

**JANUARY 16**

# Ted Koppel, longtime booster of Kissinger

**N**o doubt many people are glad that Ted Koppel will become a regular voice on National Public Radio. He recently ended 25 years with ABC's "Nightline" show amid profuse media accolades. But what kind of journalist goes out of his way to voice fervent admiration for Henry Kissinger?

NPR has announced that Koppel will do several commentaries per month on "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered." The Associated Press reported that "he also will serve as an analyst during breaking news and special events."

There's some grim irony in the statement issued by NPR's senior vice president for programming: "Ted and NPR are a natural fit, with curiosity about the world and commitment to getting to the heart of the story. The role of news analyst has been a tradition on NPR newsmagazines and there is no one better qualified to uphold and grow that tradition than Ted."

But "the heart of the story" about U.S. foreign policy has often involved deceptions from Washington. And since Koppel became a prominent journalist, he has been a fervent booster of one of the most prodigious and murderous deceivers in U.S. history.

"Henry Kissinger is, plain and simply, the best secretary of state we have had in 20, maybe 30 years – certainly one of the two or three great secretaries of state of our century," Koppel said in an interview (quoted in *Columbia Journalism Review*, March/April 1989). Koppel added: "I'm proud to be a friend of Henry Kissinger. He is an extraordinary man. This country has lost a lot by not having him in a position of influence and authority."

Koppel was heaping praise on someone who served as a key architect of foreign policy throughout the Nixon presidency. Kissinger – whose record as an inveterate liar was thoroughly documented in Seymour Hersh's 1983 book "The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House" – orchestrated bloody foreign-policy deceptions from Southeast Asia to Chile to East Timor.

Kissinger was the smart guy behind the horrendous bombing strategy that killed hundreds of thousands of civilians in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia as he held the

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diplomatic stage. Kissinger was the smart guy who colluded with Gen. Augusto Pinochet for the September 1973 coup and subsequent years of torture and murder in Chile. And Kissinger was the smart guy who, in his continuing role as secretary of state after Gerald Ford became president, gave Washington's blessing for Indonesian troops to invade and occupy East Timor – with mass-murderous results.

Kissinger was a frequent guest on "Nightline," so reverentially treated by Ted Koppel that in the summer of 1989 the host turned the moderating role over to the extraordinary man so he could direct the panel discussion himself. A few years later, in April 1992, Koppel was telling viewers: "If you want a clear foreign-policy vision, someone who will take you beyond the conventional wisdom of the moment, it's hard to do any better than Henry Kissinger."

Koppel's fervent promotion of Kissinger was no anomaly. The longtime ABC newsman amassed a notable record of banging the drum for U.S. foreign policy when it counted the most – in real time, when a crisis was underway.

Asked by Life magazine in 1988 if he'd like to be secretary of state, Koppel responded affirmatively and touted his qualifications: "Part of the job is to sell American foreign policy, not only to Congress but to the American public. I know I could do that."

Koppel made the comment while U.S. foreign policy in Central America included direct Reagan administration support for a Contra terrorist army in Nicaragua along with backing for death-squad aligned governments in El Salvador and Guatemala. Meanwhile, his "Nightline" program regularly gave aid and comfort to policymakers in Washington.

During the late 1980s, researchers at the media watch group FAIR (where I'm an associate) conducted a 40-month study of "Nightline," 865 programs in all. The two most frequent guests were Kissinger and another former secretary of state, Alexander Haig. On shows about international affairs, U.S. government policymakers and ex-officials dominated the "Nightline" guest list. American critics of foreign policy were almost invisible.

But Koppel, the program's anchor and managing editor, didn't see a problem. "We are governed by the president and his cabinet and their people," he fired back. "And they are the ones who are responsible for our foreign policy, and they are the ones I want to talk to." Instead of wide-ranging public discourse, Koppel's show was primarily a conveyor belt for elite opinion at crucial junctures. Later, if he got around to exposing official deception, he was apt to debunk propaganda that he helped to spread in the first place.

Back in 1987, Newsweek noted a basic disparity between the image and function of

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Ted Koppel: "The anchor who makes viewers feel that he is challenging the powers that be on their behalf is in fact the quintessential establishment journalist."

In that light – considering the overall coverage of Washington's foreign-policy establishment by NPR News – Ted Koppel does seem like a natural fit.

*Norman Solomon's latest book is "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death." For information, go to: [www.WarMadeEasy.com](http://www.WarMadeEasy.com)*