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THE INSCRIPTION FROM TROEZEN

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It doesn't need saying that in the field of Ancient History the inscriptions are highly important sources of information. They often provide us with facts not mentioned by any historian, thus enabling us in a most welcome way to supplement the knowledge we obtain from the historians and other literary sources. Moreover, if they contain facts which are also touched upon by literary sources, they furnish us with an efficient means of checking the reliability of the historians concerned: it is a golden rule that, if facts mentioned in an inscription are incompatible with an historian's version of those facts, the inscription has to take precedence of the historian. For inscriptions contain documents, and, if history is something like a line or a stream (which it is), the documents supplied by inscriptions are very lively *and* trustworthy snapshots of single points in that line, . . . unless the document has been forged: in such a deplorable and exceptional case the highly reliable snapshot becomes a most untrustworthy trick-photo!

From this point of view the very short history of the inscription from Troezen after its discovery has been a most remarkable one. I remember that, when a couple of years ago a colleague informed me by telephone that at Troezen an inscription had been discovered which contained a decree of the Athenian ekklesia that ordered the evacuation of Attica in 480 b. C., that this decree had emanated from Themistocles and that it had been passed *and* executed before the defeat of the Spartans in the Thermopylae, nay, before the Athenian fleet had left for Artemisium, my immediate reaction was: "No, that cannot be true; there must be something wrong about that inscription: it is incompatible with Herodotus' account of the events and, moreover, Herodotus' version is intrinsically, let us say psychologically, far more probable than that of the inscription."

However, much more striking than my offhand remonstrance of two years ago is the fact that, when after the first publication of the inscription¹⁾ a fair number of epigraphists and ancient historians started writing papers about the problems connected with the newly discovered document²⁾, it soon became clear that

¹⁾ Jameson, *A decree of Themistokles from Troezen* (Hesperia 29 (1960), 198–223 (with a rich commentary). See now also *S.E.G.* 18 (1962), No. 153 and p. 245 sq.

²⁾ Daux, *Bull. Corr. Hell.* 84 (1960), 685–88; Moretti, *Nota al decreto di Temistocle trovato a Trezene* (Riv. di Filol. 88 (1960), 390–402); Margherita Guarducci, *Nuove osservazioni sul "decreto di Temistocle"* (ibid. 89 (1961), 48–78); Habicht, *Falsche Urkunden zur Geschichte Athens im Zeitalter der Perserkriege* (Hermes 89 (1961), 1–35); Louis Robert, *Rev. Et. Gr.* 74 (1961), 167–168; Drögemüller, *Bemerkungen zur Stele von Troezen* (Gymnasium 68 (1961), 230–33), Wüst, *A decree of Themistocles from Troezen* (ibid. 233–39);

after carefully analysing the inscription a large majority could not bring themselves to believe in its authenticity. Of the authorities mentioned in notes 1 and 2 only a few, especially Jameson and Berve, are sure of the document's genuineness; the others have either serious doubts or arrive at the conclusion that the inscription is hardly more than a fake. This is a most remarkable situation. At first sight the odds ³⁾ seem hardly to be in favour of the authenticity. But one cannot decide a scientific controversy by counting votes, and I'll say at once that Jameson's and Berve's votes weigh heavily with me. Berve's elaborate paper is an admirable piece of work: practically all the objections which had been raised by other scholars against the authenticity of the inscription, have been thoroughly and convincingly met by his arguments. But one stumbling-stone remains, I mean the very stone I had tripped over, when I first heard of the discovery (*supra*): the problem of the date of the evacuation of Attica is still in urgent want of elucidation.

I do not mean by this that I still have my doubts about the authenticity of the newly discovered document: no, it is sound enough. I agree that the decree to evacuate Attica was passed before the Athenian fleet was manned and part of it was sent to Artemisium, let us say in early June 480 ⁴⁾. But let me state at once what is bothering me: I think that one thing is missing in the

Béquignon, *Rev. Arch.* 1961, 57-59; Dascalakis, *La stèle de Trézène et le "décret de Thémistocle"*, Paris, 1961; Berve, *Zur Themistokles-Inschrift von Troizen*, München 1961 (Verlag der Bayer. Ak. der Wiss.; 50 p.); Jameson, *The Scientific American* 204 (1961), 3, 111-20; Lewis, *Notes on the decree of Themistocles* (*Class. Qu. N.S.* 11 (1961), 61-66); Pritchett, *Herodotos and the Themistocles Decree* (*Amer. Journ. of Archaeol.* 66 (1962), 43-47). I did not see the papers by Amandry (*Bull. de la Fac. des Lettres de Strasbourg*, 1961, 413 sq.) and by Calabi Limentani (*Riv. Storica Italiana* 72 (1961), 345-56); some other publications may also have escaped my attention. In a more general way it is not out of place to remark that in a case like this streams of comments are usually published for years after the discovery. So it is quite possible that papers by others which are going to be published just before or just after mine will prove to contain similar or even partly identical argumentations. Under the circumstances such things cannot be helped. For Den Boer's paper, which has not yet been published, see footnote 33.

³⁾ Rumour will have it that after the discovery of the inscription English classical scholars started betting and that the odds were in favour of Herodotus and against the authenticity of the inscription! *Se non è vero, è ben trovato*.

⁴⁾ The fact that a decree of June 480 orders the recall of the ostracized to Salamis is in perfect accordance with Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 22, 8), who dates this recall to the archonship of Hypsiechides, *i.e.* before mid summer of 480 (see Jameson, 203; also Sumner, *Class. Qu.* 1961, 33-35 and 129). — The fact that Salamis occupies a rather central place in a decree of June 480 is in perfect accordance with the famous oracle of the "Wooden Walls" (*Hdt.* 7, 141), which is probably just a bit older than the decree (Jameson, 204): in this oracle, which reflects Themistocles' strategical conceptions, Salamis looms large, just as in the decree. — In June 480, when our decree

inscription: an additional clause, let us call it a rider, about the (eventual) beginning of the evacuation. In the decree that orders the mobilization (it immediately follows after the decree about the evacuation) the starting-date for the mobilization is expressly mentioned: to-morrow; but in the decree about the evacuation there is no such thing at all. It is even more noteworthy that in a decree that is so full of details regarding the organization of the mobilization, there are no details at all as far as the organization of the evacuation is concerned: this points in the same direction as the fact that no date for it is mentioned. For the mobilization was urgent and so the details of its organization had to be mentioned together with a starting-date for it. But the evacuation was not urgent: the principle of it had to be laid down in a decree, but details could wait, because this part of the decree had a *provisory* character⁵).

Many a scholar, while reading and analysing the inscription from Troezen, has not been able to get rid of the impression that the evacuation itself was to follow immediately after the passing of the decree about it. The fact that no date is mentioned for the evacuation, that in this part of the decree there is neither anything about the day of to-morrow nor about how to organize the evacuation (as there is in the next part, which treats of the wholesale mobilization), might have warned them; but it did not, in spite of the fact that it is rather easy to realize that the mobilization was a matter of extreme urgency, whereas the evacuation could wait. If I am not mistaken, this conviction that according to the inscription the evacuation was not only decided upon, but also effectuated at a moment when the military actions in the Thermopylae and off Artemisium had not even been started, was the principal reason that induced them to shy at acknowledging the authenticity of the document.

was passed, an evacuation could certainly not be regarded as downright unavoidable. But I fail to see how Themistocles could have delayed the decision about an *eventual* evacuation, because in the same decree the immediate mobilization of the adult male population was ordered for the sake of manning the fleet: after this *πανδημει* mobilization a meeting of the assembly could hardly be brought about in a regular, legally acceptable way, and this situation might go on for months. So the principle of evacuation had to be laid down in this last decree before the mobilization, in order to authorize the magistrates to announce by proclamation the urgent necessity of an immediate evacuation, if and when such a measure proved downright unavoidable. But this presupposes the presence of a rider, . . . which is missing in the decree as we have it. See my text.

⁵) I know quite well that often enough there is a positively charming element of artistic negligence in the style and composition of Greek inscriptions; but the combination of two facts mentioned by me (no date and no organizing details in the first part of the inscription, a lot of organizing details and a date in the next part) can neither be due to negligence nor to chance.

And indeed, if their premiss had been correct, they would most certainly have been right in regarding the inscription as spurious. For an evacuation of Attica before the actions of Artemisium and the Thermopylae makes downright nonsense of the historical situation. Jameson and Berve are far too much inclined to regard the military activities of the Thermopylae and Artemisium as no more than delaying operations ⁶). It is true that from the beginning there was a strong tendency among the Peloponnesians to bar the way of the Persians on the Isthmus and to leave Central Greece (including Attica) to its fate ⁷). But nonetheless Leonidas and his Spartans with their auxiliaries did occupy the all but impregnable pass of the Thermopylae and defended it stubbornly and most efficiently. It is true that Salamis occupied a central place in Themistocles' strategical conceptions. But this means no more than that *in the last resort* (a last resort he reckoned seriously with, but a *last* resort) the Greek fleet was to beat the Persian navy in the bay of Salamis: it certainly does not mean that he did not take seriously the strategic position of Artemisium and the Thermopylae, that he only regarded the military activities in that area as a quite temporary delaying action. For one thing, that strategical position was meant to protect Central Greece from being invaded by the Persians, which implies that the fate of Attica depended on it; and the fate of Attica weighed heavily with Themistocles. Secondly, that strategical position was something of his own making; for it took a man of genius to think out such a line of action, and Themistocles was the only man of genius the Greeks had in that utterly critical year. Thirdly, he was not the kind of man that is possessed by a fixed idea: his was not a one-track mind; on the contrary, the foremost quality of his mind lay in its versatility: he had more strings to his bow than one. In other words, it was not in his line to say: "We shall beat the Persians in the bay of Salamis or we shall not beat them; the operations off Artemisium and in the Thermopylae are no more than unimportant advance-guard skirmishes", but: "We shall do our utmost to keep the Persians at bay in the Thermopylae and at Artemisium, and — eventually — to beat them there decisively; but, if that line of defense succumbs, we shall do for them definitely at Salamis."

⁶) From Jameson's footnote 19 (p. 205) one almost gets the impression that in his eyes the "delaying operations" of Artemisium and the Thermopylae were hardly more than . . . withdrawing operations: both positions are simply regarded from the point of view of a more or less successful withdrawal. This means that he makes something like a farce of the line of defense in the North, which in reality was very strong and was *meant* to be strong.

⁷) Hdt. 7, 207; Berve 30, 45.

And another thing: Salamis certainly loomed large in Themistocles' mind; but he was also the first strategist in the history of the world who realized the importance of long-distance strategy: it was just like him to say to the Athenians: "There, at Artemisium, far away from your native country, you will defend Attica and protect it from being invaded", just as on the eve of the battle of Salamis he did say to the Peloponnesians who wanted to sail home: "Here, at Salamis, far from the Peloponnesus, you will defend your country." ⁸⁾

I may add that the two-sided strategical position of Artemisium and the Thermopylae was a very strong one. The Greek fleet off Artemisium had to prevent the Persian navy from entering the Straits of Oreos and landing troops in Leonidas' back (which would have made his position untenable): in spite of the fact that the Persians had not only far more numerous, but also better ships (and better crews), the Greek fleet could fulfil this task with success, because the relatively narrow waters of the Straits robbed the Persians of the advantage that lay in the larger number and the better manoeuvrability of their ships ⁹⁾. On the other hand Leonidas prevented the Persian army from cutting off the Greek navy's line of retreat, for instance in the neighbourhood of Chalcis, where the Euripus was very narrow ¹⁰⁾.

In a word, this line of defense was all but watertight. It is true that there was the famous mountain track, which threatened Leonidas' rear. But he had obviated this danger by posting a detachment of Phocians in a commanding position on the track: it was their easy task to throw the Persians down the mountain slope, if they should try to climb it. It is also true that the Persian admiralty might think of sending a strong squadron from H.Q. (at Aphetae) to the Athenian waters (actually they did think of it), in order to enter the Euripus from the South and to place the Greek fleet between two fires, between the main body of the Persian fleet in the North at Aphetae and the Persian squadron in its rear ¹¹⁾.

⁸⁾ Hdt. 8, 60, β ; see also Plut. *Them.* 7, 1-2.

⁹⁾ If the line of defense had not broken down after a few days in the Thermopylae (*infra*), it is not inconceivable that in the long run the Greek fleet might have acquired enough self-confidence and training to inflict upon the Persians the decisive defeat which it did inflict upon them afterwards in the narrow waters of Salamis.

¹⁰⁾ That there was a strict co-operation between Leonidas' army and the Greek fleet and that the strength of this northern line of defence depended on its two-sidedness, is evident from Hdt. 7, 175 and 8, 21.

¹¹⁾ It doesn't need saying that such a squadron could hardly be intended to invade Attica: that could wait and, moreover, it was a very risky affair for a warfleet to invade a hostile country without the aid of land forces. But they *could* try to plunder the coasts and to occupy Salamis; it was also for this reason that a squadron had been left in home waters, see note 14.

In this way the Greek fleet would have been wiped out and the war decided in favour of Persia. But before we conclude from such a possibility that the position of the fleet off Artemisium was horribly vulnerable, we have to realize two important factors. First of all, such a squadron was forced to sail along the outer coast of Euboea¹²⁾, where it ran a very serious risk of being wrecked; as a matter of fact the squadron which *was* sent by the Persians, was wrecked in its entirety on that dangerous coast¹³⁾. Secondly, if such a squadron had managed to survive the voyage along the Euboean coast, it would have found another serious obstacle in its way. For Themistocles had left a considerable part of his fleet in Athenian waters¹⁴⁾, just in case the Persians *would* send a squadron round Euboea. It is true that the squadron which was actually sent by Persian H.Q. was numerically stronger (200 sail) than the squadron left by Themistocles in home waters (100 sail); but a weaker squadron could easily bar the way of a stronger one in narrow waters (*in casu* the Straits of Euboea).

So all had been done to make the northern line of defence as strong as possible. Indeed, it is not overbold to say¹⁵⁾ that with a bit of luck (and no war can be won without that) this very strong strategical position might have held for months, with a reasonable chance of beating the Persian fleet decisively in the channel of Oreos (which would have been the end of the war) and with an even more reasonable chance of barring the way of the Persians on both fronts without any decisive victory till the end of the season (which would have meant the end of the war just as well, because the Persian army and fleet would have had to return home in a hurry, in order to avoid the vicissitudes of the bad season): thanks to the windfall thrown into his lap by the Phocians on the mountain track Xerxes could pass through the Thermopylae after a few days of fighting and even so he was rather late, from the point of view of season (mid August).

It goes without saying that Themistocles (and Leonidas) could and did reckon with unpleasant possibilities: soldiers were stationed on the mountain track in order to keep the Persians from climbing it; warships were left in Athenian waters in order to cover the rear

It is not due to chance that, as soon as the Persian attempt to sail around Euboea had resulted in a terrible disaster, most of the ships left in home waters went to Artemisium, in order to reinforce the main body of the Greek fleet, see note 13.

¹²⁾ The way through the Euripus was barred by the Greek fleet off Artemisium.

¹³⁾ Hdt. 8, 7. 8. 13. 14.

¹⁴⁾ See the inscription, l. 42 sq.

¹⁵⁾ See also Hdt. 7, 206.

of the Greek fleet against eventual Persian attempts to enter the Euripus from the South; they had also to reckon with the possibility of a naval defeat, which might force the Greek fleet to fall back on Salamis, so that Leonidas would have to evacuate the Thermopylae in a hurry, because the impregnability of his position depended on the presence of the fleet off Artemisium; etc. etc. But they could not foresee everything, and they could certainly not foresee that the barrage would spring a leak on its most easily defensible spot. Can we maintain within reason that Themistocles could foresee that the Phocians on the mountain track would panic and take to flight, instead of throwing the Persians down the mountain ridge, which they might have done without pains, given the fact that it is much easier to fight downwards than upwards? Could he really have a premonition of such an unexpected, miserable freak of fate? The answer is no: he was an ἄριστος εἰκαστὴς τῶν μελλόντων, but this does not mean that he was a Tiresias.

Let us sum up. The two-sided strategical position of the Thermopylae and Artemisium was very strong, and Themistocles had done his utmost to make it as impregnable and impenetrable as he could: no wonder, the fate of Central Greece, including Attica, hinged on this line of defense; if it broke down, his native country could no longer be spared the scourge of a Persian invasion. But, if this is true, can we really dispose of the military activities in the Thermopylae and off Artemisium by labelling them condescendingly as "delaying operations"? Dash it all, Attica was at stake.

It is rather easy for us to know *post factum* that in August 480 b. C. the line of defense in the North broke down after a few days of heroic fighting, because the Phocians on the mountain track had taken to flight instead of doing their duty, just as every Greek knew this after it had happened, in the second half of August 480. But Themistocles could not know this beforehand, for instance at the moment he proposed his decree, in June 480. I cannot get rid of the unpleasant impression that historians who write so easily and patronizingly about "delaying operations", suppose subconsciously that Themistocles knew (and perhaps even wanted) beforehand what they know now, *post factum*. It is one of the greatest sins an historian can commit: he must seriously try to imagine himself in Themistocles' position and not to know anything which Themistocles could not yet know. It is so easy for us to say that the military actions along that northern line of defense were naturally no more than delaying operations, because *we know* that those actions lasted but a few days. But Themistocles did not know in June 480 that those actions would last no more than a few days, and he certainly did not want it, because, I must repeat

it, Attica was at stake. Personally I find it impossible to believe that in June 480 Themistocles had given up all hope to spare Attica a Persian invasion by means of a line of defense in the North. He knew that such an action could go wrong . . . as it did; but he wanted to give it a chance, and a serious chance, for Attica's sake. If I know anything about Themistocles, it is this: he was the contrary of a defeatist.

Let us return to the inscription. We can well imagine what Themistocles, that great Churchill of Greece, said to the assembly, when he asked the Athenian citizens to vote a decree ordering a mobilization *πανδημεί*, in order to man the fleet and go to Artemisium. After explaining the situation he may have said: "The fate of Attica as well as of the rest of Central Greece depends on that line of defense in the North which you are going to mount with the other squadrons of the Greek navy and in strict co-operation with the Spartans in the Thermopylae. There, far from Attica, you will protect your native country from being invaded by the Persians. Your country expects every man to do his duty. I know you will; but I hope you will do more than your duty: I want you to fight like devils, for the sake of your country, which is at stake". And now imagine Themistocles adding casually: "By the way, I am also going to propose the immediate evacuation of Attica, just in case". What would have been the result of such an addition? My answer is: it would have undone the entire effect of the rest of his speech, it would have utterly destroyed the morale of all those men who were going to fight the Persians off Artemisium. For wouldn't they have said to each other and rightly said: "Themistocles thinks we are not going to stand a chance"? And what would the allies have said, if Themistocles had done such a thing? For it was the *Greeks*¹⁶⁾ and not the Athenians alone that had decided to defend the line of defense in the North, and they had certainly done so at Themistocles' suggestion (*supra*). In my opinion they would have been very angry and they would rightly have said to him: "It was on your proposal that we decided to mount the line of defense in the North. We did so reluctantly, because we preferred to concentrate immediately upon the defense of the Isthmus; but we followed your advice, because we thought we had to try to spare Central Greece, including Attica, the evils of a Persian invasion. And now you are shooting your own plan of campaign in the back by evacuating the very country we were going to protect by marching north and by barring the way of the Persians in the Thermopylae and off Artemisium. What do

¹⁶⁾ See Hdt. 7, 175. 177.

you think you are doing to the morale of our soldiers and yours?"¹⁷) And perhaps Sparta would have drawn back her soldiers, because Themistocles had pulled her leg and . . . because there was no need to protect an evacuated country¹⁸). — I may add that, if Themistocles had handled the matter that way, the assembly would hardly have voted the decree about the evacuation, which they did, witness the inscription. It is such an utterly horrible thing to have to evacuate your own country that no people are willing to accept such a trial, unless there is simply no choice: in the first half of June 480, two months before the battles in the Thermopylae and off Artemisium, there was no cogent reason at all for such an extreme measure. If the inscription really forces us to accept such an interpretation of the situation in the early summer of 480, we shall have to regard the document as spurious; but I think it doesn't.

No, after admonishing his Athenians to fight like devils at Artemisium in order to protect Attica from being invaded (*supra*) I think Themistocles added something quite different from what I mentioned before; something like this: "But I have to add something, though all of you know it as well as I do. A war is always a tricky business, and this obtains all the more in a case like ours, where one has to fight an extremely powerful enemy. We may be defeated off Artemisium in spite of our courage and compelled to fall back on Salamis, which would force the Spartans to evacuate the Thermopylae in their turn; or the Spartans may be defeated in the Thermopylae, thus forcing us to give up Artemisium. In either case the consequences will be the same: we shall no longer be able to save Attica from an invasion. So I must ask you to vote a decree ordering the evacuation of Attica. You know as well as I do that *now* such an evacuation is certainly *not* necessary; for by fighting the Persians in the North you will not only protect Attica from being invaded, but also your wives and children from being raped and killed. But, if that line of defense should break down, an immediate evacuation of Attica would become unavoidable. So I have to ask you *now* to vote a decree ordering the evacuation,

¹⁷) Cf. Moretti, 400–401; Dascalakis, 9. One might raise the objection that Themistocles did not destroy the morale of his men; on the contrary, he wanted the evacuation of Attica to be effectuated before the actions off Artemisium were started, because he did not want his soldiers and sailors to worry about their wives and children: he wanted to set their minds at ease, to make them quiet and care-free and thus to strengthen their morale. I am afraid such considerations do not fit in with Themistocles' personality: he had no use for quiet sailors and soldiers with their minds nicely set at ease; on the contrary, he wanted them to be desperate and to fight like desperate devils.

¹⁸) Compare the contemptuous attitude of the Peloponnesians towards an evacuated country as Attica was on the eve of the battle of Salamis, Hdt. 8, 49, 1; 61, 1.

because to-morrow the general mobilization will be started, so that after this meeting it may be impossible for months to call another meeting of the assembly. The magistrates will announce the beginning of the evacuation by means of a proclamation; but I promise you that there will be no proclamation, unless an evacuation proves downright unavoidable". If Themistocles put it like this, he certainly did not destroy the morale of his soldiers and sailors: on the contrary, they would fight extra hard off Artemisium, because it had thoroughly come home to them that there they would protect their wives and children as well as their country, and because Themistocles had made them feel that he believed in the possibility of fighting (and eventually defeating) the Persians in the North. Nor had the allies any reason to complain of dirty tricks, because Attica was not going to be evacuated during the military actions in the North. But . . . here I have to come back to what I said in the beginning: all this is only conceivable, if the inscription contained a rider, which is now missing, an additional clause which ran as follows: "The beginning of the evacuation of Attica as ordered by the decree will be announced by the magistrates by means of a proclamation; the evacuation will only be effectuated, if the circumstances make this measure absolutely unavoidable." ¹⁹⁾

It is quite clear from what I have said so far that in my opinion Attica was evacuated after the Spartan defeat in the Thermopylae. For this defeat opened the way for the Persian army into Central Greece and therefore also into Attica. The Greek fleet at Artemisium had received the news of the defeat in the afternoon of the fatal day, had left Artemisium in a hurry after nightfall, sailed southward through the Euripus and reached Athens on the next day, probably rather late in the afternoon ²⁰⁾. In any case we may take it for granted that in the evening of the day after the disaster in the Thermopylae Athens knew ²¹⁾ that Attica would be invaded by Xerxes and that therefore now the evacuation of women and children had really become unavoidable and a matter of urgency. So I suppose that very soon the bad news of the now urgent necessity was announced by proclamation to the population, as had been arranged — according to me — in the additional clause of the decree of June.

¹⁹⁾ It stands to reason that I do not pretend to know the exact terms of a clause that is missing; but, if there was a rider, it must have contained something like this.

²⁰⁾ See my paper on Leonidas, *Hermeneus* 10 (1938), 133–40.

²¹⁾ Note that Themistocles himself brought the news to Athens: he had been with the fleet at Artemisium; perhaps it was he himself that took care of the proclamation.

Herodotus mentions this proclamation (8, 41)²²; but he connects it wrongly with the so-called treason of the Peloponnesians (8, 40): according to him they failed to fulfil an agreement to meet the enemy in Boeotia and to protect Attica by doing so; this desertion (they fortified the Isthmus instead of waiting for the enemy in Boeotia) forced the Athenians to evacuate the women and children. I agree with Jameson and Berve that Eduard Meyer was right in regarding this as an Athenian forgery: it probably came into being in the course of the fifth century, after the relations between Athens and Sparta (with her Peloponnesian league) had become rather strained: Herodotus must have picked it up when he was at Athens in the age of Pericles. For strategical reasons I have always thought that this tale of desertion could not be authentic. If it were true, it should have been Themistocles who pressed the Peloponnesians to promise such a thing. And Themistocles was not a madman, but one of the best strategists in the history of the world: if he had tried to persuade the Peloponnesians to make a stand against the enemy in Boeotia, he would have been a fool. For Boeotia is a flat country (as far as Greek flatness goes): here the Greeks would never have had a chance of resisting Xerxes' gigantic army²³). So we may safely conclude that Themistocles never demanded such a thing of his allies.

But, if the reason Herodotus gives for the proclamation is spurious, the proclamation itself is certainly authentic: the only difference between Herodotus' version and historical reality lies in the fact that the proclamation ordering the evacuation of women and children resulted from the Spartan defeat in the Thermopylae and not from a pretended Peloponnesian act of treason. This means that the evacuation probably started a few days earlier than Herodotus thought, *viz.* immediately after the news of the defeat in the Thermopylae had reached Athens and not after it had become known in Athens that the Peloponnesians refused to make a stand against Xerxes in Boeotia²⁴).

I must insist on what I regard as a fact: that Attica was not

²²) He had all but ignored the decree of June.

²³) They got their chance in 479, when they won the battle of Plataeae; but by then Xerxes had marched home with the main body of his army and Mardonius had been left with limited forces. And even then the Greeks could only just manage to beat Mardonius.

²⁴) We have simply to think away Herodotus' spurious tale about the Peloponnesians' treacherous behaviour. We may certainly reckon with the possibility that the rather panicky *sauve-qui-peut* which according to the historical tradition characterized the evacuation was either entirely due to the spurious tale of treason, because this myth had a tendency to delay the evacuation (see my text), or was at least exaggerated in consequence of it. In other words, the spurious tale of treason makes the *sauve-qui-peut* more or less suspect.

evacuated, not even partly evacuated till after the defeat in the Thermopylae: only then it became unavoidable and only then Herodotus mentions the proclamation that led to the evacuation. I may emphasize that the myth of the Peloponnesian treason could never have struck root firmly into the historical tradition about the events of the year 480 (as it did), if Attica had been even partly evacuated before the defeat in the Thermopylae. I must also emphasize that, if Herodotus all but ignored the decree of June (7, 144, 3) and on the other hand emphatically mentioned the proclamation (with the evacuation that resulted from it) after the defeat in the Thermopylae, if Plutarch (*Them.* 10, 2 sq.) put the decree together with the evacuation itself after that defeat and if, in a more general way, every historian put the evacuation of Attica after the disaster in the Thermopylae (except for Nepos who doesn't count in a question like this), they could only do so, because *before* the battles in the Thermopylae Attica had not been evacuated at all ²⁵).

I may add that in the historical tradition there is no trace at all of an evacuation of Attica during the two months between the decree in early June and the battles of Artemisium and the Thermopylae in mid August. I am afraid I must disagree on this point with Jameson and Berve ²⁶). I cannot see that Berve's discussion of this problem is quite consistent with his own point of view. He rightly warns against identifying the passing of the decree with its execution. But then he goes on to prove that by mid June at least part of the population (if I do follow him, only a small part) had been evacuated in accordance with the decree: the rest lingered because they did not want to leave their beloved homesteads, until the proclamation after the defeat in the Thermopylae roused them from their lethargy and forced them to leave helter-skelter, in a *sauve-qui-peut*. Then why doesn't he take the full consequences of his own distinction between the passing of the decree and its execution, why doesn't he join me in my boat? In his own argumentation he can find reasons to do that, the more so because he has not proved at all that really a portion of the population had been evacuated by mid June. For the only evidence he is able to produce has no evidential value ²⁷). Herodotus says (8, 142, 3) that the

²⁵) Let us not forget that Herodotus stayed at Athens no more than thirty years after the events of 480 and that at that time there were still a lot of Athenians alive who had witnessed those events and could give him a reliable account of them; note that the date of the evacuation was important enough to be remembered. Cf. Dascalakis, 5.

²⁶) Jameson, 203; Berve, 25 sq.

²⁷) Berve's (and Jameson's) theory about this passage originates with Munro (J.H. St. 22 (1902), 320).

Athenians had lost the harvest of 480. But does that really put the beginning of their evacuation before mid June? Why did the Athenians lose that harvest? The simple reason might be that the adult male population was mobilized immediately after the decree that was passed in the first days of June. If so, the loss of the harvest had nothing to do with the evacuation of the women and children. But I will not insist on this: let us suppose — and I think such a supposition would be correct — that the women and children were strong enough to get in the harvest with the assistance of old men and slaves. But that does not help Berve. For according to him no more than a (small) portion of the women and children had been evacuated by mid June: the rest (and a big rest at that) lingered on and was certainly quite able to get in at least a very high percentage of the harvest²⁸). Then why did the Athenians lose that harvest? The answer is as simple as it is convincing. The harvest was safely put away in the barns by the women and children, but after the disaster in the Thermopylae the Persians invaded Attica, found the harvest in the barns and used it for their own purposes. As a matter of course this means that the Persian commissariat took possession of it and used it to feed the Persian army²⁹). Perhaps a bit of it had been consumed by those who lived in Attica during the two months from mid June to mid August; that could be no more than a small percentage. Another bit had perhaps been shipped by the Athenians to Salamis after the retreat of the fleet; but that could not amount to much, because they were in a hurry and had a lot of women and children on their hands, who had to be evacuated. So the bulk of the harvest fell into the hands of the Persians: that is what Herodotus means and it has nothing to do with an early evacuation of women and children.

In a word, I think there was no early evacuation at all: there is no evidence to prove it and, moreover, it is psychologically improbable. In the first days of June a decree was passed that ordered the evacuation. It had to be passed at so early a date, because the general mobilization which was also ordered by the decree might make another meeting of the assembly impossible for months to come; but the matter was not yet urgent at all. So the decree neither mentioned a date for the beginning of the evacuation nor detailed instructions for its organization; and — this is my conjecture — a rider was added to the decree: it contained directions

²⁸) In my opinion the women and children got in the whole of the harvest, because there was no evacuation at all before the defeat in the Thermopylae; but I am now trying to look at the problem through Berve's eyes.

²⁹) The alternative is that the Persians destroyed the harvest, which is quite possible, because there is always a strain of pyromania in invading armies.

about announcing the beginning of the evacuation by means of a proclamation, as soon as an evacuation would prove unavoidable. As a matter of course this proclamation was not launched during the more than two months that separated the passing of the decree from the disaster in the Thermopylae, because in this period Attica was sufficiently protected from a Persian invasion. But it *was* launched immediately after the news of the disaster that befell the Spartan army had reached Athens: from that moment a Persian invasion of Attica was unavoidable and the evacuation of women and children an urgent matter³⁰). It is this proclamation that is mentioned by Herodotus.

I must add a few remarks about that additional clause. For I have to make that clause acceptable by proving that it could have been there and by explaining why it is missing. There are two ways of doing that.

I. One reasonably expects such a rider at the end of an inscription, because it is an *additional* clause: the end of our inscription is lost with the lower end of the stone which contained it. That is one possibility, and the more innocent one.

II. The rider may have been left out deliberately. It is easy enough to think of two quite different reasons for such a line of conduct.

1°. The inscription is not the original document, but a late copy, which was intended to be set up at Troezen. At the time of the decree (June 480) nobody had known whether Attica would be invaded or not and (which is just the same thing) whether the women and children would have to be evacuated or not; hence the rider. But from the second half of August 480 every one knew that a Persian invasion of Attica had proved unavoidable, that therefore the women and children had been evacuated and that lots of them had found a refuge at Troezen. Moreover, we may take it for granted that this remained common knowledge for centuries, especially at Troezen. By then the rider had perfectly lost its actual significance, because it had been connected with the period of uncertainty about the necessity of an evacuation and even owed its existence to that uncertainty. So the decree itself about the evacuation of Attica remained interesting enough, but the rider

³⁰) I may call attention to the fact that the psephism proposed by the Troezenian Nicagoras (Plut. *Them.* 10, 3), which must have been passed in the first days of the evacuation, points to the late summer as time of the evacuation and certainly not to June, because a direction about the *opōra* is one of its important (and nice) details. I can see no reason to doubt the authenticity of this decree.

was left out, because it had been rendered out of date by the following events. We might call this an omission out of indifference.

2°. On the other hand it is also conceivable that the rider was not left out because of indifference, but in order to please the Troezenians. It is always nice for human beings to be reminded of benefits they (or their forbears) have conferred on others; and the greater the benefit, the nicer the remembrance. If the rider was copied with the decree, it would warn those who had forgotten it that the evacuation of women and children had only been started after the defeat of the Spartans in the Thermopylae. But if the rider was left out, the decree alone would create the false impression — which, alas, it is creating now — that the passing of the decree had immediately been followed by its execution and that the Troezenians had lodged and fed those women and children from Attica for more than two months longer than they had really supported them. And that would be a very nice sensation for the Troezenians.

It is my opinion that, if a systematic search is started for the bottom of the stone with the end of the inscription, the searchers will stand a fair chance of recovering that lost fragment; I am looking forward to being informed of that discovery. For that will be a very nice sensation for me. If a rider of the kind suggested by me proves to be present, my conjecture turns out to be perfectly correct. And, if it is not there, there is always the alternative that it has been left out (II), so that I cannot be convicted of having been wrong. But . . . I know quite well that I *may* be wrong ³¹).

³¹) I ask the reader not to regard it as an omission born of indifference, if I did not say a word about the religious character of the decree: in my eyes that side of the document is highly impressive; if anything proves the authenticity of the inscription, its solemn, sacramental character proves it. There is no contradiction between this and the fact that at the moment they trusted the safety of their country to the gods, the Athenians were going to defend that country as best they could by human means, at Artemisium and in home waters: if at any moment of their history they were in urgent want of the help of the gods, they needed that help in the summer of 480; but the Greeks knew as well as we do that the gods help those who help themselves. There is no contradiction either between the provisory character of the evacuation ordered by the decree and the fact that it trusted the safety of Attica to the gods. In other words, I am not ignoring or even violating the religious character of the decree by defending the provisory character of the evacuation.

It is true that the oracle of the "wooden walls" emphatically predicts the invasion of Attica, so that it seems reasonable enough, nay, imperative to believe that shortly after this oracle had become known, the Athenians not only voted a decree ordering the evacuation of Attica, but also effectuated this evacuation immediately. But had the decree of June 480 to carry out to the letter the instructions of the oracle? Did the Athenians turn their backs upon the enemy and retreat, as the oracle adjured them? On the

The lost fragment may contain a passage that rips ³²⁾ my case wide open. On the other hand it remains also possible that after all the inscription proves to be a fake: I shall not be surprised, if other scholars will use my own paper to prove that the inscription is a forgery; perhaps they will say that, if a scholar has to squirm like that in order to save the authenticity of a document, he only proves that there is precious little to save at all. There is something in that; in any case the last word has not been said about this remarkable document, which creates considerably more problems round the events of the year 480 b. C. than we had on our hands before its discovery ³³⁾.

In order to anticipate objections I foresee, I may be allowed to add two short remarks by way of afterthought.

If in early June 480 it had really been Themistocles' conviction that the only chance the Greeks had of beating the Persians lay in fighting them in the waters of Salamis, he would never have accepted the serious risk of gambling away the best part of the Greek fleet off Artemisium, because, if that happened, there could be no battle of Salamis. But he did accept that risk, witness the inscription and witness Herodotus; nay, the northern plan of campaign was something of his own making (*supra*)!

Perhaps my opponents will answer — it is one of their hobbies — that those northern activities were no more than short-lived, unimportant delaying operations. My answer to that is twofold. First of all, during those few days of "unimportant delaying operations" the Greeks would all the same have run a deadly risk of losing the best part of their fleet . . . and losing it for a tertiary purpose! Secondly, I do not in the least understand, why the Greeks were in

contrary, they mobilized their fleet and sent it north in order to bar the enemy's way in strict co-operation with Leonidas' land forces. If they did that in spite of the oracle, they could also make the evacuation of Attica a provisory measure. After all Themistocles and his Athenians were human: one never could tell; even a god might change his mind: note that in the inscription the gods are expected to protect the country . . . in spite of the oracle.

³²⁾ For instance: "The women and children will be transported as soon as possible to Troezen by the 100 ships that are going to be left in home waters: a regular shuttle service will be organized for that purpose". That would be the end of my little theory.

³³⁾ After I had finished this paper, Den Boer told me he had written an essay *Nieuw licht op de Perzische oorlogen*, which was intended to be published in *De Gids* of September 1962. Thanks to his kindness I was allowed to read it in typescript; but by then it was too late to react upon it in my own essay. Suffice it to say that I regard Den Boer's paper as an excellent piece of work and that I agree with him in practically every respect . . . except for the date of the evacuation of Attica.

want of a delay of a few days, if they had decided to concentrate upon Salamis (and the Isthmus). I know the answer, for it has been given: "they wanted to gain time for the evacuation of Attica and the fortification of the Isthmus". But this answer is null and void. For between Themistocles' decree (early June) and the arrival of the Persians at the Thermopylae and Aphetæ³⁴) (mid August) there was a space of more than two months: if the Greeks could not manage to fortify the Isthmus and to evacuate Attica within that time, . . . they deserved to lose their war! So the long and the short of it is that Themistocles (*and* the Spartans) took the northern line of defense very seriously, because otherwise they would not have mounted it, and that they had not decided in advance to concentrate upon Salamis and the Isthmus.

³⁴) Not to speak about Attica and the Isthmus!

