

Nabis and Flamininus on the Argive Revolutions of 198 and 197 B.C.

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IN THE SUMMER of 195 B.C. T. Quinctius Flamininus and the Greek allies of Rome went to war against Nabis of Sparta. The official cause of the war was Nabis' continued occupation of Argos, the great city of the northeastern Peloponnese.¹ A strong case can be made that the liberation of Argos was indeed the crucial and sincere goal of the war,² although the reasons for demanding Nabis' withdrawal from Argos may have been somewhat more complex.³ Nabis was soon blockaded in Sparta itself and decided to open negotiations for peace. Livy 34.31f provides us with a detailed account of the subsequent encounter between Nabis and Flamininus in the form of a debate over the justice of the war, characterized by contradictory assertions about the history of Sparta's relations with Rome and the recent history of Argos. Despite the acrimony, a preliminary peace agreement was reached but was soon overturned by popular resistance to it in Sparta. So the war continued, with an eventual Roman

¹ Cf. esp. Liv. 34.22.10–12, 24.4, 32.4f.

² See now E. S. GRUEN, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome II* (Berkeley/Los Angeles [hereafter 'Gruen']) 450–55, who finds the propaganda of this war, with its consistent emphasis on the liberation of Argos as a matter of honor both for Rome and for Flamininus, likely to have some basis in fact.

³ With Roman-Aetolian relations in decline, the Achaean League had become central to Roman arrangements in southern Greece, and Argos was a special concern of the Achaeans. It was possible to see Spartan expansion under Nabis (including his occupation of Argos) as a threat to Achaea and to stability in the Peloponnese: that is the tradition in Liv. 33.44.5–9, accepted even by W. V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome* (Oxford 1979) 218. Moreover, Flamininus, the Roman commander in Greece, had close personal relations with Aristaenus, *strategos* of the Achaean League in 195, and the Senate had left the decision for war to Flamininus (Liv. 35.45.2–4; cf. Just. 31.1.6; on the apparent contradiction at Liv. 34.22.5 see G. de Sanctis, *Storia dei Romani* IV.1 [Turin 1923] 105 and n.209, who has generally been followed). On the close coöperation of Flamininus and Aristaenus in 195 see Liv. 34.26.4–8, 33.1f. Aristaenus later made a dedication honoring Flamininus and his ἀπερτή: J. Bousquet, *BCH* 88 (1964) 607–09 [Moretti, *I.stor.ellen.* I 37]. The various other subsidiary reasons sometimes adduced by scholars for the war of 195 are all implausible: see Gruen 450–53.

victory that left Nabis in control of only a reduced area around Sparta.⁴

The debate between Nabis and Flamininus in 195 was recorded in Book 19 of Polybius' *Histories*.⁵ We do not have this version of the debate, only Livy's, and the question of his relationship to the original Polybian text is difficult. Livy 34.31f is rife with characteristic rhetoric (including outright Ciceronian language), and it may be that Livy has misunderstood some of the complex legal history at issue—a confusion that finds expression in the speeches he provides.⁶ But there seems little reason to doubt that the general thrust of the debate follows that in Polybius,⁷ and this will be our primary concern.

Most scholars have argued that in this debate Nabis gets the better of the Roman commander, whose arguments on the justice of the war appear to be factually weak.⁸ Recently, however, D. Mendels has argued that both Nabis and Flamininus make good points and are often merely interpreting the same facts differently.⁹ By contrast, the purpose of the present paper is to suggest that at least in regard to Argos both Nabis and Flamininus are guilty of distortions of the past: or rather, what they say is not congruent with the previous narrative of Argive events.¹⁰ On the other hand, Flamininus' *general* depiction of Nabis' rule at Argos as violent and lawless is far more in keeping with

⁴ For discussion of the terms of the final peace of 195 see A. AYMARD, *Les premiers rapports de Rome et de la confédération achaienne* (Bordeaux 1938 [hereafter 'Aymard']) 229–34.

⁵ Cf. F. W. WALBANK, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius III* (Oxford 1979 [hereafter 'Walbank']) 1. Polybius' sources for the colloquy were probably—directly or indirectly—prominent Achaean eye-witnesses. On Polybius' strictures about reporting in speeches what was actually said (with editing to include only the most important points) see P. PÉDECH, *La méthode historique de Polybe* (Paris 1964 [hereafter 'Pédech']) 245–59; cf. n.53 *infra*.

⁶ On the Livian rhetoric of 34.31f see J. BRISCOE, *A Commentary on Livy, Books XXXIV–XXXVII* (Oxford 1981 [hereafter 'Briscoe']) 98f; for possible confusion on the issues, especially at 34.32.2, see 101.

⁷ Cf. Briscoe 98, Aymard 221f, Pédech 287, and, in general, H. NISSEN, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die Quellen der vierten und fünften Dekade des Livius* (Berlin 1863) 159f.

⁸ See A. HEUSS, *Die völkerrechtlichen Grundlagen der römischen Aussenpolitik in republikanischer Zeit* (=Klio Beih. 31 [1933]) 44f; Aymard 222f; Pédech 287; P. OLIVA, *Sparta and her Social Problems* (Amsterdam/Prague 1971 [hereafter 'Oliva']) 291; J.-G. TEXIER, *Nabis* (Paris 1975 [hereafter 'Texier']) 80–82; Briscoe 101; Gruen 454 (as far as legalities went).

⁹ D. MENDELS, "A Note on the Speeches of Nabis and T. Quinctius Flamininus," *ScrClasIsr* 4 (1978 [hereafter 'Mendels']) 38f.

¹⁰ The basic evidence for political developments in Argos from autumn 198 onwards is the narrative in Livy (32.25, 38–40; 34.25, 40–41.7). Apart from this there is only a single fragment of Polybius' original account (18.17) plus *Syll.*³ 594 (both discussed below). The most detailed modern commentaries are Aymard 123–48, 216f, 248–51, and Texier 45f, 73–75.

the previous (Polybian) narrative than is Nabis' own claim that the Argives willingly submitted to his control. In effect Polybius (with Livy following suit) portrayed Nabis as the greater liar regarding Argos' recent history. This may go at least some distance towards balancing Flamininus' own weaknesses of argumentation elsewhere in the colloquy. What is at stake here is partly our understanding of Polybius' characterizations of Flamininus and of Nabis, and partly also our understanding of Polybius' attitude towards the Argive political convulsions of the early 190's, about which not enough is usually said.

The history of Argos during the previous five years had been complicated. At the beginning of the Second Macedonian War (autumn 200), Argos was a member of the Achaean League. In autumn 198, however, the Achaeans changed political course: earlier benevolently neutral towards Philip V in his new war with Rome, the League now adopted a policy of aiding the Romans against Philip. This was a controversial decision, and one result was the secession of Argos from the League, for the Argives had especially close ties with Macedon. The Achaean garrison was expelled, a Macedonian one (from Corinth) invited in. Philip was at first content to take Argos into his control; but as his general strategic situation worsened, he realized that it would be extremely difficult for him to hold on to the city. So he entered into an odd arrangement with Nabis of Sparta (who was himself already at war with Achaea): Nabis would assume control of Argos for Philip until it became convenient for the Macedonian to take the city back again. Philip may have hoped that Nabis would thus provide Argos with protection against the Achaeans and Rome—protection he himself could not provide—while keeping the Achaeans so distracted in the Peloponnese that they would be unable to assist Rome's expected offensive in central Greece. But once Nabis had gained control of Argos (winter 198/7), he immediately negotiated a truce with Achaea and an alliance with Rome. Indeed, he provided troops to Flamininus for the decisive campaign against Philip in 197. Nabis apparently hoped in this way to retain Argos permanently for himself. And at first he seemed to have won: neither the Isthmian declaration of 196 regarding the "freedom of the Greeks" nor the subsequent Roman diplomatic settlement made any mention of Argos, and this seemed to confirm Nabis' possession of the city. Then suddenly, in 195, Nabis' occupation of Argos became a *casus belli* with Rome.¹¹

¹¹ It is evident from his speech in Liv. 34.31 that Nabis believed the Romans had

At the colloquy before Sparta, Nabis stresses that Argos had been under his control when he joined the Roman side (winter 198/7): Flamininus had had no objection then (Liv. 34.31.8–10)—an assertion in keeping with the previous narrative. Indeed, Polybius evidently depicted Flamininus as having been so eager to gain Nabis as an ally that he disregarded Nabis' gross violation of diplomatic protocol at the Mycenae conference, where the alliance was concluded, and disregarded as well Attalus of Pergamum's complaints at that time specifically about Nabis' occupation of Argos (*cf.* Liv. 32.39.1–40.2). At 34.32 Flamininus does not even attempt to answer Nabis' claim regarding his previous diplomacy (an argument that, of course, implies that the war of 195 was unjust). Indeed, as far as it goes, the argument seems unanswerable.¹²

Second, Nabis stresses that Flamininus has no business posing as champion of the Argives against him, because Nabis took over Argos when the city was in fact an enemy of Rome: *non vestram urbem, sed hostium . . . accepi* (34.31.9). The Argives had sided with Philip in the autumn of 198, rebelling against the Achaean League. Nabis is making two points here: when he took over Argos from Philip in winter 198/7 he was scarcely harming Roman interests; and it is hypocritical for the Romans to use his possession of an enemy of theirs as a reason for war against him now. As with Nabis' first argument, his historical assertion about the position of Argos in 198 is consistent with the story presented in the previous narrative; Polybius evidently depicted him as telling the truth.¹³

Flamininus does reply to these arguments. First, he asserts that whatever grievances Rome might have against the Argives are not Nabis' concern: *ne nostram vicem irascaris* (34.32.6). This *bon mot* is typical of Flamininus' character as Polybius has previously presented it, and it is likely that something of the kind stood in the original Polybian text.¹⁴ But Flamininus' joke here obviously carries no weight as a reply to Nabis' serious accusation of Roman hypocrisy. He does

come to acquiesce in his possession of Argos. On the absence of any mention of the city in the Isthmian declaration see U. Schlag, *Regnum in senatu: Das Wirken römischer Staatsmänner von 200 bis 191 v. Chr.* (Stuttgart 1968) 94.

¹² See the recent comment of Gruen: 454 and n.96. This is the *communis opinio* (*supra* n.8). Nevertheless, as Gruen (450) points out, the wartime agreement between Flamininus and Nabis had actually left Nabis' claim to Argos in abeyance (*cf.* esp. Liv. 32.40.4), and no explicit juridical sanction had ever been given.

¹³ For the background to the Argive revolution of autumn 198 and the purpose of the revolution, *cf.* Liv. 32.19–25 (clearly based on Polybius: see n.16 *infra*).

¹⁴ For earlier examples of Flamininus' quick and ironical style of diplomatic discourse see Polyb. 18.7.5f (at Nicaea in 198), 18.34.10 (at Tempe in 197).

go on, however, to offer a more serious challenge to Nabis' version of Argive history, arguing that the Argive people are in fact innocent of anti-Roman behavior: he has good evidence that the pro-Macedonian revolution of autumn 198 was merely the work of two or at most three men, not the Argives as a whole (34.32.6). The assertion of the general innocence of the Argives is repeated at 34.32.8: they did not go over to Macedon *publico consilio*.¹⁵ The implication is that Argive innocence of anti-Roman behavior in the past gives Rome a stronger moral right now to act as Argos' champion against Nabis.

Flamininus' version of the Argive revolution of 198 does not, however, agree with the main impression left by the previous narrative. A detailed account of the revolution is found in Livy 32.25; its derivation from Polybian material was established long ago.¹⁶ It appears clear, as Flamininus maintains, that the pro-Macedonian movement began as a plot among certain members of the Argive aristocracy (25.1, *quidam principes*) and that the Macedonian general Philocles took over Argos by what was, in effect, a *coup de main* (25.5–10). But it is equally clear that Flamininus has omitted a major factor in the revolution, namely, the strong support it received from the mass of the Argive people. Livy 25.1 implies that the *principes* would never have acted if they had not known the sentiments of the *plebs*. The pro-Philip demonstration that set off the revolution began with the *multitudo*, who shouted Philip's name (25.3). And though this demonstration was apparently egged on by pro-Macedonians (*subicientium*: are these agents of the *principes*?), the demonstrations also met with *ingens consensus* (25.4). It was this show of sentiment that led the *principes* to summon Philip's general Philocles (25.5). That the mass of the Argive citizenry supported Philocles was made clear to the Achaean garrison and its commander (25.7), and the commander was prevailed upon to withdraw the garrison when he saw the Argives, in arms, joining the Macedonians *magno agmine* (25.8–10).

As one reads Livy 32.25, then, the dominant impression is that although the revolution of autumn 198 was indeed organized by a few men, they had the staunch and active support of the Argive people.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Satis compertum habemus duorum aut summum trium in ea re, non civitatis culpam esse* (34.32.6); *Argivis, qui insontes publici consilii sint* (34.32.8).

¹⁶ See Nissen (*supra* n.7) 134–38; cf. Briscoe 1–3.

¹⁷ Those Argives who joined the Macedonians in arms (32.25.8) may perhaps be perceived as 'bourgeois', since they could afford weaponry. But this does not mean that the revolution in Argos was limited to the Argive bourgeoisie, as Livy's references to the *plebs* (25.1) and the *multitudo* (25.3) make clear. For the revolution of autumn 198 as a mass movement cf. J. Deininger, *Der politische Widerstand gegen Rom in Griechenland, 217–86 v. Chr.* (Berlin/New York 1971) 46f; Texier 46f.

It is conceivable that Flamininus received his somewhat different impression of the revolution of 198 from the Argive exiles in his camp; but this is highly speculative, and the reader is certainly not told that this is the case.¹⁸ It therefore looks as if Polybius (followed by Livy) intended to depict Flamininus in 195 as guilty of distorting the character of the revolution by omission. That is, although what Flamininus says about 198 is true enough, he denies (or at least avoids) the participation of the vast majority of the Argives—and he does this apparently to win a debating point with Nabis.¹⁹

So far, our reconstruction of the debate between Nabis and Flamininus over Argive history tends to support the traditional view of the colloquy as a whole, *i.e.*, that Nabis has much the best of it. But in the course of his speech Nabis adds yet a third argument that allows Flamininus in turn to launch a concentrated attack on the nature of Nabis' regime. The attack not only reveals Nabis' own distortions of Argive history, but also serves to remind the reader of the terrible man with whom Flamininus is dealing. The result is that Flamininus' moral position is greatly strengthened, at least in the Livian version of the debate.

But what of the Polybian version? Nabis' third argument is that the Argives had invited him into their city and accepted him willingly: *nam et ipsis vocantibus ac tradentibus urbem eam accepi* (34.31.7); *quod volentem, non vi coactam, accepi* (31.9). There is no reason for Flamininus and his allies to wish to 'liberate' Argos, no need of it, and thus the war is unjust from this perspective also. Nabis has already been depicted as making the same claim about his invitation into Argos in his response to Attalus' complaints at Mycenae in 197 (32.40.1: *ille ab ipsis Argivis se defenderet accitum*). The consistency of this passage with Nabis' later claims of Argive willingness seems to guarantee that Livy has not invented these latter assertions for the purpose of the debate, but that 32.40 and 34.31 both reflect an important motif that stood in the original Polybian text. Furthermore, if Nabis made such claims about Argive willingness in the Polybian version of the debate, it follows that Flamininus made some reply—*prima facie*, a reply similar in theme to what we find in Livy 34.32.

¹⁸ On these exiles see 34.25.14. That they provided Flamininus with new 'information' (obviously self-serving) on the revolution of 198 might be inferred from Flamininus' remark, *satis compertum habemus* (34.32.6), if this is more than mere bluster.

¹⁹ The distortion here is noted briefly by Briscoe 102. Flamininus' public position greatly limiting Argive guilt for 198 may nevertheless have had important political repercussions for the Argive state that emerged from the events of 195 (see 224f *infra*).

Indeed, Flamininus' characterization here of Nabis' regime is altogether consonant with Polybius' own general description of the Spartans (see *infra*), as well as with the one Polybian fragment we possess on Nabian Argos (18.17). It follows that Flamininus' reply to Nabis in Livy 34.32 is basically Polybian, and thus that Polybius himself, on the question of Argive willingness, presented Flamininus with a powerful moral position in the debate.

Often, however, scholars have interpreted our evidence for events at Argos as an indication that Nabis' assertion of Argive willingness is, in fact, fairly convincing. This is the question we must now address: does Nabis' claim in any way conform to the previous narrative? I think it does not. In this case, it follows that Livy (and Polybius) intended the reader to believe that Nabis, in this respect, was a liar. A separate question concerns the actual situation in the city: whatever the import of the literary narrative, *was* Nabis a liar in asserting Argive willingness to accept his control? Unfortunately, except on one specific point, we can only approach Nabian Argos through that same literary narrative (Livy/Polybius), and it is disturbingly clear that both historians disliked Nabis and his policies. Yet we have seen that the previous narrative supports some of Nabis' claims concerning Flamininus' earlier diplomacy and about Argos itself in autumn 198. On the one point where contemporary documentation is available, it is (as we shall see) perfectly consistent with what the literary sources tell us. It would therefore seem foolhardy to attempt to 'save' Nabis by assuming that Livy (and Polybius) are presenting a grotesquely false picture of Argos under Nabis' rule. In what follows I am mostly concerned with comparing the previous narrative with what Nabis says at Livy 34.31; but I will have suggestions regarding the actual situation within the city.

Mendels has recently followed Aymard in suggesting that Nabis' rule in Argos was ratified by an Argive assembly as soon as he was in control of the city, or perhaps a bit later, after the destruction of the power of the *principes* and the passage of land and debt reforms by the Argive assembly referred to at Livy 32.38.9.²⁰ Somewhat similarly, Texier (55) suggests that Nabis was anxious to have his regime legitimated by the Argives, and had an assembly proclaim him king of Argos about the time of the passage of the social and economic re-

²⁰ Mendels 40f; *cf.* Aymard 138 and n.20. Aymard's argument is that such an Argive vote "est indispensable pour expliquer, dans la mesure au elles peuvent l'être, les affirmations postérieures de Nabis (Liv. XXXII.40.1; XXXIV.31.7)."

forms. On these grounds, one might conclude that Nabis' later claims about an 'invitation' into Argos had some basis in (legal) fact.²¹

In response, one can only say that the actual tendency of the ancient testimony is in the opposite direction. We have no mention of any Argive assembly that sanctioned Nabis' rule following his takeover of the city or at any other time. The alleged assembly immediately after Nabis' coup is a purely hypothetical construct of Aymard, on the assumption that Nabis as depicted in Livy 34.31 is not a liar.²² Mendels (40 n.12) suggests that Livy, eager to depict Nabis as a usurper in Book 32, has dropped such an assembly-meeting from the narrative he found in Polybius. But we know, thanks especially to Mendels' own work, just how much Polybius despised Nabis and his policies.²³ It therefore seems more likely that Livy, in failing to mention a legitimating assembly at Argos, was simply following Polybius; and that if Polybius had information about such an assembly (which is, of course, uncertain), he passed over it in silence, thus providing no support for Nabis' claim to popularity in the subsequent debate with Flamininus in 195.

Indeed, the emphasis in Livy is precisely that Nabis was *not* invited into a willing Argos. We are told that while Macedon still controlled the city, it was suggested to the Argives (evidently by the garrison commander Philocles) that they invite Nabis of Sparta to come to their aid. This was after the deal struck between Nabis and Philip (32.38.4). But the response of the Argives, meeting in assembly, was negative in the extreme: *non aspernatos modo sed abominatos etiam nomen tyranni* (38.5.). Livy goes on to say that this insulting Argive response so angered Nabis that whereas before he had been somewhat hesitant about taking over the city, now he became eager to despoil it. The result was the nighttime seizure of Argos by a Spartan coup organized with the help of Philocles (38.6).

This account clearly contradicts Nabis' assertions in 195. Some scholars have attempted to resolve the problem by suggesting that the assembly that rejected Nabis was unrepresentative of real Argive public opinion: those attending the assembly were merely the bourgeoisie (Aymard 135) or the well-to-do.²⁴ But Livy specifically says that the assembly was a crowded one (*frequenti contione*, 32.38.5) and that the subsequent coup occurred without the knowledge of any of the Ar-

²¹ Cf. Mendels 41.

²² Aymard 138 n.20. Even Aymard betrays some doubt (*supra* n.20).

²³ See Mendels' useful paper, "Polybius, Nabis, and Equality," *Athenaeum* 57 (1979) 311–33.

²⁴ Oliva 285f; Mendels 40 n.13.

gives themselves (*nocte ignaribus omnibus*, 32.38.6). In light of the previous long history of bitter relations between Argos and Sparta, none of this is unbelievable; thus Texier (52) accepts the likelihood that originally all classes in Argos opposed the arrival of Nabis. That, at any rate, is clearly what a reader of Livy was supposed to think.

Something very much like this narrative must have appeared in Polybius 18.²⁵ The colloquy at Sparta in 195 appeared in Polybius 19.²⁶ Surely Polybius therefore expected any reader, when confronted in Book 19 with Nabis' claims of having been invited into a willing Argos, to remember the narrative of the previous book and thus conclude that Nabis was lying—that his claim here had no basis in fact.

The same holds true even more for Nabis' similar claims when confronted by Attalus at Mycenae in early 197 (Liv. 32.40.1). Attalus' charge that Nabis is holding by force a city betrayed to him by the guile of Philocles (*cum fraude Philoclis proditam urbem vi ab eo teneri argueret*) is completely in keeping with the narrative immediately preceding (*cf.* 38.1–6); it is Nabis' denial of the charge (40.1: *ille ab ipsis Argivis se defenderet accitum*) that is not. Livy then adds that at Mycenae Nabis in fact refused to allow the Argives to hold a *libera contio* (*i.e.*, an assembly without the presence of Spartan troops), despite Attalus' suggestion that this would be the best way to find out the actual sentiments of the Argives (40.2). The scene at Mycenae appeared in Polybius 18, immediately after the account of Nabis' coup itself. Surely Polybius here intended to depict Nabis as a liar about his 'invitation' into Argos already in 197. It appears that Polybius has Nabis repeat that lie to Flamininus in 195, a book later (Liv. 34.31.7). And Livy depicts Flamininus in his own speech in 195 as taunting Nabis in precisely the same way as Attalus had at Mycenae in 197: a *libera contio* at Argos (or at Sparta itself) would reveal the true sentiments of the people, *i.e.*, their complaints about lawless despotism.²⁷ Attalus' call for a *libera contio* in 197 strongly suggests that Livy did not invent this motif for insertion into the debate of 195, but

²⁵ Nabis' seizure of Argos would have appeared after 18.11f, which describes the failure of Roman-Macedonian peace negotiations in winter 198/7 (it was only then that Philip decided to turn Argos over to Nabis: Liv. 32.38.1f), and before 18.16, which deals with events just after the Mycenae conference (*cf.* Liv. 32.40.8f). In turn, it is clear from 32.38–40 that in Polybius' narrative the conference at Mycenae occurred immediately after Nabis' seizure of Argos.

²⁶ The war of 195 must have occurred at some point in Book 19, for Book 20 is already dealing with the events of 192/1: *cf.* Walbank 1.

²⁷ 34.32.10: *exhibere liberam contionem vel Argis vel Lacedaemone, si audire iuvat vera dominationis impotentissime crimina*. . . . There follows discussion of Nabis' most recent "crimes" both at Argos and at Sparta (32.11).

that (again) he is drawing on a consistent Polybian theme. Thus neither Nabis' swift and secret seizure of power at Argos nor his persistent refusal to allow the Argive assembly a free voice is likely to have lent any credence to his claim—either in 197 or 195—that the Argives had invited him into their city.²⁸

A second argument sometimes brought forward to defend Nabis' claim of popularity in Argos is that he is telling the truth at least in the sense that his land and debt reforms (Liv. 32.38.9) soon led to broad support for him in the city. As Mendels expresses it (42), Nabis may thus have gained a legal sanction from “a *post factum*, ‘popular’ point of view”; and Texier (52, 55), while admitting the original reluctance of all classes at Argos to accept Nabis into the city, concludes that he soon won wide popularity. Behind these arguments lies the assumption that social and economic tensions between the classes at Argos were very deep and that these tensions were the crucial determinants of Argive political attitudes, overwhelming all other issues. Now, whatever the realities (on which see below), this is not what the ancient narratives indicate. At the very least, neither Polybius nor Livy expected their readers, in assessing Nabis' veracity in the debate of 195, to draw the conclusions that some modern scholars have drawn.

The first aspect to be emphasized is that Livy presents the Argives in both 198 and 197 as *unified*. There is broad unity among all classes on going over to Philip in autumn 198 (32.25), and there is again unity in the original Argive rejection of rule by Nabis in the assembly just before his coup (32.38.5). Indeed, these passages led Texier (46f) to wonder if the Argive *principes* might not be “moderates.” Perhaps they were; but the impression is not likely to be accidental.

Second, it is obvious that the major characteristic of Nabis' regime at Argos, as presented in Polybius 18 and Livy 32, was despotic violence, not social reform. In Livy the well-to-do are trapped in the city by Nabis' nighttime coup. Some manage to escape; their property is plundered by Nabis' troops (32.38.7). Those who do not manage to escape are forced to give up their cash assets to Nabis and to pay heavy fines or, if suspected of hiding any of those assets, are “punished and tortured like slaves” (38.8). There follows brief mention of Nabis' social legislation (38.9). Perhaps one should not make much of the hostile remarks Livy appends to this act: debt reform and land redistribution are *duas faces novantibus res ad plebem in optimates*

²⁸ Nabis' claim at Mycenae of an invitation from the Argives is rejected by K. M. T. Chrimes, *Ancient Sparta* (Manchester 1949) 28, and by H. E. Stier, *Roms Aufstieg zur Weltmacht und die griechische Welt* (Cologne 1957) 133.

accendendam; but if any implication is to be drawn, it might be that Livy's point (and Polybius') is that previously the situation in Argos had *not* been greatly 'inflamed' and that Nabis, for his own political purposes, was trying to inflame it. The accounts of Nabis' rule in Argos then continued, after the Mycenae conference and Attalus' obviously valid charges about Nabis' seizure of the city and the nature of his regime, with more tales of despotism. Here, finally, we have some Polybius extant. 18.17 describes how Nabis' wife came to Argos and far surpassed Nabis in cruelty (πολὺν κατὰ τὴν ὀμότητα Νάβιν ὑπερέθετο). She subjected the women of Argos to "every kind of outrage and cruelty" (πάν γένος αἰκίας καὶ βίας). Her purpose was not social revolution but simply to strip the women of Argos of their jewelry and finery and take it back to Sparta. At this point the Polybian narrative of the immediate consequences of Nabis' seizure of the city apparently came to an end (*cf.* the parallel Liv. 32.40.10f).

But would not the utter failure of Damocles' rebellion at Argos in summer 195 (Liv. 34.25) show readers that Nabis was in fact popular?²⁹ Livy offers an explicit gloss explaining the fiasco: it had nothing to do with Nabis' popularity, but rather with the strength of Nabis' garrison, combined with the premature exposure of the conspiracy. This meant that despite the presence of Flamininus' army nearby, the people within the walls of Argos had no hope of success in rallying to Damocles and his call to freedom from Nabis: *haud sane movit quemquam, quia nihil usquam spe propinquiae, nedum satis firmi praesidii cernebant* (25.10). This way of presenting the situation was obviously meant to give the impression that the Argives would have rebelled against Nabis' garrison if they could; but circumstances made this impossible. Indeed, to judge from the way Damocles himself is introduced into Livy's narrative (25.7, *adulescens maioris animi quam consilii*), it is likely that Polybius himself had his doubts about the wisdom of the attempted rebellion. But this hardly means that Polybius approved of Nabis.³⁰ In any case, the reader was clearly

²⁹ Aymard 216f, Oliva 289 n.4, Texier 74, and Mendels 40 n.13, all use the incident in this fashion.

³⁰ The close correlation between Livy's remark about Damocles at 34.25.7 and Polybius' own political philosophy would suggest that the remark in Livy is based on Polybian material. Polybius believed that the realities of power might require a politician to refrain from open opposition, no matter how distasteful the regime (or international hegemony); see A. M. Eckstein, "Polybius, Syracuse, and the Politics of Accommodation," *GRBS* 26 (1985) 265–82, esp. 281f. The disaster to Damocles and his followers, overwhelmed by the Spartan garrison (Liv. 34.25.11f), would have been a typical result, for Polybius, of irrational decision making: Damocles should have realistically assessed the situation and seen that the Spartan garrison was too strong.

steered away from drawing any implication from Damocles' failure that Nabis was actually popular in Argos.

The last finding is, in fact, consistent with the way the rest of the story of Argos is told. For according to Livy, once the bulk of Nabis' garrison was withdrawn from Argos to defend Lacedaemon itself from Flamininus (34.25.14), Nabis' regime at Argos was easily overthrown (40.5–7). Indeed, the narrative is explicit in stating that the reason the Argives now rose against Nabis was that they made light of the few soldiers left in the garrison (40.6, *contempta paucitate eorum qui in arce erant*). Under the leadership of one Archippus, therefore, the Argives banded together and ejected the Spartans. We are told that the commander of the Spartan garrison, Timocrates of Pellene, was given special safe passage by the Argives because of his previous *clementia* (40.6). Some scholars take this as a hint, in the tradition, indicating that the Spartans had in general ruled Argos with *clementia* throughout.³¹ But the inference is unjustified: the garrison commander before Timocrates was Nabis' relative Pythagoras, who is presented as a stern, even fanatical character. Thus if Timocrates received special consideration because of his kindnesses, this is an indication not that the Spartans had ruled Argos with *clementia*, but precisely the opposite.³² Livy depicts Argos as a city transported with joy, once the Spartans had gone (*cf.* 34.40.7, *hic laetitia*; 41.1, *laeta civitas*).

Conspicuous by its absence in Livy's account of Archippus' revolt is any attempt by the poorer Argives, the presumed core of Nabis' support, to rally to the Spartan garrison and defend Nabis' revolution.³³ This is all the more striking, given the nature of Archippus' new regime. It not only was pro-Roman but also restored Argos to the socially conservative Achaean League, and it meant the return to

³¹ Mendels 40 n.13.

³² The fierce character of Pythagoras is shown not merely by the quick destruction of Damocles and the purge that followed (34.25.22f), but also by his decision to burn part of Sparta itself in a (successful) effort to defeat Flamininus' assault (34.38f). This may give some indication of the sternness of Pythagoras' regime at Argos. Note, too, how fear of torture at Pythagoras' hands motivates Damocles' conspirators to act before they are caught (25.8f). Pythagoras was the brother of Nabis' wife (on whose cruelties at Argos see Polyb. 18.17) and was also Nabis' son-in-law. The reader has been carefully informed of this double relationship (34.25.5).

³³ Aymard (216 n.17) suggests that some of Nabis' garrison may themselves have been pro-Nabis Argives. There is no evidence for this idea, which is based on the assumption that the lower classes in Argos were fanatically committed to Nabis. Texier (88 n.139) also makes light of the ease with which Nabis' regime was overthrown, asserting that "les Argiens semblent avoir été fidèles jusqu'au bout à Nabis, et n'avoir modifié leur position que sous la pression de la nouvelle, absolument fausse, que Sparte était prise." That is not the way Livy (34.40.5f) presents matters.

many of at least some of the property confiscated by Nabis. The latter point had already been demanded by Flamininus at Sparta as part of his peace settlement (34.35.4), perhaps as a result of influence exercised over him by refugees from the Damocles disaster (*cf.* 34.35.12), men who now returned home (41.3). Since Flamininus had also gone out of his way to pardon most of the Argive *principes* for their participation in the original pro-Macedonian coup of 198 (34.32.7–9, discussed above), men who had been the special victims of Nabis in 197 (32.38.7, *principium*), it follows that these people too now returned home. In effect, Archippus' regime meant in good part a return to rule by the well-to-do.³⁴

It might be suggested that no one rallied to the Nabian garrison because his staunchest Argive supporters had already withdrawn with Pythagoras to defend Sparta itself. At Livy 34.29.14 some 2,000 Argives are depicted as arriving in Lacedaemon, and the most obvious way to read this passage is to assume that they are soldiers, not (as Weissenborn-Müller suggest) hostages: hence, some scholars assert, partisans of Nabis.³⁵ Is this a hint that Nabis had strong support in Argos? But after Archippus' revolution we find these men being welcomed back to Argos as warmly as the refugees from the Damocles disaster (34.41.2: *n.b. gaudium*). This strongly argues against the idea that these 2,000 had been fanatical adherents of Nabis' revolution, or that any reader was meant to take them as such. For men of this sort would hardly have been welcomed back into the Argos of Archippus, let alone with the same honor and emotion as the Damocles refugees.

Perhaps the best way to resolve the question of these 2,000 is to assume that their relationship with Nabis had in fact been somewhat ambiguous: they served in his forces (some willingly, others less so), but at the same time their presence with Nabis was also a guarantee of Argive good behavior. Such ambiguous situations involving 'allied' troops were not unknown in the Hellenistic age: scholars have suggested that the troops from the cities of Greece who served with Alexander's Asian expedition fulfilled a similar double function.³⁶ Niese long ago proposed something like this reconstruction of the Argive situation.³⁷

³⁴ *Cf.* Oliva 293, Mendels 40, neither with argument.

³⁵ W. Weissenborn, H. J. Müller, edd., *Titi Livi ab urbe condita libri VI* (Berlin 1962) *ad* 34.29.14. *Contra* Aymard 216 n.17 (with a strong case that the 2,000 were soldiers serving with Nabis). This is now generally accepted: *cf.* Oliva 291 n.2, Mendels 40 n.13, Briscoe 97. For the alleged corollary that the 2,000 were partisans of Nabis *cf.* Aymard 216 and n.17, Texier 75, Mendels 40 n.13.

³⁶ *Cf.* U. Wilcken, *Alexander the Great* (New York 1967) 76.

³⁷ B. Niese, *Geschichte der griechischen und makedonischen Staaten II* (Gotha 1899)

In any case, what is striking is how the unified Argos of Livy 32.25 (the rebellion to Philip in 198) and 32.38 (the rejection of Nabis in 197) reappears in 34.40f, at the end of the story, in 195. The theme of our sources on Nabis' rule in Argos is now, I think, clear. With consistency from beginning to end, these sources said (or implied) that Nabis' regime at Argos was unpopular: imposed by stealth and force upon an unwilling people, brutal and oppressive to many, appealing only to the worst men in the city, easily removed as soon as Nabis' garrison was withdrawn, to the unanimous joy of Argos. This narrative flatly contradicted Nabis' claim of popularity in his speech to Flamininus. Thus Polybius (followed by Livy) made Nabis out to be a liar: Argos, according to both, was enslaved.³⁸

Nor should we be surprised at the nature of the Nabian regime at Argos as Polybius evidently described it: the tortures, despoilings, and humiliations inflicted upon the citizenry. This is precisely how Polybius seems to have depicted Nabis in Sparta itself, from the beginning of his rule (*cf.* Polyb. 13.6f, with its discussion of Nabis' notorious torture-machine) down to 195 (the massacre of suspected opponents described in detail at Liv. 34.27.3–8). This last atrocity, occurring just before the colloquy with Flamininus, is introduced with a particularly savage gloss: *et ne quid intestini motus oreretur, metu et acerbitate poenarum tenebat animos, quoniam ut salvum tyrannum sperare non poterat* (27.3). This comment seems Polybian in tone; but in any case, no author, after such a statement, could have expected his readers to take seriously Nabis' claim of Argive (or Spartan) willingness to submit to his rule.³⁹ Conversely, when Flamininus in reply to Nabis chooses to spend half his speech castigating the hideous nature of Nabis' regime both in Argos and in Sparta (34.32.3–5 and 9–13: twenty-four lines out of fifty-four in the OCT), the author must therefore have expected his readers to nod in agreement.

For the purposes of this paper, the consistent themes of Argive unity and Nabian despotism and unpopularity, as they appear in the

660. The idea is discounted by Aymard (216 n.17) and Oliva (291 n.2), but see 228 *infra* on Syll.³ 594.

³⁸ *Cf.* Flamininus' words at Liv. 34.32.5: *Argos et Lacedaemonem, duas clarissimas urbes, lumina quondam Graeciae, sub pedibus tuis relinquemus, quae titulum nobis liberatae Graeciae servientes deformant?* And at 32.13: *at enim, ut iam ita sint haec, quid ad vos, Romani? hoc tu dicas liberantibus Graeciam? hoc iis qui, ut liberare possent, mare traiecerunt, terra marique gesserunt bellum?*

³⁹ For similar Polybian invective against Nabis, see 13.6.1–6, 16.13.1f. The massacre of Spartan dissidents is mentioned pointedly in Flamininus' speech at the colloquy (Liv. 34.32.11), as are Pythagoras' executions of the supporters of Damocles at Argos.

literary sources, are all that we have needed to establish. We can now see that the literary tradition on Nabian Argos, the 'past' from which both Nabis and Flamininus argue in Livy 34.31f, provided not the slightest support for Nabis' claim of Argive willingness to submit to his control.

But granted that this is the literary tradition, what then was the *reality* in Nabian Argos? As noted above, the epistemological problem here is severe, since (except for one detail) our only evidence consists precisely of what we have in the literary tradition. A cautious reconstruction is nevertheless worth attempting. The actual socio-economic situation in Greece—including the Peloponnese—is indeed likely in this period to have been marked by tensions between rich and poor.⁴⁰ At Argos itself, we know that in the 220's the masses had been ripe for revolution, but Cleomenes III had disappointed them, subordinating social reform to the interests of a purely Spartan expansionism.⁴¹ One can therefore understand why scholars suggest that Nabis in fact became popular at Argos in the 190's through his land and debt reforms; and we should probably assume that Nabis' regime was viewed as basically satisfactory by a significant proportion of the Argive population. But what that proportion was, we simply do not know; and there are other factors to consider in the situation. There must have been deep resentments among those who lost money and/or landed property as a result of the reforms; there was also hereditary enmity and distrust between Argos and Sparta, not helped by the previous Argive experience of Cleomenes or the uninvited nature of the new Spartan regime; the large Spartan garrison imposed by Nabis, under the command of the stern Pythagoras, may soon have led to resentments as well; land redistribution, in particular, might take a long time to create a solid and effective small-farmer class favoring Nabis—and at Argos time is exactly what Nabis proved not to have.⁴² Political conditions in Argos after the Nabian revolution are likely been complex and unsettled.

⁴⁰ For general discussion see A. Fuks, "Patterns and Types of Social-Economic Revolution in Greece from the Fourth to the Second Century B.C.," *AncSoc* 5 (1974) 52ff. On the Peloponnese see F. W. Walbank, "Alcaeus of Messene, Philip V, and Rome," *CQ* 37 (1943) 1ff.

⁴¹ For discussion see Texier 5f.

⁴² Mendels (*supra* n.23: 315, 328) shows that Nabis' reforms at Argos were probably more radical than those instituted at Sparta itself; and the more radical those measures were, the greater the number of people likely to find them disturbing. The hereditary enmity between Argos and Sparta is posited by Texier (52) as an important factor in the original Argive reluctance to accept a Spartan ruler. For the stern character of the Spartan commander Pythagoras see *supra* n.32.

Scholars who argue that Nabis was widely popular must dismiss the literary narratives as pure propaganda concocted by the enemies of both the man and his social policies.⁴³ But how far should we be willing to go in this direction? The theme of Argive unity after the fall of Nabis, so prominent in the literary tradition, is in fact borne out by our only other piece of evidence, a decree of Mycenae honoring Protimus of Gortyn for (it seems) ensuring the safe return home of Mycenaean epebes who had been serving in Nabis' army.⁴⁴ The inscription clearly suggests that Livy's picture of joy and unity at Argos (34.41) has a basis in fact. And if this is so, it is reasonable that the passage immediately preceding (40.5–7), on the easy overthrow of the Nabian regime once the bulk of the Spartan garrison was gone, has a similar validity, for these two passages are closely linked. The Mycenae inscription seems to indicate as well that the epebes' service for Nabis was involuntary (following the general suggestion made *supra* 225), although this is not as explicit as the Mycenaeans' simple joy in having their young men safely back home. It is obvious that Polybius and Livy disliked Nabis and his policies; we lack a complete (or completely objective) portrait of Nabis' Argive regime. But in view of *Syll.*³ 594, I think the burden of proof must rest heavily on those who argue that the actual Argive situation was close to the reverse of what Polybius and Livy tell us. The issue of uninvited foreign rule might well have overwhelmed all other aspects of Argive politics, including class divisions (and we do not know how deep these were);⁴⁵ and the possibility should be canvassed that Polybius (and his sources: see *infra*) had good reasons, beyond differences in social policy, for disliking Nabis.

Despite the difficulty of knowing the reality of Nabian Argos, the tendency of our literary evidence is clear. We return to the main question: who 'won' the debate between Nabis and Flamininus, as Livy

⁴³ Except, that is, for the 'information' conveyed in Nabis' own speech to Flamininus.

⁴⁴ *Syll.*³ 594.5–10: ἐπειδὴ ἀπ[αχ]θέντων ἐφ[ή]βων τῶν Μυκανέων ὑπὸ Νάβιος ἐς Λ[α]-κεδαίμονα ἐπολυώρησε Πρότιμος Τιμάρχου Γορτύνιος καὶ ἅπασαν σπουδὰν ἔθετο ὡς διασωθεῖεν τοὶ ἀπαχθέντες. . . . Pace Rostovtzeff (*SEHWW* 608), the Mycenaean epebes should most probably not be seen as kidnaped victims of Nabis' piracy off Cape Malea (*cf.* Liv. 34.32.18f). Aymard's interpretation (216 n.17), that they were soldiers serving with Nabis, is preferable and is now generally accepted (see most recently Briscoe 14).

⁴⁵ Hence the suggestion of Texier 46f that the Argive *principes* might have been "moderates" (*supra* 222); note also that as early as 224 the overthrow of Cleomenes' regime in Argos was the united work, according to Plutarch, of the aristocracy (*Cleom.* 21.1) and the masses (20.3). My point is simply our uncertainty about the depth and political importance of class divisions at Argos in the 190's.

presents it? Scholars have consistently awarded Nabis the victory, on the basis of the diplomatic arguments made in his speech, as well as their suspicions about the reality in Argos. But as for what the ancient authors *intended*, Mendels⁴⁶ is surely correct in observing that since these arguments come from a man who has been constantly reviled throughout the narrative, readers were expected to doubt any contentions he put forward. For instance, Nabis' complaints about being attacked by an ally, so impressive to modern scholars, may have lost some of their force coming from a man whom Polybius had recently depicted as attacking *his* sworn allies, the Messenians (Polyb. 16.13.3). Some of Flamininus' arguments leave much to be desired, not only regarding Nabis' previous relations with Rome, but also (as we have seen) regarding the history of Argos. Yet Flamininus' speech is far more emotionally focused on the immorality of Nabis' past behavior than it is on the legalities of past diplomacy.⁴⁷ The topic of diplomacy involved complex issues, whereas Nabis' terrorism, confirmed again and again in the previous narrative and therefore known to be 'true', was a simple and vivid theme. We have seen that Nabis' assertion of Argive willingness and Flamininus' response are both likely to have had a place in the Polybian version of the debate. It follows that in both Polybius and Livy there was a crucial point where Flamininus asserted the enslavement of Argos (and Sparta) to Nabis; and in this neither author expected the reader to see the slightest distortion.

Moreover, Flamininus' remarks are immediately seconded by additional comments from the Achaean statesman Aristaenus, who advises Nabis that the time has come to step down from power and allow his people their liberty (34.33.1f). According to Livy, this speech included a list of Peloponnesian tyrants, set forth by name, who in the past had done this and had gone on to live in peace and honor (33.2). It is possible that Livy is here summarizing a longer Polybian text, the details of which did not much interest him. As Briscoe (104) remarks, however, the reference must be to the series of tyrants who, from the mid-third century on, abdicated their power and joined their states to the Achaean League. This phenomenon was the result of policies and pressure engineered by Aratus of Sicyon, the true founder of the Achaean League; and Polybius, as an Achaean,

⁴⁶ *Supra* n.23: 331.

⁴⁷ *Cf.* the comment of Pédech concerning Flamininus' speech: "Sa réponse à Nabis est une déclamation contre la tyrannie" (287). Thus in the very last sentence of his speech Flamininus denies Nabis his claim to the title *popularis*: Nabis should speak as *tyrannus* (Liv. 34.32.20).

viewed Aratus as a special hero.⁴⁸ Thus Aristaenus' speech in Polybius in support of Flamininus apparently placed the mantle of Aratus around the war of 195—and hence around Flamininus' speech defending that war, particularly on grounds of combatting despotism. Further, Aristaenus was for Polybius a figure of considerable weight: Polybius praises his wisdom and repeatedly defends his policies.⁴⁹

All the arguments presented above tend in the same direction. Despite the opinions of modern scholars on the outcome of the debate of 195, it appears that Flamininus, in both Polybius and Livy, was intended to be seen as *winning* it. At the very least, Polybius (followed by Livy) did not intend his readers to think that Flamininus *lost* it.

This does not mean that Polybius saw Flamininus as wholly trustworthy. The attitude of the Achaean historian towards human personality, and his presentation of it, were sufficiently sophisticated that he could be comfortable with the idea that many historical figures were ambiguous in character.⁵⁰ In the case of Flamininus, the reader already knows how cynically this young man manipulated the peace negotiations with Philip in late 198 for his own political advantage at Rome. And the reader will soon be told how Flamininus played on the fears of his Greek allies concerning the expenses of the war to convince them to accept a compromise peace with Nabis that was (again) in his own political interest.⁵¹ It is therefore not surprising to find some of Flamininus' arguments in the debate with Nabis verging on sophistry—or that he cannot resist a joke (Liv. 34.32.6). As Polybius presents him, Flamininus' dominant characteristic is cleverness, for which he is explicitly praised (18.12.1–5). On the other hand, Polybius has also shown Flamininus working seriously to make the principles of the Isthmian declaration meaningful (18.45.7–12, 47.10f), so

⁴⁸ See R. Urban, *Wachstum und Krise des achaischen Bundes* (Wiesbaden 1979). Still useful is F. W. Walbank, *Aratus of Sicyon* (Cambridge 1933). Much of Aratus' accomplishment had been discussed (and defended) by Polybius in Book 2.

⁴⁹ Polyb. 18.13.4–10, 24.13–15. Note in the latter how sharply Polybius' own assessment of Aristaenus (24.15.8) differs from the much more negative opinion ascribed to Philopoemen (24.15.6f).

⁵⁰ See Pédech 204–16, 247–49; cf. esp. Polyb. 1.14.5–9, 4.8.7, 16.28.4–9.

⁵¹ On Flamininus' manoeuvres at the Nicaea conference see M. Holleaux, "Les conférences de Lokride et la politique de T. Quinctius Flamininus (198 av. J.-C.)," *Études d'épigraphie et d'histoire grecques* V (Paris 1957) 29–79; E. Badian, *T. Quinctius Flamininus: Philhellenism and Realpolitik* (Cincinnati 1979) 40–48. His manoeuvres to persuade his allies to accept peace with Nabis: Liv. 34.33.6–34.9. According to Livy, Flamininus feared being superseded if the current siege of Sparta dragged on, and thus losing the *gloria* of being responsible for finishing the war (34.33.9f). Despite the reservations of Aymard (235–37), there is no reason to doubt that this was an important factor behind Flamininus' behavior (though not the only one).

that Flamininus' justification of the war of 195 as one of 'liberation' is also not completely out of character.⁵² But if Polybius presents Flamininus as an ambiguous character, he depicts Nabis, in a crucial argument in the debate with Flamininus (*i.e.*, conditions at Argos), as an outright liar. This is perfectly consistent with Polybius' hostile depiction of Nabis' character and it significantly weakens Nabis' position in the debate; it is, moreover, a serious obstacle to the notion that Polybius has constructed a debate with Flamininus in which the Spartan tyrant emerges the winner.⁵³

One final point concerns Polybius' attitude towards Argos. As Oliva (287) has noted, the account of Nabis and his wife at Argos is given by Polybius "through the eyes of the wealthy citizens," the Argive *principes*. Indeed, one can go further: the Argive revolutions of 198 and 197, Nabis' regime of 197–195, and the counter-revolution of Archipus and its positive impact, are all described from the standpoint of the Argive *principes*. These people are consistently presented in a positive light: they led and encouraged what was in good part a popular movement in favor of Macedon in autumn 198; their original opposition to Nabis' takeover of Argos in 197 also expressed public opinion in general;⁵⁴ their sufferings under Nabis were terrible; their remnants easily overthrew Nabis' regime in 195 once the bulk of the Spartan garrison had been withdrawn, and the new government was moderate and humane and unified the Argive people.⁵⁵

How much truth there is to this depiction is clearly a matter of debate; while emphasizing our uncertainty here, I have suggested that the story may be more consonant with actual events in Argos than most scholars assume. Moreover, the finding that Polybius told the

⁵² Gruen (454 n.95) points out that Flamininus began to incline towards peace when Nabis, during the negotiations, indicated his willingness to renounce possession of Argos (Liv. 34.33.9).

⁵³ This is not to say that the speeches of Nabis and Flamininus were fictions of Polybius, created to his ideological taste: clearly this would have violated his philosophy of presenting speeches *ipsissimis verbis* (*supra* n.5). But his sources on the scene at Sparta in 195 were surely Achaeans, who would hardly have presented Nabis in a favorable light. What is striking is that, even in the face of Polybius' anti-Nabis bias and his dependence on anti-Nabis sources, Nabis does so well in the debate (though not so well as scholars generally have thought). This may be an indication of Polybius' commitment to truthful representation of past events.

⁵⁴ Cf. the *contio frequens* of Liv. 32.28.6 (and *supra* 220f).

⁵⁵ Note the safe passage granted Timocrates because of his previous *clementia* as Nabis' garrison-commander (Liv. 34.40.7). Livy depicts a similar safe passage granted the Achaean garrison at Argos in autumn 198 (32.25.9), by which most of the 500 Achaeans went free (their commander voluntarily chose to die at his post: 25.10). The offer of safe conduct comes from the Macedonian Philocles (25.9), but the impression intended was that this revolution too was moderate and humane in character.

story of Argos in 198–195 from the point of view of the *principes* has important implications for a topic in Polybian studies quite removed from the debate between Nabis and Flamininus. Almost as famous as that debate is a Polybian fragment generally called “On Traitors” (18.13–15). Since a classic article by Aymard in 1940, the scholarly consensus has been that “On Traitors” was a digression provoked by contemplation of the Argive revolution of 198, which was also a revolt against the Achaean League, and that in particular the bitter condemnation of traitors in 18.15 is an attack on the Argive *principes*, organizers of the pro-Macedonian coup.⁵⁶

Aymard’s hypothesis was based partly on the need to find a context for “On Traitors” in some event of winter 198/7 (*i.e.*, Nabis’ acquisition of Argos), and partly on the idea that Polybius, as an Achaean, would have had no love for defectors from the Achaean League. Yet Polybius seems to have made it clear (again, to judge from Livy) that the Achaean decision to join Rome in 198, which provoked the Argive revolution, was opposed by many in Achaëa, not just the Argives.⁵⁷ Indeed, prominent among opponents were the men from Megalopolis, Polybius’ home town, which, like Argos, had close ties with Macedon: the Megalopolitans walked out of the federal assembly rather than take part in the vote that led to the Roman alliance (Liv. 32.22.9f). The intense controversy at Megalopolis over the Achaean decision of 198 would have formed a part of the political milieu in which Polybius came to adulthood.⁵⁸ Even a quarter century later the important Achaean politician Archon could still express reservations about the decision of 198; and Polybius was a political associate of this man.⁵⁹ It is therefore likely that Polybius viewed the actions of the Argives in 198 with more understanding than Aymard allowed.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ A. Aymard, “Le fragment de Polybe ‘Sur les traîtres’ (xviii, 13–15),” *REA* 42 (1940) 9–19 (= *Études d’histoire ancienne* [Paris 1967] 354–63). Aymard’s interpretation is accepted by Walbank I 12 and n.4, II 564f, and *Polybius* (Berkeley 1972) 85–87. See also Pédech 200 n.512; G. A. Lehmann, *Untersuchungen zur historischen Glaubwürdigkeit des Polybios* (Münster 1967) 221; Deininger (*supra* n.17) 47 n.11; Briscoe 214; Texier 48 n.23; J. S. Richardson, “Polybius’ View of the Roman Empire,” *BSR* 47 (1979) 9 n.45. The only dissenter has been E. Gabba, “Studi di Filarco: Le biografie di Agide e di Cleomene,” *Athenaeum* 35 (1957) 30–34.

⁵⁷ The highly controversial nature of the Achaean decision of autumn 198 is manifest from the account in Livy 32.19–25.

⁵⁸ See the cogent but brief comments of Gabba (*supra* n.56) 32.

⁵⁹ Archon’s speech: Liv. 41.24, esp. 24.12–14; the young Polybius’ close association with Archon: Polyb. 28.6f. This is only four years after Archon’s comments on the events of 198.

⁶⁰ This does not mean that Polybius ultimately disagreed with the Achaean decision to back Rome; evidently he saw it as an act necessary for the survival of the Achaean League itself (*cf.* 18.13.8). On Polybius’ philosophy of *Realpolitik* see *supra* n.30.

Furthermore Argos and its leaders, the alleged subjects of "On Traitors" (and the alleged special targets at 18.15), are actually never mentioned in the digression. But in addition we have now seen that Polybius' depiction of Argive history from 198 to 195 is basically sympathetic to the class that organized the revolution of 198; surely it would be surprising if Polybius suddenly turned on them in 18.13–15.⁶¹ But the facts presented above are enough, by themselves, to cast serious doubt on the scholarly consensus that the context is Argos.

To summarize. This paper has had as its goal the reconstruction of Polybius' portrait of Nabis' regime at Argos, so as to discern the force of the arguments in the debate between Nabis and Flaminius in 195. We have seen that in this debate both men are guilty of distorting the recent history of Argos, the city that was the official cause of the recent war, but that the reader was probably meant to think that Nabis was guilty of far worse distortion than Flaminius. Flaminius' speech has its weaknesses, but the power of his argument concerning Nabis' despotism at Argos greatly strengthens its efficacy as a whole. It therefore seems that the intention of Polybius (followed by Livy) was that Flaminius at the least should not be seen as losing the debate, and was perhaps meant to be seen as winning it. But if Flaminius' account of Argos was intended to seem truthful in its most crucial aspect (the hideous despotism of Nabis over an unwilling people), this is because Polybius had all along told the story of Argos in 198–195 from the point of view of the Argive *principes*. This last finding has important bearing on whether those same Argive *principes* can be the object of the bitter attack at 18.13–15, Polybius' discussion "On Traitors."

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⁶¹ For detailed discussion of the context of "On Traitors" see "Polybius, Aristaenus, and the Fragment 'On Traitors'," *CQ* N.S. 37 (1987) 140–62.