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OTTO MØRKHOLM

## The Speech of Agelaus again

### I

In a paper published a few years ago I tried to argue that the famous speech of the Aetolian Agelaus, reported by Polybius 5, 104, from the peace conference in Naupactus in 217 B. C., was anachronistic and, most probably, an invention of Polybius himself.<sup>1</sup> As was to be expected, this view, which runs counter to the tendency prevalent among students of Polybius today, has met opposition and criticism from various parts. Recently, in the last volume of *Chiron*, Professor DEININGER has devoted six pages to a discussion of the problem criticising my arguments and stating his firm belief in the authenticity of the speech.<sup>2</sup> Owing to the importance of the problem I may be allowed to resume it here. Although I don't intend to repeat the arguments of my former paper *in extenso*, it seems to me that the question itself and the methodology involved deserve careful treatment even at the expense of some repetition.

Before turning to the proper discussion I should just like to insist on one point. In his introductory remarks DEININGER seems surprised that the question has been raised after the careful examination and repeated scrutiny of the arguments for and against by modern scholarship, which has led to a fairly general *consensus* in favour of regarding the speech as authentic.<sup>3</sup> What surprised me when I first came to deal with the speech was the complete lack of any serious modern analysis or even discussion of it. Instead of the «careful examination» etc. I found a series of more or less dogmatic statements, sometimes standing quite isolated, sometimes supported by brief allusions. This applies both to the great majority of scholars, who accepted the speech as authentic, as well as to the few dissenters.<sup>4</sup> Of course, it is quite possible that these dogmatic statements are the result of a «vielfältige Abwägung des Für und Wider», but it seemed regrettable to me that the scholars so unanimously refrained from disclosing their reasoning in any detail.

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<sup>1</sup> *Classica et Mediaevalia* 28, 1970, 240–253 (cited as: MØRKHOLM).

<sup>2</sup> *Chiron* 3, 1973, 103–108 (cited as: DEININGER).

<sup>3</sup> DEININGER 103.

<sup>4</sup> For references, see DEININGER, *Der politische Widerstand gegen Rom in Griechenland 217–86 v. Chr.*, 1971, 27, note 8, and MØRKHOLM 240, note 2.

## II

In the interest of clarity a distinction must be made between the historical problem, the authenticity of the speech, and the historiographical question concerning Polybius' use of this and other speeches. In this section I propose to deal only with the historical theme: is the speech probable or even possible in its context or is it anachronistic or in any other way out of place?

The detailed argumentation for my view, that the speech is in fact not authentic, has been given in my first paper, but in the light of DEININGER's criticism a few major points should be stressed. In the first place, Polybius explicitly states that Demetrius of Pharos was the only person to whom Philip communicated the news of the Roman defeat at Lake Trasimene.<sup>5</sup> He immediately developed a comprehensive plan in four stages, which was favourably received by Philip:

1. Peace with Aetolia
2. Attack on Illyria
3. Invasion in Italy
4. Conquest of the World.

In the following narrative of the negotiations only the first point appears, while points 2–4 are covered in absolute silence. Secondly, during the first phase of the negotiations Philip threatened to invade Elis «in order not to appear too eager for peace.»<sup>6</sup> This was a sensible way of keeping pressure on the Aetolians, and it produced the wanted result: a very quick settlement on the basis of *uti possidetis*, that is to say that the Aetolians lost a few places here and there to Philip and his allies. It runs counter to all political sense and instinct to assume that Philip or Demetrius, who had to take care of his own interests in Illyria, should have given any indications of their further plans, whether concerning Illyria, Italy or World Sovereignty, at a stage where it might so easily jeopardize the peace settlement by giving the Aetolians hopes of better terms and making them more recalcitrant. For instance they might well use the situation to demand restitution of one or another of the places they had lost during the war, if they had reliable information on Philip's eagerness for peace. But this is what DEININGER and others want us to believe without any evidence whatsoever, in order to explain the prophetic reference in Agelaus' speech to an interference in Italy and a consequent attempt at obtaining world domination (points 3–4 of Demetrius' plan).<sup>7</sup> To DEININGER

<sup>5</sup> Pol. 5, 101, 7: παραντίκα μὲν οὖν Δημητρίῳ τῷ Φαρίῳ μόνῳ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἐπέδειξε, σιωπᾶν παρακελευσάμενος. Cf. Pol. 5, 102, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Pol. 5, 102, 6: . . . τοῦ μὴ δοκεῖν λίαν ἔτοιμος εἶναι πρὸς τὴν τοῦ πολέμου κατάλυσιν.

<sup>7</sup> DEININGER 106–107. Cf. also WALBANK, Polybius, 1972, 69, note 11, who mentions as a possibility that Demetrius may have given the opponents a hint in order to «inspire from the Aetolian side the kind of proposal which Philip would find acceptable.» In view of the common interest of Demetrius and Philip at this point I find WALBANK's suggestion most unlikely.

it is «kaum vorstellbar» that Philip's intentions «auf die Dauer» should be kept secret from the Greek politicians, but here he does not take account of the time factor. From the moment when Philip first heard the news of the battle at Lake Trasimene to the final settlement at Naupactus hardly more than six weeks elapsed (from c. mid-July to the end of August). And that Philip and his Illyrian adviser were able to keep their plans secret for this short period, can hardly be doubted.<sup>8</sup> That they had to do so for quite ordinary diplomatic reasons, seems obvious to me.

Among his positive arguments for the authenticity of the speech DEININGER adduces the role of Carthage as a potential threat to Greece in 217 B. C.<sup>9</sup> I must confess that the relevance of this argument escapes me. Whether the speech is genuine or not, its setting in 217 B. C. makes the mention of Carthage necessary. More important is the fact that Carthage also appears in a similar context in Polybius' commentary to the peace, his theoretical explanation of the *συμπλοκή* of the political affairs of the whole civilized world, which is demonstrably inaccurate and abounds in loose generalisations.<sup>10</sup> One may, of course, with DEININGER assume that Polybius arrived at his concept of *συμπλοκή* on the basis of Agelaus' speech;<sup>11</sup> but to me it is improbable and strangely out of proportion to make this important element in Polybius' whole structure, the beginning of universal history as he understood it, dependent on the slender foundation of a single speech. I have no doubt that he formed this concept by speculation and that it belongs to the realm of historical theory.

However this may be (and I see no reason to conceal that here any points of view can hardly be built on more than subjective impressions and assumptions), another difference between DEININGER and me exists over the aim and methods of Roman policy in Greece before 200 B. C. This cannot be discussed here in any great detail, but already in my first paper I expressed my general agreement with the thesis of MAURICE HOLLEAUX, that the Romans took no serious political interest in Greece before the outbreak of the 2nd Macedonian War and that this marks a turning point in their attitude. DEININGER is of the opinion that this «heißt die ganz anders lautende Überlieferung sehr strapazieren», but when he continues his argument with references to the «beschwörenden Reden» in Polybius (the speeches of Agelaus, Lyciscus and Thrasycrates), the nasty picture of a full and perfect vicious circle comes to mind.<sup>12</sup> It is a characteristic example of the

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, the news of the Roman defeat at the Trasimene would soon become common knowledge, but Philip's plans were another matter, and the important one to our discussion.

<sup>9</sup> DEININGER 105.

<sup>10</sup> Pol. 5, 105, 4-9. Cf. WALBANK, Commentary I, 629-30, and my remarks, MØRKHOLM 245.

<sup>11</sup> DEININGER 105.

<sup>12</sup> DEININGER 105. Cf. MØRKHOLM 245. On the theory of HOLLEAUX see further the

way in which the discussion of the historical authenticity of Agelaus' speech has always been, and still is, vitiated by the inability to keep the historical and the historiographical sides of the problem strictly separated.<sup>13</sup>

### III

The most difficult part of the problem confronts us, when we turn to the consideration of Polybius' use of speeches in his *Histories*. His theoretical standpoint is clearly expressed in several passages: the historian is free to choose the most significant speeches among the mass of material at his disposal; he may abbreviate and summarize in order to concentrate on the essentials, and he may use his own words and phraseology. On the other hand, the content of the actual speech and the main arguments should be preserved; the historian is not allowed to distort the meaning or to introduce rhetorical exercises of his own making.<sup>14</sup>

The difficulties arise when this clear and unequivocal programme is compared with Polybius' practice. In recent years several scholars have dealt with the problem, and although there are some differences, the main tendency clearly is to accept the words of Polybius and believe in his sincerity. Thus in his great book PAUL PÉDECH concludes his chapter on «les sources des discours» with a very favourable verdict on the veracity of Polybius.<sup>15</sup> However, in his examination of the individual speeches he has given three instances of what he believes to be purely fictitious compositions, creating a curious gap between this part of the chapter and the final conclusion.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, in addition to the genuine speeches and the fictitious ones, PÉDECH seems to envisage a third category which one might call semi-fictitious. The most obvious example is the pair of speeches delivered by Chlaeneas and Lyciscus at Sparta in 210 B. C.<sup>17</sup> According to PÉDECH they present certain traces of the thought and style of Polybius and so disclose the hand of the historian;

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positive discussion of WALBANK, *JRS* 53, 1963, 1–13. The same general attitude also by E. WILL, *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique* II, 1967, 86 and 116 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. also WALBANK, *Polybius*, 1972, 69, note 11, whose first two arguments against my interpretation of Agelaus' speech are of a historiographical nature.

<sup>14</sup> Pol. 2, 56, 10; 3, 20, 1; 12, 25 a–b and i–k; 29, 12, 9–10; 36, 1, 2–7. It should be noted that all these passages, except perhaps the last one, occur in connection with Polybius' criticism of other historians.

<sup>15</sup> P. PÉDECH, *La méthode historique de Polybe*, 1964, 275–76 (cited as: PÉDECH).

<sup>16</sup> PÉDECH 263–64 (Pol. 4, 5, 2–8; speech of the Aetolian Dorimachus); 274 (Pol. 3, 108, 3–109, 12; Aemilius Paulus before Cannae); 274–75 (Pol. 11, 28, 1–29, 13; Scipio Africanus). WALBANK, *Commentary* I, 453, concedes that the first speech here mentioned is of Polybian invention.

<sup>17</sup> Pol. 9, 28–29. Cf. PÉDECH 265–66 and 276. It is of interest that PÉDECH at an earlier date, *REG* 71, 1958, 440, more clearly regarded the speech of Lyciscus as a Polybian composition. DEININGER 106 and WALBANK (in a letter) have pointed out, rightly, that my first mention of PÉDECH's final view (MØRKHOLM 249) was so short as to be misleading.

on the other hand they are adapted from contemporary political pamphlets and thus have an authentic origin in spite of various «remaniements». Finally, in his conclusion, PÉDECH calls them «textes authentiques», but adds that they have been «remaniés» by the author. All this is rather confusing, because the exact extension of the «remaniements» is nowhere precisely defined. However, it seems obvious to me that if Polybius introduced his own thoughts in these speeches and manipulated them in order to give voice to his own ideas (and I understand PÉDECH to mean this), they cannot stand up to his theoretical claims of absolute veracity. Furthermore, this claim must cover the practice completely. If only a single speech can be proved to be fictitious, the door has been opened to further doubt and new discussions.

This objection was obviously felt by WALBANK, who in his latest work on the speeches of Polybius argues that when we find rhetorical compositions, as for instance the speeches of the commanders before the Ticinus battle and the battle of Zama, the explanation is most likely to be that Polybius found these speeches in the written sources at his disposal for the Hannibalic war and accepted them as genuine.<sup>18</sup> This attitude has a clear advantage over that of PÉDECH in being consistent and logical.

WALBANK's line of approach may take us back to the speech of Agelaus. In my first paper I seriously considered the possibility that Polybius might have found a speech of Agelaus, purporting to have been delivered in 217 B. C., among the political pamphlets of the time of the first Macedonian War.<sup>19</sup> Its general similarity to the speeches of Lyciscus and Thrasycrates may be adduced as an argument for dating it in this period, but one might also think of it as a piece of Aetolian propaganda from the time of the Antiochus War, 191–189 B. C. In both cases the description of the Romans as barbarians, which is clearly not Polybius' own opinion,<sup>20</sup> would fit well into the historical circumstances. In this way the postulated gap between Polybius' theories regarding speeches and his practice would be closed and my main thesis concerning the anachronism of Agelaus' speech might be more palatable to the critics. However, I still feel that the close correspondence between the speech and its context, especially the explicit mention of Philip's plans for intervention in Italy and attempt at world-conquest, makes it far more likely that at least this passage of the speech derives from Polybius himself. On the other hand, the «pan-hellenic» arguments, which permeate the rest of the speech, might perhaps derive from the spate of anti-Roman propaganda which overflowed the Greek world after the active Roman appearance in Greece

<sup>18</sup> WALBANK, *Speeches in Greek Historians*, Oxford, no date, 12.

<sup>19</sup> MØRKHOLM 252.

<sup>20</sup> So rightly DEININGER 107. When he proceeds to use this as an argument for the authenticity of the speech, I cannot follow him. To anybody, whether a contemporary speaker or a later composer, it must have come quite natural to use an old and time-honoured rhetorical *topos* and to describe the Romans as barbarians.

during the first Macedonian War, but there is nothing in the text to indicate that Polybius might not have written it up himself.

#### IV

Most scholars who have dealt with the speeches in Polybius have been more interested in historiography than in history proper. Their natural tendency has been to base their judgment of the individual speeches on Polybius' theoretical remarks, and therefore they have started with the preconceived idea that the speeches were authentic or that Polybius at least believed so.

Under the circumstances, while I recognize that the burden of proof rests with the scholar who claims that a certain speech is not authentic or contains unauthentic elements, I should like to warn against introducing *a priori* considerations concerning the general veracity or infallibility of Polybius during the analysis of a speech and its specific historical context. Obviously, if Polybius' own claim to authenticity is used as a starting point, the result of the analysis is known beforehand, except in the few cases where we may assume that he was led astray by a too ready acceptance of other writers' fictitious speeches.

If, on the other hand, it can be demonstrated or made plausible that one or more of his speeches were actually composed by Polybius himself in order to develop ideas peculiar to him, we are left with the problem of explaining his theoretical remarks. This will admittedly be most difficult and can certainly not be done on the basis of an analysis of a single speech. My main concern with the speech of Agelaus has been to demonstrate that it contains anachronisms and clear indications of Polybian authorship and therefore cannot be used as historical evidence for the beginning of Greek resistance to Rome already in 217 B. C. As regards Polybius' veracity, further work will be necessary in order to arrive at a balanced judgment. For the moment I can only conclude on a note of warning against uncritical acceptance of his professions concerning his own practice in recording speeches, especially as they nearly always appear in connection with a harsh criticism of earlier historians.