

THE GREEK AS A MERCENARY SOLDIER

By A. G. RUSSELL

EVERY young man in Greece during the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. had to be a soldier or a sailor, whether he liked it or not, for the greater part of his life; we may recall that Socrates 'trailed a pike' when he was forty-five at the battle of Delium, and the records of those times certainly show that anyone to whom the life of soldiering appealed had ample opportunity to indulge his taste to the full. If he did not like it, there was little remedy, and no provision for conscientious objection in the city-state. There were some, however, who found an outlet for their surplus energies not in the army of their own city but in that of a foreign overseas power, or even of a neighbouring and rival state, sometimes from choice, often compelled by a variety of causes which we shall shortly mention. It was with the Carians of southern Asia Minor that mercenary service of this sort traditionally originated in the eighth and early part of the seventh centuries B.C.—with their neighbours from Ionia they had long been troubling the shores of the Nile Delta by their freebooting expeditions until Psammetichus I actually took them into his service in his successful attempt to gain the throne of Egypt, and then formally incorporated them in his army, stationing them at Daphnae on the eastern frontier of the Delta. From that time onward Egypt also knew other large bodies of Greek soldiers, still mainly from Asia Minor; in return for their help the Egyptian kings on various occasions sent gifts to the great shrine of Apollo at Branchidae. Later on we find that this habit of mercenary service spread to, and grew in, mainland Greece.

Why did the Greeks go abroad, when they could get plenty of fighting at home? It was not so much the sheer joy of battle as a very compelling economic reason. Demaratus the Spartan observed to king Xerxes that 'Want hath ever been a foster-sister to Hellas': Greeks joined the armies of other states because there was not enough for them to live on at home; their country was, and is, poor, and it is this poverty.

that has had its influence on Greek history, down to the present day, as one of the factors that have caused Greeks to emigrate in such large numbers, and it is just from those areas where natural conditions made the pursuit of agriculture most difficult and life in general hard to maintain that the majority of mercenaries in ancient, and of emigrants in modern, times was drawn. The most rugged and desolate parts of the Peloponnese are the interior of Arcadia and the south-eastern district known as the 'Maina'—the latter became a definite rendezvous for men waiting to be hired, from the former, for example, came a band of Greeks to Xerxes, complaining of their poverty and asking him to take them into his service . . . and not very long ago each Arcadian village had a surprisingly large contingent of returned emigrants who had formerly made a living by selling sweets and tobacco in the down-town areas of New York.

But there were other reasons besides poverty which induced Greeks to leave their homes. Crowded conditions in the cities, political troubles and the rule of a landed aristocracy had been among the causes of the colonizing activities in the eighth and seventh centuries; they must also have been the reasons why men of adventurous nature went abroad as soldiers, usually to the East, to serve in the armies of Assyria and Chaldea. Perhaps sharing the same restless disposition, Antimenidas, the brother of Alcaeus, served in the army of Babylon and while there was presented with a sword of honour, and Asia Minor Greeks must have found their way also into the armies of Croesus and Gyges, who sent some of them to Egypt. And reasons which influenced individuals sometimes affected whole communities; for three hundred years the Spartans had oppressed the Messenians, until in 401 B.C., unable to bear such tyranny any longer, a large number of them emigrated, three thousand to Cyrene, and some to Sicily, where Dionysius I was in need of troops. Fifty years later another body of Greeks found their own land too hot for them; the career of brigandage of the Phocians had drawn upon them the armies of Philip, and they, too, emigrated to Crete and Sicily.

Far more frequently, however, it was as individuals or in

small groups that men left Greece. That greatest bane of city-state life, political faction, violent as it was in the fifth century, became even more virulent after the Peloponnesian War. A change of government usually meant at least exile for the defeated party, and men of character and enterprise would ill bear the degrading conditions which this might easily entail, so they found scope for action in the armies, sometimes of foreigners, sometimes of other Greek states. Thus Aristippus joins the expedition of Cyrus because he is unable to live in his own city on account of the oppression of his political enemies. For the Sicilian expedition Athens hired a hundred and twenty Megarians, whose service with the Athenians is explained by the mention of a recent revolution in Megara—they were probably members of the defeated party. About 400 B.C. Sparta needed mercenaries to serve in Asia Minor and asked Athens to help in raising them. In reply to Thibron's request, the authorities dispatched three hundred of those knights who had been most deeply implicated in the Revolution of the Thirty. It was felt that their departure would be a gain to the State as removing a source of dissension. The Peloponnesian War had caused profound disturbances, and many citizens must have found political and financial conditions uncomfortable enough to make them prefer service abroad, such as was offered by the Spartan campaigns in Asia Minor and the expedition of Cyrus. The division of booty at the end of a successful war would enable them to repair their damaged fortunes, while in the meantime political conditions at home might have changed for the better.

The effects of the Peloponnesian War were felt by the victors as keenly as by the defeated—the rigorous method of life enforced by the Spartans and the slender opportunities at home for the accumulation of wealth created dissatisfaction even among their well-drilled ranks, and became even less tolerable when Sparta found herself undisputed mistress of Greece, with a large income from her tributaries, and in constant contact with the outer world. Spartans were sent as harmosts to govern the Empire, and those who remained at home came to envy their fellows the positions of wealth and

authority to which they had risen. The result was that many went abroad, following the example of Gylippus and Dexippus, to Sicily or to Asia Minor, to gain their fortunes—a temptation from which not even the kings were immune.

Then there was the type of man who from recklessness, ambition, or desire for wealth, migrated, not to take service with any Greek state but to accept the pay of Egypt or Persia, hoping to obtain some petty chieftainship or position of authority under king or satrap. Such a typical swashbuckler was Menon, the Thessalian, who joined in the Anabasis. The Greeks on their march under Cyrus met several others, men employed as military advisers, and in their own sphere exercising considerable power, like Coeratadas, a Theban, or Phalinos. They were the prototypes of the 'condottieri' of all nations who served the tyrants of north Italy in the Renaissance period—men like John Hawkwood, an Englishman, in the middle of the fourteenth century, who made a good thing of changing his allegiance from ruler to ruler. They often commanded groups of adventurers, resembling the English, Gascons, and French who ravaged Lombardy, or the Grand Catalan Company in Greece. The career of Pausanias after the Persian defeat was repeated in that of Clearchus after the downfall of Athens; his head-quarters, also, were at Byzantium, where his conduct was so overbearing that the home authorities became jealous. To return home would have meant certain impeachment, and so Clearchus entered into negotiations with Cyrus, and when the time came, joined him with the forces which he had levied. There were others, too, who would have been called upon to face trial, had they gone home—Drakontios, the Spartan, was threatened with trial in his boyhood for the accidental killing of a youth; and doubtless the ranks of the army of Cyrus, and later of the Phocians, contained, as did the Foreign Legion, many fugitives from justice.

The last important reason for mercenary service was a military one. Before the Peloponnesian War it had usually been possible for each city to put into the field a fully equipped army with its components of cavalry, hoplites, and skirmishers, all raised from the citizen or resident-alien popula-

tion, but when campaigns lasted longer and the size of armies grew, the problem arose of man-power, which Athens, with a fleet to man and overseas posts to garrison, found especially difficult. With the aim of securing superiority of weight, generals equipped the greater part of their army as hoplites, but needing the other arms just as much, hired mercenaries to fill the gaps. Certain peoples specialized in the use of one particular weapon, and found their services in demand when expeditions on a considerable scale were being planned. The Cretans were especially skilful in archery—a skill fostered by the physical features of their country which with the exception of the Messara plain offered few opportunities for the use of hoplites. From the beginning of the fifth century Cretan archers are found in the service of almost all large Greek states, and also in the Seleucid, Ptolemaic, and Roman armies. They got their practice in the civil wars, endemic among the many cities of the island whose inhabitants gained a sinister reputation for treachery and rapacity. They joined the Athenian expedition to Sicily and had no hesitation in attacking Gela, which in company with the Rhodians they themselves had founded. It was with Rhodians that they were often associated on other campaigns, for Rhodes produced the best slingers in the Mediterranean. But during the fourth century she became richer and more powerful, with possessions to guard on the mainland of Asia Minor, so that gradually Rhodians became less prominent in foreign armies as their services were needed at home.

In Greece itself, Arcadia, as we have seen, was the biggest source, providing men both for foreign Powers and for the larger Greek states. It seems strange that a people who could furnish such valuable fighting material to others should never have been able to overcome their own dissensions and unite until the time of Epaminondas, but it was probably this very habit which prevented them from doing so. Lycomedes of Mantinea in his efforts to rouse the Arcadians to a sense of their power, pointed out that every state in need of help had used Arcadian mercenaries, who had been responsible for the Spartan victory over Athens, and for that of Thebes over Sparta. During

the wars of the Renaissance, similar great use was made of Swiss pikemen who had a great reputation throughout Europe. Athens also hired Arcadians, as on the expedition of Melesandros to Lycia in 425 B.C. when he went to collect arrears of tribute, and for the reinforcements which ten years later she sent under Demosthenes to Sicily, where they were to be found serving with unfortunate results on both sides. Of the troops recruited for the expedition of Cyrus, almost half came from Arcadia and Achaëa. Both on the Lycian expedition and in the *Anabasis* the Arcadians are described as hoplites, though usually mercenaries were light-armed; as hoplites they would be more useful to Cyrus who needed a solid core to his army, already well supplied with native peltasts.

The usual procedure adopted by a state anxious to recruit mercenaries was to send officers called ξενόλογοι to districts where they were likely to find such men, and by attractive bounties engage them for a particular campaign or for a term of years. When this practice became common, the necessity of placing some restriction upon it was soon evident, so agreements were made defining the extent to which these officers were allowed to enrol men. The earliest probably is the permission given by Sparta to Dionysius I to recruit as many men as he wished within her territory for his Carthaginian wars, and repeated in 315 B.C. to Aristodemus, a general sent by Antigonus. Explicit details are given in a treaty between Rhodes and Hierapytna (in Crete) about 200 B.C., by which these states undertook to give each other the fullest facilities for raising mercenaries within their territories, and to guarantee their transport between Crete and Asia Minor; they also agreed to refuse similar permission to any other state wishing to recruit soldiers within their spheres with the object of waging war on either of the contracting parties. In a decree of Aptaera, honouring a king of the Attalid dynasty (probably Attalus II, 159–138 B.C.) one of the privileges granted was the right to recruit mercenaries in their territory (ξενολογεῖσθαι).

These recruiting officers came not only from Greece but also from foreign powers; Egypt and Carthage sent their agents—thus Agathocles, guardian of Ptolemy Epiphanes

(c. 220 B.C.) sent Scopas the Aetolian with a large sum of gold for bounties, while Ptolemy himself later went to Naucratis to take over mercenaries raised for him in Greece by Aristonicus. The great financial resources of Egypt enabled her to be particularly generous in the terms she offered. Though it was more usual for Carthage to raise her troops in Spain, Italy, and North Africa, she occasionally sent for them to Greece, whence she attracted to her standard such men as Xanthippus, the conqueror of Regulus. After the First Punic War, Rome forbade her to recruit mercenaries in Italy, while one of the provisions of the Peace of Apamea between the Romans and Antiochus V in 188 B.C. forbade the latter to send his officers into the Roman protectorate for such purposes.

The earliest centres for the trade in mercenaries had been Athens and Corinth, the exceptional position of the latter city making it an entrepôt for traffic of every description. Here Sparta had raised troops for her campaign against the Arcadian League while Euphron of Sicyon went to Athens. During the disturbances of the early fourth century almost every large city had a certain floating population, drifting from place to place and earning a livelihood as best it could. They included escaped slaves, men taken from the quarries—or even disappointed lovers—unemployed discharged soldiers—a mass of unstable ‘wanderers’ from whom Isocrates complains that it would be possible to raise a larger force than from the citizens. As Delos at a later period was the centre of the slave-trade in the Aegean, so at the end of this century Cape Taenarum became the head-quarters of the mercenary trade. In this wild and desolate region there were nearly always bodies of men waiting for the recruiting sergeant, and filling in the time by brigandage. Here in 303 B.C. Cleonymus raised five thousand for his adventures abroad; it was a convenient point for sailing to Egypt, and difficult to approach on the land side, advantages which it shared with Malea. In Italy, Bruttium performed a service similar to that of Taenarum, offering a refuge to runaway slaves, anxious to avoid recapture by joining the army of whoever wanted them. In the Ptolemaic period, Aspendos on the south coast of Asia Minor became another well-known centre.

The most important point that had to be decided between recruiting officers and their prospective soldiers was, of course, the rate of pay and the numerous other details connected with provisioning and the gratuities payable on discharge. Pay varied considerably from time to time, and is too large a question to be discussed in full here, since it also involves the reward given to citizen forces, and the ration allowance which was made in addition; there are one or two details about the latter with which we are acquainted. In an important inscription of Hellenistic times recording an agreement between Eumenes of Pergamum and his mercenary troops, threatening to revolt, the stipulation is made that definite prices should be charged for the necessaries of life—for instance corn was to be sold at 4 drachmae the 'medimnus', wine 4 drachmae the 'metretes'. It looks as if the king's government undertook all the commissariat arrangements and was suspected of charging exorbitantly for the provisions which the soldiers had to buy. In the same agreement the privilege of receiving rations free of charge was given to any soldier who was awarded the 'poplar crown'—a decoration bestowed for good conduct or bravery. It was not unknown for generals to make up false returns of the numbers of troops under their command, to draw ration money from the employing state for non-existent combatants and divert it to their own pockets ($\mu\iota\sigma\theta\omicron\phi\omicron\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ ἐν τῷ ξενικῷ κενᾷς χώραις).

When the mercenary system became permanent and well organized, troops being hired took good care to stipulate not only the rate of pay but also the length of their service and of the campaigning year. Among the inscriptions found at Cos is one dating from between 203 and 190 B.C., containing a list of citizens who contributed to the military expenses of the state when it needed mercenaries; from the details given there the campaigning year is probably nine months, while in the Eumenes inscription it is definitely fixed at ten, and the insertion of intercalary months prohibited. Under the Macedonian calendar, an intercalary month of $22\frac{1}{2}$ days was added every two years, or $33\frac{3}{4}$ days every three, so that troops serving under a contract which failed to mention this point were liable

to be compelled to serve at a reduced rate of pay. Alexander had intercalated a month, and Memnon added several days in order to defraud his troops of some of their reward. At Pergamum, apparently, soldiers undertook to stay with the colours for a definite period and were paid yearly, as they did also in Sicily. So we find that in 302 B.C. Agathocles, tyrant of Syracuse, thought of using mercenaries originally enrolled in 319 B.C.

Only individuals or cities in control of an organized financial system and a dependable income could afford to maintain mercenaries for any length of time or in considerable numbers. Sparta made her first wide use of them when victory brought her the hegemony of Greece, and Peisistratos and Philip were able to enrol them through their possession of the sources of mineral wealth: the Persians and Phocians could continue the struggle as long as the money lasted. In some cases the employment of mercenaries had a direct influence on coinage, the outstanding example being Carthage. Though she was a great trading-city it was not until the end of the fifth century B.C. that she began to issue coinage, of which the earliest specimens were struck in Sicily, where she had to spend large sums on her mercenaries. The style of these coins shows them to have been the work of Sicilian artists, who sometimes copied Syracusan types; on others typical Punic symbols are found, a date-palm, with inscriptions in Carthaginian script, and the names of occupied towns, Heraclea, Minoa, Motya, Eryx; another class of coins had 'Machanat', i.e. people of the camp or army, and 'Mechasbim', paymasters. This camp coinage ended in the time of Agathocles, having lasted nearly a century. Foreign Powers were not alone in issuing special coins to pay their mercenaries, occasionally Greek generals did the same; from Zacynthus comes a coin, having on the reverse ΔΙΩΝΟΣ, and a tripod with ΙΑ between the feet. The expedition of Dion to Sicily embarked at Zacynthus in 357 B.C. and this coin probably represents a privilege given to him to coin money for the payment of his men before the actual start. We also find Conon (394 B.C.) and Memnon (334 B.C.) at Ephesus issuing a gold coin for the same purpose.

It is rather remarkable to find Syracusan coins copied in Old Greece, but widely spread examples of these have been found in Opuntian Locris and in Pheneus, the latter in Arcadia. The two most popular types were the Arethusa by Cimon and Persephone by Evainetus, both of them of exceptional beauty, and it is most probable that they were brought back to their native land by mercenaries who had served in Sicily, where so many Arcadians went, and there they were copied because of their artistic qualities and the wide circulation of their prototypes. Not very long ago there was found in Arcadia a hoard of coins from Asia Minor mints, probably the savings of a mercenary soldier in the time of Alexander the Great, who, having served with some profit, brought his wealth back, settled down in his old home, and then on the rumour of approaching danger buried it in the ground, where like the great treasure of the parable it was discovered many centuries later.

Mercenary service had great influence on the evolution of military tactics, social development, land settlement, and on the dispersal of Greek ideas throughout the Eastern world—to follow out these paths is a fascinating study which can be recommended as leading to all sorts of by-ways in Greek history and economics.