

Grasping Reality with Both Hands

The weblog of Brad DeLong. Comments (mostly) welcome, or email me at delong@hey.com with "delong-weblog" as the subject.
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Caesar Offers a Compromise Solution (or So Caesar Says): Liveblogging the Fall of the Roman Republic



A strongly unconventional high politician facing the expiration of his term of office. He knows that there is a very high probability that, because of his actions in office, his adversaries will try and convict him of crimes after he lays down his power.

The Beginning of Caesar's *Civil War*, in which Caesar says that he had proposed a compromise solution to the political crisis:

Gaius Julius Caesar: *The Civil War*. 'PART I: THE STRUGGLE BEGINS: 1. Intransigence at Rome: 1) The dispatch from Gaius Caesar[1] was delivered to the consuls; but it was only after strong representations from the tribunes that they gave their grudging permission for it to be read in the Senate. Even then, they would not consent to a debate on its contents, but initiated instead a general debate on 'matters of State'...

...This was opened by the consul Lucius Lentulus, who promised that, if the Senate was prepared to state its views courageously and firmly, he would not fail in his duty to the State; but if they had regard for Caesar's possible reactions, and tried to ingratiate themselves with him, as on previous occasions, then he would choose his own line of action and would not obey the voice of the Senate. He reminded them that he too could take refuge in the good-will and friendship of Caesar.

Scipio spoke in the same vein. Pompey, he said, intended to stand by his duty to the State, if the Senate would support him; but if they hesitated and showed weakness, then, should they want his help later, they would ask for it in vain. The Senate was meeting in Rome, and Pompey was near by; and so Scipio's speech seemed to come from the mouth of Pompey himself.

Some few expressed themselves in milder terms:

First, Marcus Marcellus launched into a speech to the effect that the topic should not be introduced in the Senate until a levy had been held throughout Italy and troops enrolled under whose protection the Senate might dare, freely and with impunity, to pass whatever decrees it wished.

Marcus Calidius urged that Pompey should set out for his provinces, so that there should be no grounds for hostilities. He alleged that Caesar was apprehensive that Pompey was holding on to the two legions he had taken from him, and keeping them near Rome, in order to do him some harm.

[1] Brought from Caesar at Ravenna to the Senate by Gaius Scribonius Curio, in it Caesar offered to resign his proconsular command if Pompey would do the same. Otherwise, Caesar said, he would defend his rights, and would also defend the rights of the Roman Republic against the plots of the Optimate faction.

[2] Not in Spain with the armies the Senate had appointed him to command, but rather in his house northwest of Rome.

`.#history #livebloggingthefalloftheromanrepublic #politics #2020-07-22`

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