

Birthdays: War Criminal Henry Kissinger Turns 100

By [Dr. Binoy Kampmark](#)

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“Once you've been to Cambodia, you'll never stop wanting to beat Henry Kissinger to death with your bare hands.”

Anthony Bourdain, *A Cook's Tour* (2002)

If a heavy resume of crimes is a guarantee of longevity, then surely Henry A. Kissinger (HAK, for short), must count as a good specimen. The list of butcheries attributed to his centurion, direct or otherwise, is extensive, his hand in them, finger fat and busy. There were the murderous meddles in Latin America, the conflicts in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. (The interventions in Laos and Cambodia are said to have left 350,000 Laotians and 600,000 Cambodians dead.) Then came the selective turning of blind eyes in Indonesia and Pakistan, and the ruthless sponsorship of coups in Africa.

Regarding the Vietnam War, this pornographer of power's deviousness, and attempt to inveigle himself into the favours of Richard Nixon, running as presidential candidate in 1968, knew no bounds. With privileged access as an advisor to the US State Department, he became the conduit for information to Nixon's campaign to sabotage the Johnson Administration's efforts to broker an earlier peace with North Vietnam. This involved convincing South Vietnam that the peace terms they could negotiate would be far more favourable under a Nixon administration. Peace prospects were scuppered; the war continued, eventually yielding a wretched Nobel Peace Prize for the Doctor in 1973. The US forces soon withdrew, leaving the impotent South Vietnamese to be overrun by their stronger Northern opponents.

Nixon's electoral victory in 1968 ushered in an era of ruthless subversion of the international order, and one that bears repeating in these testy times of China ascending and US Imperial anxiety. Kissinger, working with Nixon, thought that convincing North Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh to return to talks would be helped by targeting North Vietnamese supply routes in Laos and Cambodia. With stomach-churching cynicism, these bombing operations were given

various gastronomic names: Operation Menu; Breakfast Plan. When the covert bombing program was exposed by the *New York Times* on May 9, 1969, Kissinger [put the wind up](#) FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to not only place a number of journalists under surveillance, but a select number of government officials, including his aides in the National Security Council. One of the latter, Morton Halperin, would subsequently sue his former boss, Nixon and the Department of Justice for illegal wiretapping of his home and office phones.

In Chile, Nixon and Kissinger poisoned the waters of that country's politics, destabilising the democratically elected government of socialist President Salvador Allende and paving the way for a bloody coup that installed General Augusto Pinochet. A mere eight days after Allende's election in September 1970, Kissinger, in conversation with CIA director Richard Helms [emphatically stated](#) that, "We will not let Chile go down the drain." Three days later, Nixon, in a meeting including Kissinger, [infamously told](#) the CIA to "make the [Chilean] economy scream."

In November 1970, Kissinger demonstrated an almost callow level of expertise in [claiming](#) in a memorandum that Allende's election "would have an effect on what happens in the rest of Latin America and the developing world; on what our future position will be in the hemisphere; and on the larger world picture". To permit democratically elected socialist governments in the Americas along the "Titoist" lines of Allende's government "would be far more dangerous to us than in Europe", creating a model whose "effect can be insidious."

Kissinger's venality, and complicity as a deskbound suited thug, supply us a bottomless reservoir. To commemorate the occasion of his hundredth natal day, Nick Turse of *The Intercept* [revealed](#) a number of unreported attacks on Cambodian civilians during the secret war, suggesting that the program has been more expansive, and vicious, than had been previously assumed. "These attacks were far more intimate and perhaps even more horrific than the violence already attributed to Kissinger's policies, because the villages were not just bombed, but also strafed by helicopters gunships and burned and looted by US and allied troops."

The incidents are too numerous to list, leaving us a catalogue of cruelties ghoulish and despairing. Yet his own accounts do little to shed light on such exploits. *The White House Years* are barren on his blood-soaked achievements, the doorstep memoirs being a selective account drawing from memos, memcons and telcons that this faux Metternich had generated while in office. In 1977, in typical fashion, Kissinger [made off with](#) over 30,000 pages of daily transcripts of phone conversations he was involved in, documents he deviously called "personal papers". In self-reflective glory, he could pilfer, cut and adjust.

Efforts to seek his richly deserved arrest have been made, though all have ended in a legal and practical cul-de-sac. In January 2015, CODEPINK protesters [ventured](#) to make a citizen's arrest during a US Senate Armed Services Committee hearing. In the UK, human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell also had a stab in April 2002, seeking a warrant from the Bow Street Magistrates' Court under the Geneva Conventions Act 1957. The [charges asserted](#) that "while he was national security adviser to the US president 1969-1975 and US Secretary of State 1973-1977, [Kissinger] commissioned, aided and abetted and procured war crimes in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia".

The presiding District Judge Nicholas Evans was not willing to play along, hampered by higher powers. To proceed, the Attorney-General's consent was needed. Lacking that,

“there is nothing I can do.” That’s HAK’s way of operation, an oleaginous Brahmin above others. Let the likes of Pinochet be nabbed; the backer always makes his getaway.

Best, then, to conclude this natal day salutation to the man by reflecting on the remarks of that most raw yet delicate of culinary (and social) commentators, Anthony Bourdain. In visiting Cambodia for his *Cook’s Tour* series, he could [only reflect](#) about why such a man was not sharing dock space at The Hague with other war criminals. “You will never be able to open a newspaper and read about that treacherous, prevaricating, murderous scumbag sitting down for a nice chat with Charlie Rose or attending some black-tie affair for a new glossy magazine without choking.” Sadly, for many in the Kissinger cosmos, they continue to do so without so much as flinching.

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Dr. Binoy Kampmark was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He currently lectures at RMIT University.

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