



Reforms of Pericles and Establishment of the Athenian Empire

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With exception of triumphant victory over Persian Empire, there is no more illustrious period in history of Athens than a relatively short life of Athenian Federacy. An explosive efflorescence of Athens in fields of politics, economy and arts was achieved only rarely in human history. Athenians were successful to a large extent thanks to reforms and leadership of Pericles, who, in environment of dynamic and change loving community, was able to lead his city with exceptional statesmanship. The submitted paper is describing, in a concise fashion, the advancement of Athens during the time of her supremacy and main aspects of Pericles' s political and personal life.

Athenian Empire. Periclean reforms. Athenian art.

The momentous victory of united Greek states over invincible Persian Empire had a profound consequence upon the whole Greek world and especially upon the Athens.

A relatively short period delineated by Pericles ascendancy and the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian war can be without exaggeration defined as the golden age of the Athenian City State. In refinement of democratic institutions, economical conjuncture, advancement of influence of Athens as a hub of Mediterranean and especially unprecedented explosion of artistic creativity, Athens constituted one of the illustrious epoch in the history of humankind.

Since reforms of Solon, democracy took a firm hold on political life of Athens. Even the most threatening reversal toward to nullification of democracy - a rule of tyrant Peisistratos - did not uprooted popular reforms. Peisistratos himself respected Solonian constitution and his son Hipparchos, after a short rule was expelled and disgraced him cooperating with Persians.[1]

Victory over Persian Empire, not only averted destruction of Athens, but also commenced a new era in development of Greek society as a whole. A new „super power“ situated in confinement of world of Greek states started gradually emerging.

The demise of Persian interference into Greek affaires created a power vacuum, which enabled Athens to capitalize upon her newly gained naval might without having a clear understanding that they are sailing into uncharted waters. As Alfred Zimmer noted, „*Like other great things the Athenian Empire was the child of necessity, and its creators did not know what they were doing.*“[2]

The opportunity, before not contemplated and planned, arose, when „*Back in 480, after the final defeat of the Persians, the Athenians had been chosen to lead the new confederacy of free Greek states.*“[3] According to Plutarch, representatives of allied Greek states entrusted to Athenian Aristides, renowned for his honesty and impartiality, authority to decide size of contribution which were deemed necessary to keep alliance going - „*Even at the beginning, while the Spartans were in command, the Greeks had made a certain contribution towards the war, but now they wanted each city to be assessed at a fair rate. So*

they applied to the Athenians for the services of Aristides and appointed him to survey the various territories and their revenues, and then to fix their contribution according to each member's worth and ability to pay."[4]

There were several important reasons for voluntary compliance with Athenian naval leadership. According to A. Zimmern, *„Few of the members of the new alliance had any ships to offer. Many of them had lost their navies twice over in the last twenty years, first in ill-started 'Ionian Revolt', and then again, after they had been forced to commit contingents against their own kinsmen, at Salamis and Mycale.*"[5]

Another difficulty in renewal of naval force for these states was lack of proper material for building of ships. Unlike Phoenicians, who could exploit forests of Lebanon, inhabitants of Greek city states had only limited access to proper wood. Besides, size of Athenian fleet allowed implementation of a revolutionary innovation - introduction of standardized spare parts, which improved productivity of ship building immensely. Moreover, in case of need, any part could be exchanged without excessive labor consuming reconstruction.

The island of Delos was chosen as a headquarters and contributions collected from members of alliance were deposited in Delian temple of Apollo. On important issue of control of collected funds Athenians initially agreed with generous arrangement of establishment sort of parliament seated at Delos composed of all members of alliance.

According to A. Zimmer Aristides determined a total sum needed to finance Allied fleet of two hundred triremes at 460 talents. This sum was deemed to provide enough money for various needs of 188 men on board of each ship (170 rowers, 8 officers, 10 mariners).[6]

Despite formal democratic arrangement, from the outset, collected contribution was given at discretion of Athenian representatives and controlling body composed of allies was reduced primarily to a role of statist, ratifying decisions already made by Athenian executives. Originally, the Alliance was intended to carry a war against Persia. However, after conclusion of peace between Athens and Persia in year 448, flow of allied contribution did not cease. The question of use of funds was hotly debated on the floor of Athenian Assembly. During the years 443 - 442, after transformation of Alliance into five tribute districts for more convenient collection of tribute, it is possible to speak of Athenian Empire. In year 440 contributions collected from Allies were added to Athenian treasury and were in reality placed under a full control of Athenians.

Dominant position of Athens in the alliance impacted also the sphere of legal relations between Athens and allied states. Athens, by contracting bilateral treaties with members of alliance, succeeded to establish a custom of trying all court cases involving Athenian citizens in Athenian courts. Thus citizens of allied states were removed from their jurisdiction and submitted to Athenian judges.

Military power of Athens went hand-in-hand with economic prowess. Athens was known for their high quality coinage. Athenian drachma,[7] was desired medium of exchange throughout Greek World. No Athenian politician permitted debasement of coinage and rich veins of silver mines at Laurium prevented of shortage of minting metal.[8] Political and economic ascendancy of Athens propelled her coinage to a status of a universal medium of exchange not only in Greece but also in remote regions. Similarly, weights and measures, which started to be in use in many Greek states, were based on Athenian standard.

Port of Piraeus grew into an international centre of commerce. From distant shores luxuries were imported of which Athenians never heard before. Historian Will Durant in his monumental work *The Life of Greece* described a scale of international trade carried in and out of Piraeus: *„From Piraeus merchants carry the wine, oil, wool, minerals, marble, pottery, arms, books and works of art produced in fields and shops of Attica; to the Piraeus they bring grain from Byzantium, Syria, Egypt, Italy and Sicily, fruit and cheese from Sicily and Phoenicia, meat from Phoenicia and Italy, fish from the Black Sea, nuts from Paphlagonia, copper from Cyprus, tin from England, iron from the Pontic coast, gold from Thasos and Thrace, timber from Thrace and Cyprus, embroideries from the Near East, wools, flax and dyes from Phoenicia, spices from Cyrene, swords from Chalcis, glass from Egypt, tiles from Corinth, beds from Chios and Miletus, boots and bronzes from Etruria.*"[9]

Even exotic and scarce items such as ivory from Ethiopia and perfumes and ointments from Arabia were available to Athenian buyers. In span of few decades Athens became one of wealthiest cities of Mediterranean. There was, however, the other side of the coin. Growing dependence on foreign imports, especially on imported grain, made a naval supremacy of Athens a must.

One of the consequences, as C. E. Robinson noted, was a certain implosion of Mediterranean space: „*Economically the Mediterranean world had become since war a more closely-knit unit; and Athens stood more or less at its centre.*“[\[10\]](#)

Quoted author also pointed to psychological changes, which had an impact upon citizens of Athens: „*The strain on Athens was constant, and competition severe. And this, too, had its effect on the people’s character. They grew more grasping and aggressive. As their fleet came to assume the control of the Aegean, they began to be more conscious of their strength and less scrupulous in their use of it.*“[\[11\]](#)

Still, despite rising resentment of number of „allied“ states, Athens managed to carry on and spread her influence throughout Greece. This was possible primarily thanks to political acumen of Pericles, who became a symbol of Athenian efflorescence in her golden age.

The most surprising development in Athenian politics immediately after victory was demise of undisputed hero of anti-Persian resistance – Themistocles.

According to Plutarch, Themistocles „*from his youth was of a vehement and impetuous nature, of a quick apprehension, and a strong and aspiring bent for action ... his mind was early imbued with the keenest interest in public affairs, and the most passionate ambition for distinction.*“[\[12\]](#)

Probably in this character feature – an unbraided ambition – can be traced his undoing. Though Athenians thanked for their victory in large measure to his foresight and inspiring leadership, he was ostracized „*to humble his eminence and authority, as they ordinarily did with all whom they thought too powerful...*“[\[13\]](#) To do him further injustice, he was accused of treasonable dealings with Spartan king Pausanias. Themistocles refused to return to Athens to face possible death sentence and he fled – paradoxically – to the court of Persian King, where he argued his devotion to Persians on pretext of secret message to Xerxes informing King Greek intentions.[\[14\]](#) Even though true intention of Themistocles message was to made Greeks fight, it appeared as Athenian commander sided with Persians and accordingly he was welcomed as a friend. This, however, prevented Themistocles’s return to Athens definitely.

A position of prominence – for a while – assumed a son of Miltiades – Cimon. He, in his own right became a heroic figure in annals of Athenian history. I year 466[\[15\]](#) in Pamphylia, under his leadership a combined Persian land and naval forces were destroyed. W. M. West, on the base of contemporary resources, stated that as a result of overwhelming victory, Athenian fleet captured 250 enemy vessels.[\[16\]](#) Cimon, personally an utterly honest man, lost his popularity because his allegiance to oligarchic party. In quickly shifting sands of Athenian politics he lost last traces of sympathy after flawed attempt to help Sparta in her fight against uprising of Helots. Disgraced, at the proposition of Pericles he was ostracized and, in word of W. M. West „*...oligarchic party was so demoralized by his fall that for two generations the government remained in the hands of democrats.*“[\[17\]](#)

Pericles, possibly tormented by feelings of guilt, used his influence and managed to convince Athenian citizens to recall Cimon. Cimon repaid with heroic death in service of Athens during naval campaign in Cyprus.

For a short time a leading position was occupied by Ephialtes. Under his leadership the last vestiges of aristocratic influence were threatened. A radical democrat by his convictions, incorruptible but stern to the utmost, he fought bitterly Areopagus, an ancient political tool of aristocracy, and on pretext of malfeasance, had several of its members put to death. The merciless struggle with Areopagus climaxed in Ephialtes’s assassination. At that moment a rising star of Pericles started to shine brightly.

According to Plutarch „Pericles was ... of the noblest birth both on his father’s and mother’s side. Xanthippus, his father, who defeated the king of Persia’s generals in the battle of Mycale, took to wife Agariste, the grandchild of Clisthenes, who drove out the sons of Pisistratus...“[\[18\]](#)

Taking to consideration political orientation of his predecessors, it can be conjured, that he inherited their democratic inclinations. During his political career he was repeatedly elected to post of *strategoí* and notoriety of his elections resulted in great deal of influence which he had upon Athenian politics. C. E. Robinson roughly divided Pericles’s prominent role in Athens into two periods: „*The thirty-two years of Pericles’s rule – and it was almost uninterrupted – fell into two halves, a period of continuous warfare followed by a period of nominal peace.*“[\[19\]](#)

Pericles changed life in Athens and city itself in several important ways. In realm of political reforms he profoundly deepened democratic character of Athenian constitution. Pericles took note, that one of the biggest hindrances to participate on democratic life for less well-off citizens was lack of time. These people devoted a large portion of every day to secure their livelihood with no time and energy left to take active part in political activities. The most important institution, shaping political developments in Athens, was the *heliaea* a body of citizens eligible to service as jurors in courts. W. M. West describes a mass character of this institution: „Six thousand citizens were chosen by lot each year (probably only from those who offered themselves), of whom one thousand were held in reserve, while the others were divided onto ten jury courts of five hundred each, called dicasteries. For important cases, several of these were sometimes thrown together.“[20]

This way citizens as a whole gained a political influence in shaping political decisions of state. However, to perform jury duties required a time. To do that could only citizens who were not obliged to make a living by everyday labor, that is, to well off. With aim, at least partially correct this disadvantage of less moneyed Athenians, Pericles introduce a pay of two obols (later three obols) per day a reward for jury service.

A step in a wrong direction, which in a long run was detrimental to a future of Athens, was a measure submitted by Pericles' s in regard to citizenship. Because privilege of citizenship became a valuable possession, he restricted it to persons whose both parents were Athenian citizens. As a result, approximately five thousand persons were eliminated from rolls of citizens. Charles A. Robinson posted question probing wisdom of this measure: „This represented a complete reversal of Solon's farseeing reform a century and half earlier and brings us up sharply against a fundamental question asked by Athenian history. Since Solon was followed by greatness, as Pericles was by disaster, are we conclude that liberality and breadth of outlook produce the one and selfishness and narrowness the other?“[21]

Citizenship became an exclusive privilege and unquestionably immensely popular with Athenian citizenry. Pericles was well aware of it and versed enough in the art of politics to know that no politician, striving to survive in democratic environment, can go against a majority of voters. There was no doubt, that dilution of privilege as precious as citizenship was at that time in Athens would surely jeopardize his popularity. As an example of consequences of such an unpopular decision can be mentioned loss of popularity and eventually loss of life of Gaius Grachus, after he tried to broaden a Roman citizenship to inhabitants of Latin cities. Eventually it took thousands of death in ruthless war before Romans finally acceded to Latins and granted them the Roman citizenship.

Paradoxically, it was Pericles, who paid a price for restriction of citizenship, when his own son, born to non-Athenian women, was excluded form this „privileged club“. Only when his legitimate sons died in plague which affected Athens during Spartan siege, Athenians took pity on him and, as Plutarch wrote, „... allowed him to enroll his illegitimate son in the family phratry lists and to give him his own name.“[22]

More wholesome were his reforms in the sphere of economics. As W. Durant noted, „He sought to reduce the pressure of population upon the resources of Attica by establishing colonies of poor Athenian citizens upon foreign soil.“[23]

The most remarkable enterprise enacted by Athens was the colonization of Thurii. Unlike schemes of earlier settlements manned intended only for inhabitants of Attica, this involved dwellers of other Greek cities - an experiment which could begin a process of unification of all Greece into homogenous community. According to A. Zimmern „The new colony was not to be an offshoot of Athens on the old Greek States lines. It was to be a Panhellenic settlement under the influence of Athens, a permanent embodiment of her new ideal of the blessing of free intercourse. Men from all the Greek states were to be merged and mingled in the new citizen body. All Greece was invited to take part in the enterprise. Colonists and visitors streamed in, not only from Athens and her Empire, but from Arcadia, Elis and Achaea, from Boeotia and the rest of Central Greece. Amongst them were some of the best known figures of the day, Protagoras the sophist, Empedocles the poet and philosopher, Hippodamos the architect, and Herodotus the historian.“[24]

After promising beginning,[25] however, the rooted difference proved to be stronger than ideal of unity and fusion. As A. Zimmer noted, „Within a year or two the new citizen-body had divided itself into tribes, according to the previous nationality of its members, and by 440 Herodotus and other prominent upholders of the new principles retired ruefully to Athens, leaving the city in the hands of the anti-Athenian majority. The first attempt to put the educational policy of Athens into practice had ignominiously failed. The City State tradition was too firmly rooted. Greece was not fitted for

Panhellenism, as Pericles understood it. “[26] To give work to the idle, he made state an employer on a scale unprecedented in Greece: „...ships were added to the fleet, arsenals were built, and a great corn exchange was erected at the Piraeus.” [27]

Pericles intended to make Athens and harbor Piraeus, distant from city some ten kilometers, a homogenous fortified structure. Construction of so called Long Walls enabled Athens, in case of war, protect a vitally important terminal. [28] This undertaking led to conflict with Sparta, which was spurred by oligarchic party in Athens to try to suppress democracy. Though Spartans defeated Athenians at Tanagra (457), oligarchic insurrection did not materialized and Spartans incursion came to nothing. [29]

Farseeing was Pericles’s decision to beautify Athens with number of public buildings. Plutarch characterized it as „one measure above all which at once gave the greatest pleasure to the Athenians, adorned their city and created amazement among the rest of mankind, and which is today the sole testimony that the tales of the ancient power and glory of Greece are no mere fables.” [30]

Plutarch’s words are as timely today as they were in his time. This, however, did not go well with everybody. On the contrary, as Plutarch noted, decision to elevate Athens to unprecedented glory, though also by using contributions of allied states, encountered a furious opposition - „... it was this, more than any other action of his, which his enemies slandered and misrepresented. They cried out in Assembly that Athens had lost her good name and disgraced herself by transferring from Delos into her own keeping the funds that had been contributed by the rest of Greece ...” [31]

Pericles retorted, that Athenians have a moral right to use contribution in line with their interest, because they carry the whole burden of general defense. „They do not give us a single horse, nor a soldier, nor a ship” -said Pericles according Plutarch. [32]

There is a general consensus of contemporary historians and modern experts, that one of the masterpieces of architecture was (and still is) The Parthenon, a temple devoted to Athene Parthenos. [33] The whole building, situated on Acropolis, is constructed from a fine white marble excavated from mount Pentelicus. Temple, due to precise workmanship, does need mortar - individual block fit together closely. Also segments of columns are so finely polished that it is difficult to tell them apart. Surprisingly, this magnificent temple is constructed in simple Doric style, avoiding unnecessary embellishments. The temple has an unassuming size 70 by 30 by 20 meters. Despite relatively modest size, builders succeeded in balancing all measurements in such a way as to accommodate for distorting effect of perspective, so temple seems to be perfectly proportionally balanced. This was achieved by ingenious correction of individual parts of the building. Columns were broadened by two centimeters in the middle sections, tapered toward the top and slanted toward center. Thanks to these corrections a colonnade seemed evenly proportioned from every angle of view. Similarly, an optical illusion of perfection was achieved by curving of horizontal lines of *stylobate* and *entablature* upward center. Each line of this fabulous building is slightly curved and this masterly correction is making the temple magnificently gracious. Parthenon, besides a triumph of architecture, is a mythology embedded in stone. A line of ninety-two *metopes* illustrate a Trojan War, a fight between Greeks and Amazons, statues of centaurs and gods. All figures are done with astonishing dynamism. A foremost representative of classicism, sculptor Canova, valued work of Greek sculptors on Parthenon with utmost admiration: „All other statues are of stone, these are of flesh and blood.” [34]

In southwestern part of Acropolis an Odeum [35] was built, serving as stage for musical performances and Dionysian dramas. Pericles himself acted as an arbiter in annual contests of musical performances. Unfortunately Odeum, which was partly constructed from wood, succumbed to vicissitudes of eventful history of Greece.

Athena was celebrated also by other sanctuary situated on Acropolis - a small temple built by Callicrates in Ionic style devoted to Nike Apteros (Wingless Victory). [36] Top of the Acropolis is crowned by colonnades built by Mnesicles named Propylea (Before the Gates) whose interior was furnished by votive tablets (Pinakes) which gave a name to the whole structure - Pinakotheka.

At the helm of an army of artisans and artists laboring on miracle of Athenian artistic build-up stood a personal friend of Pericles - Pheidias. Pheidias, one of the greatest Greek sculptors, had an impeccable artistic upbringing. His father was a painter and he studied under Polyglotus and possibly under Ageladas. Due to his artistic acclaim and strong personal ties with Pericles he became sort a general supervisor of all works executed during years 447 - 438. From number of artworks ascribed to him, the most celebrated is the statue of Athene Parthenos (Virgin Goddess), almost fifteen meters tall figure made

partly of ivory and gold. According to tradition described by W. Durant, „It was so placed that on Athena’s feast day that the sun would shine through the great doors of the temple directly upon the brilliant drapery and pallid face of the Virgin.“[37]

Lavish spending, which Pericles was willing to provide for build-up of Athens, did not go well with everybody in the city. Pericles was too popular to be attacked directly, so his enemies ventilated their enmity attacking his associates. Pheidias was accused and convicted of embezzling some of gold used for statue of Athena. Only interference of citizens of Olympia, who agreed to post a bail of allegedly forty talents saved famous sculptor from punishment, possibly from death sentence. Generosity of Olympians was, however, not completely selfless. The condition for bail was that Pheidias will create a statue of Zeus for temple devoted to ruler of Greek Pantheon. It was done – a humongous statue of God, tall twenty meters, came into being. The Thunder wielding God, mastered by Pheidias, was allegedly so majestic, that it was included among Seven Wonders of the World and pilgrims from the whole Greece made journeys to worship him.

As was noted, by attacking Pheidias enemies of Pericles were trying to undermine his popularity and political influence upon a majority of Athenians. There were reasons for it. Pericles, similarly as Solon, profoundly changed life in Athens, namely economic and social position of average Athenian citizen. Besides placing a decisive political power to hands of *heliaea*, he introduced a measure which should enable non-moneyed citizens to actively participate on deliberation of above mention institution.

In year 451 Pericles implemented a payment of two (later three) obols for day duty of each member of jury.[38] Critics severely denounced this measure on grounds that this will lead to parasitic dependence on state dole for ever increasing number of citizens. It is possible argue that gained opportunity to participate on political life had more wholesome impact than possible danger of excessive dependence on state. As this was not enough, Pericles persuade *heliaea* to pay every citizen two obols annually to cover admission fee for games, plays and festivals. Athens became a truly welfare state.

With aim to increase a political influence of average citizens, a measure was adopted (year 457), allowing members of third class, so called *zeugitai*, to be eligible for office of *archont*, which was traditionally a preserve of wealthiest class. Later, even *thetes*, members of poorest class, could be elected to this exclusive office. Such radical reforms roused a hatred from those who lost their political clout. As was noted, ways were devised to damage Pericles’s reputation and his political standing. His closest associates were slandered and accused of improper conduct.

Though married, he fell under spell of charming foreigner – Aspasia, a liberated woman, described by her enemies as a „*Milesian courtesan who had established a luxurious brothel at Megara and had now imported some of her girls into Athens*“.[39] According to Plutarch „*She was prosecuted by Hermippus the comic poet, who also accused her of procuring free-born Athenian women for Pericles and receiving them into her house.*“[40]

It is truth, that Aspasia, utilizing the relaxing atmosphere under Pericles leadership, introduced a novelty – a school for Athenian girls, where maidens learned art of rhetoric and philosophy – something scandalously new and unheard of till then. Also men attended Aspasia’s house, this precursor of Parisian saloons, among them such an intellectual celebrities as Socrates, Euripides and Anaxagoras. No wonder that conservatives were furious. The jurors took mercy upon Aspasia only after Pericles was pleading for her with tears in his eyes.

Another blow was aimed at philosopher Anaxagoras, one of the closest friends of Pericles. Plutarch wrote, that „*Decree was also introduced by Diopheites, the diviner, to the effect that anybody who did not believe in the gods or taught theories about celestial phenomena should be liable to prosecution, and this was aimed to cast suspicion on Pericles through Anaxagoras.*“[41]

There was a grain of charge brought against Anaxagoras however. Athenians, in spite of all breakdowns with old customs in political area, did not rise to refusal of religious customs and superstitions, which were sanctified into law. Even during the Pericles’s dominance of political life of Athens a law prohibiting study of astronomy was in force. This was surprising, because in other Greek cities, far less democratic, search for scientific knowledge was progressing apace. Parmenides, a citizen if Elea elaborated a revolutionary idea of the sphericity of the earth and noted that moon has his bright side constantly turned to the earth. A Theban Philolaus announced a new arrangement of celestial system – the earth as centre of the universe was replaced by „central fire“ and situated among many other planets. Democritus went even farther and described the Milky Way as a multitude of stars.

In Athens, however, these ideas were not welcomed, so as were scientific inquiries and explanations containing anti-religious tilt. Anaxagoras, despite his highly valued book *On Nature*, which, according to W. Durant, „... had been acclaimed by the intelligentsia of Athens as the greatest scientific work of the century...“[\[42\]](#) was viewed with suspicion by many. Anaxagoras searched for logical and natural explanations of causes, which were deemed to be divine. His assertion that the sun is a lump of burning stone became pretence for pressing charges against the philosopher. Cleon, a political adversary of Pericles, accused Anaxagoras of impiety, arguing that this is in a straight controversy with the generally accepted perception of the sun as a god. Anaxagoras was sentenced to death and fled to Lampsacus, where he became known as teacher of philosophy.

Pericles elevated the democratic experiment in Athens to a degree not known before, but political developments were not propitious to his labors. Athens, unlike Rome, failed to become a fulcrum of united Greece, capable of consistent economic, civic and cultural advancement. The tragedy of the last years of Pericles' life and the demise of the Athenian Empire are interwoven.

The strength of Athens, which translated into naval control of the Aegean, became a source of irritation of many Greek communities including the members of the Athenian Confederacy. A fact that contributions of member states were used for the adornment of Athens, this aversion deepened. There were other causes for dissatisfaction of allied states – a constantly rising amount of payments, which reached a cumulative sum of 460 talents, irksome regulation of trade by agents of Athens and supremacy of Athenian courts, decisions of whose was not always impartial. Some member states tried to break their bonds by force. In suppressing uprisings, Athens proved that originally voluntary union became in reality the Athenian Empire, which, without hesitation will be kept together with use of violence. Such were cases of uprisings in Samos in year 440, Euboea in year 446 and Aegina in year 457, which were suppressed by force.

Athenians themselves had had no illusions about the nature of their Empire. Thucydides cited the words of populist leader Cleon, who openly defined the nature of the Athenian Confederacy in his alleged speech to the Athenian Assembly in year 427: „*You should remember that your empire is a despotism exercised over unwilling subjects who are always conspiring against you; they do not obey in return for any kindness which you do them to your own injury, but only in so far as you are their masters; they have no love for you, but they are held down by force.*“[\[43\]](#)

Pericles himself was aware of the precarious position of Athens and tried to defuse the looming danger to Athens presented by the host of her enemies. With the goal to avert a possible outbreak of hostilities, he tried to organize a meeting of all Greek states to look for a solution how to eliminate growing tensions. Athenian envoys were sent to all cities with an invitation. Ominously, the leading Peloponnesian power – Sparta, refused to attend, followed by many other cities. Consequently, the project fell through. Pericles had no illusions – a general conflict was looming on the horizon. He made everything in his power to prepare Athens for a war. Traditionally Athens imported large quantities of grain from Sicily. Sicily, however, was settled by Greeks of Dorian extraction who, in case of war with Dorian Sparta, would take side with their brethren. According to CH. A. Robinson, „*In order to eliminate Athenian dependence on Sicily, Pericles founded a colony at Thurii, a remarkably fertile spot in southern Italy ... Not much later Pericles planted a large colony – Amphipolis or 'Double City' – in northern Greece and the crossing of the River Strymon. It controlled the route to the gold and silver mines of Mt. Pangaeus and to Byzantium on the Bosphorus, and could keep an eye on the Athenian interests in that area.*“[\[44\]](#)

The initial cause of war was, as in many cases of major conflagrations, indirect and seemingly not capable of leading to a general war. But in a situation when cumulated tensions were about to burst, it started a chain reaction of events resulting in drawing a number of Greek states into all-out conflict.

Corcyra, an island community which was a colony of Corinth, decided to break ties with its mother city and joined the Athenian Confederacy. Corinth took Corcyrian decision as an affront and sent a fleet to subdue the revolting city. A new ally and protector – Athens – also sent a squadron to help Corcyra. Both navies fought an indecisive battle. The whole conflict took a clear ethnic tilt. Dorian Corinth was helped by Dorian Megara. In response, Athens excluded products of Megara from Athenian markets. Megara appealed to Sparta for help. Sparta demanded the abolition of exclusion of Megarian wares. Pericles, looking for a mutually acceptable solution, proposed a compromise – as a reward for allowing Megarians to trade in ports of Attica, Athens will be allowed to sell her products in Spartan-controlled territories. Sparta refused. Moreover, as a condition for keeping the peace, Spartans asserted that Athenians must dissolve the Athenian Confederacy. This amounted to a clear declaration of war.

The conflict between Athens and Sparta immediately involved a number of Greek states. As W. Durant

wrote, „Nearly all Greece ranged itself on one or the other side. Every state in the Peloponnesus except Argos supported Sparta; so did Corinth, Megara, Boeotia, Locris and Phocis. Athens, at the outset, had the half-hearted help of the Ionian and Euxine cities and the Aegean isles.“[45]

To trace all vicissitudes of Peloponnesian War is beyond scope of this paper. It was a ruthless and utterly destructive conflict, which in words of W. Durant amounted to „suicide of Greece“, when „The Athenian fleet laid waste the coastal towns of the Peloponnesus, while the Spartan army invaded Attica, seized the crops, and ruined the soil.“[46]

Despite its melancholy end, in regard to significance of Athenian Empire, a valuation of

C. M. Bowra can be cited, who emphasized a positive aspect of Athenian democratic experiment: „Athens believed that the gods had been unprecedentedly generous to her in their most glorious gifts and that she embodied all that was most worth having in the civilization of Greece. She was indeed the ‘Hellas of Hellas’, as Thucydides calls her in his epitaph on Euripides. This sense of unique powers easily became a sense of mission, and many Athenians would agree with Pericles that ‘our city is an education to Greece’ ... Yet not everyone responded to these advances with willing readiness, and if Athenian civilization was not accepted voluntarily, it was sometimes imposed by brutal compulsion. The Athenian Empire brought many benefits to its members, but its policy, which was a result of self-confidence and belief in democratic ideals, could only breed distrust, fear and hatred among those, to whom such ideals were abhorrent.“[47]

Periklove reformy a vytvorenie Aténskeho impéria

Štúdia je venovaná vrcholnému obdobiu dejín Atén, v čase keď po víťazstve gréckych štátov nad Perzskou ríšou Atény utvorili námorný spolok. Vďaka rozhodujúcej námornej prevahe Atény transformovali pôvodne dobrovoľný spolok na Aténske impérium a príspevky členských štátov využili v značnej miere na skrášlenie svojho mesta. Autorom kontroverzného rozhodnutia bol významný aténsky štátnik Perikles. I keď Aténske impérium nebolo založené na striktno dodržiavanom princípe dobrovoľnosti a Atény vo viacerých aspektoch zneužívali svoje postavenie hegemóna, nesporne prispeli k hospodárskemu a kultúrnemu rozmachu celého západného Stredomoria. Podmienkou politického vývoja v Aténach smerom k prehĺbeniu demokracie boli reformy, ktoré presadil, nezriedka proti silnej opozícii, Perikles. Pod vedením tohto výnimočného štátnika sa stali Atény nielen laboratóriom demokracie, ale tiež domovom najväčších gréckych umelcov.

[1] GRANT, Michael. *Zrození Řecka (The Life of Greece)*. Brno : BB/art s.r.o., 2002, pp. 67-77.

[2] ZIMMERN, Alfred. *The Greek Commonwealth*. New York : Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 185.

[3] HAMILTON, Edith. *The Greek way*. New York : Avon books, 1973, pp. 141.

[4] PLUTARCH. *The rise and fall of Athens*. New York : Penguin Classics, 1985, pp. 135.

[5] ZIMMERN, A. *The Greek...*, pp. 186.

[6] ZIMMERN, A. *The Greek...*, pp. 407.

[7] The silver content of drachma amounted to 98 %.

[8] In otherwise barren soil of Attica the silver mines of Laurium were a bright exception. Already in year 483 the government profit from silver extraction amounted to hundred talents, a humongous sum. The richness of ore contributed to advance in metallurgy. Because ore contained also lead, it was necessary separate silver. This was done by ingenious method of heating the molten alloy on cupels of porous

material and exposing it to the air. Oxidation transformed lead to leadmonoxide and pure silver.

[9] DURANT, Will. *The Story of Civilization: Part II. The Life of Greece*. New York : Simon and Schuster, 1939,

pp. 276.

[10] ROBINSON C. Edward. *Hellas a short history of ancient Greece*. Boston : Beacon Press, 1957, pp. 69.

[11] ROBINSON, C. E. *Hellas a short...*, pp. 69-70.

[12] PLUTARCH. *The lives of noble Grecians and Romans*. Chicago : Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952, pp. 88-89.

[13] PLUTARCH. *The lives of...*, pp. 97.

[14] Herodotos wrote about episode concocted by sly Themistocles. During the night before battle of Salamis a devoted Themistocles's servant Sicinnus stealthily went to Persian fleet with following message: „The Athenian commander has sent me to you privily, without the knowledge of the other Greeks. He is well wisher to the king's cause, and would rather success should attend on you then on his countrymen; wherefore he bids me tell you that fear has seized the Greeks and they are meditating a hasty flight. Now then it is open to you to achieve the best work that ever you wrought, if only you will hinder their escaping.“ FINLEY, Moses I. *The Greek historians*. Cambridge : Penguin Books, 1981, pp. 185.

[15] All years shown in text are ment to be B.C.

[16] WEST, William M. *Ancient history*. Boston and Chicago : Allyn and Bacon, 1902, pp. 160.

[17] WEST, W. M. *Ancient history ...*, pp. 2

[18] PLUTARCH. *The lives of ...*, pp. 122.

[19] ROBINSON, C. E. *Hellas a short ...*, pp. 71.

[20] WEST, W. M. *Ancient history...*, pp. 169.

[21] ROBINSON, Charles Alexander. *Athens in the Age of Pericles*. Norman : University of Oklahoma Press, 1959, pp. 34.

[22] PLUTARCH. *The rise and fall...*, pp. 204.

[23] DURANT, W. *The Story of...*, pp. 291.

[24] ZIMMERN, A. *The Greek...*, pp. 374.

[25] To enforce unity and standardization, Hippodamos laid out revolutionary design of streets of the city

- streets were built in a rectangular grid. In political sphere Protagoras elaborated a model constitution for citizens of this promising Utopia.

[26] ZIMMERN, A. *The Greek...*, pp. 375.

[27] DURANT, W. *The Story of...*, pp. 251.

[28] Actually fortification roused anger of Spartans and led to Battle of Tanagra (457), which despite Spartan victory amounted to nothing - Athenians were not compelled to destroy precious walls.

[29] DURANT, W. *The Story of...*, pp. 250.

[30] PLUTARCH. *The rise...*, pp. 177

[31] PLUTARCH. *The rise...*, pp. 177.

[32] PLUTARCH. *The rise...*, pp. 178.

[33] The room for maiden priestesses situated in the western part of building meant in Greek language *ton parthenon*, which eventually gave name to whole temple.

[34] DURANT, W. *The Story of...*, pp. 334.

[35] A Music Hall.

[36] Temple was destroyed by Turks in A. D. 1687. Some parts of frieze, rescued by Lord Elgin, are displayed in the British Museum.

[37] DURANT, W. *The Story of...*, pp. 325.

[38] The payment was roughly equal to average salary of unskilled worker.

[39] DURANT, W. *The Story of...*, pp. 252.

[40] PLUTARCH. *The rise...*, pp. 198.

[41] PLUTARCH. *The rise...*, pp. 198.

[42] DURANT, W. *The Story of...*, pp. 339.

[43] THUCYDIDES. *History of the Peloponesian war*. London : Penguin books, 1972, pp. 199.

[44] ROBINSON, Ch. A. *Athens in the...*, pp. 107.

[45] DURANT, W. *The Story of...*, pp. 441.

[46] DURANT, W. *The Story of...*, pp. 441.

[47] BOWRA, Maurice. *The Greek genius*. New York : Mentor books, 1964, pp. 200.