

R15 THE PELOPONNESIAN WARS

The Peloponnesus is a huge peninsula south of the Gulf of Corinth. It was controlled by the city-state of Sparta. Its rival was Athens in the north. Athens wanted to ensure that Greece was not occupied by the Persians so began to gather allies, city-states that promised to help any of the others in case of attack. This defensive alliance was called the HELLENIC LEAGUE.

Not every city wanted to join this league and those that refused to do so were bullied by Athens. Pericles, the great leader of Athens, had the support of most of the mainland city-states, along with those on Aegean islands and the colonies in Asia Minor. But the league was more an Athenian empire than a partnership. Those that tried to break away were treated as traitors.

The island of Thasos was an unwilling ally and in 463 BC, Athens sent war ships there to force cooperation. The people of Thasos did what others with the same problem had done---they asked Sparta for help. But at that time Sparta was busy dealing with a revolt of its slaves.

However, things like this angered Sparta. They, like the controlled city-states, saw that tribute money being paid to Athens was not used for their defense but was instead being lavishly spent on improving the city of Athens. To the Spartans it seemed as if Athens were collecting these allies in order to extend its influence into the western part of the Mediterranean. This worried Sparta for they depended on corn and other food supplies that came from Sicily, Italy, Spain, and France (modern names for these locations in the western Mediterranean).

Sparta built up its own group of allies, the PELOPONNESIAN LEAGUE. Then in 457 BC the two rivals fought and the Spartan forces barely won. Thus began the Peloponnesian Wars.

Write the answers on your paper. DO NOT WRITE ON THIS CARD.

1. What threat did Sparta see in the western Mediterranean?
2. T F Athens controlled the Peloponnesian peninsula.
3. T F Not every city-state willingly joined the Hellenic League.
4. Why were its allies angry with Athens?