

# Cimon's Dismissal, Ephialtes' Revolution and the Peloponnesian Wars

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THE YEAR 462 B.C. may have marked the most acute crisis in what Bengtson calls "the decisive turning point in the internal and external histories" of Sparta and Athens.<sup>1</sup> We lack the authoritative historical source to state from antiquity the case for 462 that Herodotus states for 480 or Thucydides for 431. But ancient historical tradition does suggest the unique concatenation of three calamities in 462. First in the tradition, at Sparta the earthquake of 464 and the subsequent helot rebellion shook the state to its very foundations, so that proud Sparta had to come as suppliant to Athens. Second, at Athens the 'revolution' of Ephialtes overthrew Areopagite oligarchy and established Periclean democracy, hardly less calamitous an event in surviving accounts. Third, between Sparta and Athens opened the decisive rift, the 'dismissal' of Cimon from Ithome by 'fearful' Spartans, followed by his ostracism, the reversal of alliances, and the first of the Peloponnesian wars.

The severity of these calamities was not doubted in antiquity. But our sources on the first two are uncritical enough and removed enough in time to encourage a measure of skepticism among moderns. Diodorus, Plutarch and Pausanias are open to question, as is Aristotle. But on the third calamity, Thucydides has always seemed critical enough and close enough to command assent. It is my purpose to encourage a measure of skepticism concerning Thucydides' account of the 'dismissal' of Cimon, the one event of this most crucial year that our best and earliest source emphasized. The one calamity that Thucydides seems to have ignored in his text, Ephialtes' 'revolution', seems to have preceded Cimon's 'dismissal', suggesting the hypothesis that this departure may have been far more the political decision of a Cimon anxious to return to Athens than the military decision of a

<sup>1</sup> H. Bengtson, *Griechische Geschichte*<sup>4</sup> (Munich 1969) 190.

Sparta fearful that Cimon's forces might combine with rebellious helots.

The tradition of 'dismissal' established in Thucydides 1.102 is the immediate issue. But behind the immediate issue lie questions of the gravity of Sparta's helot problem, the development of Athenian democracy, the origins of the Peloponnesian wars, and the credibility of Thucydidean history. The hypothesis suggests that the calamities of 462 may have been so inextricably intertwined that the investigation of Cimon's 'dismissal' demands, first, a reappraisal of the seriousness of the earthquake and rebellion at Sparta and of the aid sent from Athens; second, a reexamination of the chronology of 'revolution' at Athens and 'dismissal' from Ithome; third, a reconsideration of the relationship between constitutional changes and foreign policies; and fourth, a respectful if not quite reverent reassessment of the Thucydidean narrative of the Pentecontaetia at its most crucial point.

### Catastrophes at Sparta and Aid from Athens

Thucydidean 'dismissal' has not received the vigorously critical treatment it deserves, but eminent scholars have pointed the way in passing remarks, Bury's "strange indeed," Ehrenberg's "remarkable," and most recently de Ste. Croix's "extraordinary" and "unparalleled."<sup>2</sup> Such remarks have been inspired by the peculiar story of Sparta, at the time of her greatest need, dispatching her strongest ally, without the slightest known provocation, thus initiating the gravest Hellenic wars. Sparta is said to have acted so irrationally because of the force of 'fear'. While no one would dismiss Thucydidean assertion lightly, this story seems open to question, and first on considerations of the seriousness of the Spartan crisis and the nature of Cimon's relief force.

For the severity of the earthquake of 464 our fullest accounts are those of Diodorus, who reports 20,000 Lacedaemonians killed and the city leveled (11.63), and Plutarch, who specifies particularly heavy losses among the young men and leaves exactly five houses standing (*Cim.* 16.4-5). The trouble is that these fullest accounts may be too full statistically and anecdotally. Late accounts of the helot rebellion may suffer from a similarly unhistorical inflation, and Plutarchian stories

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Bury, *History of Greece*<sup>3</sup> (London 1951) 344. V. Ehrenberg, *From Solon to Socrates* (London 1968) 198. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca 1972) 179.

of Archidamus' heroics, which saved the city from the helots, may be no more surely founded than his story of the providential hare, which saved the younger boys from collapsing buildings (*Cim.* 16.5–7). However, there are two more fragmentary but probably more reliable bits of evidence in the best fifth-century sources. Herodotus reports that three hundred Spartans fell in battle along with their commander, Aeimnestus, the slayer of Mardonius at Plataea (9.64). And Thucydides reports that the rebellion was not finally ended until the besieged Messenians were offered terms "in the tenth year" (1.103.1). If these early accounts may be trusted, they speak for themselves concerning the severity of the crisis. But even if they may seem suspiciously reminiscent of losses in the Persian War or the duration of the Trojan War, they would then suggest that in contemporary or nearly contemporary judgement, the rebellion was comparable to the greatest wars.

Perhaps the most conclusive evidence on the historicity of the natural and social catastrophes at Sparta may be drawn from the record of her participation in the first Peloponnesian war. Athens provoked the former *hegemon* by her continued alliance with Megara against Corinth, by her conquest and imperial incorporation of Aegina and by her military and political domination of Boeotia. The Delian League became more and more the Athenian Empire, and a land empire was added. In further outrages the Athenians sailed boldly around the Peloponnesus, raided Laconia and burned the Spartan dockyards. But the gravest provocation must have been the settlement of rebellious Messenians at Naupactus under Athenian protection, after terms of capitulation had rewarded rebellion with freedom. Opportunity for Spartan response would seem particularly good when, according to Thucydides (1.104, 109–10), two hundred Athenian and allied ships were sent to Egypt, even better when of these and another fifty sent in relief only a few returned. This astonishing loss bears instructive comparison with the rather better-attested figures for the Sicilian Expedition.<sup>3</sup>

Given provocation and opportunity, Sparta hardly responded. We know that just 300 Peloponnesians were available for the relief of Aegina and that these troops had to be taken from their duty at Corinth and Epidaurus, where their loss was quickly felt (Thuc. 1.105–06). We also know that in 457 a sizable Peloponnesian army,

<sup>3</sup> R. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (Oxford 1972) 92–185.

including 1500 Lacedaemonians, slipped north across the Gulf of Corinth to compel the Phocians to make peace with the northern Dorians—a bold show of force, to be sure. That they fought and won at Tanagra is true, but it may be more significant that this battle was forced on reluctant Spartans by bolder Athenians who blocked their way home (Thuc. 1.107–08). Apparently, this was the only Spartan military response to the Athenians until 446, when an army marched north under Pleistoanax and then returned to the Peloponnesus without once having leveled a spear in combat (Thuc. 1.114).

Ancients and moderns have struggled for explanations. Ancients suggested Athenian bribes as the explanation for this last failure to fight, and bribes there may have been (Plut. *Per.* 22–23). But Persian money spent in quantity on the other side had been insufficient to move the Spartans in the previous decade (Thuc. 1.109.2). The most recent explanation for the failure of Sparta to fight is that the control of the Megarid and its mountain passes by the Athenians was enough to discourage Spartan invasions such as those familiar in the later Peloponnesian War.<sup>4</sup> But this explanation does not account for the meagerness of Spartan aid to Aegina or for the failure to mount a major campaign against Argos. And it does not explain the prompt return of the Spartans after Tanagra, when they administered only a passing rebuke to Megara, or their sudden turn-about a decade later. That the Athenians maintained geopolitical control of the Megarid for most of the first Peloponnesian war may not have been so substantial a check on Spartan military activity as the material, social, demographic and psychological effects of the great earthquake and the helot rebellion. It took almost a generation for these effects to wear off enough for the Spartans to make war in 431, and there is social and demographic evidence for damage lasting even after that.<sup>5</sup> The generally catastrophic picture sketched in the accounts of Diodorus and Plutarch should be accepted. However many bodies and houses fell in fact, Sparta had good reason to fear when helots rose in rebellion.

But was there any reason to fear the Athenian relief force? We are asked by the received tradition to believe that the Spartans of their own volition would dismiss a sizable, experienced and loyal force under the leadership of a remarkably sympathetic commander. The

<sup>4</sup> de Ste. Croix, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 190–96.

<sup>5</sup> See de Ste. Croix, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 331–32 for references.

size of the Athenian force, 4,000 hoplites, comes from Aristophanes (*Lys.* 1137–46). Some exaggeration must be allowed for in this account of the army “which saved the whole of Sparta,” surely a surprising assessment if we accept only the one abortive mission described by Thucydides.<sup>6</sup> But the historian himself speaks of “considerable force” (1.102.1). The expertise of this force can perhaps be overemphasized. Thucydides carefully speaks of “reputed” skill in siegecraft (1.102.2), and the general incapacity of Greek siegecraft is well known.<sup>7</sup> But Athens had had particular successes against fortified camps after the battles of Plataea and Mycale (*Hdt.* 9.70, 102), and after hardening and enheartening victories at the Eurymedon, Athenians under Cimon had succeeded in the long and difficult siege of Thasos, a major place with permanent fortifications (*Thuc.* 1.101). The Athenians were experienced. Nor is the loyalty of this friend in need questioned in surviving accounts. Thucydides reports their indignation at a treatment that was undeserved, but, even in their anger at the apparent rebuke of ‘dismissal’, they did not give conspiratorial substance to the alleged Spartan ‘fear’ (1.102). Cimon went far beyond soldierly loyalty to philolaconian identity. His remarkable sympathy is shown in his rhetoric, urging Athenians to labor with the “yoke-fellow.” He was the Spartan *proxenus* at Athens, and he named his own son Lacedaemonius (*Plut. Cim.* 16). Such was the size, experience, loyalty and leadership of the force ‘dismissed’ from Ithome.

The story of dismissal is indeed “strange” and “remarkable,” “unparalleled . . . in the whole of Greek history.” The search for a parallel in modern history leads toward such fantasies as a Churchill dismissing an Eisenhower in 1942 or 1943, or a Ky dismissing a Westmoreland in 1965 or 1966. From such modern fantasy we must turn back to ancient history, and to Athens, not Sparta.

### Ephialtes’ ‘Revolution’ and Cimon’s ‘Dismissal’

It may be taken as established that both ‘revolution’ and ‘dismissal’ fall in the archon year 462/1. But there has been no resolution to the question of whether Ephialtes’ ‘revolution’ took place when Cimon was conveniently absent at Ithome, or whether it came later, when he returned shamefully ‘dismissed’, his politics discredited. Scholarly

<sup>6</sup> The case for two missions rests on *Plut. Cim.* 16–17, discussed below.

<sup>7</sup> G. B. Grundy, *Thucydides and the History of his Age*<sup>2</sup> I (Oxford 1948) 282–98. A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* I (Oxford 1945) 16–19.

difference of opinion on the subject goes back to Meyer and Beloch respectively. Recent students of war origins divide, Kagan with Meyer and de Ste. Croix with Beloch.<sup>8</sup> The state of the question is well enough represented by the equivocation in Gomme's "Ephialtes" in *OCD*<sup>2</sup>, a not unreasonable position, given the inconclusiveness of the debate so energetically carried out over the chronology of Ithome,<sup>9</sup> a debate that could work largely with Thucydides, while that over the revolution of Ephialtes must work largely with Plutarch. The trouble is that neither of the preferred sources, Thucydides or Aristotle, so much as mentions the crucial event considered by the other. Gomme complains that we have been "scurvily" treated by our sources.<sup>10</sup> He is right, but the case of 462 is not hopeless.

Plutarch's *Cimon* 14 ends with the reduction of Thasos and the apparently unsuccessful prosecution of Cimon on his return by Pericles and others. Chapter 15 then asserts that Cimon continued to foil the democrats, "but only for as long as he was at Athens:"

The next time that he sailed away on an expedition, the people broke loose from all control. They overthrew the established order of the constitution and the ancestral customs which they had always observed up to that moment, and following Ephialtes' lead they deprived the Council of the Areopagus of all but a few of the cases which had been under its jurisdiction. They took control of the courts of justice and transformed the city into an unmitigated democracy. . . (*Cim.* 15.2)

According to Plutarch, Cimon then returned from his unspecified expedition, offended by the attack on the Areopagus, and attempted to reestablish the former order. But he was harried by accusations of unnatural fondness for his wine, his sister and his Sparta. *Cimon* 16 breaks any chronological line to digress on Cimon's philolaconism, the great earthquake, the Spartan appeal and the debate with Ephialtes, ending in the dispatch of a "first" expedition. *Cimon* 17 begins with the Lachartus anecdote concerning Cimon's return through Corinthian territory, then narrates a second Spartan appeal and a "second" expedition, recognizably that of Thucydides 1.102. Cimon is "dismissed" and then returns to be ostracized.

<sup>8</sup> D. Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca 1969) 73 n.56; de Ste. Croix, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 179 n.43.

<sup>9</sup> R. A. McNeal, "Historical Methods and Thucydides 1.103.1," *Historia* 19 (1970) 306-25.

<sup>10</sup> Gomme, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 53.

The crux is *Cimon* 15.2. If the unspecified expedition refers to that sent to Ithome and if it can withstand the challenges of internal criticism and external evidence, then it stands as our only authority and should be accepted. Beloch's attack on the passage and on the priority of 'revolution' to 'dismissal' has been followed with slight differences of emphasis by Walker and Jacoby. But this attack has failed, as Hignett has argued.<sup>11</sup> I shall attempt to develop and to strengthen the argument against Beloch in order to establish the priority of Ephialtes' reforms to Cimon's 'dismissal'.

Most specifically, Beloch argues that the sea-borne expedition of 15.2 cannot refer to the Ithome expedition, because "it is explicitly attested that Cimon took the land route (*Cim.* 17.1)." But this apparently damning contradiction cannot hold on either end. 17.1 explicitly attests a land *return* from the *first* of two alleged expeditions. *Cimon* 17 would allow for a sea-borne departure, and so would *Cimon* 16, even regarding the two reports as a doublet for one historical expedition. Moreover, "sailed away" cannot carry decisive weight. "Plutarch or his source may have changed a general word for campaigning into a more specific one, adopted because most Athenian expeditions were sea-borne."<sup>12</sup>

More generally, Beloch argues that such efforts to save *Cimon* 15.2 show too much respect for Plutarch. In chapters 15–17 especially, "a hopeless confusion rules."<sup>13</sup> But this confusion has been overemphasized. *Cimon* 15–17 follows a ring structure familiar to students of Greek literature. This ring structure, along with an apparently minor thematic continuity and the need to rely on different authorities for different parts of his account, may combine to confuse Plutarch's own historical understanding. But before rejecting the text we do have, we should try to understand it on its own terms. Rather than being hopelessly confused historically, Plutarch's account is perfectly clear morally. The question is not, "What happened at Ithome?" It is rather, "How did the good man and his fellow good men fall?"

*Cimon* 15 follows the account of democrats-against-the-hero from the previous chapter, but now these attacks are successful. Expedition, 'revolution' and return to the domestic fray follow chronologically

<sup>11</sup> C. Hignett, *A History of the Athenian Constitution* (Oxford 1952) 337–41.

<sup>12</sup> J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte* II.2 (Strassburg 1916) 197. Meiggs, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) 89 n.3.

<sup>13</sup> Beloch, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.12) 197–98. E. M. Walker, *CAH* V (1927) 467. F. Jacoby, *FGrHist* IIIb (Suppl.) 2.369.

enough. But charges of philolaconism invite an explanatory digression on that morally interesting point (16.1–4). And this digression in turn invites further digression on the Spartan troubles (16.4–7), from which we return ring-wise with Cimon's philolaconian rhetoric, now not a matter of comic jibes but of particular excellence, given the need of the friend (16.7–8). All might have been well, if one rhetorical success related to the expedition had not suggested another, the exchange with Lachartus (17.1). This anecdote is a return story. After telling the return story, the Thucydidean account of what happened to the expedition at Ithome becomes a second expedition for Plutarch (17.2). Had he been willing to displace or dispense with Lachartus, we might have had only one historical expedition and a very proper literary construction for *Cimon* 15–17.2, ABCBA, in which A represents successful attacks on Cimon (15 and 17.2), B represents his philolaconism (16.1–4 and 16.7–8), and C represents Spartan troubles (16.4–7).

This history interests Plutarch as the occasion for exhibiting Cimon's best qualities in the defense of the good men and their order at Sparta as well as at Athens, and for explaining the success of mean-spirited attacks first behind the back and then below the belt. Plutarch concentrates on the hero and pays disproportionate attention to successful rhetorical exchanges before narrating the failures of dismissal and ostracism. Lachartus belongs chronologically between Thucydidean dismissal and the ostracism that Thucydides did not record. We who are used to reading orderly narrative in chronological lines may experience some confusion when confronted with Plutarch's thematic continuities and moralistic rings. The result is that even an attentive student of this life can find three expeditions, one per chapter,<sup>14</sup> whereas there was much more probably only one historically, to which three references are made. *Cimon* 15.2 does refer to the expedition to Ithome. Plutarch is confused historically, but not hopelessly, and he is not at all confused morally. Beloch commands the last word, although I shall address it against his own argument. Having complained that "we respect Plutarch too much," he adds a fully justified afterthought, ". . . and his authorities perhaps too little."<sup>15</sup> The authority for *Cimon* 15.2 cannot be rejected because of Plutarch's doublet in 16–17.

Beloch's most emphatic arguments are based on evidence external

<sup>14</sup> W. von Uxkull-Gyllenband, *Plutarch und die griechische Biographie* (Stuttgart 1927) 71–73.

<sup>15</sup> Beloch, *loc.cit.* (*supra* n.12).



to Plutarch's life. These arguments against *Cimon* 15.2 involve estimates of the position of Cimon and of the Areopagus before 'dismissal' and judgements concerning the function of ostracism. First, Beloch stresses that the hero himself was "at the height of his power" after his court-defense in 463 and his successful rhetoric in 462. "It is therefore completely out of the question" that Ephialtes could have "overturned" the Areopagus before the shock of "dismissal."<sup>16</sup> But estimates of Cimon's prior position should include such matters as the horrendous failure of the colonists in Thrace (Thuc. 1.100.3), the rebellion of Thasos and the length of the siege (Thuc. 1.100–01), the accusation on Cimon's return (Plut. *Cim.* 14.2–3), the reported prosecutions of Areopagites (Arist. *Ath.Pol.* 25.2), and Ephialtes' resistance in the Assembly (*Cim.* 16.8). Less easily datable but perhaps more damaging may have been such personal attacks as *Cimon* 15.4. Second, Beloch and after him Walker argue that the Areopagus would be the least favorable ground for any democratic challenge before 'dismissal' discredited the opposition.<sup>17</sup> But the Areopagus of 462, after archons had been allotted for about a generation, may in fact have been much weaker politically than Aristotle suggests (*Ath.Pol.* 22.5, 23.1–2, 25.1). Even if the Aristotelian interpretation of 462 is more substantial than many critics suggest,<sup>18</sup> we can see lines of attack open for Ephialtes, reputed for "incorruptibility and loyalty to the constitution" (*Ath.Pol.* 25.1). The Areopagus is said to have lost "prerogatives which it recently had acquired" (25.2). If it is fair to term Ephialtes a 'revolutionary', perhaps we should use the word in the retrospective sense most common in early modern Europe. Third, Beloch and after him both Walker and Jacoby argue that revolution must come after Cimon's ostracism, let alone his dismissal, because this ostracism would be beside the point if major issues of policy and leadership were already decided.<sup>19</sup> This variant of the argument from Cimon's presumed strength risks serious anachronisms. And it ignores the valid function of ostracism in Cimon's case after 'revolution', 'dismissal' and return; the determined opponent of changes voted by the *demos* had to cease his opposition.

<sup>16</sup> Beloch, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.12) 197–98.

<sup>17</sup> Walker, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.13) 468.

<sup>18</sup> J. Day and M. Chambers, *Aristotle's History of Athenian Democracy* (Berkeley 1962) 120–35, 183–86.

<sup>19</sup> Beloch, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.12) 197–98. Walker, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.13) 68–71. Jacoby, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.13) 369–70.

It is necessary to reemphasize the political opportunity opened for Ephialtes by the physical absence of Cimon and the hoplites, perhaps about a fifth of the entire hoplite census at a time when there may have been a near balance between hoplite and thetic citizens at Athens. Without them, Athens was a more democratic city politically, probably enough to facilitate changes toward democracy institutionally. But this democracy was probably more factional than ideological, and Cimon could be expected to resist vigorously changes made in his absence and against his interest.<sup>20</sup>

Beloch is left with the suggestive argument that "a change of constitution was something that took time even at Athens, and could not be played through overnight in a theatrical manner. Cimon was in the near vicinity and could have returned at a moment's notice." Hignett counters that the general of an expedition voted by the Athenian Assembly could not simply "throw up his command and return to Athens before the expedition was over, however much the political situation might call for his presence there."<sup>21</sup> Beloch's argument is political; Hignett's response is constitutional, but there are also political problems related to Cimon's return from his expedition. Here both Beloch's and Hignett's arguments can and probably should be maintained. Cimon would indeed desire to come home on report of fundamental political changes of whatever sort, but he could not legally do so before the expedition was over. Of course, there are more ways than victory or defeat to end an expedition. Dismissal is one.

### Cimon's and Sparta's Responses to Ephialtes' 'Revolution'

Dismissal in anything like the traditional, Thucydidean interpretation is highly improbable. Athenians who only wanted to stay were not cast out by Spartans who only wanted them to go. From Athenian affairs we have motivation enough for Cimon's return. But to get home, constitutionally and politically, Cimon needed to be sent home. The general was under orders, orders he or his close friends had moved, orders voted in the Assembly. He tried for victory with the

<sup>20</sup> Hignett, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.11) 341. A. W. Gomme, *The Population of Athens in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.* (Oxford 1933) 25–26. W. R. Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth Century Athens* (Princeton 1971) *passim*.

<sup>21</sup> Beloch, *loc.cit.* (*supra* n.12). Hignett, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.11) 338–39.

assault reported by Thucydides (1.102.3), but his hoplites were less well equipped to take a mountain stronghold further fortified with walls than they had been to take pallisaded Persian camps on level ground.<sup>22</sup> Dismissal could have seemed a good enough solution to Cimon's difficulty, however badly it turned out on his return. For Cimon's friends, it would seem to satisfy international political responsibilities as well as domestic political interests. For Ephialtes and Cimon's enemies, it would seem to satisfy the policy of malign nonintervention advocated against the expedition in the first place. For the expeditionary force, it would seem to satisfy the frustrations of men supporting an alien ally against a stubborn enemy in a remote and uncongenial location. The clever man of Plutarchian tradition, who could gull even greedy Spartans over the spoils of earlier battles (*Cim.* 9), who could persuade even independent Greeks to become tributary allies of their own free will (*Cim.* 11) and who could bring the bones of Theseus back to Athens with a straight face (*Cim.* 8.5–6), this man would seem to have devised a way out of his own expedition in a way that would satisfactorily defy criticism.

Thucydides' explanation is that the Athenians were "dismissed" above all else for the Spartan "fear" of their "audacity" and "fickleness," in the well-chosen words of the Smith translation. The ancient historian applies the contrast of national characters drawn in the speech of the Corinthians that precedes the narrative of the Pentecontaetia; he finds in the past an explanation related to the "real cause" of the contemporary war. Thucydides' mind is fixed on the relations of states, but his words may be misread as veiled references to internal politics.<sup>23</sup> LSJ translate *νεοτεροποιία* (Thuc. 1.102) as 'innovation' or 'revolution', with this passage as their reference, *νεοτεροποιός* (1.70) as 'innovating' or 'revolutionary', again with Thucydides' passage as the primary reference. The same term that describes the ever-active but constitutionally and politically stable Athens of the 430's is used to describe the supposedly frightening quality of the city in 462. Ionian restlessness as shown in foreign policies comes much closer to Thucydides' meaning than revolutionary radicalism as shown in domestic politics.

To suppose that Spartan 'oligarchs' took fright because 'democrats' had taken certain powers from the Athenian Areopagus is to risk

<sup>22</sup> Pace Gomme, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 301–02. D. Fimmen, "Ithome," *RE* 18 (1916) 2305ff.

<sup>23</sup> Hignett, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.11) 196–97, *cf.* 341.

anachronistic error. There is no good evidence of such partisan organization and ideological consciousness at this time in Athens,<sup>24</sup> let alone Sparta. It is true that repeated Spartan expeditions in the late sixth century seem to show an interest in Athenian politics, but the nature of that interest should not be mistaken. In fairly rapid succession they at least attempted to establish in power the 'democrat' Cleisthenes, the 'oligarch' Isagoras, and the 'tyrant' Hippias. These expeditions suggest relative indifference to later political classifications or even to Athenian constitutional history itself. The Spartan interest at the time of Cleomenes was to have an obliging Athens, not an oligarchical Athens as such. And the Spartans' own intended intervention on behalf of Hippias at the far right can be described by Herodotus with the term *νεότερον* (5.93).

Sparta does not seem to have been overly concerned about the distribution of powers among the Athenian Areopagus, Ecclesia, Boule and dicasteries, a generalization that holds for times less troubled in the Peloponnesus and certainly for 462, with such great problems of her own so close at hand. Nevertheless, Sparta would have been interested in keeping Athenian politics in friendly hands like Cimon's—and in keeping arms like Cimon's friendly. Therefore, on Cimon's presumed urging, it would probably have been seen by Sparta to be in her own interests formally to dismiss Cimon with his force, so that the general could attempt to regain the leadership that had been so valuable in dispatching the expedition in the first place, leadership now threatened by the Ephialtes who had argued against that expedition. An Assembly led by Ephialtes might recall the force with little hope of return. Especially if the siege promised to be long even with the Athenians, as it was without them, it would have made very good sense for the Spartans to release Cimon once the assault had failed, perhaps with an unpublicized understanding about return.

But, however successfully 'dismissed', Cimon failed on his return. How? Thucydides suggests that the Athenians were so offended at their dismissal that they reversed their alliances immediately on returning home. The loose identification of the hoplite force with the Athenian citizen body and/or Assembly may represent more wishful thinking of the later aristocrat than the political analysis of a well-informed historian. And the picture of citizen-soldiers somewhat grudgingly and quite angrily going home should be set against

<sup>24</sup> Connor, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.20) 63 n.54.

Herodotus' last view of the more heroic generation who fought Xerxes (9.117). Cimon's hoplites were not the whole state, nor would they have been of one mind themselves. Cimon's problems on his return may well have involved his hoplites and their anger at dismissal, but they must also have involved political rivalries and the constitutional reforms. Failures in foreign policy might still prove to be the readiest sticks with which to beat Cimon and even the Areopagites. In particular, the tradition of Sparta's promise to aid rebellious Thasos against Athens and Cimon seems to be more mud slung after the fact of the historical assistance to Sparta against her rebellious helots, than critical inquiry into what would have happened if Poseidon had not providentially shaken Sparta and saved Athens (Thuc. 1.101). "Stupid" Cimon actually went to the assistance of his "traitorous" ally, *that* was the point. And then *he* was "dismissed" by the doubly perfidious Spartans, so full of treason themselves that they suspected good Athenians. "Stupid" Cimon. He now found himself dismissed from his own city.

### Thucydides' Apparent Mistake

All this is against 'dismissal' in any sense other than departure initiated by Cimon and only responsively authorized by Sparta. What then is for the tradition of dismissal initiated by a fearful Sparta? The answer is short—Thucydides. Other sources that seem to corroborate the story from later antiquity signify at most that there was no known tradition against it. The decisive argument has been Thucydides' authority. But even Thucydides could make mistakes, and there are good reasons to suspect that 1.102.3 may be one.

Even Gomme, that spirited champion of Thucydides, has emphasized the inadequacies of the account of the Pentecontaetia. He finds it "scrappy," chronologically imprecise, bare in its narrative and remarkable for its omissions. These objections are well taken, but Gomme's own conclusion is tendentious and apologetic: "The excursus is an early essay . . ." Other scholars have dated the narrative after 404, since Thucydides purports to correct the *Atthis* of Hellanicus (1.97.2).<sup>25</sup> But even a date before exile still leaves at least three full

<sup>25</sup> Gomme, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 361–413, Meiggs, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) 444–46, Grundy, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) I 441–45, can represent the traditional presumption of late composition shared by Finley and others on the basis of 1.97.2. Adcock, Hammond and others support the earlier date.

decades and the outbreaks of two Peloponnesian wars between Thucydides and the events of 462. And a date after 404 widens the gap to six decades, the last two of them full of disasters for the historian and his city. Whether partisan or not, distortions in the minds and mouths of oral sources must have complicated any attempt to reach a critical understanding of the origins of the earlier conflict.

The remoteness of time is compounded by a remoteness of place. Thucydides' boast to have particular familiarity with Spartan affairs must be interpreted in light of the more general and much grosser ignorance of his readers. The boast is followed not long after by a complaint concerning Spartan secretiveness (5.26.5, 74.2). If Thucydides as a maturing historian and exiled general found accurate knowledge of contemporary Sparta difficult, we may judge that such knowledge of the Sparta of 462 was even more difficult to find and even more uncertain when found. With the known exception of Archidamus, the members of the Gerousia in 462 can be presumed dead by any time of Thucydides' writing. Accurate knowledge of the decision to dismiss could not have been very general even at Sparta, given the circumstances, and it is difficult to imagine the interview with an Athenian general in which the unlikely Spartan of the war-time years with such knowledge would converse freely about the fears of the 460's.

Sparta in the 460's remains as remote for us as it is because it was already so remote for Thucydides. But the problems go beyond his sources to his own mind. The narrative of the Pentecontaetia has a particular purpose. It is a digression to explain the fearful growth of Athenian power and the origins of the Archidamian War.<sup>26</sup> 'Dismissal' is at the epicenter of Athenian power and Spartan fear, but the epicenter is eccentric by the attraction of the closer and more massive conflict. The dangers of anachronism should be obvious in any attempt to substantiate an analysis of the origins of one war by looking back to a previous war between antagonists at very different stages in their developments.

More personal factors may also help to explain Thucydides' apparent failure to investigate traditions of Cimon's expedition critically. Thucydides the historian was probably related to the great Cimon. Both maternal and paternal relationships have been suggested, and both have been questioned, but the evidence for at least the paternal

<sup>26</sup> J. H. Finley, *Thucydides* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1942) 79–81, 135–38.

relationship seems strong.<sup>27</sup> In retrospect, Thucydides cannot have had much sympathy for the expedition of 462, given his particular acceptance of the Spartan 'promise' to Thasos and his more general acceptance of the inevitability of war between the great powers. But there is no sign of a willingness to entertain the possibility that for purposes of political self-interest against what may have been or at least seemed Periclean reforms, Cimon was responsible for the dismissal so directly related to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian wars.

Most deeply, perhaps, Thucydides' own military career matched Cimon's in its ending if nothing else. For all his military accomplishments, Cimon was cast out by an ungrateful *demos*. And whatever his military accomplishments, Thucydides, too, was exiled, equally unfairly in his own eyes. The aristocratic general maintained a proper reserve, but the hurt was real, as is shown by a careful reading of the account of the fall of Amphipolis and by a critical evaluation of the rhetorical glorification of the good old Periclean days and of the pitiless exposure of the varied ills that followed Pericles' death and his own downfall. We may speculate that, especially after exile, Thucydides would not be psychologically predisposed to investigate critically the story of the earlier general who had also suffered apparently undeserved rejection.

Speculation has nothing to do with what may be the decisive limitation of Thucydides as the historian of 462. This is that Thucydides pays no attention to the internal politics of Athens. If we depended only on his work, we would not know even the name of Ephialtes, nor would we know of any political changes in 462/1. Perhaps more startlingly, we would not know of Cimon's trial on the return from Thasos, of his ostracism on the return from Ithome, or of his apparently premature return from ostracism. We would know nothing of Pericles' political reforms of the 450's or rivalries of the 440's. The point need not be labored,<sup>28</sup> but the consequences for Thucydides' understanding of the high politics, statesmanship and war that do concern him must be faced squarely. Any attempt to understand the relationships of states without inquiry into their internal affairs is hazardous, and it may be doomed to failure.

In attempting to reconstruct the origins of the Peloponnesian wars,

<sup>27</sup> O. Luschnat, "Thukydides der Historiker," *RE Suppl.* 12 (1970) 1087-91. J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families 600-300 B.C.* (Oxford 1971) 232-36.

<sup>28</sup> Gomme, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 361ff.

Thucydides may have been partially blinded by his remoteness in time and place from Ithome, his singleness of purpose in demonstrating Spartan 'fear', his particular familial and professional relationships with Cimon, and his general indifference to Athenian political life and development in the earlier period. There are limits to what we may expect even of Thucydides and, probably more importantly, distinctions that we must respect within Thucydides. Verifiable and presumably verified facts must not be confused with unverified because unverifiable inferences. Cimon's 'dismissal', no cause given except for the simple untruth that Sparta "had no further need of them," and the Athenian reaction, suspicious and angry disbelief, were probably verifiable and presumably verified facts. But it does not seem that the cause that Thucydides or his informants inferred was either verified or verifiable. Spartan fear of ever-active Athenians combining with rebellious helots was not expressed at the time, this according to Thucydides' own text. But Athenian suspicion and anger at this dismissal *were* voiced, again according to Thucydides, who says that these feelings led to the reversal of alliances without mentioning the ostracism of Cimon (1.102).

The Spartan fear in question was a fact, but it was a fact of the 420's, the years of Pylos and Cleon. Athenian success on Sphacteria sent Spartan prisoners to Athens, where Thucydides could have learned from them or from envoys sent on their behalf:

As for the Lacedaemonians, they had never before experienced predatory warfare of this kind, and therefore, when the helots began to desert and there was reason to fear that the revolutionary movement might gain still greater headway in their territory, they were uneasy, and, in spite of their desire not to betray their alarm to the Athenians, kept sending envoys to them in the endeavor to recover Pylos and the prisoners. (4.41.3)

Thucydides' expressed theory is that the past should be studied in order that we may be able to understand the future, which will resemble it. But in the case of Cimon's dismissal, an event at the most crucial juncture of the internal histories of Athens and Sparta with their external relations, the great historian seems to have worked backward and anachronistically, inferring the past from what he knew of its future, his present. The Spartans probably were afraid in 462, but this historical fear was significantly different from that of 425 and



424. Insofar as we can judge, it was a fear of helots shaken into massive rebellion by the earthquake, with Cimon's presence a great security. The Spartans' first concern was order at home, but they also desired a sympathetic Athens, that is, an Athens in which Cimon's position was assured. This desire, itself secondary, was related to their first concern. Cimon's own first concern was the restoration of his own position, itself threatened by what we call the 'revolution' of Ephialtes. His departure from Ithome without any political motive of his own was probably no more than agreed-upon fiction in 462. 'Dismissal' might more recently have been challenged as such had it not been for the unrivaled authority of Thucydides, whose factual narrative is so good that we uncritically accept it even with its inferences, which become part of our 'factual' narratives.

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