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Annex 16 (Book XXI, chapter 8)

- The Spirit of Law - Annexes to the edition of 1758 -

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Isle of Delos. Mithridates

After Corinth had been destroyed by the Romans, the merchants withdrew to Delos [1] : religion and veneration of peoples caused this isle to be thought a secure place ; it was, moreover, very well situated for trade with Italy and Asia, which, since the demolition of Africa and the weakening of Greece, had become more important.

From the earliest times, the Greeks sent colonies, as we have said, to the Propontis and the Euxine Sea ; under the Persians they preserved their laws and their liberty. Alexander, who had set out only against the barbarians, did not attack them. [2] It does not even appear that the kings of the Pontus, who occupied several of them, had taken their political government from them. [3]

The might of these kings [4] increased as soon as he had subjugated them. Mithridates found himself in a position to buy troops everywhere ; continually to repair his losses [5] ; to have workers, vessels, war machines ; to procure himself allies ; to corrupt those of the Romans, and the Romans themselves ; to pay the barbarians [6] of Asia and Europe ; to wage war for a long time, and consequently to discipline his troops : he was able to arm them and to instruct them in the military art of the Romans [7], and form considerable corps with their renegades ; finally, he could absorb great losses, and suffer great failures, without perishing ; and he would not have perished if, in periods of prosperity, the sensuous and barbaric king had not destroyed what, in ill fortune, had made the great prince.

So it is that, while the Romans were at the height of their grandeur, and seemed to have no one but themselves to fear, Mithridates put back into question what the capture of Carthage and the defeats of Philip, Antiochus and Perseus had decided. Never was a war more destructive ; and the two parties having great might and mutual advantages, the peoples of Greece and Asia were destroyed, either as friends of Mithridates or as his enemies. Delos was caught up in the common misfortune. Commerce disappeared everywhere ; indeed it was necessarily destroyed when the peoples themselves were destroyed.

The Romans, following a system I have discussed elsewhere, [8] destroyers so they would not appear as conquerors, laid waste to Carthage and Corinth ; and by such a practice they would perhaps have doomed themselves if they had not conquered the whole earth. When the kings of Pontus made themselves masters of the Greek colonies of the Euxine Sea, they refrained from destroying what was to be the cause of their greatness.

[1] See Strabo, book X.

[2] He confirmed the liberty of the city of Amise, an Athenian colony, which had enjoyed the popular state, even under the kings of Persia. Lucullus, who took Sinope and Amise, restored their freedom, and recalled the inhabitants, who had fled on their vessels.

[3] See what Appian writes on the Phanagorians, the Amisians, the Synopians, in his book on the war against Mithridates.

[4] See Appian on the immense treasures which Mithridates put into his wars, those he had hidden, those which he lost so often by betrayal of his own, and those that were found after his death.

[5] He once lost 170,000 men, and new armies at once reappeared.

[6] See Appian, on the war against Mithridates.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] In *Considerations on the causes of the greatness of the Romans*.