

Great Britain: Kissinger: war criminal but wise?

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Senior Colonel Wu Qian, top spokesman of China's defence ministry warned the United States to stop interfering in Taiwan and the South China Sea, saying (according to the *Morning Star* of 1 December): "We request that the US side acts in accordance with its words and takes concrete steps to honour its commitment not to support Taiwan independence".

What was remarkable about Col Wu's statement was not what he said but what (if the *Morning Star's* report on 1st December is complete and accurate) he didn't say. As he was speaking on the day after Henry Kissinger's death was announced, Col Wu must have been the only Chinese government spokesman not to heap praise upon the old war criminal and to call him (in the words of President Xi Jinping and other top officials of the Chinese Foreign Ministry) "an old and dear friend of the Chinese people" and a "trailblazer".

"Both China and the US should inherit and carry forward Dr. Kissinger's strategic vision, political courage and diplomatic wisdom," the ministry said.

The apparent failure of Col Wu to mention Kissinger was particularly remiss because the commitment that the Col was invoking was the "one China" policy that Kissinger largely created, following his own clandestine visit to Beijing in 1971 and his boss Richard Nixon's famous meeting with Mao Zedong the next year.

Of course, it is possible that the Col did indeed praise Kissinger, but the *Morning Star* chose not to report it — as the paper also failed to report the warm words of President Xi and the Chinese state media.

Elsewhere in the same edition, the paper carried a lengthy obituary by Andrew Murray entitled "Kissinger: a war criminal who served US imperialism" that detailed the litany of Kissinger's crimes between 1969 and 1975: prolonging the Vietnam war and extending it to Cambodia, supporting Pakistan's genocidal war to prevent Bangladeshi independence, supporting the coup against the Allende government in Chile, backing the Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus and the even more murderous Indonesian invasion of East Timor, leading to the deaths of a quarter of the population.

Having noted (accurately) that "there was no regime so obnoxious, no tyrant too murderous, for Kissinger's blessings to be withheld, provided only it upheld US strategic interests and stood firm against the USSR", Murray notes at the very end of his denunciation that "Kissinger remained a feted figure in China as one of the architects of US-Chinese reconciliation and met President Xi Jinping in Beijing this year, marking his centenary."

In fact, the *Morning Star* has not always been so critical of Kissinger and has even cited his views with approval: on December 28 an article by Marc Vandepitte praised his call "for a quick end to the fighting in Ukraine" and a ceasefire under which Russia "would disgorge its conquests [since

February 2022] but not the territory it occupied nearly a decade ago, including Crimea.”

Vandepitte also quoted, with obvious approval, a *Wall Street Journal* article in which Kissinger wrote: “We are on the edge of war with Russia and China on issues we partly created”.

In another piece for the paper (29 May 2023) Vandepitte recommended Kissinger’s interview with the *Economist* magazine: “His rich experience tells him that determined diplomacy is the only way to avoid ruinous conflict.”

On 22 July 2023, following Kissinger’s meeting with President Xi, a *Morning Star* article that seemed to present Kissinger in a positive light had to be followed by an addendum reminding readers that he was a “war criminal [who] cannot be rehabilitated given his association with some of the worst US crimes of the 29th century.”

But the same addendum then went on to praise his “tacit acknowledgement that we live in a multipolar world and that Washington cannot simply dictate to other countries ... That would be a useful lesson for today’s US — and British — politicians to heed.”

So it seems that even though this war criminal was beyond rehabilitation, he somehow had pearls of wisdom to dispense.

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