

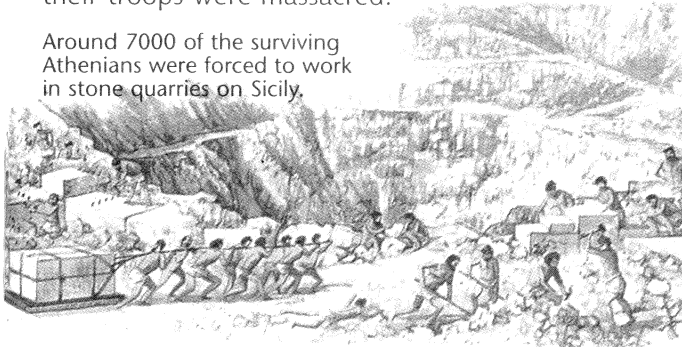
For a link to a website where you can read an animated story about the Peloponnesian War, go to www.usborne-quicklinks.com

The Sicilian expedition

In 430BC, a plague broke out in Athens, in which around a quarter of the people died. By 421BC both sides were exhausted and signed a treaty.

But war broke out again and events soon turned against Athens. In 415BC a politician called Alcibiades persuaded the Athenians to attack Syracuse, in Sicily. Before the attack, he was told to return to Athens to face charges brought against him by his enemies. Instead, he fled to Sparta and advised the Spartans on how to defeat Athens. The Athenians were defeated at Syracuse and many of their troops were massacred.

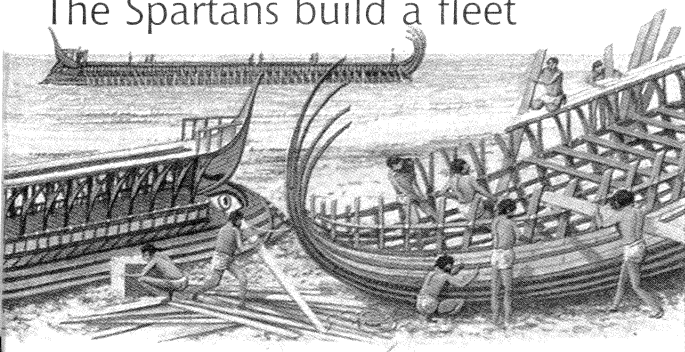
Around 7000 of the surviving Athenians were forced to work in stone quarries on Sicily.



Political unrest in Athens

In 411BC a council of 400 men seized power in Athens and abolished democracy. The news caused Athenian forces overseas to mutiny. After three months, democracy was restored. The Athenians needed a strong leader, so they recalled Alcibiades and made him *strategos*. But he failed to fulfil their hopes and was not re-elected. Support for the Athenians declined and some of their allies withdrew from the Delian League.

The Spartans build a fleet



Meanwhile the Persians intervened. They were fighting the Greek colonists in Ionia, who were supported by the Spartans. The Persians persuaded the Spartans to withdraw from Ionia by giving them money to build a fleet. This enabled the Spartans to attack the Athenians at sea as well as on land.

The Battle of Aegospotami

In 405BC, the Spartans scored a decisive naval victory. They launched a surprise attack on the Athenian fleet when it was docked at Aegospotami in Thrace. The Spartans captured 170 Athenian ships and executed around 4000 prisoners. It was a blow from which Athens never recovered.

The Athenians had gone ashore at Aegospotami to eat when the Spartans attacked.



The Spartans then laid siege to Athens. Without a fleet, the Athenians were unable to import food, and many people starved. In 404BC, they had to surrender. The Spartans pulled down the Long Walls, ended the Delian League and abolished democracy. They installed an oligarchic government known as the Thirty Tyrants.

After the Peloponnesian War

The Spartans' victory did not bring peace or unity to Greece. They began to lose control in Athens, where democracy was restored in 403BC. Wars broke out again between the various states. Most Greeks were too absorbed in these problems to notice a new power rising in Macedonia, to the northeast. The Macedonians began expanding their territory, and took advantage of the wars in Greece. Within 50 years of the end of the Peloponnesian War, the Macedonians had conquered many of the Greek states (see page 72).

Key dates

479-431BC The Golden Age of Athens.

460BC The Spartans reject Athenian help in stopping a rebellion. The Athenians start to build the Long Walls.

431BC Start of the Peloponnesian War.

415-413BC Athens sends an expedition to Sicily which is defeated.

405BC The Spartans defeat the Athenian fleet at the Battle of Aegospotami.

404BC The Athenians surrender. End of the Peloponnesian War.

371BC The Spartans are defeated by the Thebans at the Battle of Leuctra and Thebes becomes a leading power in Greece.

362BC The Thebans are defeated by the Spartans and Athenians at the Battle of Mantinea.