



Pericles of Athens and the Birth of Democracy

By Donald Kagan

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Never has the story of the difficult birth of the world's first democracy had more to say to us than now. This masterful biography of Pericles, the first citizen of Athens and its leader for over 20 years, skillfully weaves together the shifting political interests, international tensions, and intellectual currents that guided his remarkable career.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Democracy past and present is explored in this biography of Pericles, who governed Athens during the fifth century B.C., associated with such philosophers and artisans as Sophocles, Aeschylus and Phidias, and commissioned the Parthenon. Illustrated.

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From Library Journal

Kagan is well known for his four-volume history of the Peloponnesian War (The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War , LJ 1/5/70; The Archidamian War , 1974; The Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition , 1981; The Fall of the Athenian Empire , 1987, all Cornell Univ. Pr.). His latest work is the first genuine biography of Pericles in English since A.R. Burn's Pericles and Athens (1949) and the most spirited defense of the Athenian democracy since W.G. Forrest's The Emergence of Greek Democracy (1966). The book is a lively and thoughtful chronicle of the years leading up to and into the great war between the Athenians and Spartans. Pericles is cast as the tragic hero whose flaw is the very rationality with which he so skillfully guided the Athenians and forged an empire. Contrary to the charges of both ancient and modern critics, Kagan argues that the democracy was a rational, deliberate, and moderate regime, and Pericles is portrayed as the consummate visionary political leader whose great mistake was to expect everyone to think and behave as rationally as he did. This learned and passionate book is sure to cause controversy and is recommended to both academic and public libraries.

- V. Bradley Lewis, *Univ. of Notre Dame, Ind.*

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