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GREECE IN THE FOURTH CENTURY B.C.

The Peloponnesian war ended in a victory for the decentralizing forces in Greece; but that victory was not complete or decisive. When Athens was crippled and the Athenian Empire destroyed, competitors for the succession put in an appearance, one after another; and even the Athenians themselves considered that their defeat was not final and that their dreams of restoring the empire might yet be realized. Though Sparta had issued from the war victorious, properly speaking, there was no real conqueror. All the partakers in the strife were weakened; all were confronted by sore points and difficult problems in domestic and foreign policy; and Sparta, in her new part as queen of the seas, had to face more trouble and responsibility than other states. Greece expected of her that she should restore order and tranquility at sea as well as on land. But this needed men and money, because force alone could maintain order. She was obliged to adopt Athenian policy without possessing Athenian resources. During the war Persia had acted as paymaster; but her money was not given for nothing, and now she sent in the bill: she demanded the restoration of the cities in Asia Minor which had formerly belonged to her.

Persia was still a powerful, wealthy, and well organized empire. It is true that her reputation had suffered greatly from her failure in Greece. Further, a strong detachment of Greeks had fought for Cyrus in his struggle against his elder brother, Ar-
taxerxes, for the succession in 401 B.C., and had succeeded in retreating from Babylonia after the defeat of Cyrus. This retreat was described by the Athenian, Xenophon, and the whole episode demonstrated afresh to the Greeks their superiority to the Persians in tactics and strategy. Yet the situation remained essentially unchanged. Greece was crippled and split up and torn by mutual hatred between the states; Persia was still a very rich country with a powerful army, and well acquainted with the state of affairs in Greece. In an armed conflict Greece would have no chance at all; but the Persians had changed their tactics since the time of Marathon and Salamis. They were convinced that a steady stream of their gold would break up Greece more and more, until any form of national union would be impossible, and Persia, without having recourse to a fresh campaign, would find it easy to reduce Greece to the position of dependent vassal.

So Persia made her first move at the end of the Peloponnesian war. Sparta, constrained by public opinion and conscious that further demands from the same quarter were inevitable, was not inclined to surrender the Greek cities in Asia Minor. This made war certain, and war in Asia, not in Greece, offensive war on the side of Sparta, and defensive on the side of Persia. At one time, Sparta and especially Agesilaus, her able king and general, dreamed of a national war waged by all Greece against her old enemy, and of decisive victory in the struggle. But that dream remained a dream. Not even the ruthless measures taken by Lysander, when he kept garrisons and military governors in all the chief cities, could weld Greece together. Persian gold did its work, and when Sparta in 395–394 B.C. made the first serious effort to attack Persia, she was soon forced to give up operations in Asia for the defence of her own military supremacy in Greece. For at this time, 394–391 B.C., the Athenians rebuilt their walls and refortified their harbour, while the vassals of Sparta, profiting by the absence of her forces in Asia, were planning and carrying out new and, in some cases, very surprising alliances, which involved a rearrangement of forces among the city-states.
Sparta was obliged to make concessions which amounted to capitulation. Her supremacy in Greece was secured; but the price paid for that security was the freedom of the Greek cities in Asia Minor. It must be said that these cities shed few tears at their restoration to Persia, since it promised them great commercial advantages at the loss of political independence: they had never enjoyed either under Athens or under Sparta. The conditions of the treaty concluded with Persia in 386 B.C. by the Spartan ephor Antalcidas, are notable: the Persian king, like Flamininus the Roman general and the emperor Nero in later times, bestowed freedom on all Greek communities, except the cities in Asia, which became subject to Persia, and except the islands of Lemnos, Imbros, and Syros, which remained in the possession of Athens; rigorous war was declared against all who refused to submit to this settlement. The treaty did not touch the supremacy of Sparta; for it did not forbid pacts and alliances between individual states, such as formed the legal basis of that supremacy.

Meanwhile, Greece became more and more discontented with Spartan rule, and the difficulty of maintaining that rule became greater and greater. Persia and Syracuse, Sparta's allies, could not give her active assistance: the former was fighting hard against the process of disruption which had taken an acute form in her vast empire; and the latter was far away and entirely occupied with Sicilian and Italian affairs. Yet Sparta needed external support to control her empire, so large, so scattered, and so constantly disturbed. Constant wars had involved heavy loss of life, chiefly among the Spartiates, and the number of Spartan citizens with full rights was now dangerously reduced. On the other hand, the government of their foreign possessions was so profitable to the governors that the Spartiates took no steps to increase their numbers and treated every attempt in that direction as revolutionary. They preferred to ignore the transference of land, either allotted by the state or acquired, to the hands of women, rather than fill up their ranks by admitting Spartans without full
rights, Perioeci, and Helots. Consequently, the Spartiates were too few to defend Sparta, to command the scattered garrisons of the empire, and to carry on foreign wars.

The rivals of Sparta meanwhile were gaining strength. A comparatively long peace had encouraged a renewal of Athenian trade. At the same time the former allies of Athens, oppressed by the Spartan garrisons and the *harmosts* who commanded them, sighed for the good old days of the Athenian confederation. The conditions seemed favourable for renewing that confederation on more equitable terms. Elsewhere, the power and influence of Boeotia and of her chief city, Thebes, were growing in central Greece, and hatred for the Spartan garrison which held the Cadmea, the acropolis of Thebes, was growing also.

For all this, the Greek world was surprised, first, by the news that a detachment of Spartan invincibles had been beaten by the Theban, Pelopidas, and later by the complete victory won by the Boeotian militia over a picked Spartan army at Leuctra in 371 B.C., when Sparta, backed by all Greece and confident of victory, was marching to suppress the obstinate Boeotians. The Thebans owed this victory entirely to the military genius of Epaminondas: he had reformed the tactics of Greek militia forces, won considerable victories, and inspired Boeotia to rise against the oppressors of Greece. The victory of Leuctra and the invasion of the Peloponnesian led to the separation of Messenia from Sparta; and thus the military strength of Sparta was undermined; for many Spartiates had their allotments of land in Messenia, and could no longer maintain themselves and their families without them. The political state of Greece, bad enough already, was made worse by the collapse of Sparta. The last power which had tried, more or less successfully, to deal with the growing anarchy, now disappeared. Sparta ceased, and ceased for ever, to play the leading part in the life of Hellas.

There was no one to take her place. The second Athenian maritime alliance was formed on purpose to fight Sparta; but, when she lost political importance, the Athenians endeavoured
to convert it into an empire by the same harsh measures which they had used before the Peloponnesian war. The result was resentment among the allies, war, and the dissolution of the alliance. The supremacy of Boeotia was bound to be short-lived and precarious: she had neither the historic past and the wealth and civilization which created the Athenian Empire, nor that excellent professional army of citizens which formed the strength of Sparta. The effect of her supremacy in Greece was purely destructive: she crushed the last attempt made in Greece to create the semblance of a national power with the resources of a single city-state.

When the Spartan league had fallen to pieces and Thebes was growing steadily weaker, the political condition of Greece can only be defined by the word ‘anarchy’. The observers of that day, reflective and clear-sighted men of affairs, such as Xenophon and Isocrates, Plato and Aristotle, saw all the horror of this anarchy, but saw no way out of it. And indeed there was no way out for those whose political views could never rise above the limits of the Greek city-state, and its peculiar conception of freedom. For such men freedom meant simply the possession of certain political rights—rights strictly limited to the inhabitants of their native city and the limited territory belonging to it. The sovereignty of the city, its complete political independence, was an axiom in all Greek political science. Whatever interfered with that sovereignty seemed to a Greek intolerable slavery; and this is why Greece struggled so obstinately against Athens and against Sparta, choosing political anarchy rather than subjection to any one city-state.

Syracuse also, when she attempted to unite the western Greeks into one kingdom, was foiled by the same deeply rooted prejudice of the Greek mind. For a time the attempt was successful. Under the pressure of constant danger from Carthage and from the Italian peoples, the Greeks in Sicily and Italy endured the military dictatorship of Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse and an able statesman. But when he died in 367 B.C., his empire
in the island and on the mainland fell to pieces. Some decades later the same fate overtook the short-lived Syracusan Empire of Agathocles, another tyrant of Syracuse. Here also the failure was due to this—that the despotism of Dionysius and Agathocles was built up on the basis of a city-state, which, in its Greek form, was incapable of becoming the centre of a great national and political union.

Thus the Greek city-state, in the two centuries of its development, proved unable to create a national union of Greece, and reduced Greece to a condition of political anarchy, which must infallibly end in her subjection to stronger and more homogeneous governments. Apart from the tendency to separation innate in the Greek mind, the blame for this failure lies largely on the constitution of the city-states, and, most of all, on democracy, the most complete and progressive form of that constitution. Democracy in Greece proved unable to create a form of government which should reconcile the individualism characteristic of the nation with the conditions essential to the existence of a powerful state, namely, civic discipline and a preference of the general interest, even when it appeared to oppose the interest of particular persons or classes or even communities.

The fifth century B.C. was exceptionally favourable for the growth of individualism. The extension of trade, the great technical improvements in agriculture and industry, the supremacy of Greece in the world’s markets, her production of oil, wine, manufactures, and luxuries for all those countries to which her colonists had penetrated—such conditions had enabled the Greeks to show their enterprise in the sphere of finance, and to abandon more primitive methods in favour of a capitalistic system and a production aimed at an unlimited market with a demand constantly increasing in amount. The rudiments of such a system are noticeable at Athens even earlier than this century. The transition to capitalism was made easier by the existence of slavery, as an institution everywhere recognized, whose necessity and normality no one questioned. The slave markets provided
slave labour in abundance; and the growth of political anarchy only increased the supply of slaves and lowered the price of labour. But capitalistic enterprise was interfered with by the state: within the limits of small states it was difficult for the capitalist to go ahead: their territory was too small and the competition of neighbours too severe. And apart from this, within each state capital had to fight the socialist tendencies of the government and its inveterate jealousy of all who, either by wealth or intellectual and moral superiority, rose above the general level. Thus capitalism and individualism, growing irresistibly, came into constant conflict with democratic institutions; and the conflict led to utter instability, hindered the healthy development of capitalism, and turned it into speculative channels with which the state was powerless to interfere.

Among the characteristic peculiarities of Greek democracy is its view that the state is the property of the citizens—a view which includes the conviction that the state is bound, in case of necessity, to support its members, to pay them for performing their public duties, and to provide them with amusements. These expenses had to be defrayed by the state either out of the public funds, including its foreign possessions and the tribute paid by the allies, or, if these funds were insufficient, at the cost of the more wealthy citizens. In extreme cases the state resorted to confiscation and requisitioned, on various pretexts, the riches of the well-to-do. When the government sold corn and other food below the market price, or paid the citizens for attendance at the popular assembly and for serving as judges, members of the Council, and magistrates; when it gave them money to buy tickets for the theatre and fed them for nothing in times of dearth—in such cases the usual procedure was to squeeze the rich for the means; they were compelled either to lend money to the state, or to undertake, at their own cost, the management of certain public duties, for instance, the purchase and distribution or sale of corn. They were required also to fit out warships for service, and to pay and train choruses and actors for theatrical
performances. Public burdens of this nature were called *liturgiae*.

The same levelling tendency is shown by the state in every department of life. The equality of all citizens was a principle of democracy; and where it did not exist forcible measures were taken for reducing all alike to the average standard, if not to the standard of the lowest citizens. In public life all citizens might and must serve their country as magistrates; hence most of the magistrates were appointed by lot and the method of choice was abandoned. In private life, sumptuary laws aimed at the same object, and equality in morals was secured by laws which prescribed definite rules of conduct. And lastly, in order to preserve equality in matters of the intellect, thinkers and scholars, whose opinions appeared subversive of religion and government, were again and again prosecuted. I have already spoken of the fate of Anaxagoras and Socrates.

Democracy had good reason for prosecuting thinkers and men of learning. For they submitted the city-state to merciless criticism based upon a profound study of its essence. Some peculiar social institutions, such as slavery and the isolation of women, were repeatedly dealt with, from different points of view, by Euripides and Aristophanes. There is a remarkable review of Athenian democracy, witty, profound, and, in places, malicious, in an anonymous pamphlet of the fifth century; the writer is unknown, but was evidently an important figure in the politics of the day. But the heaviest blows suffered by this form of constitution were dealt by the sophists and by Socrates, of whom we have already spoken. Plato, the disciple of Socrates, and Aristotle, the disciple of Plato, summed up the results of this criticism and investigation: in their political writings they gave an excellent and detailed account of such a constitution in its development and practical working, classified all the possible forms which it might assume, and planned the formation of a new and more perfect city-state out of the elements actually existing in Greece.

Democracy was not the only form of government in Greece in the fourth century B.C.; and democracy in one state differed
from democracy in another. It appeared in a moderate form at Athens. For Athens still possessed a numerous class of small landowners, an important element in the population of Attica. This essentially conservative class voted, at times of crisis, with the higher class of the city population, and so prevented the proletariat, who were mostly sailors or dock labourers in the Piraeus, from keeping power in their own hands for long. Economic conditions worked in the same direction: men who could earn good wages at Athens were not inclined to give up their earnings for the small sum paid to judges, councillors, and magistrates; so that in practice the business of government was generally left to the richer and more educated classes. And lastly, the ordinary citizen, who had not received the necessary education, felt himself lost in complicated political affairs, and gladly made them over to professional politicians to manage.

A serious danger to the city-state lurked in this tendency of most citizens to hold aloof from politics. Men lost the taste for public life; they felt that public duties, especially the duty of military service, were a grievous burden, and retired more and more into private life; they were thankful to any one who could govern in such a way as to relieve the citizens, as far as possible, from the current business of the state and the necessity of serving in the army. I said above, that democracy was not triumphant everywhere in Greece. Many states were ruled by an oligarchy, that is, by a small group of the richest and most influential men, others by a tyranny, in which one man, supported by hired soldiers, was supreme. Both these forms of government rested on a practice new in Greek life, and partly due to the dis-taste for public life already mentioned—I mean the gradual substitution of hired professional soldiers for an army composed of citizens.

From the earliest period of Greek history it was the custom of Eastern monarchs to base their military strength largely upon detachments of Greek mercenaries. The stormy politics of Greece were constantly pouring a stream of young and healthy
men into the market, where they could be bought. They served in the armies of the Persian kings and satraps; and the vassals of Persia, the Carian kings, for instance, relied upon them. In the fourth century B.C. even the Greek city-states began to use mercenaries for foreign wars. Oligarchies employed them; and so did tyrants, in order to keep the power they had seized.

The case of Panticapaeum, the richest of the Greek colonies on the Black Sea, may serve as a typical example of the way in which the power of a tyrant was maintained for a long time by means of mercenary forces. Panticapaeum, a colony of Miletus, had become a tributary vassal of the Scythians; acting as middleman between Scythians and Greeks, it had grown rich by the export of grain and fish. In the second half of the fifth century B.C. it fell into the hands of tyrants. The decisive factor in this revolution was the hostility between two sections of the population in Panticapaeum and the other Greek cities on the straits of Kertch, which controlled a large part of the Crimea and all the Taman peninsula. The natives formed one section, and the Greek settlers the other; and the tyranny of Panticapaeum was established in order to reconcile the interests of both. It maintained itself for a long time and was converted into a hereditary monarchy, thanks to the strong mercenary army employed by the tyrants.

But if the political life of fourth century Greece was unsatisfactory, her economic life was not. Agriculture everywhere became more intensive and therefore more productive: old-fashioned methods were generally abandoned. Economic progress was powerfully aided by Greek science, which turned its attention to technical improvements. Specialists collected the results of private experiments, studied them and published them, and so created a science of agriculture. Evidence for this will be found in a short treatise by Xenophon, an Athenian citizen, the same who saw service with the younger Cyrus in Persia as one of his mercenary soldiers. Similarly the culture of the vine and the olive was placed on a scientific basis.
Industrial activity was no less intense. The factory system, indeed, was never adopted—I have already pointed out how difficult it was for a sound capitalistic system to grow up in Greek cities, but workshops of moderate size with a score of workmen, partly free and partly slaves, abounded in every large city. The work done there was highly specialized, different shops turning out different parts of the same article. Thus, in the manufacture of candelabra, four sets of workmen might be employed in four different cities: the first would make the metal branches, the second the stem, the third the pedestal, and the fourth the lamps to be placed on the branches.

The development of trade and industry was facilitated by the abundance of monetary tokens, especially in silver, which were coined by each of the larger cities. Special repute was enjoyed by the Athenian 'owls', silver coins bearing the figure of an owl. Persian gold and the gold coins of Cyzicus and Lampasacus circulated everywhere. The increasing amount of money gave birth to the banking industry and set credit transactions on a firm footing. Banks at Athens in the fourth century B.C. did essentially the same business as our own do now: they received deposits and kept them, made payments on the order of the depositors, gave credit to merchants and traders, received real and personal property as security, and acted as brokers between capitalists and parties in need of credit. Improvements were made in commercial documents and civil law. International trade gradually created a civil law of nations, or rather, a law of cities.

The expansion of trade and, still more, of industry depended largely upon slave labour. The slaves at Athens were numerous, but they were distributed in groups of moderate size over the different departments of industry. Great plantations and large factories, equipped with servile labour, were both unknown in Greece. The mines were the only exception to this rule. In outdoor and indoor work the slave was a member of a great family. In the fields he often worked side by side with his master, ate the same food, and slept under the same roof. In the workshop he
rubbed shoulders with the free artisan, did the same work, and received approximately the same wages, i.e. a sum sufficient to cover the necessaries indispensable for a single man. In building the practice was the same: slaves and free citizens of Athens worked together to raise the Parthenon and Erechtheum. We may suppose that the same conditions held good in other parts of Greece.

Greece was now passing through an economic and social crisis which gradually became more acute. The essential features of the crisis were the shortage of foodstuffs which is referred to frequently in literary and epigraphic sources, proletarianism, and the spread of unemployment, both illustrated by the growing number of Greeks who became mercenary soldiers in Greece and abroad. There were many causes for this economic unbalance. Greece was not rich in natural resources and had to depend on importing food as well as raw materials for her industry. The forests of Greece, once productive, had now vanished. In addition, Greece suffered from over-population. The remedies were colonization and the export of wine, oil, and manufactured products. When, in the fifth century, before the Peloponnesian War, the influence of Greek civilization had made these exports familiar commodities to the native inhabitants of Spain, Gaul, Italy, Sicily, Egypt, and the Black Sea coast, Greek export trade rose immensely. The graves of Scythian nobles contain great amphorae once filled with wine and oil and quantities of Greek ornaments; the graves in Etruria and southern Italy are as rich in the same objects; and both bear witness to the importance of Greek exports. In exchange Greece imported from the countries mentioned above the raw materials required for her industries, and foodstuffs to support the population of her cities—immense quantities of corn, salt fish, metals, hides, flax, hemp, and timber for shipbuilding. The importation of slaves was also important.

But Greek colonial expansion ended in the middle of the sixth century, and the market for Greek exports, which had been expanding rapidly in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., shrank con-
considerably in the fourth century and was no longer able to absorb the goods that Greece had to offer. The reason was that the other countries had gradually developed their own agriculture and industry and competed with Greece proper not only in their own markets but also in foreign trade. Such countries as Italy developed their own viticulture and production of olive oil. In the Persian Empire, during the Peloponnesian War, local silver coins, often imitating the Athenian 'owls' (silver pieces bearing the figure of an owl), had already begun to supplant Greek coins. Finds in northern Italy show that around 400–375 B.C. the importation of Attic vases to this region dropped to about one-fourth the amount bought before the Peloponnesian War. At the end of the fifth century, Attic vases were sold in southern France in increasing quantities, but the competition of imports from southern Italy soon became fierce, and this French market, too, was lost after 350 B.C. In this way Greece became less and less able to pay for the imported goods which she absorbed in ever-increasing quantities.

The crisis in the foreign commerce of Greece together with the anarchic political conditions brought about the difficult economic situation in which Greece found herself at the time of Alexander the Great. The decline was gradual. Greece was faced with the necessity of readjusting her economic and political life.
In the middle of the fourth century B.C. the position of affairs within the Graeco-Oriental world may be described as follows. Greece was torn by political and social anarchy. The principle of autonomy for the different city-states had been victorious over the principle of unification, either in empires, like that of Athens, or in federations, like that of Boeotia; and this victory led to painful consequences in the foreign and domestic affairs of Greece. Of the eighty-five years that divide the beginning of the Peloponnesian war from the conquest of Greece by Macedonia, fifty-five were filled with wars waged by one state against another. Every considerable Greek city experienced at least one war or one internal revolution every ten years. Some cities, such as Corcyra, were perpetually under the strain of revolution, past, present, or future. These convulsions were social rather than political. Abolition of debt and redivision of land had become the programme of the popular party. At Athens the strife of parties was carried on without those atrocities which attended it at Argos, for instance, or Corcyra; yet the democracy, when restored after the Peloponnesian war, included in the jurors' oath a clause that no person taking the oath should demand abolition of debt or a redivision of land.

Anarchy in politics being thus complicated by social anarchy, Greece was filled with exiles from different cities, homeless ad-