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Erik Von Kuehnelt-Leddihn: The Problems of A Successful American Foreign Policy Study Guide

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ERIK VON KUEHNELT-LEDDIHN: THE PROBLEMS OF A SUCCESSFUL AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY STUDY GUIDE, 2006-2010 Steven Alan Samson

[The Problems of a Successful American Foreign Policy](#)

Introduction

A good introduction to the life and work of the political scientist and journalist Erik Maria Ritter von Kuehnelt-Leddihn (1909-1999) may be gleaned from several articles posted on the Internet. He even has a Facebook page. The following is from an article by the Rev. George W. Rutler posted on CatholiCity.

“The universities of Vienna and Budapest taught him law civil and canonical, theology, and political science. Sixteen young years after his birth in Vienna, he became an essayist for the London *Spectator* and was not yet 21 when he took up residence in Russia as a correspondent for a Hungarian newspaper. Annual research trips took him to ‘the Subarctic and other regions,’ and that tally eventually added up to 75 lands. ‘Most of these countries I have visited on several occasions: Vietnam, for instance, five times and Northern Ireland recently twice.’ Utterly contemptuous of a certain breed of superior Europeans, he boasted having visited all 50 United States, and added with an imperial air, ‘including Puerto Rico and the Canal Zone.’ These journeys produced journalistic commentary for 51 journals in 13 countries, plus four novels and six volumes of political philosophy. The Austrian aristocrat championed America's Founding Fathers and the Hapsburgs [Hapsburgs] with both fists.”

K-L studied Japanese with Tomoyuki Yamashita (who was posted to Vienna in the late 1920s) and later deplored the general's trial and execution following the Second World War. As a journalist, he reported on Stalin's Russia, including the Ukrainian famine; a Nuremberg rally in Nazi Germany; the Spanish civil war; and the independence of the former Belgian Congo. He taught at Beaumont College in Berkshire during the 1935-36 school year and left Austria yet again in 1937 to teach several subjects at four American colleges from 1937-1947, including Japanese at Fordham. From numerous conversations with him over a nearly seventeen year period, I have many fond recollections of this gentleman and scholar with the droll wit and the twinkle in his eye. He notes at the end of his novel *Black Banners* that he wrote the book between April and September 1945 in New York, a Navajo mission in Arizona, San Mateo, California, and Nome, Alaska. He usually visited the United States once a year and frequently stopped in Portland, where I first met him, and at Grove City College. He once remarked to me that the only parts of the United States he had not visited were Southeastern Oregon and Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

I have published some his correspondence, along with lecture notes and photographs, on the Liberty University Digital Commons, in addition to a few of my study guides on his work. I got the idea from Paul Gottfried, who reprinted one of K-L's letters in *Encounters*.

Study Questions

1. When did America break with its founding ideology, leading to a replacement of **John Calvin** with **Jean-Jacques Rousseau**? [The president in question was Andrew Jackson]. If the **Monroe Doctrine** was designed to buttress America's “splendid isolation,” what led to American intervention in Europe? How do **democracy** and (classical) **liberalism** differ? Who was **George D. Herron**? [See Hans-Hermann Hoppe, *The Myth of National Defense*, p. 115. Another important and shadowy figure that goes

unnamed here is Col. Edward Mandell House]. What were some of the results of the American intervention? [*Imprimis* also reprints an address by George Nash, the historian of the conservative movement, on the same subject].

NOTE: The **Lansdowne Letter**, which was circulated within the Cabinet a full year before it was published in *The Telegraph*, November 29, 1917, proposed a return to the *status quo ante bellum* [before the war] at a time when the war had reached a near stalemate: "We are not going to lose this war, but its prolongation will spell ruin for the civilised world, and an infinite addition to the load of human suffering which already weighs upon it. . . . We do not desire the annihilation of Germany as a great power. . . . We do not seek to impose upon her people any form of government other than that of their own choice. . . . We have no desire to deny Germany her place among the great commercial communities of the world." Many scholars doubt that it would have been accepted on the German side. The *Times* and several other newspapers refused to carry the letter and it was rejected by the Cabinet and the military.

One scholar who has taken a more positive view is Douglas Newton, who has noted: "Lansdowne answered that the best hope for post-war security lay in 'an international pact', that is, in multilateral guarantees to submit international disputes to arbitration and to coerce 'a Power which breaks away from the rest'. This project of collective security, based on compulsory arbitration, Lansdowne reminded his readers, had already been endorsed by Wilson and Bethmann-Hollweg in speeches in May and November 1916. Similarly, it had been endorsed by the Austrian government in its Reply to the Papal Peace Note of August 1917, by Count Czernin in a speech in October 1917, and by Balfour in his reply of 10 January 1917 to the Wilson Peace Note of December 1916." http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_go1877/is_1_48/ai_n6764517/

2. How did Europe's great minds regard democracy? What happened with various democratic experiments following the First World War? What did Plato, Aristotle, and Polybius understand about the character of democracy? How and where did modern democracy originate? Where has "organic democracy" actually succeeded? What, according to the Fabian socialist **Harold Laski**, are the preconditions for democracy to flourish? Where may these essentials be found? [HINT: The "Northwest" of Europe was shaped by the Protestant Reformation]. And, just as importantly, where are they not found? What is it about the American experiment that makes Americans susceptible to "the global democratic dream"? What factors militate against it? How do the Catholic, Orthodox, and Islamic nations differ from the Protestant nations (those of the Northwest)? Where is the true divide within the Western world? Where is the greater degree of responsibility exercised?
3. What has been the **quintessence of politics** since the French Revolution of 1789? On what sort of faith is Marxism based? How do false ideologies answer people's need for a "coherent world view?" [In *The Shield of Achilles* Philip Bobbitt, Lyndon Johnson's nephew, depicts modern international politics as a rivalry between three ideological programs: Communism, Fascism, and liberal Parliamentarianism]. What is behind the growth of **Santa Claus parties** and what make them immune to defeat? What is the basis of their appeal? How do they die?
4. Where does "capitalist" America face its strongest challenges? [Today, the perils we face still come from such French Revolutionary epigones as Mexico, China, Russia, Cuba, and Iran, all of which went through their own revolutions: 1910, 1911 and 1949, 1917, 1959, and 1979. Only Germany (1933), among revolutionary powers, subsequently underwent a systematic reconstruction. Spain's revolution of the 1930s was thwarted]. How do the mass murders of the 20th century demonstrate the author's case? Why did the initiative always remain with the Soviet Union in its war with the West? [That changed during the Reagan Administration].

5. Why did (and does) the United States have to intervene in so many regions? [You cannot fight something with nothing. The West's problem is always its lack of vision]. Thought question: How would Kuehnelt-Leddihn regard the neoconservative vision of spreading liberal democracy as a vision or program? What made statesmen like Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer a fluke? Why does the Free World live in constant uncertainty, fear, and tension? What is the excuse of democracies "changing their minds?" ("Is mutual confidence among the Free World nations possible?"). Give some examples of such perfidy. How have the criminals in the Kremlin avoided the problem? What was Jacob Burckhardt's verdict on modern politics? The Soviet foreign minister alluded to was Andrey Gromyko.

6. What is the Achilles heel of every democracy? In foreign affairs and defense, "enormous wide knowledge and experience are necessary as well as an exceptional swiftness in making decisions." Why are parliaments (and congresses) poorly suited to the task? What is needed to carry out a strong and independent foreign and military policy? What does Kuehnelt-Leddihn mean by the growing gap between **scita** [the sum of all the political, economic, technological, scientific, military, geographical, and psychological knowledge of the masses and of their representatives] and **scienda** [the sum of all the political, economic, technological, scientific, military, geographical, and psychological knowledge that a governing body must possess to allow it to reach logically, rationally, and morally sound conclusions]? This concerns the background one needs to "talk rationally, constructively, sensibly about foreign affairs."

7. What are the three most important elements in understanding foreign affairs? What is wrong with the way they are understood and taught in America? What remedies does he offer? The ideology of the Right is well summarized in the [Portland Declaration](#), which is linked here. A short summary of the 26 points may be found at the end of the text. Does Kuehnelt-Leddihn believe America has the capacity to do what is required?

Review

John Calvin
 break with Monroe Doctrine
 individualism
 Santa Claus parties

Jean-Jacques Rousseau
 George D. Herron
 communitarianism
 Achilles heel of democracy

democracy and liberalism
 Harold Laski
 quintessence of politics
 scita and scienda