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Sean M. Kennedy, *France in the World: The Career of André Siegfried*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2023. ix + 339 pp. \$95.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9780228014317; \$95.00 U.S. (epub). ISBN 9780228015345; \$95.00 U.S. (epdf). ISBN 9780228015338.

Review by Philip Nord, Princeton University.

André Siegfried (1875–1959) was that political oxymoron, a liberal-conservative. The label might appear to defy definition, but Sean Kennedy's well-researched and judicious intellectual biography of the man gives flesh and meaning to the term.

Flesh first of all, because Siegfried looked and acted a certain way. He dressed in three-piece suits and sported a well-tended mustache. From 1910 on, with one extended interruption during the Great War, he taught at Sciences Po or the École libre des sciences politiques by what was then its full name. Students appreciated Siegfried's style. He lectured from notes, formulating his ideas in a precise and elegant French. Listeners were never left in doubt as to what he meant to say. Lucidity, reasonableness, urbanity: such were the defining characteristics of Siegfried's persona.

As to substance, Siegfried is best remembered for the *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest*. It is a massive volume, which was first published in 1913 and has remained on and off in print since then. It has a fair claim to be a founding text of political science in France. For sure, this was the august status claimed for it by Jacques Chapsal, a colleague of Siegfried's at Sciences Po and the school's long serving director in the post-Second World War era. There is some justification for Chapsal's opinion. Siegfried studied the voting behavior of France's western departments in the first decades of the Third Republic. He discovered remarkable continuities in political orientation, making generous use of charts and graphs to give vivid representation to his arguments. When it came to explaining such enduring temperaments—and temperament was Siegfried's chosen word—he adopted a multi-vector approach. In some corners of the region, religion, the Catholic religion to be precise, weighed heavily in shaping electoral choices. The prevailing agricultural regime mattered too. Did small farms predominate or larger concentrations of property? Did peasants work the land or engage in animal husbandry? Kennedy makes clear that a third variable was also operative, ethnicity. The Bretons were Celts who bridled at impositions of authority (shades of Astérix). Vendéens were given to a deep religious piety. Normans were temperate and practical people. But for all the differences among its inhabitants, the West had a certain underlying cohesiveness, and this is where Siegfried brought the region's geology into play, for what defined the West in the final analysis and distinguished it from the rest of France was the bedrock on which it was built, the Massif armoricain. Siegfried's stress on deep-seated continuities, on the *longue durée*, calls to mind Fernand Braudel, but when Siegfried starts to talk

about rootedness in the soil, another name pops up, that of Maurice Barrès. As it happens, Siegfried was a close reader of Barrès' oeuvre, a connection that Kennedy has occasion to point out more than once. So, yes, the *Tableau politique* was and remains a pioneering work of political geography that opened new vistas of research. But it is also a text veined with streaks of ethnic and geological determinism that bespeak a lurking Barrèsian presence in the make-up of Siegfried's way of thinking.

Siegfried was a star teacher and the author of a groundbreaking tome that has stood the test of time (more or less). He was also a man of institutions. Siegfried was named to the Collège de France in 1933. In 1942, he assumed the presidency of the Musée social, a think tank that brought together establishment figures of various political and religious persuasions (Siegfried himself was a Protestant) to debate social reform. At the Liberation, he was elected to the Académie française and in 1945 named first president of the Fondation nationale des sciences politiques. It is with Sciences Po, however, that Siegfried's name is most intimately associated and not just as a teacher and scholar. More than once he entered the political fray to defend the school's autonomy, in 1936 when Léon Blum's Popular Front government floated a plan to replace the school and again in 1945 when there was talk of nationalizing it outright. The Sciences Po team scored victories both times. Siegfried was an elite figure who educated future elites, modeling for them how to think and act. Sciences Po existed to train civil servants in-the-making, but that task, Siegfried firmly believed, was best left to independent-minded, elevated spirits like his own. He was not a raging free marketeer who hated the state, but he was dead set on keeping the state in its place.

Siegfried's stature as an academic, that and all the honors he accumulated, amplified what he had to say, and he made sure that his voice was heard well beyond the confines of academe and the corridors of power. Kennedy notes that Siegfried published thirty books, not all of them scholarly. In the 1950s, he maintained a regular column at *Le Figaro*. When Siegfried spoke, he had the nation's ear. Kennedy has pored over Siegfried's considerable corpus as a popularizer and journalist. Viewed through this lens, Siegfried's record of achievement looks a good deal less impressive. He wrote a refined and crystalline prose, but the handsome packaging notwithstanding, so many of the ideas he retailed were steeped in stereotypes and clichés, if not worse.

France had achieved a pinnacle of civilization, of that Siegfried had no doubt. Two words summed up the nation's achievement: measure and quality. France itself was moderate in scale, not too small, not too large. It boasted a modern, industrial economy, but one whose dynamism was tempered by the slower rhythms of peasant life. The French, moreover, knew how to strike a balance between work and life. They gave the Promethean impulse its due but reserved ample time for leisure and reflection. That sense of balance, everywhere present in French civilization, channeled and magnified the nation's energies in productive ways materially and intellectually. Siegfried's France was a land of high-end goods and high-end ideas, both the goods and the ideas unmatched for their taste and sophistication. Yet the nation's greatest creation, as he saw it, was a human one, the critical-minded, self-reliant individual. From such sturdy stuff republics are made, and Siegfried remained in good times and in bad a staunch republican, albeit of a center-right variety. He loved liberty but of a bounded sort that recognized limits. His model politician was not Léon Blum, whom he judged too statist in outlook, but Raymond Poincaré who economized at home and stood firm abroad.

As much as Siegfried gloried in French *mesure*, he felt it to be imperiled, and the moment he turned to pinpointing where the dangers came from, his thinking took on darker hues. Jews, he felt, were a welcome ferment, but they were also hard, if not impossible, to assimilate and in large numbers made for a destabilizing influence. What was true of Jews was a fortiori true of immigrants in general. Latins adapted to French ways without too much difficulty but less so other categories like Slavs or “Asiatics” as Siegfried persisted in calling them. The presence of too many people not French enough posed one kind of danger. The United States posed another. Siegfried appreciated American youthfulness and energy, but he fretted about what America was becoming. That anxiety stemmed in part from the US’s changing ethnic and racial composition. Newcomers from all over were swamping the nation’s Anglo-Saxon core, hardy folk who had gotten America off to such a promising start. Siegfried deplored Jim Crow. He was not that kind of racist. But he did indulge in the hoariest of stereotypes when writing about black people, characterizing them as cheerful and sensual, in all not the kind of material with which to build a great nation. But that was America’s problem. What made the US such a risk to France was the civilizational model it was developing, one with a strong and regrettable gravitational pull. America, to Siegfried, represented all that was outsized. Large-scale industry and mass consumerism flattened out the cherished differences among people, boiling them down into a standardized and conformist oneness. Such lop-sided development was the very antithesis of French *mesure*, and Siegfried feared what America’s present meant for France’s future.

That said, Siegfried still understood America as part of the West, that cultural and political amalgam smelted down from the raw ores of the classical past and Christianity. Siegfried had more than one opportunity to make manifest his western loyalties. He was present in 1945 as a member of the French delegation to the inaugural conference of the United Nations in San Francisco. However much Siegfried had misgivings about the German character—and as a Frenchman of his generation he did have misgivings—he swallowed such doubts and gave full backing to the European Economy Community. These institutions, the UN and the EEC, were international bulwarks that protected western values, setting standards of conduct on the world stage and pooling resources in Europe so as to thwart a repeat of the aggression that had sparked the Second World War. For make no mistake, Siegfried warned, there were still aggressors on the prowl, and he had no hesitation naming public enemy number one. It was the Soviet Union and the USSR’s proxies across the globe. If he had had concerns about Blum’s socialist party, they paled in comparison to what he felt about the Parti communiste français.

Communism was a proximate threat to the West, but there was also a more distant one, and in identifying it, all of Siegfried’s worst impulses came into play. He did not, it seems, go on at length about France’s own experience of decolonization. Siegfried deplored the outcome of the Suez crisis of 1956, but he was more tight-lipped about the imperial wars that France waged in Indochina and Algeria. The index to Kennedy’s book includes two brief references to the latter and none to the former. But Siegfried was a globe-trotter, and about the lands he visited, he did have much to say. He avowed an affinity for South Americans. They were kindred spirits, Latins like the French, whose charm and easy-going manners he found sympathetic. Sub-Saharan Africa was another matter. Siegfried professed, as Kennedy bluntly puts it, an “abiding belief in the inferiority of Africans” (p. 214). As for Asians, they were good imitators but lacking in creative imagination. They were also numerous, prompting an anxious Siegfried to warnings about a looming “yellow peril.” Indeed, in the postwar decades, it was not just Asia that was on the rise but the whole Third World. France was under threat, so was the West, and so too, as Siegfried

said more than once, the “white race.” The more Siegfried looked outward, the more racist his views became.

Siegfried’s liberal-conservatism turns out to be an uneasy mix. He was loyal to the Republic in an era when all too many French heeded the siren calls of authoritarian alternatives. Siegfried defended freedom as he understood it against the state’s encroachments. Moderation in all things was his personal creed, and it was a creed that fed an intense patriotism, for when it came to moderation on a national scale, when it came, that is, to crafting a balanced, civilized way of life, Siegfried felt that the French achievement was unparalleled in the world. He also believed in elites and in preserving the institutional scaffolding that buttressed elite rule. Not least of all, he was a dyed-in-the wool inegalitarian, who preoccupied himself, in Kennedy’s phrasing, with “developing classifications and hierarchies of peoples.” That predilection was, Kennedy concludes, not just a peripheral aspect of Siegfried’s work and thought but “integral” to them (p. 266).

Kennedy succeeds admirably in identifying a type, but he leaves open the question of that type’s place in the flow of French history. Who, readers might well ask, were Siegfried’s antecedents? Guizot? Tocqueville? And did such men think as he did in all respects? Yet the most pressing unaddressed question has to do with Siegfried’s heirs. Who were, who are the liberal-conservatives in the postcolonial world we inhabit today?

Philip Nord
Princeton University
pgnord@princeton.edu

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