy for ~~a~~ dealing with foreign affairs would be doomed from the start. Lake does not feel that Nixon and Kissinger had a particular consciousness of managing the withdrawal of the United States power from the world. ^{He} thinks that ~~this is~~ ^(this/what) the crucial question about the Nixon-Kissinger approach was whether/they had in mind. ^{He}'s not fully certain on it himself. He thinks that they did recognize that the United States was living in a different kind of world that

withdrawing

they would have to make adjustments to deal with this changed situation. They felt that American power had been reduced from what it had been in the earlier period following the war. Lake thinks that Nixon felt ~~that~~ this was due more to internal ~~than external~~ than to external causes. ~~He~~ thinks that Nixon and Kissinger recognized the reduction in American willingness to support a large world role, but he thinks that they were more limited in their recognition of the ~~changes~~ changes in the outside world itself. Vietnamization, Lake says, was designed to deal with this change, more to satisfy the fall of domestic support for a ~~prolonged~~ ^(an aggressive) policy than because of the situation in Vietnam. Lake feels that the invasion of Cambodia in 1970, and the Christmas bombings in 72 show that Nixon really wanted to carry out a much more aggressive policy in Vietnam than he felt that he had the country's support for, ~~it~~ and that he would have carried this out if he ^(had) thought ~~that~~ ^(would be) he had been able to gather enough political support to do it. Lake says that Daniel Ellsberg argues "that it was always the plan of the administration to ~~a~~ take the action that it ultimately took in 1972." ~~But~~ Lake himself does not believe that this is true.



VRAM

Plans for escalating the war were always ~~lying~~ ^(the) on ~~the~~ shelf, Lake says, but they ~~were~~ taken off the shelf only when Nixon ~~w~~ felt that the situation had become such that there was no ~~other~~ other way for him to deal with it. Lake said that in the time ~~that~~ he was in the National Security Council he was opposed to the approach that became known as "Vietnamization," ~~that~~ ^(unilaterally) he was in favor of making more concessions, not for simply withdrawing ~~in~~ ^(could) unilaterally but for making concessions when the strength of the United States was at its peak in Vietnam, ~~and that~~ ^(be) he thought that a mutual withdrawal ~~can~~ be arranged that would ~~have been~~ acceptable to both sides. He was in favor of a negotiated settlement, but one in which the United States got everything that it could. Whether or not the North Vietnamese would have accepted this kind of a bargain at that time, Lake says, no one will ever now know. Lake ~~s~~ says that his approach was in general similar to that that was set forth by Clark Clifford.

VR

He was not simply for getting out, but for using all the chips we had to get out in a ~~an~~ advantageous way. There was great division within the administration, Lake recalls, over the Vietnam ~~policy~~ policy. Laird was in favor of Vietnamization, Rogers, on the other hand, was in favor of making more of an effort to get out and would have been prepared to make more concessions to get out. However, Kissinger quickly established ~~his~~ his dominance over Vietnam ~~policy~~ policy and the entire Vietnam war was soon being run out of Kissinger's shop, although Vietnamization did come from Laird, and that was the policy ~~that~~ that was adopted. Kissinger actually ^(favored) more of a bargaining strategy than the policy that was decided on, so in that sense his dominance was not so complete as all that. Kissinger's general dominance over foreign policy was ⁽²⁷³²⁰⁷¹¹⁸⁾ ~~simply~~ emerging during the time that Lake was there. Lake left the administration at the time of the Cambodian invasion in 1970.

Kissinger and Nixon had broadly similar world views, Lake believes. ~~It~~ It is not entirely true that Nixon was the strategist and Kissinger the tactician, because Nixon got into the planning of ~~the~~ tactics while Kissinger had strategic thoughts. The exact relationship between them is now very difficult to determine, Lake says, because Kissinger was always very careful not to reveal what he and Nixon ~~had~~ had discussed in private. Kissinger's aim, Lake says, was to seek stability in the world, ~~his~~ his approach was not so much ideological as of trying to maintain a stable balance of power. ~~It~~ It is true that the Soviets were looked on as the enemy, but there was little sense ⁽ⁱⁿ⁾ ~~in~~ the Nixon administration of crusading for freedom among peoples under communist domination. Lake feels that as a liberal, ~~if~~ he in a sense feels more concerned over the internal situation in the communist countries than Kissinger does. Lake says that he feels that he has in a way more in common with Goldwater type conservatives than with ~~men~~ men like Kissinger and ~~Nixon~~ Nixon whom he says do not feel "in here about the evils of communism. Lake concedes that ~~Nixon~~ Nixon may have felt something like that though in a different way.



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Nixon

~~Nixon~~ and Kissinger thought of the Soviets as the ~~enemy~~ enemy rather
 than as oppressors of their own people. Kissinger 's approach, Lake says,
 was a classic diplomatic ~~approach~~ approach, one of avoiding extreme change, of maintainig
 the status-quo in so far as was possible. Lake/feels that Kissinger did not fully
 recognize that neither the ~~United States~~ United States ~~or~~ nor the Soviets now have as
 much power in the world as they used to have. Lake says that he ~~had~~ ^{heard} nothing in
 the administration while he was serving in it ~~was~~ about the evolution of power
 or sophisticated theories such as that. He says ~~essentially~~ ~~K~~ Kissinger had a
 strain of pessimism about the fate of the United States. ~~He~~ ^H felt that the
 foreign policy establishment had deserted him and that the ~~country~~ country lacked
 the will to fulfill its responsibilities as a great power. Lake thinks that
~~N~~ Nixon had less of this pessimism. Lake himself feels that such pessimism is
 very danger ^{ous} leading to development of nationalism, ^{and} too much looking inward.

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K
Pessimism

