

## Mercenaries as Laborers: A Mutiny, Labor Conflict, and Strike in Polybius's Truceless War?

### General Timeline of the Truceless War (Hoyos [2007]):

**Summer 241:** Army of Sicily transferred to Carthage; Negotiations over backpay

**August 241:** Army sent to Sicca

**Aug.–Sept. 241:** Fruitless negotiations with Hanno at Sicca

**Oct. 241:** Army mutinies and moves to Tunes; Negotiations at Tunes with Gesco

**Nov. 241:** Army seizes Gesco and companions; Move to violence

**Late 241–Early 240:** Spread of revolt to Libya

### Notes

**[1]: Polyb. 1.65.6-8. *Polybius contrasts the mercenaries with "civilized" people.***

τόν τε γὰρ παρὰ τοῖς πολλοῖς λεγόμενον ἄσπονδον πόλεμον, τίνα φύσιν ἔχει καὶ διάθεσιν, μάλιστα ἂν τις... ἐπιγνοίη, τοὺς τε χρωμένους μισθοφορικαῖς δυνάμεσι τίνα δεῖ προορᾶσθαι καὶ φυλάττεσθαι μακρόθεν ἐναργεστατ' ἂν... συνθεωρήσειε, πρὸς δὲ τοῦτοις τί διαφέρει καὶ κατὰ πόσον ἤθη σύμμικτα καὶ βάρβαρα τῶν ἐν παιδείαις καὶ νόμοις καὶ πολιτικοῖς ἔθεσιν ἐκτεθραμμένων·

For someone might especially observe this war, said to be Truceless according to the masses, what sort of nature and disposition it has, and he might consider thoroughly the men using mercenary powers, what sorts of things it is necessary [for them] to look out for and defend against from far off, and in addition to those things, in what way and to what extent the mixed and barbarian characters differ from those having been raised in schools and customs and civil habits.

**[2]: Polyb. 1.68.10-11. *Polybius sees the demands of the mercenaries as outrageous.***

καθόλου δ' αἰεὶ τι νέον καὶ καινὸν προσεξεύρισκον, εἰς ἀδύνατον ἐκβάλλοντες τὴν διάλυσιν,

... but in general they [the mercenaries] were always devising something new and novel, pushing off the agreement into impossibility...

**[3]: Polyb. 1.66.11. *The owed wages.***

ἅμα δὲ ῥαθυμοῦντες, τινὲς μὲν αὐτῶν ἐξελογίζοντο τὰ προσοφειλόμενα σφίσι τῶν ὀψωνίων ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖον

...but at the same time some of them, being off from work, were adding up the things owed to them of their wages to their total...

**[4]: Polyb. 1.66.7. *The gold coin.***

For their most pressing concerns λαβόντας εἰς 7τὰ κατεπείγοντα χρυσοῦν ἕκαστον

... each one receiving a gold coin for their most pressing concerns...

**[5]: Polyb. 1.66.12. *The bounties.***

πάντες δ' ἀναμιμησκόμενοι τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν, ὧν οἱ στρατηγοὶ κατὰ τοὺς ἐπισφαλεῖς τῶν καιρῶν παρακαλοῦντες σφᾶς ἐπεποίηοντο, μεγάλας εἶχον ἐλπίδας καὶ

And all of them, remembering the bounties, which their generals, imploring them, had made during uncertain times, had great hopes and a great expectation of the restitution being made to them.

μεγάλην προσδοκίαν τῆς ἐσομένης περι  
αὐτοὺς ἐπανορθώσεως.

**[6]: Polyb. 1.68.5. Food given to the mercenaries at cost.**

καὶ τὰς τε τῶν ἐπιτηδείων ἀγορὰς  
ἐκπέμποντες δασιλεῖς ἐπώλουν, καθὼς  
ἐκεῖνοι βούλοιντο καὶ τάττοιεν τὰς τιμὰς.

**[7]: Polyb. 1.68.8-10. The costs of horses and grain.**

... καὶ τῶν τεθνεώτων ἵππων ἀπῆτουν τὰς  
ἀξίας. προσδεξαμένων δὲ καὶ τοῦτο, πάλιν  
τῆς προσοφειλομένης σιτομετρίας ἐκ  
πλείονος χρόνου τὴν μεγίστην γεγонуῖαν ἐν  
τῷ πολέμῳ τιμὴν ἔφασκον αὐτοὺς δεῖν  
κομίζεσθαι

**[8]: Polyb. 1.69.5-7. Spendius's and Mathos's fears.**

ἦν δὲ τις Καμπανὸς ἠύτομοληκῶς παρὰ τῶν  
Ῥωμαίων δοῦλος, ἔχων σωματικὴν δύναμιν  
καὶ τόλμαν ἐν τοῖς πολεμικοῖς παράβολον,  
ὄνομα Σπένδιος. οὗτος εὐλαβούμενος μὴ  
παραγενόμενος αὐτὸν ὁ δεσπότης κομίσθαι,  
καὶ κατὰ τοὺς Ῥωμαίων νόμους αἰκισθεῖς  
διαφθαρῆ, πᾶν ἐτόλμα καὶ λέγειν καὶ  
πράττειν, σπουδάζων διακόψαι τὰς διαλύσεις  
τὰς πρὸς Καρχηδονίους. ἅμα δὲ τούτῳ καὶ  
Λίβυς τις Μάθως, ὃς ἦν μὲν ἐλεύθερος καὶ  
τῶν συνεστρατευμένων, πλείστα δὲ  
κεκινηκῶς κατὰ τὰς προειρημένας ταραχάς.  
ἀγωνιῶν οὖν μὴ τίση καὶ τὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν  
λοιπῶν δίκην, ἐπὶ τῆς αὐτῆς ἐγένετο γνώμης  
τοῖς περὶ τὸν Σπένδιον. καὶ λαμβάνων τοὺς  
Λίβυας ὑπεδείκνυε διότι μετὰ τὸν  
ὄψωνιασμὸν χωρισθέντων τῶν ἄλλων γενῶν  
εἰς τὰς πατρίδας ἀπερείσσονται καὶ τὴν ὑπὲρ  
ἐκεῖνων ὀργὴν εἰς αὐτοὺς οἱ Καρχηδόνιοι καὶ  
βουλήσονται διὰ τῆς εἰς σφᾶς τιμωρίας  
ἄπαντας καταπλήξασθαι τοὺς ἐν τῇ Λιβύῃ.

**[9]: Final list of demands**

...and sending out markets well stocked with  
necessities they [the Carthaginians] sold [the  
goods], just as those guys [the mercenaries]  
wished and set the prices.

...and they were also demanding back the  
values of their dead horses. And after [the  
Carthaginians] also conceded these things,  
they [the mercenaries] were saying again that  
it was necessary for them to carry off the  
greatest price, having come to be in the war,  
of the grain dole having been owed for a long  
time.

But there was a certain Campanian deserter,  
a slave of the Romans, having bodily strength  
and reckless daring in the wars, named  
Spendius. This guy, fearing that his arriving  
master might collect him, and that by the  
customs of the Romans, having been  
tortured, he might be killed, he was daring  
both to do and to say everything, hurrying to  
break up the resolutions with the  
Carthaginians. But at the same time in this  
place there was also a certain Libyan Mathos,  
who was indeed a free man and one of the  
ones serving, but had very much incited the  
previous disturbances. Worrying then that he  
might pay the penalty also on behalf of the  
rest, he came into the same mind as the ones  
around Spendius. And taking the Libyans, he  
instructed them, since after the other groups  
were separated to their homelands after pay,  
the Carthaginians would also vent their anger  
over them against [the Libyans] themselves  
and they would plan to strike down through  
vengeance against them, all the men in Libya.

Wages owed from Sicily, grain and grain  
allowances, reimbursement for the grain  
bought in Sicily, reimbursement for the horses  
lost in battle, bounties promised by the  
generals, guarantees of safety

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