

SPARTA'S ROLE IN THE FIRST PELOPONNESIAN WAR

THUCYDIDES' brief account of the events which have come to be known as the First Peloponnesian War has left considerable doubts about Sparta's precise role.¹ Her first clearly attested expedition is that to help Doris in 458 or 457, but fighting had been going on for some two or three years before this and several members of the Peloponnesian League were involved in it. The question is whether Sparta and her League as a whole were also involved, and if so, from what date. Scholars have taken differing views on this problem and one of the most recent, and important, treatments of it firmly advocates an early commitment to war by Sparta and her League.² It is the purpose of this paper to suggest a different interpretation of the evidence and to claim that it is one which fits better into the context of Spartan behaviour throughout the whole period *c.* 460–445 B.C.

Thucydides is perfectly clear about Athenian actions. They renounced their old alliance with Sparta which dated from the Persian Wars and they concluded a full alliance (*συμμαχία*) with the Argives who were Sparta's enemies (*πολέμιοι*) and with Thessaly. The application of the term *πολέμιοι* to the Argives need occasion no surprise. After the battle of Sepeia the Spartans had refused a treaty of peace to Argos, as emerges from Herodotus vii 148, where she asks for one as the price of joining the Hellenic alliance against Persia. This request was not granted and we subsequently hear of clashes between Argos and Sparta or Sparta's protégés as Argive strength revives. Argives fought at the battle of Tegea and attacked Mycenae and Tiryns whose independence had probably been underwritten by Sparta.

Athens' attitude to Sparta is clearly revealed by this act of alliance with Sparta's old traditional enemy at a time when that enemy was in a phase of active hostility. There can be little doubt that Athens was thinking of prosecuting war against Sparta and her allies from the outset, though I do not think that one is justified in inferring this purely from the fact of the creation of the alliance.³ Alliances are sometimes made on a precautionary or speculative long-term basis, such as surely are the alliances of Athens with Leontini and Rhegium and possibly with Egesta (or, in modern times, the alliance of China with Albania). But the ostracism of Cimon and the aggressive actions which soon followed show clearly the Athenian mood⁴ and make it certain that this alliance was meant to produce action.⁵

But the attitude of Sparta is less clear. Thucydides seems to ascribe the dismissal of Cimon and his hoplites to Spartan fears about what attitude the radical-minded Athenians might take over the helot problem when they met it face to face.⁶ But they cloaked this by

¹ I am grateful to Mr W. G. Forrest for some helpful suggestions regarding this paper. He should not, of course, be held compromised thereby.

² G. E. M. de Ste. Croix *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (1972) 187–8. He thinks that the departure of Megara from the Peloponnesian League and her alliance with Athens were the crucial cause and occasion.

Of earlier scholars, Busolt (*Gr. Gesch.* III, 1 302 and 209) attributes the war to the pressure put on Sparta by this alliance, but he is thinking in terms of power politics rather than the legal aspect. He hedges on the actual date of the formal beginning of the war by observing that the creation of this alliance was bound to bring Sparta in 'sooner or later.' He carefully preserves Thucydides' own ambiguous terminology for the opponents of Athens in the fighting of the early years and thus leaves open the question whether Sparta and the League were involved. But he interprets the expedition to Doris as evidence that Sparta had come to realise the need for action if her League was to survive. So he may have thought that this was Sparta's first intervention in the war, but

he may also have thought that war was declared earlier.

Gomme (*Hist. Comm.* I 305) thought that Corinth put great pressure on Sparta, as in 431, and succeeded in getting her to declare war. He seems to have thought that the placing of a garrison in Aegina was the first act of the League, as he says of this 'the first Peloponnesian War has begun.'

On the other hand Kahrstedt (*Gr. Staatsrecht* I 92) thought that Corinth and her allies were fighting alone until 458, as they did again before 431. Bengston (*Gr. Gesch.*⁴ 290–10) holds that the breach between Sparta and Athens only came with the Battle of Tanagra, as does K. Wickert, *Der peloponnesische Bund* (Diss. Erlangen 1961).

³ As does L. H. Jeffery *BSA* lx (1965) 52.

⁴ Thuc. i 103.3 *κατ' ἔχθος ἤδη τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων* is relevant if it precedes the outbreak of the war.

⁵ De Ste. Croix *op. cit.* 183–4 draws attention to the strong language in which Aeschylus alludes to the alliance.

⁶ The recent attempt by John R. Cole, *GRBS* 15 (1974) 369–85, to discredit Thucydides' account of

a pretence that they no longer needed Athenian assistance. The excuse may seem flimsy as the military situation does not appear to have been resolved. But it is possible that they said they had now decided to negotiate surrender (as in fact they did, though we do not know how soon). In any case the important point is that it showed that the Spartans were not openly seeking to insult and humiliate the Athenians and that they felt it necessary to try to smooth matters over. This need not surprise us, since the main victim of an open insult was likely to be their loyal friend Cimon. If the matter was handled as tactfully as possible he might be able to survive as leader in Athens and to preserve her good relations with Sparta. The Athenian reaction proved violent but there is no reason to suppose that this was intended, or even expected, by Sparta or that the dismissal was the result of hatred (as the promise to invade Attica over Thasos may have been) rather than fear and prudence. When Athens seemed to have acted outrageously as over Thasos, Samos and Potidaea, general feelings at Sparta might turn violently anti-Athenian,⁷ but there is no reason to put this episode into that category, and in view of later events it seems inadvisable to do so.

The Spartan action, then, cannot be taken in itself as equivalent to a declaration of war, or even as indicative of a clear desire for war. At the most it showed latent hostility, as de Ste. Croix suggests; at the least it may merely have shown extreme cautiousness about an Athenian presence in Messenia. It is necessary to trace the development of events further to find the occasion for Sparta to enter the war.

The next major event is the secession of Megara from the Peloponnesian League and her alliance with Athens (a full *symmarchy*). De Ste. Croix argues that this automatically brought about a state of war between Athens and Corinth, as Megara was already at war with Corinth.⁸ If this principle is sound then it could surely be held that Sparta had already entered into a state of war with Athens as a result of Athens' alliance with her enemy Argos. But this seems to attribute too rigorous and precise a significance to an action lying within the somewhat elastic and pragmatic sphere of Greek international law. De Ste. Croix himself has pointed out the arbitrary nature of actions between states in the Greek world⁹ and it is clear that they were frequently able to adopt interpretations of the rules which happened to suit their own interests at the time, even if these interpretations do not seem consistent or logically convincing. In order to show this it is desirable to look at situations which arose before and during the Peloponnesian War.

In 433 Athens was behaving strictly within the rules (even though the Corinthians professed not to think so)¹⁰ and the Spartans were logically and legally justified in refusing

this episode is not very convincing. It does not seem likely that the Spartans would have been willing to allow the Messenians to escape merely because they wanted Cimon to have a chance to oppose Ephialtes' reforms (if, indeed, this chronology is conceded). Would they have put such a remote problem before their own urgent and immediate one? Moreover, if Cimon did return so opportunely his enemies would surely have suspected and denounced such a transparent connivance, and it is difficult to believe that such charges would not have been remembered in Athens; in which case Thucydides could hardly have got away with his version, even if we are willing to credit that he might have wished to.

That the Spartans became genuinely frightened by the possible reactions of the Athenian soldiers is by no means improbable. Ordinary Athenians did not normally see the Spartan system in its home and one should not make the mistake of thinking that as hoplites they would be more sympathetic to it than thetes. The vast majority of Athenian hoplites were as enthusiastic for democracy as the thetes and they proved this by leading the overthrow of the Four Hundred and the Thirty. The oligarchs' attempt to

create a rift between hoplites and thetes was a failure.

⁷ See n. 42 for discussion of this point.

⁸ This in itself was an anomalous position in so far as members of the Peloponnesian League were sworn to have the same friends and enemies as Sparta, but Sparta did not enforce this clause so strictly as Athens with her League. It is difficult to see how Sparta's tolerance of internal wars between League members can be *formally* reconciled with the principle of having the same friends and enemies as Sparta, even though it was made easier through the giving of oaths separately by each member to Sparta alone. As in the case of revolts and secessions, such as that of Megara in c. 460, Sparta sometimes found it convenient to disregard them for a time, even though they must have involved a breach of the oaths. Sparta's inaction must have been based on pragmatic rather than legal grounds. Cf. de Ste. Croix, *op. cit.* 114 § 5(d).

⁹ *Op. cit.* 16 ff.

¹⁰ Thuc. i 53.1. Cf. the Athenian reply in the same chapter and the correct conduct of the Athenian captains in i 49.4, though in i 49.7 tempers began to

to support the Corinthians.¹¹ But the deciding factor in their attitude was no doubt their interests rather than logic or law. It is also difficult to credit that their behaviour after 420 B.C. was dictated purely by the latter in view of its extreme flexibility and pragmatism. Athens' alliance with Argos, Elis, and Mantinea in 420 did not constitute a formal breach of the Peace of Nicias or of the alliance between Athens and Sparta. This could only come with the crossing of frontiers or possibly a direct clash of nationals without the justification of an *epimachy*. Moreover, both these alliances were purely defensive, unlike the three-power treaty of Argos, Elis and Mantinea referred to by Thucydides v 48.2. But it was clearly provocative in the sense that Elis and Mantinea had broken their allegiance to the Peloponnesian League and any attempt by Sparta to assert her legal rights over her defecting allies would lead to conflict with Athens. So far as Sparta was concerned the case of Mantinea and Elis is legally similar to that of Megara in 461/0, but in practice she felt her interests more directly threatened in the centre of the Peloponnese than she had in the case of Megara (where Corinth was more directly implicated). Thucydides' need to explain that neither Athens nor Sparta renounced their alliance as a consequence of the four power *epimachy*¹² in 420 arises because the possibility of a clash was only too clear. Events soon began to bring this possibility nearer to actuality.

When Epidaurus, a member of the Peloponnesian League, was attacked by Argos Sparta seems to have declared war on Argos. She placed a garrison under a Spartan commander in Epidaurus and the Argives described these in Athens as *πολέμιοι*¹³. Sparta also called out the forces of the League on two occasions,¹⁴ although she did not in the outcome lead them into action. It seems that some members of the Peloponnesian League thought of giving Epidaurus independent help.¹⁵ No doubt they were the usual local allies, as in the first Peloponnesian War.

The Athenians avoided being drawn directly into the fighting at Epidaurus¹⁶ and contented themselves with Alcibiades' cheeky expedition to Achaëa, the summoning of a conference at Mantinea and the sending of 1,000 hoplites to join their allies in the face of the second abortive Spartan threat of invasion. When Agis made his first actual invasion they once more sent 1,000 hoplites and some horse. These arrived to find the four-month truce between Agis and Argos already concluded. Alcibiades demanded the resumption of the war on the ground that a truce could only be made with the assent of all the allies, none of whom had been consulted. Yet if Argos alone was officially at war with Sparta how could this be the case? One would expect that she could make her own truce. But Alcibiades was not a man to stand on niceties.

Alcibiades won his way, although the Argives followed belatedly, and the allied army attacked Orchomenos, a member of the Peloponnesian League.¹⁷ Surely Athenian participation in this act was a breach of the Peace of Nicias and could have been regarded by Sparta as a *casus belli* if she had wished, since one clause in the Peace banned attacks by the Athenians and their allies on the Spartans and their allies (including Orchomenos).¹⁸ This makes the position different from Corinth's attack on Corcyra (which did not break the

rise on both sides. But even such an open clash is still not taken as a breach of the Peace, any more than the Battle of Mantinea was in 418. Thuc. ii 7.1, talking of the Theban attack on Plataea, speaks of *λελυμένων λαμπρῶς τῶν σπονδῶν*.

¹¹ Cf. Thuc. vii 18.2 where the Spartans recognise the Theban attack on Plataea and their own refusal of arbitration as placing responsibility for the breach of the Peace on their own side. Yet, strictly speaking, even the Theban attack on an ally of Athens, though a breach of the Peace, need not in itself have automatically involved Sparta. This involvement arose because Thebes was too powerful an ally to leave in the lurch, especially at a time when Sparta and the League had already declared war.

¹² Thuc. v 48.1. In mid fourth-century Athens again had alliances with Sparta and her enemies at

the same time (Dem. xvi).

¹³ Thuc. v 56.1-2.

¹⁴ Thuc. v 54.1 and v 55.3.

¹⁵ Thuc. v 54.4. I agree with de Ste. Croix that they were not under an obligation to help by virtue of their membership of the League (*op. cit.* 114).

¹⁶ When the Argive embassy to Athens denounced the Spartan garrison in Epidaurus as *πολέμιοι* and blamed the Athenians for letting 'enemies' pass by sea, the Athenians remained inactive and contented themselves with adding a footnote to the stele of the Peace with Sparta to the effect that the Spartans had broken their oaths (Thuc. v 56.3). They did not throw down the stele as if the Peace had been broken. Cf. A. Andrewes in Gomme *Hist. Comm. ad. loc.*

¹⁷ Thuc. v 61-3.

¹⁸ Thuc. v 18.4.

Thirty Years' Peace) because Corcyra had not been a party to that Peace. As for Athens' involvement in the ensuing battle of Mantinea, this could be justified in some way as the fulfilment of her obligation to an ally, since Sparta had invaded Mantineian territory and was the aggressor.¹⁹ Even though Alcibiades was behaving as if Athens was at war with Sparta the Spartans and the more cautious majority of Athenians still tried to think of themselves as at peace. Hence the Peace which followed the Battle of Mantinea was purely between Argos and Sparta and did not involve Athens or Elis and Mantinea at all.²⁰

The reactivation of Pylos by Athens as a base for raids on Spartan territory and Athenian descents on the coasts of Sparta's allies did not affect Sparta's view that the Peace had not been broken, for that is what she wished to be the case. Thucydides himself makes it clear that she could have treated some of these episodes as a breach of the peace if she had chosen. When some Athenians finally joined some Argives in a direct attack on Laconian territory Thucydides observes that this was merely the most overt of the provocations.²¹ The Spartans chose to take this as their breaking point.

Legalistic considerations are, therefore, clearly not paramount and there is no ground for suggesting that any Greek state would find itself 'automatically' at war with another except perhaps if its territory was directly attacked, in which case it would be difficult to overlook it. Even the concepts of symmarchy and epimachy which played so important a part in the Corcyra episode could become confused, as de Ste. Croix has himself pointed out.²²

It is now possible to return to the situation at the outset of the First Peloponnesian War. If Sparta did not get drawn automatically into war with Athens because of Athens' alliance with Megara the situation of Corinth is of course very different. There can be no doubt whatever that she regarded herself at war with Athens from the moment of Megara's alliance with the latter and the placing of Athenian garrisons in the Megarid. It is certain that she must have put pressure on Sparta to declare war and summon the League Congress for the same purpose, but the question is whether she was successful.²³ It has been suggested that there is evidence in Thucydides to show that she was, but unfortunately it is somewhat ambiguous.

In his account of the opening military engagements of the war Thucydides twice uses the term 'the Peloponnesians', in i 105.1, of the fleet which fought the Athenians off Cecryphaleia, and in i 105.3, of those responsible for putting 300 hoplites into Aegina. Elsewhere we hear of the Corinthians and the Epidaurians (i 105.1), the Aeginetans and their allies (i 105.2), the Corinthians and the Epidaurians (i 105.3), the Corinthians (three times in i 105.6 and once in i 106.2). The question is whether the use of the term 'Peloponnesian' in these two passages is purely geographical and refers to the same groups as the other passages (that is, Corinth, Aegina, Epidaurus and possibly other local allies²⁴), or whether either passage, or both, should be taken to indicate that Sparta and the League had declared war and were making a contribution to the fighting, if only through the presence of a Spartan commander.

Gomme comments on i 105.3 'the first Peloponnesian War has begun.' He therefore seems to choose to press the second passage to mean Peloponnesians in the political sense whilst disregarding it in the earlier passage, which he presumably took to be geographical.

¹⁹ Thuc. v 64-5. Sparta no doubt could justify her action on the grounds that Mantinea had illegally seceded from her League.

²⁰ Thuc. v 77.9.

²¹ Thuc vi 105.1-2. Cf. Gomme *op. cit.* iv 78 (A. Andrewes) and 377 (K. J. Dover).

²² *Op. cit.* Appendix XIII.

²³ Wickert *op. cit.* 61 argues that Sparta took no part in Corinth's war, and that this was because Corinth had been the aggressor against Megara and had no right to be helped, and also because Aegina was not a member of the Peloponnesian League. The arguments on the latter point are not conclusive and

it is not a safe basis from which to make deductions. As for the former, Sparta had her own interests in Megara which should have led her to action (see note 29). Wickert thinks the expedition to Doris is not to be linked with Corinth's war.

²⁴ A bronze grave dedicated at Olympia has been found with an inscription saying that the Sicyonians dedicated Athenian spoil from Halieis. (*ΕΣΤΙΑ* May 8, 1971). This occasions no surprise as the Sicyonians help Corinth subsequently (Thuc. i 114.1). I am grateful to the Editor for drawing my attention to this piece of evidence.

It is not clear why he made this distinction. Even if he thought that Sparta might not have been able to get ships up to join the Corinthians she would surely have had time to send a commander if she had in fact taken over the running of a League war. It was customary for a Spartan to assume command of a League fleet even if she herself was contributing little in the way of ships.²⁵

It would certainly be easier if the word means the same thing in both passages. De Ste. Croix argues that the case is clearer in the second passage on the grounds that the 300 hoplites are not Aeginetans, Corinthians or Epidaurians. This is not a conclusive point since we have no information about who they were. It is not said that they are even Peloponnesians, though it is clearly very likely. They can hardly have been Spartans or we should hear more about their fate when Aegina fell. As they are not ascribed to any city it seems possible that they were not a national contingent at all. Perhaps they were mercenaries recruited from Arcadia, but that, of course, is mere speculation.

It seems difficult to believe that the Spartans were involved in these two early episodes of the war, for three reasons. The first and least compelling is that no Spartan commander is named, whereas they normally are for the expeditions in which they were certainly involved. Any League expedition had to have a Spartan commander: the allies' oath was probably even at this date 'to follow the Spartans.'²⁶ But it is possible that it is an omission by Thucydides.

The second argument is much more important and depends on looking at the immediately subsequent course of events. It does not appear that the Spartans played any part in the Corinthian attempt to save Aegina by invading the Megarid. Yet if Sparta had undertaken to help Aegina by placing the garrison of 300 hoplites there she would surely have felt herself committed to further action.²⁷ But the terminology used by Thucydides to describe the operation in the Megarid clearly rules out Spartan participation. 'Corinth and her allies' is not a possible expression to refer to an army of the Peloponnesian League. 'The Lacedaemonians and their allies' is the correct term, as in Thuc. i 115.1. It is not possible to explain Spartan inaction by the great difficulty of passing Mount Geraneia as de Ste. Croix suggests, because the Corinthians and their allies succeeded in crossing the mountain and descending into the plain²⁸ round the city of Megara even without the help of Sparta or, presumably, Elis or the Arcadian cities. It is inconceivable that the Spartans should have refused to lead an expedition which the Corinthians were not frightened to undertake. Even if they thought it hazardous and did not wish to risk their manpower, at least they could have sent a commander. The blow to Spartan prestige and authority would have been shocking if they refused to lead after having committed themselves to war. The need to help Aegina was paramount and failure to act seems explicable only if wider considerations had caused Sparta to refuse to declare war and to leave Corinth to do as well as she could with local help. This, after all, is what happened at the time of the Corcyra

²⁵ e.g. Thuc. ii 85.1, iii. 261; *cf.* also de Ste. Croix, *op. cit.* 112 at (e).

²⁶ *Cf.* de Ste. Croix *op. cit.* 108 and 112 at (e).

²⁷ If Aegina was a member of the Peloponnesian League as de Ste. Croix believes (*op. cit.* Appendix XVII B) then the failure of Sparta to give help to Aegina is staggering. Even if she was not, as argued by Wickert (*op. cit.* 23-6, 62, 64) it remains very surprising. The case of Megara is different in that she had defected.

It is true that Sparta was not under a legal obligation to help her allies when they got involved in wars, even if they were blatantly the objects of aggression. But failure to help would weaken the League if the ally succumbed and whether she succumbed or not Sparta's credibility as hegemon would suffer very badly. *Cf.* de Ste. Croix *op. cit.* 106, 113. He suggests that where the attack on a

member of the League was blatant Sparta might not even need to summon a meeting of the League Congress but could call out her allies automatically. He cites Thuc. v 57.1 for the summoning of troops to help Epidaurus against Argos.

²⁸ Thuc. i 105.3 τὰ δὲ ἄκρα τῆς Γερανείας κατέλαβον καὶ ἐς τὴν Μεγαρίδα κατέβησαν. It may be that after the fall of Aegina the Athenian capacity to defend the Megarid became stronger and therefore more deterrent, but when Corinth invaded no regular field force was available, only the young and the old. Why did Sparta miss this golden opportunity?

²⁹ The big difference is that Sparta had no interests of her own in Corcyra whereas she did in Megara, who had seceded illegally from the Peloponnesian League and made Spartan activity north of the Isthmus more difficult.

episode,²⁹ when Corinth was left to fend for herself with help only from local allies.³⁰ Diodorus xi 79.3, for what it is worth, says that Megara's alliance with Athens made Athens equal to Corinth with 'Peloponnesians.' It is not 'the Peloponnesians' and clearly Megara would not have made Athens equal to the whole Peloponnesian League, only to Corinth with her local allies. But Thucydides' terminology is the decisive point together with the lack of Athenian traditions about a Spartan defeat on this famous occasion.

The third argument for thinking that Sparta had not declared war before the Aegina and Megarid campaigns is drawn from a consideration of her attitude throughout the whole remaining period of the war and in the peace settlement. Her only activities are the expedition to help Doris in 458 or 457 and the invasion of Attica at the end of the war. How much evidence do these two occasions provide of a sustained will to war?

The Doris expedition was a powerful one and contained more Lacedaemonians than usual.³¹ It has often been pointed out that it was stronger than was necessary to deal with Phocis and some scholars have thought that it was intended to carry out some much more important secret plan. It is not usually suggested that a direct attack on Athens was proposed. If that had been its aim, it would not have loitered in Boeotia on its return journey from the North. So some scholars have suggested that from the outset it was intended to interfere in the political affairs of the Boeotian cities³² (as it subsequently in fact did) and to establish regimes which would be hostile to Athens and thereby provide a counterbalance to her which might render her less dangerous. This is possible³³ and is of course compatible with the belief that Sparta had not declared war against Athens, only against Phocis.³⁴ But a perfectly adequate explanation of the large force is that the Spartans were apprehensive of Athenian actions against them in view of the extreme aggressiveness which they had shown, and realised that a weak force with a small Spartan element would not be safe in the proximity of Attica, especially as the Corinthians and their neighbours must have been greatly weakened and demoralised by the outcome of the previous years' fighting. Their precaution was justified in the event.

However, the essential point is that the Spartans remained in Boeotia rather than march into the Megarid or Attica and risk a battle. When the battle was forced upon them on Boeotian soil they took advantage of their close-fought victory merely to ensure their

³⁰ On that occasion Corinth gained wider support, especially from the Western regions, Megara, Pale (in Cephallonia) Epidaurus, Hermione, Troezen, Leukas, Ambracia, Elis, Phlius and Thebes (i 27.2) and, later, Megara, Elis, Leukas, Ambracia and Anactorium (i 46.1). J. D. Smart *JHS* xcii (1972) 139 perhaps overstates Sparta's opposition to Corinth at this time, but she was clearly following a very different line from Corinth.

³¹ Cf. de Ste. Croix *op. cit.* 209.

³² B. H. Fowler in *Phoenix* xi (1957) 164 ff. uses three special issues of Tanagran coins as evidence to suggest that Tanagra had been claiming leadership of the Boeotian federation during the years preceding 458/7 and that she had probably been encouraged in Athens. She suggests that Thebes asked for Spartan help to deal with Tanagra and re-establish Theban hegemony. This would certainly explain the presence of the Spartan army at Tanagra, which is not on the direct route home, and also account for the quickness of Athenian reaction. But there is no ground for supposing a formal alliance between Athens and Tanagra and we need not suppose that Tanagra had really achieved the position of hegemon in practice.

³³ F. Hampl *Die Gr. Staatsverträge* 72 has argued that Thucydides' account is contrary to this interpretation. The Boeotian episode, he suggests, like the Athenian oligarchs' embassy, seems to arise out of the circumstances of the imposed delay and was the

concern of the Spartan commander on the spot, rather than the Spartan state.

³⁴ Sparta's interest in Doris, as her reputed motherland, is in itself perfectly adequate as an explanation of her action, but it may well be true, as is argued by G. Zeilhofer in *Sparta Delphoi und die Amphiktyonen im 5 Jahrhundert* (Diss. Erlangen 1959) 41 ff. on the strength of Plut. *Cimon* 17.3, that the Phocians had also seized Delphi which Sparta wished to liberate, as in 449. Zeilhofer also suggests that Sparta's concern for Doris was not purely sentimental since her only ability to partake in the deliberations of the Amphictyony came through Doris' single vote. These deliberations were normally dominated by Thessaly and her satellites and did not often affect Greek affairs very seriously, but they no doubt enjoyed prestige (as does a voice at UNO today) and there was always a possibility that it might enable Sparta to sponsor a motion to increase her own representation and diminish that of her enemies, as in her proposal to expel the Medizers after the Persian War. It might also improve her chances of protecting Delphi and its priests, about whose independence Sparta showed continual concern. It was stipulated in the forefront of the Peace of Nicias (Thuc. v 18.2) and was only abandoned during the Third Sacred War when the alternatives to Phocian control seemed even less acceptable.

safe return. Their failure to press home their advantage by marching on Athens and attempting to interfere with the completion of the Long Walls is usually explained by the fact that it had been a hard fight. But the Athenians, who had the worst of it, were willing and able to meet and defeat the Boeotians only sixty-two days later. Surely the Spartans with their tougher training should have been able to take advantage of this unique opportunity to prevent Athens becoming invulnerable to siege—if they had really had a will to fight?

So the expedition of 458 or 457 does not seem to provide much evidence for a Spartan will to war. (Her failure to react to the Athenian domination of Boeotia after Oenophyta shows the reverse if she put value on Thebes as a counterweight to Athens, for which *cf.* Diod. xi 81.2.) Nor does that of 446. The chain of events which led to it began with the activity of Boeotian oligarchs who defeated a small Athenian force under Tolmides. The Boeotians freed themselves from Athens and probably gave encouragement to dissident Euboeans some of whom had been with them and now also rose in revolt. Subsequently anti-Athenian elements in Megara took action, killing many of the Athenian garrisons and inviting in Corinthians, Sicyonians and Epidaurians.

In all this there is no evidence that Sparta had any hand,³⁵ although the Corinthians and Megarians no doubt sent urgent requests for her to send a force to ensure Megarian freedom (there were still Athenian garrisons at Nisaea and, presumably, Pegae). All those who were in revolt no doubt also hoped that a League army might be able to exert decisive pressure on Pericles to accede to crippling peace terms. The hawks at Sparta would share those hopes, whilst their opponents no doubt saw that an intervention would enable Sparta to press Athens at last to accept a peace if the terms were not too stringent. Such terms would not please the hawks nor Sparta's allies, any more than in 421 or 404. For different reasons, therefore, both groups would favour an expedition. Eventually the Spartans with a League army crossed the Attic frontier, but soon halted and returned. As Pleistoanax and Cleandridas were punished severely it might seem that this was an example of a king using his powers in the field to carry out a policy contrary to general Spartan feeling. But it would have been possible for the Spartans to order the army back into action, as they did with King Agis in 418 after he had missed one opportunity against the Argives. They did not do so in 446 and they subsequently accepted peace terms which were in essence highly favourable to Athens and disastrous for Corinth and Aegina. Athens made territorial concessions which looked impressive on paper, and therefore helped to save Sparta's face, but which were largely meaningless. Athenian strategy henceforward was to renounce territorial aggrandisement and to concentrate on sea-power, so the abandonment of land bases was of no consequence to Athens. But Athens ensured its control of the seas by its retention of the base at Naupactus and of Aegina as a tribute-paying member of the League. As Corinth and her local allies had fought fiercely to prevent Aegina falling into Athenian hands and the Messenian-held base at Naupactus was an affront to Sparta and a threat to Corinth, this was a signal triumph. It should also be noted that Athens was not required to make any concessions about her empire and was indeed tightening her control in Euboea as a consequence of the revolt. The specific confirmation of Aegina's status as a tribute-paying member together with the general principle which the Corinthians stated in the Corcyra debate—that each state should have the right to discipline its allies—amount to an endorsement of the Athenian hegemony by the Spartans. It is clear that the hawkish feelings shown on other occasions both before and after were not predominant in Sparta at this time. As de Ste. Croix rightly points out, the peace-terms had to get through the Spartan assembly and the League Congress.³⁶ We may

³⁵ De Ste. Croix *op. cit.* 197, following Busolt, suggests that the revolts must surely have been concerted with the Spartans but there is nothing in the evidence to support this. Gomme in commenting on i 114.1 speculates about local grievances in Euboea and notes the presence of Euboeans in Boeotia. No doubt there was co-operation between these groups as between Corinth and Megara. But no Spartan

force was at hand to help the Megarians, only the local allies who had been involved in the affairs of Megara 460–57. Co-ordination from Sparta is a guess which depends on the prior assumption that Sparta was belligerent, which is precisely the point at issue.

³⁶ *Op. cit.* 198.

conjecture that Sparta had to work hard to get a majority in the League Congress for such terms, but she succeeded, as she did not in 421.

Thus the two active interventions of Sparta, far from contravening the general passivity of her conduct in the First Peloponnesian War, rather tend to confirm it. Her expedition to Delphi in about 448 to remove Phocian control illustrates the same point, since when Athens undid Sparta's arrangements the situation was accepted by Sparta.³⁷ Even attacks on Laconia itself did not lead to active reprisals.

De Ste. Croix has argued that Spartan inactivity was due to the great difficulty of getting through the Athenian garrisons of Mount Geraneia. But, as has been noted, the Corinthians and their local allies had succeeded in doing this when they invaded the Megarid, so a full Peloponnesian force should have been able to do the same if it really wished. The reluctance of the Peloponnesian army to make the attempt on its return from Phocis must be attributed more to a desire to avoid a direct conflict with Athens than to military factors.³⁸

That Sparta was unwilling to make war is surely shown also by her failure to act against Argos, especially after Argive participation at Tanagra. If she were really eager to fight and was merely frustrated by the Athenian control of Mount Geraneia why did she not lead the League army against Argos, which was not so protected? This was her strategy when she was confronted by Athens and Argos again after 420, and it led to a great triumph. In the first Peloponnesian War she was in a stronger position, as Elis and Mantinea were within the League. If it is thought that the Battle of Oenoe is the answer to this question, it does not seem to be very adequate. If there really was such a battle, it seems to have been on a small scale and not the action of a full League army such as one would expect. It might have been a surreptitious attempt to collaborate with Argive traitors, as has recently been suggested,³⁹ but if so its failure might have been expected to be followed by a massive open invasion to knock out Athens' ally. Athens would have had to leave Argos to succumb or else send a force and thus provide the Spartans with the chance to get at her enemy in spite of Geraneia. An expedition to Achaea after Athens' intervention there would also have been feasible.

The absence of any such attempts, the conduct of their forces when they were actually in a position to exert pressure (after Tanagra and in 446) together with the nature of the Peace terms, all seem to suggest that Sparta was most reluctant to fight Athens. That a state of war between Athens and the Peloponnesian League was in existence before 451 is clear, because of the truce of that year.⁴⁰ But it would seem most likely that it was brought into existence by Athens' attack on the Peloponnesian army on Boeotian soil at Tanagra.⁴¹

³⁷ The same is true of her acceptance of Athens' rearrangement of the affairs of Boeotia after Oenophyta.

³⁸ De Ste. Croix *op. cit.* 191 says 'And the very fact that no Peloponnesian army attempted again to cross the Megarid in either direction, as far as we know, whereas immediately Megara returned to her Spartan allegiance in 446 the Peloponnesians invaded Attica through the Isthmus, is very strong circumstantial evidence that the Megarid could be held firmly enough to make a Peloponnesian expedition through it too hazardous.' But this argument of course involves a *petitio principii*. The conclusion only follows if we assume a Spartan desire to invade Attica.

³⁹ A. Andrewes in *The Ancient Historian and his Materials* ed. B. Levick (1975) 9 ff. The exploit of the distinguished Spartiate Aneristos who took Haliëis with a well-manned merchant ship may represent a response to an appeal from a pro-Spartan group in the city when threatened by Athens early in the war, but hardly shows official Spartan initiative (Hdt. vii 137).

⁴⁰ A word is perhaps required about the back-

ground of this truce. The willingness of the Spartans to participate in it is not surprising if their attitude is correctly depicted in this paper. The Athenian attitude is presumably due to the revival of interest in the Persian War which accompanied the return of Cimon from ostracism. (Thuc. i 112.1-4, Plut. *Cimon* 18.1-5). If Cimon had lived he would no doubt have hoped to turn the truce in due course into a peace, and the Spartans would have shared this hope. The peace which Argos made with Sparta at this time was no doubt due to disappointment at the poor results of their alliance with Athens. They had been dragged into Athens' enterprise in Boeotia but had received little help in their own ambitions. Oenoe was at the best a small-scale affair and Thyreatis remained in Spartan hands.

⁴¹ There could hardly be any way of 'overlooking' this. Athens had no right to be in this part of Boeotia, only in the territory of Plataea. This presumably remains true even if Athens had been secretly encouraging anti-Theban pretensions in Tanagra (see n. 25) if there was no formal alliance. If Athens had had an *epimachia* with Tanagra her action might not have forced Sparta to regard herself

It was a war which Sparta did not want and which she chose not to pursue. Even the invasion of 446 may well have been intended merely to exploit the situation created by the revolts in order to bring about the Peace which she had wanted all along.

That this was the attitude of most Spartans most of the time during this period need not surprise us. The idea that Athens and Sparta should exercise dual hegemony over Greece had considerable appeal and provided definite advantages for Sparta as well as Athens. There were 'professional' anti-Athenians at Sparta at all times, as there were 'professional' pro-Athenians. The large majority of Spartans would not be permanently committed to either group but would be influenced by general reluctance to get involved in matters outside the Peloponnese and by the circumstances of the time. They would only occasionally swing into a 'hawkish' mood under the influence of an aggressive king (such as Cleomenes I or Agesilaus) or of some startling event (Thasos, Samos, Potidaea).⁴² It does not seem that the dismissal of Cimon and his troops from Ithome is evidence of such a mood, as has already been argued.

It should be noted that the two kings in the first Peloponnesian War seem both to have been for peace. Archidamus appears to have taken no active part in spite of his military experience and the prestige he apparently won in the events of 465-3,⁴³ and Pleistoanax clearly contributed to the making of the Peace. Both, at a latter date, showed no enthusiasm for the war of 431-21. De Ste. Croix says of the vote for war in 432 'I know of no parallel to this overruling of a king who was the leading Spartan of his day, except perhaps in 440'.⁴⁴ If Sparta did in fact declare war in 460 it seems that this would be another such case, but my argument is that war was in fact forced on Sparta against her will and was consequently not prosecuted by her in any active way at all.

It is, perhaps, desirable to add some comments on those explanations of Spartan conduct between 461 and 445 which attribute her relative inactivity to weakness or preoccupation. Those who stress her weakness during this period take the view that she had suffered heavy casualties in the earthquake and the helot revolt and was therefore incapable of fulfilling her responsibilities as hegemon of the League even though she had declared war. There seem to be several difficulties in this view. In 458 or 457 Sparta was able to produce 1,500 of her own men for the expedition to Doris, and this is a very substantial force compared with her later contributions to League armies.⁴⁵ Moreover, she could have assumed command of a League army even if she did not make a very large contribution of manpower herself. Finally, it is very odd that she should have declared war in the first place if she knew that she was not going to take part in it. It would inevitably mean that leadership would pass to Corinth and Sparta would lose face.

The 'preoccupation' theory would refer to a continuing siege of Ithome till *c.* 456. If King Archidamus and a substantial body of troops were tied up at Ithome until 456 it might

as at war. In any case, the attack on the Laconian shipyards by Tolmides (Thuc. i 108.5) would have produced this effect shortly afterwards. Such an overt act of aggression could hardly have been treated as were the raids from Pylos after the Peace of Nicias.

⁴² It is here conceded that the promises of help to the Thasians and Potidaeans were in fact resolutions of the Spartan assembly (although the former is said by Thucydides (i 101.2) to have been kept secret from the Athenians), and that the convening of the congress of allies by Sparta over Samos at least shows that she was willing to consider war. Some scholars have thought that the promises may have only been made by Spartan officials who may have genuinely thought that they could get them honoured, and convinced the Thasians and Potidaeans of this. Thucydides might well have got his information about the promises from sources in Thasos and Potidaea, where they would have been eagerly credited (*cf. και ἐμελλον* in Thucydides *loc. cit.*).

But no such explanation will meet the case of Samos. Unless the Corinthian story of the congress is totally rejected it must be agreed that at least this one case of a sudden switch in the Spartan attitude is established, and therefore the other two may be credited, though they are by no means certain, and no explanation is provided of the failure to help Potidaea promptly.

⁴³ Plut. *Cimon* 16. 4-7. Diodorus xi 63.5-7.

⁴⁴ *Op. cit.* 143.

⁴⁵ It might be suggested that Sparta could have been capable of an isolated big effort but not of a sustained one. The reply could be that one would have expected the isolated big effort to have come over Aegina before the Doris issue arose. More seriously, the question is merely whether Sparta possessed enough troops (as she clearly did). Her expeditions cost her nothing economically and could be repeated without difficulty, as they were in the Archidamian War.

help to explain Sparta's passivity down to that date. But it is still difficult to explain the large force sent to Doris. If it could be made available for that expedition surely it could be employed on the urgent task of rescuing Aegina from conquest by Athens? Moreover, if preoccupation with the siege is the correct explanation why did a spate of activity not follow the termination of the siege? It is difficult to think that this explanation is any more acceptable than that of weakness.

If these ways of accounting for Spartan inactivity fail and if the problem of Mount Geraneia does not seem quite enough to explain Spartan inactivity in the Megarid and is quite irrelevant to the immunity of Argos, then it might seem that a solution of the problem in political terms is required. It has been suggested here that there were always some hawks in Sparta and strong outbreaks of hawkishness might seize the majority of Spartans at moments of stress. But these moments tend to be fleeting and intrude into a fairly steady tradition of live-and-let-live towards Athens. We need not attribute this attitude to the lobbying of Spartans who admired the Athenian way of life, as was the case with the Spartan way of life for Athenian Laconisers. It is no doubt partly due to caution in dealing with a power whose strength lay in areas so different from, and so invulnerable to, Spartan resources, but also to a pragmatic acceptance of co-hegemony. After the Persian War Sparta had shown her reluctance to undertake effective responsibility for Ionia and the Aegean, and could hardly refuse to allow Athens to accept it. As Thucydides observed,⁴⁶ they saw that the Athenians were better suited for the task than they, and were also well-disposed towards them. The hawks at Sparta who had tried to prevent the re-building of the walls of Athens were no doubt also behind the debate reported by Diodorus⁴⁷ in which the Athenian hegemony was denounced. But if they had succeeded Sparta would sooner or later have displayed her inadequacy as a protector and her attitude would have been revealed as selfish and contrary to the anti-Persian cause.

As it turned out, the price for Athens' co-hegemony and responsibility in Asia and the Aegean proved to be a high one—the development of the ἀρχή. But Athenian leaders could argue that the Ionians needed tough discipline if they were to be a solid bulwark against Persia and this argument clearly prevailed when the Thirty Years Peace was concluded, even though Naxos and Thasos had provided nasty shocks. The argument still retained force even when Athens under Pericles clearly ceased to be well-disposed to Sparta. After all, the effective protection of Ionia and the Aegean still continued and Cimon was re-elected general as soon as he returned from ostracism. Even after his death there was still the possibility that Pericles would die or lose favour and that Thucydides son of Melesias or another would take up Cimon's policy. This is the policy to which Cimon referred in his famous speech in support of the Athenian expedition to Ithome when he talked of Athens and Sparta as the yoke-fellows of Greece.⁴⁸ Sparta wished to keep close control of the Peloponnese together with a looser supervision of central Greece, such as she attempted in 478–6, briefly succeeded in achieving in 457 and satisfactorily accomplished after the Athenian defeat at Coroneia. The Athenian violation of the Peloponnese and reorganisation of Central Greece during the First Peloponnesian War were a severe blow to the system but it was restored by the Thirty Years' Peace even after Cimon's death. The prudence of this attitude is demonstrated by the betrayal of Ionia and the damage to the Spartan way of life which resulted from her final abandonment of the system after 412.

Trinity College, Oxford

A. J. HOLLADAY

⁴⁶ i 95.7.

⁴⁷ xi.50.

⁴⁸ Plut. *Cimon* 16.8.