

## BOOK GROUP NOTES:

### John Russell's Q

Those who don't read history are bound to repeat it. Cliché. H tells us how we got here. Helps us understand the present dynamics, form judgments for future. But we're not in Pentagon or White House. We don't repeat history, we understand the present. Vote

I read history for pleasure,

2 historical theories: *history is product of* ~~natural forces~~, social, economic, political, *forces*

And Great Man theory.

#### Natural forces:

- Germany would have united if Bismark never existed.
- Germany would have rebelled against punitive reparations if Hitler never existed

#### Great Man:

- No War of 1871 if no Bismark.
- No WW2, No Holocaust, No Israel if no Hitler.

Accordingly, 2 broad types of history book: 1) what happened and why, and 2) who did what and how.

CIVIL WAR: Battle Cry of Freedom / Team of Rivals.

WW II: The Pacific / Sea of Thunder

I generally most enjoy the WHO/HOW school of history:

Tried By War, Lincoln as Commander in Chief

Manchester, Churchill and MacArthur

Goodwin, No Ordinary Time

MASSIE: CATHERINE the GREAT  
Caro, LBJ quintology

(Anomalies: THE BOX and

Robt Massie: Castles of Steel/Dreadnaught v. ~~Nicholas &  
Alexandra~~

### FICTION:

- DeBerniere, Birds w/o Wings
- Vitaly Grossman, Life & Fate
- Karl Marlantis, Matterhorn

Historians as story-tellers stay with me ~~better~~. BEST

### LAWRENCE of ARABIA:

Movie, Lawrence as Legend. Peter O'Toole at 6'4" played  
Lawrence at 5'3". Ratio of Legend to Reality.

MOVIE - ~~THE~~ DAMASCUS in charge on HORSES  
Rogan, The Fall of the Ottomans, Lawrence pops in and  
out inconsequentially, carries flag into Damascus after Faisal.

OPEN CITY

Michael Korda, Hero, Lawrence of Arabia, stultifying detail.

AMAZON: 20+ bios of Lawrence. NYT; Anderson  
"contextualized" Lawrence.

ANDERSON told the story of the times thru Lawrence in context.  
Thus: Pruffer, Yale, Aaronsohn

+Sykes, Allenby, Djemal, Hussein, Faisal

MIDDLE EAST IN WW I = GREAT STORY

- Ottoman Empire crumbling

- OIL, Germany & England want it
- Suez protection
- Incompetent military, e.g. Gallipoli, Gaza (until Allenby)
- Disjointed Egypt/India policy re Muslims, e.g. muddled Arab Revolt policy
- Britain & France disgusted with Arabs as soldiers, not in European model
- Sykes-Picot: Britain keeps Palestine, promises Syria to France
- Britain promises Arabia to Hussein, minus something
- Balfour promises national homeland in Palestine to Jews, minus something
- S-P to 7 Syrians: all that Arabs took from Turkey, to Arabs
- At Versailles,
  - No 14 Points,
  - No promises,
  - old-fashioned imperial land=grab.

LAWRENCE, GB put a uniform on an archeologist. He understood

- The land
- Arabs, culture & tribalism
- Military strategy
- guerilla warfare—when Army still frontal assaults on Gaza
- Cf: Grant v. Quantrill's Raiders; Americans in Viet Nam, Iraq, Afghanistan;
- Also: devoted romantic
- committed more to Arab nationalism than to British policies and strategy

#### WHAT DID LAWRENCE DO?

- Used Arabic tribal ways to lead Eastern wing of British assault on Syria

OXFORD, not SANDS  
NO MILITARY TRAINING

- Method: bought them off like Petraus w/ gold, loot, and romantic dream of Arab Nation
- Enabled British Northern strategy; Damascus
- Rose from intelligence clerk in Cairo to Lt. Colonel, re-established civil administration in Damascus

What do we learn? E.g. AQABA:

- Movie/honeymoon were wrong. No charge. Siege & surrender.

Learn: don't learn history from the movies, e.g. LBJ in *Selma*

- Guns, trenches defend attack from sea, not from land. SINGAPORE. Japanese emulate Lawrence; Brits did not.
- Lawrence: don't count on Arab tribesmen to hold defensive positions. They will run. US trained Iraqis & ISIS?

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS? Lawrence withdrew at the height of his military, achievement.

"I've had enough of the Arabs"

Depression; PTSD

Dream of Arab Nation evaporated

From blood, killing, physical and mental exhaustion, and Perfidy of Albion.

Avoid responsibilities.

Avoid knighthood

He had given his all for Sykes-Picot

Q's:

1. What happened to L on the road to Damascus?
2. If not The Peace to End All Peace, how should the Middle East have been settled?

Oren, Faith, Power & Fantasy