power, which put fear into the Lacedaemonians and so compelled them into war,[54] while the explanations both sides gave in public for breaking the Peace and starting the war are as follows.

b. Debate at Sparta in 432 [i.68–88]

The immediate causes that were alleged were three Athenian actions: her siege of Potidaea, her decision to help defend the island of Corcyra against Corinth, and her decree restricting trade with Megara.

Potidaea *was a Corinthian colony that had been part of the Athenian empire, but had rebelled against Athens (with Corinthian help) and been put under siege by Athens in 432.*

The Island of Corcyra *(modern Corfu) was also a colony of Corinth, but had no love for her mother city. Corinth had quarreled with her colony Corcyra over a place called Epidamnus, which was divided by civil war. Corinth supported the ruling democrats of Epidamnus, while Corcyra joined a group of exiled oligarchs in attacking them. Athens came in on the side of Corcyra, for fear that if Corinth defeated Corcyra, the Peloponnesians would have control of the Corcyrean fleet, the second largest in Greece.*

Megara *was Athens' immediate neighbor to the west; the Athenian decree prohibiting trade between Megara and Athens or any of the Athenian allies apparently caused hardship in the city, and this was much resented by the Peloponnesians.*

Invited by Corinth, representatives of the cities in the Peloponnesian League gathered in Sparta in 432 to try to talk the Lacedaemonians into war with Athens. The Thirty Years' Peace Treaty had been in effect since 446, at least in theory, and the allies' goal was to show that Athens had broken it. The treaty had forced Athens to give up some of her conquests at the time. It listed the allies on both sides and barred each side from recruiting the other's allies. Apparently it also specified that future disagreements would be settled by arbitration.

Athens had a number of enemies at this point: Corinth was bitter about Athens' siege of Potidaea and support for Corcyra; the island of Aegina[55] com-

54. "Compelled them into war": scholars differ on how to take this. Comparison with parallel passages suggests that Thucydides does not mean that war was simply inevitable, but that people on both sides *felt* compelled to it by their mutual fear. Compulsion (*anankē*) is a subjective necessity. On the interpretation of *anankē* see above, p. xxx.

55. Aegina, an island close to Athens, had rebelled in 457 and been brought under firm Athenian control. We do not know precisely what sort of autonomy had been promised the Aegenitans earlier, or how they felt it had been infringed. On the concept of autonomy, see the Glossary.

plained that Athens had violated her autonomy (which had been guaranteed in the treaty); and Megara was furious because Athenian markets were closed to her.

Sparta opened her assembly to a series of complaints from her allies against Athens, of which Corinth gave the last. Thucydides presents only the barest sketch of the preceding speeches, but he gives us his version of the Corinthian speech in full, followed by a reply from the Athenians. Afterwards the Spartans debated the issue among themselves: a king named Archidamus urged caution, but an official known as an ephor carried the day with a call for war.[56]

These four speeches constitute the famous Debate at Sparta.[57] *All four are carefully composed in relation to one another, so that the structure of the debate rewards careful study. A remarkable feature of the debate is that the enemies of Athens have much to say against Athens, but they also comment at length about her military and cultural strength. We are led to see at the outset that Athens cannot lose this war unless she makes terrible mistakes or has extraordinarily bad luck. Thucydides is preparing us for the tragic downfall of Athens, which will in fact be due to a series of military errors compounded by bad luck.*

SPEECH OF THE CORINTHIANS

[68] You have so much confidence in your own government and society, Lacedaemonians, that you are too suspicious of us outsiders when we have a complaint to make. This confidence gives you your self-control,[58] but it also makes you rather ignorant in foreign affairs. Many times we have warned you of the damage Athens was about to do to us, and each time you have ignored our guidance entirely. You suspect that we're speaking for our personal interests alone, and that is why you did not call the League together before we were hurt, but waited until it was actually happening to us.

And now we are in the best position to speak, since we have the worst complaints—we've been assaulted by Athens and neglected by you. Now, if the Athenians had done their injustices to Greece in secret, you would not know, and we would have to inform you. But as it is, who needs a long

56. On the Spartan constitution, see p. xii.

57. Scholars disagree about the historical status of such speeches in Thucydides. See i.22 and p. xxi.

58. "Self-control": *sōphrosunē*, a virtue associated with oligarchy and also with Lacedaemon. The Greek word cannot be contained by one English one; it is also translated in these pages as "prudence," "moderation," and "clear-headedness."

speech? You can see they have subjugated[59] some of us, while plotting against others, (especially our allies), and have long since mobilized for any war. Otherwise they would not have taken Corcyra from us by force or besieged Potidaea, when one of these is quite handy for attacks against our interests in Thrace, and the other could have provided us Peloponnesians with a very substantial navy.[60]

[69] And for all of this you are yourselves responsible, because you allowed them first to fortify their city after the Persian Wars and later to build the long walls.[61] From that day to this you have been taking freedom away, and not merely from the people they have subjugated, but from your allies as well. If you have the power to put a stop to subjugation, yet look the other way while it happens, then you have done it yourselves, more truly than if you had been the subjugators, yet all the more if you claim honor and virtue as the liberators of Greece![62]

Even now it has been hard to hold this meeting, and our agenda is unclear. We should no longer be asking whether we have suffered injustice, but how we may defend ourselves. The Athenians made up their minds and went into action against us without delay, while we were indecisive. But we know the path they follow, how the Athenians encroach upon their neighbors little by little. As long as they think you are blind to this and do not notice it, they will proceed with some caution; but once they realize that you are looking the other way, in full knowledge, then they will lay into us fiercely. You Lacedaemonians are the only Greeks who prefer procrastination to power as a defense, and you are the only ones who like to crush your enemies not at the start but when they've doubled their strength. You were supposed to be dependable, but your reputation has eclipsed the truth. We know ourselves that the Persians came from the ends of the earth to the Peloponnesus before you sent a significant force against them; and now you are looking the other way from the Athenians,

59. Subjugated: the Greek literally means "enslaved."

60. Corcyra (modern Corfu) had a navy of one hundred twenty triremes, the second largest in Greece. In fact, Corinth was the aggressor in her quarrel with Corcyra, and Athens had merely responded to calls for help against Corinth. Potidaea was of strategic importance for Athens' interests in the part of northern Greece known as Thrace, which was a source of gold as well as timber for ships. A former Corinthian colony, it had been a tributary member of the Athenian alliance until its rebellion against Athens in 432.

61. The long walls, guarding the road from Athens to its port, Piraeus, were built in 458.

62. See i.18, ii.8, and viii.46 for the Spartan claim to be the liberators of Greece.

who are not far off as they were, but close by; and instead of attacking them for your own defense you are waiting for them to attack, when the odds against winning will be much worse for you. We also know that the Persian king was defeated mainly by his own mistakes, and that our survival so far against the Athenians has been due to their blunders more often than to any help from you. Really, hoping for help from you has destroyed some people who were unprepared because they relied on you.

Now please do not think we are speaking out of hostility; this is merely a complaint. Complaints are for friends who make mistakes, accusations for enemies who commit injustice. [70] Besides, we think we are in as good a position as anyone to find fault with our neighbors, especially in view of the great differences between the two sides, to which we think you are blind.

We don't think you have thought through what sort of people these Athenians are: your struggle will be with people totally different from yourselves. They love innovation, and are quick to invent a plan and then to carry it out in action, while you are good only for keeping things as they are, and you never invent anything or even go as far as necessary in action. Moreover, they are bold beyond their power, take thoughtless risks, and still hope for the best in danger; whereas your actions always fall short of your power, you distrust even what you know in your minds to be certain, and you never think you will be delivered from danger. Above all, they never hesitate; you are always delaying; they are never at home, and you are the worst homebodies, because they count on getting something by going abroad, while you fear you will lose what you have if you go out.

When they overcome their enemies, they advance the farthest; and when overcome by them, they fall back the least. And as for their bodies, they devote them utterly to the service of the city as if they were not their own, while they keep total possession of their minds when they do anything for its sake. Unless they accomplish what they have once set their minds on, they count themselves deprived of their own property. And if they do get what they went for, they think lightly of it compared to what their next action will bring, but if they happen to fail in any attempt, they turn to other hopes and make up the loss that way. You see, they alone get what they hope for as soon as they think of it, through the speed with which they execute their plans.

At this they toil, filling all the days of their lives with hard work and danger. What they have, they have no leisure to enjoy, because they are continually getting more. They do not consider any day a holiday unless they have done something that needed to be done; and they think that an

idle rest is as much trouble as hard work. So that, in a word, it is true to say that they are born never to allow themselves or anyone else a rest.

[71] That is the character of their city, Lacedaemonians, and yet you still procrastinate! You don't realize that you will enjoy the longest peace if you make your intention clear never to put up with injustice, while using your own military with justice. You think fairness lies in a defense that does no harm to others and brings no damage on yourselves. This would hardly work even with neighbors similar to you. As we have just now shown you, however, your customs are quite old-fashioned compared to theirs. New ways necessarily prevail over old, in politics as in technology; unchanging traditions may be best for a city at peace, but a city faced with the many necessities of war must have many innovations as well. That is why there have been more changes in Athens than here, because of their wide experience. [63]

So now is the time to put an end to your torpor! Help Potidaea and the others, as you promised, by immediately attacking Attica, so you will not betray your friends and kindred to their worst enemies and drive us in despair to seek out some other alliance. There would be no injustice in that, either to the gods who received our oaths or to the people who heard them. Treaties are broken not by those who go elsewhere because they were abandoned, but by those who fail to help the ones they swore to help. But if you decide to become engaged, we will stay with you, since to change allies then would be a sacrilege, and we would not find more compatible allies in any case. Think carefully about all this, and try not to let the Peloponnesus sink under your leadership below the level at which it was given you by your ancestors.

[72] So spoke the Corinthians. Athenian ambassadors happened to be at Sparta already on other business, and when they heard the speeches against them they decided they should present themselves to the Lacedaemonians, not to defend themselves on the charges brought by the cities, but to persuade the Lacedaemonians to consider the whole issue at greater length rather than make a quick decision. Besides, they wished to point out how powerful their city was, refreshing the memories of the old while instructing the young on what they had missed. They believed their speech would turn them more to peace than to war. So they went to the Lacedaemonians and asked for permission to speak to the assembly. On being invited to do so, they came forward and spoke as follows:

63. The changes in Athens are the democratic reforms. For Thucydides' mixed views on the effectiveness of democracy at war, see Introduction, p. xxv.

SPEECH OF THE ATHENIANS[64]

[73] Our mission here was not to argue with your allies, but to represent our city on another matter. Still, when we heard the great outcry against us we came forward, not to respond to the charges made by the cities, (for you are no law court set over our speeches and theirs), but so that you will not be too easily persuaded by your allies into making a bad decision on important matters. Besides, we want to review the whole case against us and show that we are not being unreasonable in holding on to our possessions, and also that we are a city to be reckoned with.

There is no need to speak of the distant past, for which hearsay is a better witness than what you listeners have seen. The Persian Wars, however, and events you know from your own experience, must come into this speech, although it is a nuisance for us to keep bringing them up. In our actions at that time we took risks to achieve benefits that partly went to you in actual fact; at this point we should not be deprived of all our glory, for what it's worth. This story will be told, not by way of asking favors, but as evidence to show you what sort of city will be your opponent if you make the wrong decision.

We say that at Marathon we faced the Persians first and alone.[65] And when they came a second time, when we were too weak to resist by land, we took to our ships with all our people and joined in the battle at Salamis [in 480], which kept them from sailing down to the Peloponnesus and destroying one city after another with a fleet so large that you would have been unable to combine forces against it. The best evidence for this comes from the Persian king himself: as soon as he was beaten at sea he quickly took the greater part of his army and went back home, seeing that his power was no longer what it had been.

[74] That is how it was, and it is clear that, when the Greek cause depended on her ships, we Athenians provided the three things that contributed most to the victory: the largest number of ships, the most intelligent commander, and the most unhesitating zeal. (1) We supplied just under

64. The Athenian speech does not respond to specific charges of the Corinthians such as the matter of Potidaea. Instead it responds to what Thucydides earlier called "the truest reason for the quarrel" (i.23): the growth of the Athenian empire, which was also a general theme of the Corinthian speech (i.69). Thus, in shaping this debate, Thucydides relegates "the explanations both sides gave in public" to the sidelines: this is a debate about the empire.

65. Plataean troops were also engaged in the Battle of Marathon in 490.

two thirds of the four hundred ships.[66] (2) Themistocles, the Athenian leader, gets the most credit for positioning the battle in the narrow strait, which clearly saved our cause; and you honored him for this more highly than any other outsider who came to your city. (3) We showed the most daring zeal when no one came to help us from further south and all of Greece to the north of us had been subjugated by the Persians. Then we decided it was right for us to leave our city and sacrifice our property. We did not want to abandon the common cause of our remaining allies or split off and so become useless to them, so we took to our ships without any anger at you for not coming to our defense any sooner.

We insist, therefore, that our action did you at least as much good as it did us. You did come to help—when we had nothing left to save—and you did so more out of fear for yourselves than for us, since you left behind cities that were still full of your homes, which you hoped to enjoy in the future. We, however, set out from a city that was no more, we risked our lives for homes that survived only in a slender hope, and we did our share of fighting to save you while saving ourselves as well.[67] If we had surrendered to the Persians earlier, as the others had done, out of fear for our land, or if we had not had the courage to take to our ships—if we had thought ourselves defeated—then there would have been no point in your fighting the Persians at sea: you did not have enough ships, and the Persians would have taken everything they wanted without a blow.

[75] Really, Lacedaemonians, in view of our zeal and intelligent strategy during the Persian Wars, do we deserve to be treated with such extreme hostility by the Greeks, even though we do have an empire? After all, we did not take the empire by violence; it was the allies themselves who came and begged us to take command when you were unwilling to stay with us and finish off the war against the Persians.[68] After that action we were compelled to develop our empire to its present strength by fear first of all, but also by ambition, and lastly for our own advantage.[69] Once we

66. An exaggeration: there were two hundred Athenian ships in an allied fleet of a little under four hundred.

67. In 480, when the second Persian invasion under Xerxes reached Athens, the Athenians sent their wives and children to safety on the islands and put every available man on board their fighting ships.

68. Soon after 479, the Spartans withdrew from the war against the Persians, and the Athenians took over the cause.

69. The three motives are *deos, timē, and ōphelia.* Fear is Thucydides' favorite explanation for violence and injustice, and he sees it operating even when it is well below the surface. The word translated "ambition" literally means "honor."

had come to be hated by most people,[70] when some had already rebelled and been put down and you had turned away from our former friendship to suspicion and hostility, then we thought it would not be safe to risk letting anyone go free, especially since the rebels went over to your side.[71] No one should be blamed for looking after his own interests to fend off such great dangers.

[76] You Lacedaemonians, for example, use your position of leadership in the Peloponnesus to arrange affairs in the cities there to your own advantage. If you had stayed on as leaders of the alliance against the Persians, you would have been as much hated by all as we are now, and we are sure that your leadership would have been no less painful to the allies than ours has been. You too would have been compelled to rule with a strong hand or else put yourselves in danger. We have not done anything in this that should cause surprise, and we have not deviated from normal human behavior: we simply accepted an empire that was offered us and then refused to surrender it. If we have been overcome by three of the strongest motives—ambition, fear, and our own advantage—we have not been the first to do this. It has always been established that the weaker are held down by the stronger.[72] Besides, we took this upon ourselves because we thought we were worthy of it, and you thought so too, until now that you are reckoning up your own advantage and appealing to justice—which no one has ever preferred to force, if he had a chance to achieve something by that and gain an advantage.

When people follow their natural human inclination to rule over others,

70. "Hated by most people": see ii.8, i.99, and iii.47. This is probably an exaggeration, as much of the empire appears to have been loyal to Athens even in adversity. The issue is debated by scholars. Is Thucydides to be trusted on this point? Or is he taking a narrowly oligarchical perspective? Did ordinary Athenians see their empire this way? Was Athens seen as a supporter of democracy in the subject cities? Did the empire in fact become more harsh around 432 and ease up afterwards under pressure of war? In i.99 Thucydides explains the decline of Athenian popularity in these terms: The allies began by making payments so as to avoid contributing troops or ships in the war against Persia. Then, when they failed to meet their financial obligations, Athenian forces would come against them. Since they had cut back on their own military forces, they would have no adequate means of defense against Athens, and so they continued in the empire, full of resentment.

71. Athens had been badly scared by the rebellion of the nearby island of Euboea in 446; that was why she had agreed to the Thirty Years' Peace.

72. See the Melian Dialogue, v.105, and Democritus fr 267: "By nature it is fitting for the stronger to rule."

they deserve to be praised if they use more justice than they have to, in view of their power. And we think that if anyone else had our position, you would really see how moderate we have been; yet our very fairness has brought contempt on us instead of the praise we deserve.

[77] Although we have been at a disadvantage in lawsuits arising from treaties with our allies and have allowed them trial in our own city by impartial laws, we have nevertheless been given a reputation for litigiousness.[73] No one notices that others, who have empires in other places, and are less moderate toward their subject states than we, are never upbraided for it. Those who have the power to use force, you see, have no need at all to go to law. And yet because these men have been used to dealing with us on equal terms, if they lose anything at all which they think they should not have lost, either by sentence of our courts or by the power of our government, they are not thankful for the large amount that they retain. Instead, they complain more about their slight loss than they would if we had put law to one side and openly seized their goods at the start. For in that event, not even they could deny that the weaker must give way to the stronger. People are apparently more passionate over injustice than violence, because then they feel that someone who is their equal has taken an unfair advantage, while they accept violence from someone stronger as a matter of necessity. At least, when they suffered worse things under the rule of the Persians, they accepted them; but now they find our empire hard to bear. And that was to be expected: the present is always the worst to those who are subject to the rule of others.

As for you, if you should defeat us and reign yourselves, you would soon find a change from the love they bear you now out of fear of us, at least if you are planning the sort of behavior you showed when you were their leaders for that short time against the Persians.[74] The customs in your country are not compatible with those of others; and to make matters worse, when any one of you travels abroad, he neither follows your customs nor those of the rest of Greece.

73. The interpretation of this passage is in question. According to the alternative reading, preferred by Hornblower, the Athenians were losing cases tried abroad and therefore shifted trials to Athens so that they could get a fairer hearing *for themselves*. This can be defended from the Greek, but would not fit a context in which the Athenians are pleading their fairness to their allies.

74. "The sort of behavior you showed": The Spartan general Pausanias had alienated a number of allies soon after his victory at Plataea (i.94–95); but another Spartan general, Brasidas, was to be highly successful in winning friends for Sparta in northern Greece (p. 97). Events showed, however, that Sparta could be a harsh master (see iii.93).

[78] Make your decision with the slow deliberate care due to important matters, and don't bring trouble on yourselves by giving in to other people's opinions and complaints. Before you go to war, you must realize how unpredictable war is. The longer it lasts the more it is likely to turn on chance. The odds of disaster are the same for both sides, and no one can see where the dangers lie. People tend to go into war the wrong way around, starting with action and turning to discussion only after they have come to harm. We are not making that mistake, and neither are you, so far as we can see. So, while it is still possible for both sides to use good judgment, we ask you not to dissolve the treaty or break your oaths, but to submit our differences to arbitration according to the agreement. If not, the gods who heard the oaths are our witnesses, and once you have started the war we will do our best to resist wherever you show the way.

So spoke the Athenians. After the Lacedaemonians had heard the complaints of their allies against Athens, as well as the Athenian speech, they put everyone else out of their assembly and discussed the situation among themselves. The opinions of the majority came down to this: that the Athenians were guilty of injustice, and they should go to war right away. But their king, Archidamus, who had a reputation for intelligence and prudence, came forward and spoke as follows:

SPEECH OF ARCHIDAMUS

[80] I have seen too many wars, Lacedaemonians, (and so have you, if you're my age) to have any desire for the business out of that ignorant belief, to which ordinary people succumb, that war is safe and good. If you think about it with a clear mind, you will see that this war we are discussing would be no small one. Our strength would be comparable if we were to fight Peloponnesians who are our neighbors, where we could reach any place quickly. But these men live in a distant land, and besides they are superbly trained at sea and have all sorts of excellent resources—private and public wealth, ships, horses, infantry, the largest population of any city in Greece, and many tax-paying allies as well. How could we lightly undertake a war with men like these? Unprepared as we are, where could we get the confidence to rush into war? From our ships? We are weaker there, and it would take time to build and train a navy to match theirs. From our money? There we are even weaker, since we have no public treasury and cannot easily raise money from our citizens.

[81] Perhaps one of you takes heart from our heavy infantry, which is superior to theirs in quality and numbers, because this would allow us to invade them frequently and waste their lands. But they have plenty of land in their empire, and will bring in whatever they need by sea. If, on the other hand, we try to get their allies to rebel, we will have to provide them with naval support, as they are mostly islanders. So what kind of war will this be? Unless we take control of the sea, or cut off the income that supports their navy, we will be defeated on almost every front. And then we will have gone too far to make an honorable peace, especially if everyone thinks we started the quarrel. We must not indulge in the false hope that we will end the war quickly if we destroy their crops. No, I am afraid that we shall leave this war as a legacy to our children. We cannot expect the Athenians to give up their ambitions slavishly to save their land, or, with their experience, to be easily shattered by war.

[82] Now I am not asking you to be so blind to the damage Athens is doing to your allies that you let them get away with it and do nothing to arrest them in their schemes.[75] But do not take up arms just yet. Send to them instead, and make demands, without implying too clearly whether you plan to make war or give way, and use the time to prepare our forces. We should acquire allies, either Greek or foreign, who can add a naval force or money to our power. (No one should be blamed for saving themselves by taking help from foreigners as well as Greeks—not if Athens is plotting against them, as she is against us.[76]) We should also stockpile our own resources. If Athens accepts our demands, so much the better; if not, we'll let two or three years go by and then attack them, if we choose, from a stronger position. And perhaps once they've seen our preparations, and realized that we really do mean to back up our demands, they'll give in more easily, before their farmland is ruined and while they can still decide to save the goods they have now, which are not yet destroyed. Remember,

75. "To be so blind": this is one of the accusations of Corinth, above, i.69.

76. "No one should be blamed": see i.75, where the Athenians introduce this line of thought, that a city cannot be blamed for actions taken in its own defence. Seeking help from foreigners (which in this case probably meant using Persian money or ships against Athens) was a terrible thing to do so soon after the long hard war to keep Persians out of Greek affairs. An early Spartan attempt to deal with Persia was derailed by the Athenians (ii.67). Towards the end of the war, however, almost twenty years after this debate, Sparta did use Persian help to defeat Athens. As elsewhere in the debate, Thucydides is probably foreshadowing the outcome of the war.

their land is nothing but a hostage to us, and as such it is more useful to us the better cultivated it is. You ought to spare Athenian farmland as long as possible, and not make them so desperate that they are harder to control. If we are hurried by the complaints of our allies into wasting their land before we are prepared, then be careful we don't bring down shame and trouble on the Peloponnesus. Complaints can be resolved, whether they are from cities or individuals, but a war engages everyone for the sake of a few personal interests, a war's progress cannot be foreseen, and there is no decent way to end it easily.

[83] Now, although there are many of us, no one should think it is cowardice that prevents us from quickly attacking that one city. They have just as many allies as we do, and theirs give them money. After all, war depends more on finance than on weapons, since money lets you put weapons to use; and this is especially true when a land-power takes on a sea-power. We should collect money first, therefore, before we are carried away by our allies' speeches. We are the ones who will bear most of the responsibility for the outcome, either way, so we should take the time to look ahead.

[84] Yes, we are slow and make delays; that is their biggest complaint about us. But don't be ashamed of that. If we begin the war in haste, we'll have many delays before we end it, owing to our lack of preparation. Besides, our city has always been famous, always free; and this slowness of ours is really nothing but clear-headed self-control. It is this that gives us our unique ability to restrain our arrogance in success, and to yield less than other people to misfortune. When people try to excite us with praise into doing something dangerous, we do not let the pleasure of it overcome our better judgment; and if someone tries to spur us on with harsh criticism, we do not let ourselves be swayed by our anger. Our discipline makes us good soldiers and gives us good judgment. We are good soldiers because our self-control is the chief cause of a sense of shame, and shame of courage;[77] while we have good judgment because our education leaves us too

77. "Our self-control . . . courage": literally, "A sense of shame takes the biggest part in self control, and courage takes the biggest part in shame." When x takes part in y, it is y that explains x. For the interpretation of this difficult passage, see Nussbaum (1986: 508, n. 24), and my note on iii.83. Self-control (*sōphrosunē*), the chief virtue associated with Sparta, is essentially linked to a sense of shame (*aidōs*), which is closely akin to shame (*aischunē*). Shame leads to courage because men who have a sense of shame will not want to be seen doing anything cowardly.

ignorant to look down on our laws,[78] and our self-control is too strict for disobeying them. We have none of that useless intelligence that condemns the enemy's forces in a fine speech but fails to deliver as good an attack in the field. Instead, we think the plans of our neighbors are as good as our own, and we can't work out whose chances at war are better in a speech. So we always make our preparations in action, on the assumption that our enemies know what they are doing. We should not build our hopes on the belief that they will make mistakes, but on our own careful foresight. And we should not think there is much difference between one man and another, except that the winner will be the one whose education was the most severe.

[85] These practices were passed down to us by our ancestors and they have always helped us. Do not let them go; and do not let yourselves be rushed into a decision in a brief part of a day, when it concerns many lives and cities, a great deal of money, and our honor. Instead, decide at leisure. We can do that, more easily than most people, because of our strength. Send to the Athenians about Potidaea, and send to them about the injustices of which our allies complain. I urge this because they are ready to go to arbitration, and in such a case it is not lawful to attack them first, as if they were in the wrong. But do prepare for war in any case. This decision will be the strongest, and it will put the most fear into our enemies.

That was what Archidamus said. Then Sthenelaïdas, who was one of the ephors that year, stood up last and spoke thus:

SPEECH OF STHENELAÏDAS[79]

[86] I don't understand all these words the Athenians use. They praised themselves a lot, but nowhere did they deny the injustice they've shown to our allies and the Peloponnesus. Yes, they were good men against the Persians at one time, but they are bad men to us now, and they deserve double punishment for changing from good to bad. We've stayed the same, then and now: we will not disregard any injustice to our allies, if we are clear-headed, and we will punish Athens without delay, since there is no delay in our allies' suffering.

Others may have plenty of money and ships and horses, but we have

78. Sophists were forbidden to bring the new learning to the Lacedaemonians. See Plato, *Hippias Major* 283–84.

79. A truly Laconic speech. Spartans were famous for brevity in speaking and our word "laconic" is derived from the name of their homeland. Sthenelaïdas plays no other part in the *History*.

good allies and they should not be betrayed to the Athenians. This issue is not to be settled in arbitration or speeches, since the damage is not being done in a speech; no, this calls for swift punishment with all our strength. Don't let anyone teach us it's proper to stop and discuss injustice while it's being done to us; what's really proper is for those who are planning *injustice* to spend a lot of time in discussions.

Vote for war, then, Lacedaemonians! Be worthy of Sparta and don't let Athens grow any stronger! Don't betray your allies either, but with the gods' help let us attack the aggressors!

[87] With these words, since he was an ephor,[80] he put the vote to the assembly of the Lacedaemonians. They decide matters there by shouting rather than counting votes, and he said he could not tell which shout was louder. In fact, he wanted them to show their opinion openly, so as to whip up enthusiasm for making war. So he said, "Any of you Lacedaemonians who thinks the treaty is broken and the Athenians are in the wrong, go over there," pointing out a place to them, and, "Anyone who does not think so, get on the other side." They stood up and divided, and by far the greater number thought the treaty had been broken. Then they called the allies back in and told them that they had decided the Athenians were guilty of injustice, but that they wanted to call a formal meeting of all the Peloponnesian League and put it to the vote, so that if they made war it would be on the basis of a common decision.

This done, the allies went home, while the Athenians stayed on to finish the business that had brought them. This decision of the assembly (that the treaty had been broken) was made in the fourteenth year of the Thirty Years' Peace, which began after the rebellion in Euboea.[81]

[88] The main reason the Lacedaemonians voted that the treaty had been broken and that the war should begin was not that the allies' speeches had persuaded them. They made this decision because they were afraid Athenian power would continue to grow, seeing that most of Greece was already subject to them.[82]

80. Sparta had five elected officials known as Ephors (overseers).

81. The debate took place in 432; the treaty was negotiated in 446, after Athens had put down a rebellion on Euboea, the island just north of Attica (i.114–15). Much later, the Lacedaemonians came to regret their decision to start the war (vii. 18).

82. Speeches in Thucydides rarely affect action, although they frequently bring to light the motives for action. As we have observed before, fear, not reason, is the principal cause of war and other human evils, according to Thucydides (p. xxxi, see i.23).