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Source: *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Jan., 1966, Bd. 15, H. 1 (Jan., 1966), pp. 74-95

Published by: Franz Steiner Verlag

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/4434912>

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## POMPEY'S STRATEGY AND DOMITIUS' STAND AT CORFINIUM

According to the opinion of most modern historians, Pompey's decision to evacuate Italy upon Caesar's approach, was the only course of action open to him. Judgments of Pompey's strategy differ to a certain extent. While some historians consider Pompey's withdrawal from Italy as the execution of a carefully prepared plan, others believe that he was simply forced into the evacuation by military necessity,<sup>1</sup> but beyond this, most scholars agree that Pompey's course of action offered the only chance of success. This opinion appears also accepted in most of the recent general histories. This unanimity among contemporary writers seems somewhat surprising in view of the failure of Pompey's strategy even if the failure by itself, of course, cannot be considered evidence that the strategy was wrong or that any other could have been more successful. Such unanimity, however, did not always exist. The question was extensively debated in the nineteenth and earlier part of the twentieth century until it appears to have been put to rest by Rice Holmes' thorough analysis and plausible arguments.<sup>2</sup> Rice Holmes' investigations, still today after forty years are the most comprehensive and form the basis of most current opinions. With all due respect to Rice Holmes' scholarly work, it seems possible however, that the general shift of interest in our time from the military to the socio-political aspects of history may have helped to let his opinions stand undisputed. But it is exactly because of the social and political implications of the Civil War, and the light this question may shed on the much-maligned defenders of the Republic, that this attempt is made to reconsider the evidence. But first a short review of the events prior to the outbreak of the war seems in order.

Ever since 59 when Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar had developed their stranglehold on Roman politics, the conservative senate majority had fought tenaciously to re-establish the traditional government practices. By 57 they had regained control of the state only to lose it again to a renewed alliance between the three usurpers. From then on they realized that their only hope consisted in breaking the alliance and drawing Pompey to their side. By playing on the natural rivalry between Pompey and Caesar, they gradually accomplished this objective. The crucial issue that had emerged during the years 51 and 50, was the question whether Caesar should be permitted to stand for election to another

<sup>1</sup> Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution*, (Oxford, 1949), 90. Matthias Gelzer, *Pompeius*, (Munich, 1949), 214–226.

<sup>2</sup> T. Rice Holmes, *The Roman Republic and the Founder of the Empire*, (Oxford, 1923), III, 23–25, 354–358, 368–372.

consulship while he still retained the proconsulate and his army in Gaul. So long as he retained the imperium, he was safe from prosecution in the law courts. If he could be forced to relinquish his command and present himself in Rome for the election in the legally prescribed manner, his opponents would be able to stop him through court actions. Pompey, who had for considerable time attempted to maintain his own power by playing the senate and Caesar against each other, finally stopped his vacillations and endorsed the legislation which would force Caesar to lay down his command before his candidacy for the consulate.

In October 50, the events began to gather momentum. The consul Caius Marcellus raised separately the questions of a successor to Caesar in Gaul and of Pompey's resignation.<sup>3</sup> Curio, who had been recently won over by Caesar and was defending Caesar's interests as tribune, countered by offering one motion for the simultaneous termination of the commands of both Caesar and Pompey.<sup>4</sup> Curio's motion was carried by an overwhelming majority. Curio hurried to the Forum and mobilized a popular demonstration. A rumor gained currency that Caesar was about to march on Rome. The next day the consul Marcellus proposed in the senate that two legions stationed in Italy that had been previously transferred from Caesar to Pompey under the pretext that they were needed in the Eastern provinces, should be called from Capua for the defense of the state. Curio vetoed the motion.<sup>5</sup> Marcellus moved for a vote of censure against Curio. The motion lost. Marcellus then on his own responsibility, called upon Pompey to lead the two legions against Caesar and conduct additional levies. Pompey accepted the mandate.<sup>6</sup> Caesar made a compromise proposal that he should be allowed to retain Cisalpine Gaul, and Illyricum with two legions until he took office as consul.<sup>7</sup>

The events described by Caesar now followed one another in rapid succession.<sup>8</sup> The consul Lentulus opposed Antonius' effort to have Caesar's letter read in the senate and, supported by Scipio, brought a motion to have Caesar declared a public enemy unless he resigned his command. The motion was vetoed by the tribunes Antonius and Cassius. There followed a meeting between Pompey and the senators. A *senatus consultum ultimum* was issued. The tribunes fled the city. Conscriptions were ordered. Italy was divided into command zones. The provinces were assigned; Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus was nominated as Caesar's successor in Gaul and he immediately assumed a key role in the events to follow.

Domitius appears to have been at that time the leader of the republican group. As the brother in law of Cato, related to Brutus, Bibulus and Appius Claudius, he had always been in the forefront of the political struggle against

<sup>3</sup> Appian 2. 4. 30.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; Plutarch, *Pompey* 58. 4–5.

<sup>5</sup> Appian 2. 4. 31.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*; Dio 40. 64. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Plutarch, *Pompey* 59; Suetonius, *Caesar* 29.

<sup>8</sup> Caesar, B. C. I. 1–6.

Pompey and Caesar. That the usurpers of power had considered him a threat from the beginning, is indicated by their attempt to incriminate him in the staged Vettius affair during 59. The informer Vettius had testified that Domitius' house was the basis of operations of an alleged conspiracy to assassinate Pompey.<sup>9</sup> But the plot failed, Caesar's authorship was suspected,<sup>10</sup> and thus Domitius was not prevented from obtaining the praetorship for 58. Even though Caesar and his friends were able to dispose temporarily of Cato and Cicero, Domitius and Memmius as praetors tried immediately to have Caesar's legislation of the previous year invalidated because of the neglect of the auspices.<sup>11</sup> But Caesar remained in the vicinity of Rome with his army and the senate did not dare to act.

Domitius' and Memmius' moves created a serious threat for the triumvirs. After his return from exile, Cicero offers the following rationalization for their failure to protect him from Clodius:

Illi autem aliquo tum timore perterriti, quod acta illa atque omnes res anni superioris labefactari a praetoribus, infirmari a senatu atque a principibus civitatis putabant, tribunum popularem a se alienare nolebant suaeque sibi propiora esse pericula quam mea loquebantur.<sup>12</sup>

Even if we allow for some exaggeration by Cicero, his statement gives credence to M. Gelzer's opinion that Caesar felt compelled to seek the protection of his proconsular command outside the pomerium where he was immune from the danger created by Domitius' legal actions.<sup>13</sup> The speeches of Domitius and Memmius during the "*altercationes*" with Caesar in the senate became published propaganda material which was apparently not without effect as Caesar found it necessary to publish three answering speeches<sup>14</sup> and even thus could not prevent the election of conservative consuls for the next year.

When during 57 and 56, Pompey under attack from Clodius, was forced closer to the senate party, Domitius' chances for the consulate in 55, "his year" looked good. Cicero in his speech *In Vatinius*, in 56, called Domitius the past and present hope of the good men.<sup>15</sup> Domitius felt confident enough to proclaim

<sup>9</sup> Cicero, *Ad Att.* 2. 24. 2-3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*; Suetonius, *Caesar* 20. Cf. Lily Ross Taylor, "The Date and Meaning of the Vettius Affair", *Historia* 1 (1950), 45-51. Walter Allen Jr., "The Vettius Affair, once more", *TAPA* 81, (1950), 153-163.

<sup>11</sup> (Caesar) functus consulatu Caio Memmio Lucioque Domitio praetoribus de superioris anni actis referentibus cognitionem senatui detulit, nec illo suscipiente triduoque per inritas altercationes absumpto, in provinciam abiit. (Suetonius, *Caesar* 23)

<sup>12</sup> Cicero, *Pro Sest.* 40.

<sup>13</sup> Matthias Gelzer, *Caesar. Der Politiker und Staatsmann*, (Stuttgart, 1921) 76.

<sup>14</sup> Suetonius 49, 73. Cf. Lily Ross Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar*, (Berkeley, 1949), 145.

<sup>15</sup> Cicero, *In Vat.* 25: L. Domitium, cuius dignitas et splendor praestringebat, credo, oculos tuos, Vatini, quem tu propter commune odium in bonos oderas, in posterum autem propter omnium spem, quae de illo est atque erat, ante aliquanto timebas.

publicly: "*consulem se effecturum quod praetor nequisset adempturumque ei (Caesari) exercitus...*"<sup>16</sup>

It was at that juncture, however, that Caesar, even though he was in Gaul, realized the threat from Domitius' side, took the initiative by calling the conference in Luca, and reestablished the unity with Crassus and Pompey.<sup>17</sup> Pompey and Crassus "*detrudendi Domiti causa*"<sup>18</sup> agreed to assume the proconsular commands over Spain and Syria respectively while Caesar's command in Gaul would be extended for another five years.

Pompey and Crassus concentrated now on preventing the elections for the rest of the year so that the conservative consuls would be out of office and in no position to check their manoeuvres. This they managed to achieve, with help of their accomplices among the tribunes and augurs. Thus the year began with an interregnum. By the time the *commitia* were finally set, probably sometime in January, the city was in the hands of mobs of the triumvirate's supporters and the other candidates had withdrawn out of fear. Only Domitius, encouraged by his brother in law Cato, who had recently returned from Cyprus, stood his ground.

The developments on election day are described by Plutarch, Dio, and Appian.<sup>19</sup> Domitius and Cato, with their escort, tried to reach the Campus Martius before daybreak. They collided with an armed group, their torchbearer was killed, and they had to flee to their homes. Pompey and Crassus, of course in the absence of any competition won the consular elections for 55. They immediately took office and by continued use of their tactics of trickery and violence, prevented Cato's election to praetor for the same year. The provinces were then assigned according to the arrangements worked out at Luca. Having thus assured their power for another five years, the triumvirate made no special effort to prevent Domitius' election for the next year; Pompey, however, administered his provinces through his *legati* and stayed in Rome to keep matters under control.

Domitius and Appius Claudius were elected consuls for 54, Cato was elected praetor. Even though their influence in these offices was severely impaired by the concentration of power in the hands of their opponents,<sup>20</sup> they continued a twofold struggle against Caesar and his associates.

First, Domitius and Cato intensified the struggle for public opinion through an uninterrupted series of court actions. Lily Ross Taylor points out that:

In the courts the optimates constantly brought suit against the minions of the dynasts, and jurors were sufficiently favorable to enable them to get a good many convictions. Even when the accused were acquitted, the

<sup>16</sup> Suetonius, *Caesar* 24.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Appian 2. 17-18; Plutarch, *Caesar* 21, *Cato Minor* 41, *Pompey* 52, *Crassus* 15; Dio 39. 31.

<sup>20</sup> Cicero, *Q. F.* 2. 15a. 3.

courts, thronged with people, served as a sounding board for charges against the men in power.<sup>21</sup>

The second effort was directed towards driving a wedge between Caesar and Pompey. During Domitius' consulate several unrelated events occurred favoring this undertaking. Caesar's daughter and Pompey's wife, Julia died. Crassus fell in battle. Through the marriages of Appius Claudius' daughters, one to Pompey's son, the other to Brutus, Cato's nephew, a family relationship was established between Pompey and the aristocratic circle around Cato.<sup>22</sup> Later the sole consulship was offered to Pompey by Bibulus, another member of this circle.<sup>23</sup> There is however no indication that Domitius ever relented in his opposition to either Caesar or Pompey; he tried to prevent Julia's public funeral and at the end of his consulate he became embroiled in an election scandal that was probably engineered by Pompey.<sup>24</sup>

Later, in 51, Domitius and Cato, as *quaesitores*, persisted in their tactics of continuous attack against Caesar's followers in the courts and apparently they were successful in depriving many of their civil rights.<sup>25</sup> While Caesar himself in his proconsulate was immune to court actions, Domitius continued in his prosecutions of Caesar's henchmen. He accused Caelius<sup>26</sup> and his son accused Saturninus who had helped Antonius' election to the augurate.<sup>27</sup> Finally he took part in the effort to bring Caesar's command to an end so that he in person could be brought into court for his illegal acts. Domitius' name appears first on a senate decree of September 29th, 51, making the question of the provinces the first order of the day after March 1st, 50.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, it appears that Domitius had always been one of the most active leaders of the struggle against Caesar and Pompey. Cato most likely lost some of his influence when he forfeited the consulate in "his year," 50, through his refusal to campaign. At the time the open break between Caesar and Pompey occurred, the leadership of the senate party appears to have tacitly but clearly passed from Cato to his more active brother in law. Domitius' nomination as Caesar's successor in Gaul was the symbolic expression of this fact. Domitius, after his death, was generally regarded as the leader of the militant republicans. When Appian and Dio speak of him as "*diadochos Kaisaros*," there is an implication that more than the would be succession in Gaul is meant. Appian's description of the scene in the senate when Domitius was nominated to the command in Gaul sounds like an ascendancy by acclamation.<sup>29</sup> When Tacitus says of Domitius "*pro optimatibus ceciderat*," we can understand this to mean

<sup>21</sup> Lily Ross Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1949) 145, 229 n. 21.

<sup>22</sup> Cicero, *Ad Fam.* 3. 4. 2. Cf. Syme, 45.

<sup>23</sup> Plutarch, *Pompey* 54, *Cato Minor* 47.

<sup>24</sup> For more detailed discussion cf. my dissertation: *The Life and Political Career of Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus*, University Microfilms Inc., 1964, Ann Arbor, Mich.

<sup>25</sup> Taylor, op. cit., 156, 232 n. 50.

<sup>26</sup> Cicero, *Ad Fam.* 8. 12. 2-3.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 8. 14. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 8. 5. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Appian 2. 32. 129.

"at the head of the optimates" as well as "for the cause of the optimates."<sup>30</sup> Domitius' acknowledged leadership is also illustrated by the reaction of the Massilians later in the war when they handed him the supreme command over their forces as soon as he arrived. In the Philippics Cicero presents Domitius as the leader of the republican cause.<sup>31</sup> To Lucan, certainly, he was the foremost aristocrat at Pharsalus, he is the only one singled out by name among the dead.<sup>32</sup>

Thus in early 49, the alliance confronting Caesar consisted of the old republican senate families who under the leadership of Domitius tried to maintain the traditional institutions and of Pompey who clung to his own extra-legal position of semi-dictatorial power. Both parties to the alliance were as mutually distrustful as they were dependent on each other.

Marcus Antonius, Cassius, Caelius and Curio left Rome on January 7th 49 B.C. Caesar left Ravenna and occupied Ariminum on the tenth or the eleventh.<sup>33</sup> There he was met by the tribunes. Caesar immediately began his probing military moves and emboldened by the lack of effective resistance, increased the speed and scope of his operations. He sent Marcus Antonius with five cohorts toward Arretium while he himself conducted levies around Ariminum and dispatched single cohorts to occupy Pisaurum, Fanum and Ancona.<sup>34</sup> According to Caesar's report, he undertook these steps only after Lucius Roscius and Lucius Caesar arrived with unsatisfactory replies to his latest compromise offer. Kurt von Fritz, Rice Holmes, and Michel Rambaud point out that Caesar must have occupied the above mentioned localities between the 12th and 15th since the news had reached Rome by the 17th while Roscius and Lucius Caesar could not have met Caesar before the 17th or the 18th.<sup>35</sup>

Rome was thrown into panic and confusion when Caesar's successes became known. When Pompey mentioned the possibility of a withdrawal from Italy,<sup>36</sup> he was severely criticized because of his previous bland assurances.<sup>37</sup> The reports of Plutarch, Appian and Dio complement each other in their descriptions of the chaos in Rome and of Pompey's helplessness. Refugees swarmed into the city from all directions while the inhabitants were fleeing in obedience to Pompey's orders. Pompey allowing himself to be swayed by whomever he met, gave

<sup>30</sup> Tacitus, *Annals* 4. 44.

<sup>31</sup> Cicero, *Phil.* 2. 27. 71; 13. 29.

<sup>32</sup> Lucan, *Pharsalia* 7. 597 ff.

<sup>33</sup> T. Rice Holmes, *The Roman Republic and the Founder of the Empire*, (Oxford, 1923) III, pp. 377-383. Holmes, in the appendix, collates the dates computed by Col. Stoffel and O. E. Schmidt with his own well-supported time table. With few exceptions his dates are accepted by the later authorities. When there is disagreement I have indicated the span between the earliest and latest date.

<sup>34</sup> Caesar, B. C. I. II. 14.

<sup>35</sup> T. R. Holmes, op. cit., III, 382 f., Kurt von Fritz, "The Mission of L. Caesar and L. Roscius in January 49 B. C." *TAPA* 72 (1941) 145, 156. Michel Rambaud, *L'Art de la déformation historique dans les Commentaires de César* (Paris, 1953) 135 f.

<sup>36</sup> Appian 2. 37.

<sup>37</sup> Plutarch 60.



conflicting directions, contradicting himself sometimes on the same day.<sup>38</sup> He left Rome on the 17th of January and most of the senate followed him the next day. Appian says that Domitius left after his appointment as Caesar's successor.<sup>39</sup> This happened between January 10th and 17th. By the 23rd, Domitius was collecting troops in the Marsian territory.<sup>40</sup> In the beginning of February, we find him rallying the various contingents in retreat for an attempt to block Caesar's way. By February 9th, Cicero knows that Domitius is preparing his stand at Corfinium.<sup>41</sup> Domitius' prompt actions offer a striking contrast to the frantic confusion in Rome and to Pompey's indecision. For even though Pompey had mentioned the possibility of withdrawal from Italy,<sup>42</sup> he apparently hesitated, and kept his associates in the dark about his intentions.<sup>43</sup> A letter by Cicero on the 22nd of January illustrates that uncertainty:

Nam quod rogas cures ut scias quid Pompeius agat, *ne ipsum quidem scire puto, nostrum quidem nemo*. . . . Ille iter Larinum: ibi enim cohortes et Luceriae et Teani reliquaque in Apulia. Inde *utrum consistere uspiam velit an mare transire nescitur*.<sup>44</sup>

Cicero, of course, made no preparations to defend the Campanian territory assigned to him, and used the procrastination of the others as an excuse. The consuls did not show much more zeal. Caius Marcellus did not even appear at a meeting in Capua which they themselves had called.<sup>45</sup>

Domitius, however, attended to his task. He did levy troops and he concentrated them in a good defensive position in Caesar's path. Caesar resumed his movement into Picenum on January 27 or 28th. For the second time he misrepresents the facts by claiming that he did so after Roscius and Lucius Caesar arrived with a new unsatisfactory answer to his previous proposal, when actually he must have resumed his moves before they could have returned.<sup>46</sup>

According to Caesar, Attius Varus, under pressure by the inhabitants, evacuated Auximum upon Caesar's approach and was promptly deserted by his troops.<sup>47</sup>

Caesar now advanced rapidly through Picenum where Pompey and Labienus supposedly had a strong following. But the situation was the same as before, the towns opened their doors to Caesar, and apparently welcomed him with open arms. Even if we are inclined to take with caution Caesar's reports of the enthusiastic reception of his troops, we must believe them since Cicero essentially confirms them.

<sup>38</sup> Appian 2. 36; Plutarch, *Pompey* 61; Dio 41. 7.

<sup>39</sup> Appian 2. 32.

<sup>40</sup> Cicero, *Ad Att.* 7. 13b. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Cicero, *Ad Att.* 7. 23. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Cicero, *Ad Att.* 7. 11. 3; 10. 8. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Kurt von Fritz, "Pompey's Policy before and after the Outbreak of the Civil War of 49 B. C." *TAPA* 73 (1942), 149-180; D. R. Shackleton Bailey, "Expectatio Corfiniensis", *JRS* 45, (1956), 58-59.

<sup>44</sup> Cicero, *Ad Att.* 7. 12. 1-2.

<sup>45</sup> Cicero, *Ad Att.* 7. 21. 1.

<sup>46</sup> von Fritz, *TAPA* 72, 138-142.

<sup>47</sup> Caesar, B. C. 1. 13. 3.



Multum mecum municipales homines loquuntur, multum rustici; nihil prorsus aliud curant nisi agros, nisi villulas, nisi nummulos suos. Et vide quam conversa res sit; illum quo antea confidebant metuunt, hunc amant quem timebant.<sup>48</sup>

The behavior of the rustic and municipal populations confirms that Pompey had lost the basis of his popular support to Caesar. That this also held true in the Picenian territory was an especially hard blow to the republican side. As a supposed Pompeian stronghold it had been mentioned by Pompey as the area where he would halt Caesar, and it was where Domitius attempted his stand: On the 28th Cicero had written that Pompey . . . *paucis diebus se firmum exercitum habiturum spemque adfert, si in Picenum agrum ipse venerit, nos Romam redituros esse*.<sup>49</sup> In the first days of February Caesar was joined by the 12th legion. When Caesar, with his two legions, approached Asculum, Lentulus Spinther withdrew with his ten cohorts from that city. He, too, was deserted by "*magna parte militum*."<sup>50</sup>

Relictus in itinere cum paucis incidit in Vibullium Rufum missum a Pompeio in agrum Picenum confirmandorum hominum causa. A quo factus Vibullius certior quae res in Piceno gererentur, milites ab eo accipit, ipsum dimittit. Item ex finitimis regionibus, quas potest, contrahit cohortis ex dilectibus Pompeianis; in his Camerino fugientem Lucilium Hirrum cum sex cohortibus quas ibi in praesidio habuerat excipit, quibus coactis XIII efficit. Cum his ad Domitium Ahenobarbum Corfinium magnis itineribus pervenit Caesaremque adesse cum legionibus duabus nuntiat. Domitius per se circiter XX cohortis Alba ex Marsis et Paelignis, finitimis ab regionibus coegerat.<sup>51</sup>

The juncture of Vibullius and Domitius occurred on the 8th of February. Thus, according to Caesar, Domitius now had 33 cohorts in Corfinium, a traditional stronghold in previous wars. Pompey confirms this approximate number of Domitius' troops when he says:

. . . quod meas XVIII et suas XII cohortes tribus in oppidis distributas haberet (nam partim Albae partim Sulmone collocavit . . .)<sup>52</sup>

In a letter to Cicero, he breaks down the "*XVIII meas*" to *XIII quas Vibullius adduxit*" and five which followed with Hirus.<sup>53</sup> Caesar and Pompey, then, roughly agree on the total number of cohorts under Domitius. There is, however, one disagreement: Caesar includes Hirus' six cohorts in Vibullius' thirteen: Pompey says Domitius had Vibullius' fourteen in addition to Hirus' five. Appian says that Domitius left Rome with 4,000 men.<sup>54</sup> These apparently constitute or form part of Domitius' "own" twelve cohorts. Caesar further says that Domitius, pleading for help from Pompey, says more than 30 cohorts were

<sup>48</sup> Cicero, *Ad Att.* 8. 13. 2.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 7. 16. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Caesar, *B. C.* 1. 15. 3.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 1. 15. 4f.

<sup>52</sup> Cicero, *Ad Att.* 8. 12a. 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 8. 11a.

<sup>54</sup> Appian 2. 38.

in jeopardy.<sup>55</sup> There is considerable debate concerning the breakdown and origin of Domitius' troops among the authorities and there are various contradictory attempts to reconcile the diverse statements by Pompey, Caesar, Appian, and later statements by Caesar concerning the number of troops he sent to Sicily.<sup>56</sup> It is gratifying that we have as much definite knowledge as we do concerning the size of Domitius' force i.e., between 31 and 33 cohorts at, most likely, not much more than 50% of full strength or an estimated 12,000 men. Domitius and Caesar confronted each other thus, at the beginning, with fairly equal numbers of troops.

From the events at the beginning of the Civil war it appears then that Domitius was the only one willing to oppose Caesar in Italy. Caesar himself initially might have intended only an armed demonstration to lend weight to his demands, but he expanded his probing thrust quickly into an invasion when effective resistance, except from the side of Domitius, failed to materialize. Partly because of the lack of decisiveness of the other commanders, their forces seemed to be melting away while Domitius' contingent held firm under his determined leadership. Domitius apparently felt sure that with prompt supporting action by Pompey, Caesar could be outnumbered and defeated before he could draw on his reinforcements.

Asculum fell on the 8th of February; this was the day of Vibullius' arrival at Corfinium. In the meantime, Pompey had begun to concentrate his troops in Apulia.<sup>57</sup> He was urging the consuls as well as Cicero and Domitius to join him in Luceria, and expected everybody to comply. He hinted vaguely at plans for defense of southern Italy, but gave no indication of his intention of crossing the Adriatic. On the 10th of February he wrote Cicero:

Q. Fabius ad me venit a. d. IIII Idus Febr. Is nuntiat L. Domitium cum suis cohortibus XII et cum cohortibus XIII quas Vibullius adduxit ad me iter habere; habuisse in animo proficisci Corfinio a. d. V Idus Febr. C. Hirrum cum V cohortibus subsequi. Censeo ad nos Luceriam venias. Nam te hic tutissime puto fore.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, on the 8th Domitius was planning to set out on the 9th to join Pompey. But he changed his plan overnight and on the 11th or 12th Pompey received a letter (written by Vibullius on the 9th) informing him to this effect. Pompey immediately wrote to Domitius:

CN. MAGNUS PROCOS. S. D. L. DOMITIO PROCOS.

Valde miror te ad me nihil scribere et potius ab aliis quam a te de re publica me certiore fieri. Nos disiecta manu pares adversario esse non possumus; contractis nostris copiis spero nos et rei publicae et communi saluti prodesse posse. Quam ob rem, cum constituisses, ut Vibullius mihi

<sup>55</sup> Caesar, *B. C.* I. 17. 2.

<sup>56</sup> Holmes, *op. cit.* III, Appendix pp. 368–372, discusses the various opinions.

<sup>57</sup> Cicero, *Ad Att.* 8. 1. 2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 11a.

scripserat, a. d. V Id. Febr. Corfinio proficisci cum exercitu et ad me venire, miror, quid causae fuerit, quare consilium mutaris. Nam illa causa, quam mihi Vibullius scribit levis est, te propterea moratum esse, quod audieris Caesarem Firmo progressum in Castrum Truentinum venisse. Quanto enim magis appropinquare adversarius coepit, eo tibi celerius agendum erat, ut te mecum coniungeres, priusquam Caesar aut tuum iter impedire aut me abs te excludere posset.

Quam ob rem etiam atque etiam te rogo et hortor, id quod non destiti superioribus litteris a te petere, ut primo quoque die Luceriam advenires, antequam copiae, quas instituit Caesar contrahere, in unum locum coactae vos a nobis distrahant. Sed, si erunt, qui te impediant, ut villas suas servant, aequum est me a te impetrare, ut cohortis, quae ex Piceno et Camerino venerunt, quae fortunas suas reliquerunt, ad me missum facias.<sup>59</sup>

To summarize: On the 8th of February, Domitius had been planning to leave his defensive position at Corfinium to join Pompey, but he changed his mind over night for unknown reasons and decided to make a stand. Pompey's conjecture that Domitius was swayed by some of his followers who wanted to protect their possessions in that area, does not seem convincing. According to Vibullius, as quoted by Pompey, the arrival of Caesar at Castrum Tuentinum was the reason for Domitius' change of plans, but we miss an explanation why Caesar's approach should have caused the change; after all, Domitius must have been expecting Caesar's advance all along. Pompey himself discounts Vibullius' explanation as a valid reason. I think to find the answer to this puzzling question we must look for a significant event that occurred in the twenty-four hours during which Domitius changed his decision. To our knowledge the only such event was Vibullius' arrival. It seems then logical to assume that some development connected with Vibullius' coming caused Domitius' change of mind. We can conjecture what some of the effects of Vibullius' arrival might have been.

1. The first and obvious fact is that Domitius' strength was increased by at least fourteen cohorts.
2. Vibullius brought the news that Caesar was approaching faster than Domitius had expected.
3. Vibullius may have had information about Pompey's actual plans; he may have confirmed Domitius' suspicions that Pompey did not yet fully intend to fight Caesar—at least not in Italy.

Any one or any combination of these three considerations seems sufficient reason for Domitius' decision. The addition of Vibullius' troops almost doubled Domitius' forces. At least temporarily, he was superior to Caesar in numbers and in a much better position than before to resist. Even if he had no doubts about Pompey's will to resist, the defense from a fortified position on the approach route to Rome was obviously far more advantageous from a strategic

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 12b.

point of view to a stand in the much more open country around Luceria leaving Rome wide open to Caesar. Most general histories discuss Domitius' actions as if they had been the arbitrary act of a recalcitrant subordinate of Pompey, but such a view is unjustified. Pompey had not been given a supreme command. Domitius was technically equal in rank to Pompey as a proconsular and out-ranked him in family prestige as the fifth descendant of his family to attain the consulate in unbroken succession. He had every right to disagree with Pompey. With Caesar's reputation for speed of movement confirmed by his recent advances, it also may have appeared doubtful to Domitius that he could still accomplish an unhindered junction with Pompey. The plan proposed by Domitius seems simple and logical. If Caesar attacks him, he will resist and he will expect Pompey to attack Caesar in a pincer movement. If Caesar by-passes him to attack Pompey, he will come to Pompey's support.

But Domitius' most crucial reason would have been his justifiable distrust of Pompey. Pompey had been playing the two sides against each other for such a long time and had come twice to terms with Caesar in the last minute, both times with disastrous consequences for Domitius and his associates. Missions and messages were still being exchanged between the two former allies. Many like Cicero, were still hoping for their reconciliation. Vibullius might have brought rumors of such exchanges or he could have had information on Pompey's plans to withdraw from Italy. In either case it would have been in Domitius' interest to commit his and Pompey's joint forces to battle. If Italy were to be abandoned and reconquered by Pompey's provincial armies with the help of Pompey's client potentates in the East, then, in case of victory the power would be all Pompey's. His *dominatio* would be absolute and the senate would be at his mercy. Only a shared victory of Domitius and Pompey now, would give the senate a partnership in the government. Therefore this was Domitius' opportunity. While Caesar is approaching, Domitius suddenly finds himself not only with his own but also a good part of Pompey's troops, almost twice the force he had before. By committing such a large part of their available troops, he will force Pompey's hand and put an end to his vacillations. Pompey could not afford not to help him. Together they would be able to block Caesar's path and to defeat him before he could bring up additional reinforcements.

Caesar arrived at Corfinium on the fifteenth of February and established a fortified camp facing the city wall.<sup>60</sup>

Domitius reacted with vigor: He made the physical preparations for the defense of the city, he did not spare his personal fortune to offer a real incentive to his troops, and he finally wrote a letter designed to leave Pompey no other choice but to come to his aid. Domitius cites two compelling reasons: first, the unique opportunity to bottle up and starve Caesar between two armies in confined terrain; second, the price of Pompey's failure to act and of consequent

<sup>60</sup> Caesar, B. C. I. 16. 4.

defeat would be the loss of 30 cohorts and many prominent and influential supporters.<sup>61</sup> The content of this letter is essentially confirmed by Pompey in his message to the consuls and in his answer to Domitius, both on February the 17th.<sup>62</sup> The reports Cicero had received confirm Domitius' readiness to fight. On February the 18th he writes "...*ecce litterae Caesarem ad Corfinium, Domitium Corfini cum firmo exercitu et pugnare cupiente.*"<sup>63</sup> Thus, Domitius and his troops apparently were convinced that they had Caesar in a trap to which Pompey would spring the door. Their confidence was justifiable since the idea that Pompey could abandon them appeared inconceivable not only to them. Cicero later wrote to Pompey: "...*in eadem opinione fui quo reliqui omnes, te cum omnibus copiis ad Corfinium esse venturum.*..."<sup>64</sup> Even Cicero, who suspected Pompey's plan, finds it at first impossible to believe that Pompey would go through with his proposed course of action. On the 18th he writes:

Non puto etiam hoc Gnaeum nostrum commissurum, ut Domitium relinquat, etsi Brundisium Scipionem cum cohortibus duabus praemiserat, legionem Fausto conscriptam in Siciliam sibi placere a consule duci scripserat ad consules. Sed turpe Domitium deserere erit implorantem eius auxilium.<sup>65</sup>

A subsequent letter confirms the widespread conviction that Pompey must help Domitius, when Cicero was already skeptical.

Unum etiam restat amico nostro ad omne dedecus, ut Domitio non subveniat. 'At nemo dubitat, quin subsidio venturus sit'. Ego non puto. 'Deseret igitur talem civem et eos, quos una scis esse, cum habeat praesertim is ipse cohortis triginta?' Nisi me omnia fallunt, deseret. Incredibiliter pertimuit, nihil spectat, nisi fugam.<sup>66</sup>

Pompey, of course, proceeded to evacuate his army from Italy. Without support from Pompey, Domitius' situation soon deteriorated. Part of his force at Sulmo surrendered and changed sides. On February the 17th, Caesar was joined by another veteran legion and 23 new cohorts, nearly doubling his forces. He outnumbered Domitius now two to one and was able to lay siege to the complete perimeter of Corfinium.<sup>67</sup> On February the 19th Pompey's answer arrived,

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 17: Re cognita Domitius ad Pompeium peritos regionum magno propositi praemio cum litteris mittit, qui petant atque orent, ut sibi subveniat: Caesarem duobus exercitibus et locorum angustiis facile intercludi posse frumentoque prohiberi. Quod nisi fecerit, se cohortisque amplius XXX magnumque numerum senatorum atque equitum Romanorum in periculum esse venturum. Interim suos cohortatus tormenta in muris disponit certasque cuique partis ad custodiam urbis attribuit; militibus in contione agros ex suis possessionibus pollicetur, XL in singulos iugera et pro rata parte centurionibus evocatisque.

<sup>62</sup> Cicero, *Ad Att.* 8. 12a and 12d.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 8. 3. 7.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 8. 11d. 3. Cf. Shackleton Bailey, *JRS* (1956), 62f. concerning the sincerity of Cicero's statement.

<sup>65</sup> Cicero, *Ad Att.* 8. 3. 7.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 8. 7. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Caesar, *B. C.* 1. 18. 5.

dashing all hopes of support. The final act in the drama of Corfinium began. Caesar relates it as follows:

Litteris perlectis Domitius dissimulans in consilio pronuntiat Pompeium celeriter subsidio venturum hortaturque eos, ne animo deficiant, quaequae usui ad defendendum oppidum sint, parent. Ipse arcano cum paucis familiaribus suis colloquitur consiliumque fugae capere constituit. Cum vultus Domiti cum oratione non consentiret atque omnia trepidantius timidusque ageret quam superioribus diebus consuesset multumque cum suis consiliandi causa secreto praeter consuetudinem colloqueretur, concilia conventusque hominum fugeret, res diutius tegi dissimularique non potuit. Pompeius enim rescripserat, sese rem in summum periculum deducturum non esse, neque suo consilio aut voluntate Domitium se in oppidum Corfinium contulisse: proinde si qua fuisset facultas, ad se cum omnibus copiis veniret. Id ne fieri posset, obsidione atque circummunitione fiebat.

Divulgato Domiti consilio milites, qui erant Corfini, primo vesperi secessionem faciunt atque ita inter se per tribunum militum centurionesque atque honestissimos sui generis colloquuntur: obsideri se a Caesare; opera munitionesque prope esse perfectas; ducem suum Domitium, cuiusque spe atque fiducia permanserint, projectis omnibus fugae consilium capere: debere se suae salutis rationem habere. Ab his primo Marsi dissentire incipiunt eamque oppidi partem, quae munitissima videretur, occupant, tantaque inter eos dissensio exsistit, ut manum conserere atque armis dimicare conentur; post paulo tamen internuntiis ultro citroque missis, quae ignorabant de Domitio fuga cognoscunt. Itaque omnes uno consilio Domitium productum in publicum circumsistunt et custodiunt legatosque ex suo numero ad Caesarem mittunt: sese paratos esse portas aperire, quaequae imperaverit facere et L. Domitium vivum in eius potestatem tradere.<sup>68</sup>

As Kurt von Fritz points out, this account by Caesar, more than anything else, has contributed to the unfavorable judgment of Domitius by the historians:

At first he thought he knew better than Pompey and made ready to resist Caesar against his express orders; then his confidence gave way to equally exaggerated fear and he prepared to flee in the darkness of the night in order to save his own person while abandoning his soldiers to their fate.<sup>69</sup>

We shall try to show that Pompey did not necessarily know better and that even if he did, Domitius might not have been to blame because Pompey had never definitely informed him of his plan.<sup>70</sup> But even assuming that Pompey's plan was sound and that Domitius knew about it, he would still have had to make an attempt to force a decision in Italy if he wanted to keep the republic from domination by either Pompey or Caesar.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* 19–20.

<sup>69</sup> von Fritz, *TAPA* 73, 162.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* and p. 154.



As for the second part of the accusation, Domitius' desertion, we must consider that it is based on the report by Caesar about his most persistent enemy. In the two chapters quoted above we find all the techniques that Caesar uses consistently to impose his coloration on the events while seemingly preserving his objectivity.<sup>71</sup> The opening words "*litteris perlectis*" are a typical example of the method Michel Rambaud calls *narration pré-explicative* which in the guise of providing a temporal circumstance makes a severe accusation.<sup>72</sup> These two words make Domitius' following speech appear as a lie and a deliberate deception worked on his troops.<sup>73</sup> Moreover the two words are also possibly a manipulation of the chronology similar to the previously mentioned misrepresentation of the timing of Lucius Roscius' and Lucius Caesar's mission. Domitius may well have made his speech when he still was confident that Pompey would come to his aid *before* the arrival of the final disillusioning letter.<sup>74</sup> Domitius' alleged duplicity is then underlined by the antithesis of an extract of Pompey's actual message. The extract, in fact a condensation of all three letters by Pompey, serves the additional purpose of discrediting Pompey. It omits all the military justifications Pompey has presented for not coming to Domitius' aid. The phrase "... *ut de omnibus fortunis rei publicae dimicem*..." has been shortened by Caesar into "*sese rem in summum periculum deducturum non esse*." The change and especially the omission of the word "*publicam*" has changed the sense from "I cannot risk the entire fate of the Republic" to something slightly stronger than "I am not going to take a grave risk."<sup>75</sup> Just as Caesar's version of the letter presents Domitius as a traitor to his troops, it presents Pompey as a coward and deserter of his allies.<sup>76</sup> It is precisely to counteract that im-

<sup>71</sup> Michel Rambaud, *La Déformation historique*, 363. Rambaud traces these techniques through all of Caesar's writings. In an essentially factual account, Caesar under the guise of giving exact circumstance of time, sequence and locality, creates premises that suggest to the reader the conclusions which Caesar desires him to draw concerning the motivation of his opponents and his own lofty intentions. Even Rambaud's critics, who believe that he carries his conclusions too far, concede his basic points.

Cf. J. H. Collins, *CW* 57, (December 63), 83: "... there is a certain amount of tendentious misrepresentation in the BC, and that work contains a good deal of blackening of the opposition."

M. Gelzer, "Caesar als Historiker," *Kleine Schriften*, (Wiesbaden 1963) II, 330: "... führt er die leitenden Männer der Gegenseite vor, wie man sie sehen soll."

II, 311: "... und es kann nicht anders sein, als daß die beiden Werke im Dienst seiner Politik stehen. Besonders deutlich erscheint die Tendenz im 'Bürgerkrieg', wo er zeigen will, wie es seine politischen Gegner waren, die ihm den Krieg aufzwangen und immer wieder seine Friedensangebote zurückwiesen".

For a bibliography of pro and contra Rambaud literature see J. H. Collins, *CW* (December 1963), 83f. My personal opinion is that many of Rambaud's findings are incontrovertible and much of the opposing criticism is based on emotion rather than factual argument.

<sup>72</sup> Rambaud 154 ff.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 340.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* "Anachronismes", 134 f.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 355.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 354.



pression that Pompey attempted to give wide circulation to his letters to Domitius and the consuls in which he tries to make all the blame fall on Domitius.<sup>77</sup> Thus we find a determined effort on *both* sides to make Domitius appear in the worst possible light.

The next chapter (B.C. 20) is very similar in its construction. It opens parallel to the 19th with an absolute ablative "*divulgato Domitii consilio...*" implying both a temporal and a causal connection between Domitius' alleged secret plan and a mutiny. Incidentally, we do not know how Domitius' plan could have become known to either his soldiers or to Caesar. Caesar's explanation that they suspected Domitius because of his worried look is extremely flimsy. The opposition of the republican troops to their leaders is a theme that runs throughout Caesar's *Bellum Civile*.<sup>78</sup> The *oratio obliqua*, following immediately afterwards, contrasts the dutiful conduct of the men who have worked hard on the fortifications with the traitorous plans of their leader. The allegation of Domitius' duplicity is now put into words, but not by Caesar; Domitius' stands convicted by his own soldiers. But not all troops participate in the mutiny; it almost comes to a fight, some apparently are willing to defend Domitius. Caesar, however has an explanation ready: the loyal troops did not know about Domitius' plan. They desist as soon as they are informed. Domitius is put under guard by his soldiers and delivered to Caesar.

We cannot accept Caesar's report without reservations.<sup>79</sup> Cicero in his many references to Domitius' stand at Corfinium, never hints at any attempted desertion by Domitius. He has only praise for Domitius and high hopes for his success. After Domitius' surrender, Cicero still has no word of criticism for him and not even Caelius who seldom passes up the opportunity for a thrust at Domitius and criticizes Caesar for allowing Domitius to escape alive,<sup>80</sup> does not mention the attempted flight. In Cicero's eyes Pompey bears all the blame for the loss of Corfinium; Domitius' surrender was caused directly by Pompey's ignominious flight.<sup>81</sup>

Suetonius says only that Domitius was captured at Corfinium: "... *in dicionem redacto...*"<sup>82</sup> and "... *principio civilis belli ad Corfinium captus est.*"<sup>83</sup>

According to Dio, Domitius tried to evacuate with some measure of safety in obedience to Pompey's orders, apparently with his troops.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 354–355; also von Fritz, *TAPA* 73, 156–160; Shackleton Bailey, *JRS* 46, 59. Cicero, *Ad Att.* 8. 12. 6.

<sup>78</sup> Rambaud, 340.

<sup>79</sup> von Fritz, *TAPA* 73, 162–165.

<sup>80</sup> Cicero, *Ad Fam.* 8, 15. 2.

<sup>81</sup> *Ad Att.* 8. 8. 2.

<sup>82</sup> Suetonius, *Caesar* 34. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Suetonius, *Nero* 2. 2.

<sup>84</sup> Dio 41. 11. In Dio's passage, the ones with him οἱ συνόντες κατοκνήσαντες must refer to Domitius' troops as it is the common subject to κατοκνέσας and to προσέθεντο τῷ Καίσαρι and since only the troops actually joined Caesar, "the ones with him" cannot mean Domitius' entourage alone. Thus Dio means that Domitius was about to attempt to extricate himself and his army as Pompey had suggested.

According to Appian, it was the inhabitants who captured Domitius in the attempt to escape. This report seems open to doubt as not even Caesar claims that Domitius actually started out to flee and was captured in the attempt.<sup>85</sup> In Caesar's version, his *troops* arrested Domitius *before* a flight he was still only planning. Thus the evidence for Domitius' desertion rests only on two contradictory statements by Appian and Caesar against Dio's testimony. I believe that all the reports can be reconciled if we allow for Caesar's intent to discredit his opponents. Domitius had been confident to the last and had told his troops that Pompey could not fail to come to his support. When he received the letter in which Pompey made it perfectly clear that he was not coming and requested Domitius to extricate himself and join him, Domitius decided to comply. Now to his troops it was one thing to resist Caesar from a fortified position in expectation of Pompey's help—this they had been willing to do—but to attempt to break through Caesar's ring of fortifications and to retreat under enemy attack was a different matter. This would indeed have been a desperate undertaking, especially for a force containing many half-trained troops. A mutiny broke out among part of Domitius' army. The remainder of the force, confronted with the mutineers within the walls and Caesar's army without, were forced to go along with the rebels. Domitius was seized and put under guard. If Domitius tried to escape, the mutiny may have caused that attempt rather than his plan of a flight causing the mutiny.

Caesar states that after the surrender he dismissed Domitius and his son, four other senators and many equites, that he incorporated the troops into his own and that he left Corfinium after seven days from his arrival. He concludes his report as follows:

Pompeius his rebus cognitis, quae erant ad Corfinium gestae, Luceria profiscitur Canusium atque inde Brundisium.<sup>86</sup>

Corfinium fell on the 21st of February. Caesar says that Pompey left Luceria when he received the news. This is in contradiction with Cicero, who writes on the 24th, that Domitius surrendered when he heard of Pompey's flight.

At ille tibi πολλά χαίρειν τῷ καλῷicens pergit Brundisium. Domitius autem aiunt re audita et eos qui una essent se tradidisse.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Appian 2. 38. The accuracy of Dio Cassius' testimony concerning the Civil War is usually doubted when he tries to explain causes or to ascribe motives for actions, but he is generally reliable in his narration of the events. He apparently follows a source sympathetic to the republican cause, probably Livy either directly or second hand. His account and Caesar's usually coincide sufficiently to confirm the essential veracity of both. Because of this, Dio's evidence in the few cases where it contradicts Caesar's demands serious consideration. Appian's testimony on the other hand, is usually more pro-Caesar than Caesar's own writings and shows a sufficient amount of provable distortions to warrant its acceptance only with extreme caution. Cf. Eduard Schwartz, *Griechische Geschichtsschreiber*, (Leipzig, 1957), 378, 438; also E. Meyer, *Caesars Monarchie und das Principat des Pompeius*, (Stuttgart, 1918), 607, 610–611, 86n. 3.

<sup>86</sup> Caesar, B.C. 1. 24. 1.

<sup>87</sup> Cicero, *Ad Att.* 8. 8. 2.

The departure of Pompey from Luceria on the 19th and the surrender of Corfinium on the 21st are both fixed by Cicero.<sup>88</sup> There is no disagreement about the fall of Corfinium on the 21st. So Caesar's statement obviously is not accurate. The news of Pompey's departure may well have caused the mutiny, if there was one, and the surrender. Thus Domitius' plan which had been predicated on Pompey's support, met failure. Pompey withstood all pressures by Domitius and public opinion and abandoned Domitius. The reasons cited by Pompey in his letters seem rather an attempt to justify his conduct to the world than explanations to Domitius for whom they arrived too late.

The following is a summary of the arguments Pompey presents in his letters to the consuls and to Domitius:

1. Caesar is superior in troops.

...et nos non habemus exercitum tam amplum neque tam magnum quam ille. (VIII, 12c, 3)

2. Soon Caesar will even be stronger; he can draw on reinforcements close at hand.

Non enim pro tua prudentia debes illud solum animadvertere, quot in praesentia cohortis contra te habeat Caesar, sed quantas brevi tempore equitum et peditum copias contracturus sit. (12c, 1)

3. Our troops are neither trustworthy nor battle trained.

...quod his duabus legionibus non puto esse committendum ut illuc ducantur ...non est nobis committendum ut ad has XIII cohortes quas dubio animo habeo hostis accedere aut in itinere me consequi possit. (12a, 2, 3)

Neque enim celeriter ex dilectibus hoc homines convenire possunt, et, si convenirent, quantum iis committendum sit, qui inter se ne noti quidem sunt contra veteranas legiones non te praeterit. (12d, 2)

4. Caesar can pin us down even without risking a battle, and, with the morale of our troops as it is, we could not withstand a winter camp.

Quae si copiae (Caesar's) in unum locum fuerint coactae—ut non pugnet sed suis locis repugnet, haerebis, neque solus cum ista copia tantam multitudinem sustinere poteris ut frumentum eas. (12c, 1)

Cavendum enim puto esse ne implicatus haeream. Nam neque castra propter anni tempus et militum animos facere possum... (12c, 2)

5. I cannot risk the whole war in a single battle, especially under the circumstances.

Neque enim eorum militum quos mecum habeo, voluntate satis confido ut de omnibus fortunis rei publicae dimicem, ... (12d, 1)

Most of these reasons for Pompey's decision, on the surface, appear borne out by the course of the actual events.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 8. 9. 4 and 14. 1.

1. Caesar close to his base of operations in Gaul, did increase the strength of his troops rapidly, and the efficient, businesslike performance of his men gave testimony to their thorough training and battle experience.

2. The mass of desertions and surrenders on Pompey's side showed that he was right in his appraisal of the poor morale among many of the troops at his disposition.

Most modern scholars believe that Pompey estimated the situation correctly and that he had no other choice.<sup>89</sup> According to T. Rice Holmes' calculations,<sup>90</sup> Pompey had the 2 legions received from Caesar in Italy and 7 more in Spain, while Caesar had originally one legion with him, 2 more on the march, and 7 more in Gaul. T. R. Holmes reasons that, since Pompey's two legions in Italy were unreliable, his closest experienced troops were located in Spain and thus

<sup>89</sup> L. Holzapfel, *Beiträge zur altrömischen Geschichte*, *Klio* 4 (1904) 378. Holzapfel was of the opinion that Pompey's plan "... auf einer richtigen Abschätzung der beiderseitigen Streitkräfte beruhte".

Eduard Meyer, *Caesars Monarchie und das Principat des Pompeius*, (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1918) 298f., states that Pompey clearly recognized that any resistance in Italy was impossible, but that the senators "militärisch völlig urteilslos" were aghast at this suggestion. Meyer interprets Cicero's references in *Ad Att.* 7. 11. 3, "... non est inquit in parietibus res publica", and "... fecit idem Themistocles", as clearcut announcement of Pompey's decision on January 17th 49. Meyer does not offer any explanation why he considers Pompey's plan the only correct one.

T. Rice Holmes, *The Roman Republic and the Founder of the Empire*, (Oxford, 1923), III, 357-362, gives a thorough analysis of the earlier views and of the military forces available to both sides. He comes to the conclusion that Pompey's decision was correct (III, 6, 24; II, 264) Most more recent comments are based on and referenced to Holmes.

Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution*, (Oxford, 1949), 49 follows Meyer in the belief that Pompey's plan was "subtle and grandiose", that it was known to his associates, and that Domitius' stand at Corfinium was obstinate folly (p. 90), but does not offer any arguments for these views.

Kurt von Fritz, "Pompey's Policy before and after the Outbreak of the Civil War of 49 B.C.", *TAPA* 73, (1943), 145-180, presents convincing evidence in Cicero's correspondence, especially in Pompey's letters (*Ad Att.* 8. 12a, 12b, 12c, 12d) that Domitius did not know about Pompey's plan until it was too late. He points out that the harsh judgment of Domitius by many modern historians is caused by the belief that he was informed. Von Fritz is further of the opinion that Pompey intentionally concealed his plan from Domitius, and that his letters to the consuls were written to justify himself.

Lily Ross Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar*, (Berkeley 1949). Miss Taylor does not express any opinion on Pompey's strategy, but she does recommend von Fritz's article as an interesting interpretation (p. 237, note 14).

Matthias Gelzer, *Pompeius*, (Munich, 1949), 214-226. M. Gelzer's evaluation of the military situation is mainly based on Holmes' findings. He believes that Pompey did not withdraw on the basis of a predetermined plan or strategy, but because he was gradually forced to do so. He thinks that Pompey actually planned a stand in Apulia, but that he changed his mind when he realized that Domitius was not about to join him. This is the same interpretation of *Ad Att.* 8. 12a as von Fritz's that Pompey to the last conveyed the impression that he was going to make a stand in Italy.

<sup>90</sup> *Op. cit.* III, 354-358.

cut off by Caesar's legions in Gaul. Holmes discounts the recently levied troops as useless against Caesar's veterans.<sup>91</sup> He also without specific explanation, rules out the possibility of bringing troops from the provinces to Italy by sea. Consequently the only promising course of action open to Pompey was to rely on his domination of the sea to remove his troops from Italy to a place where he could train them while he mobilized the unlimited forces which his prestige and following assured him in the East. Holmes also states that:

The advice which he gave to Domitius was worthy of the conqueror of Sertorius and of Mithradates; and the surrender which transferred three legions from his army to that of Caesar was chargeable to Domitius alone.<sup>92</sup>

Kurt von Fritz points out that most modern scholars "are extremely harsh in their judgement of Domitius Ahenobarbus."<sup>93</sup> If one assumes with W. Heitland, T. Rice Holmes, E. Meyer, R. Syme, that Pompey's plan offered the only chance of success, that Domitius was fully informed about the plan, but obstructed it without justification, then one must necessarily agree with these scholars that Domitius was "stupid," "pigheaded," "arrogant," "conceited."<sup>94</sup>

If however, Pompey's plan was not as clearly superior as we are led to believe, Domitius appears in a different light.

That Pompey's plan failed, as we said can not be considered evidence that it was not the best choice under the circumstances, but since it failed, the reasoning in its defense cannot be considered a conclusive argument either. Similarly it is impossible to prove that another alternative would have been more successful; all arguments concerning "what would have happened if" are necessarily speculation.

There are, however, some dissenting opinions, that may deserve consideration. Pompey's contemporaries were shocked by his plan. W. Drumann believes that the evacuation was a defeat before the war even began and that Pompey's actions spread defeatism because they were interpreted as an indication that he did not even know how to prepare for war and as a confession that he lacked courage to meet the enemy. Drumann, disagreeing with Holzapfel, also refers to Buelow's words during the Napoleonic war "Unsere Knochen sollen vor Berlin bleichen, nicht rückwärts."<sup>95</sup> Drumann furthermore believes that Pompey kept his plan to himself.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* III, 24.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* 25.

<sup>93</sup> Kurt von Fritz, *TAPA* 73, 148, 162.

<sup>94</sup> W. E. Heitland, *The Roman Republic*, (Cambridge, 1909) III, 278: "Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, an obstinate conceited aristocrat, one of Caesar's bitterest enemies . . ."

R. Syme, *op. cit.* 90: "... and it was more than the obstinate folly of Ahenobarbus that brought on the capitulation of the neighboring city of Corfinium."

H. H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero*, (London, 1959), 139: "His scheme was wrecked by the obstinate folly of L. Domitius Ahenobarbus . . ."

M. Gelzer, *Pompeius*, 218: "... einem so eingebildeten Optimaten wie Domitius . . ."

<sup>95</sup> Wilhelm Drumann - P. Groebe, *Geschichte Roms in seinem Übergange von der republikanischen zur monarchischen Verfassung*, 2nd ed., (Leipzig, 1902-1919) III, 381.

Napoleon asserts that to win the war, Pompey would have had to make a decisive stand in Italy. Napoleon is convinced that because of its symbolic value, Rome had to be held at all cost while Pompey with his command of the sea could have brought up reinforcements from the East and from Spain.<sup>96</sup> Clausewitz is emphatic that any effort to avoid a decisive battle is self-defeating.<sup>97</sup>

Actually, the disparity between Caesar's and Pompey's forces was not as staggering as Pompey made it appear. He had two trained legions in Italy, "qualified to contend with veterans."<sup>98</sup> As Kurt von Fritz points out, the distrust of the two legions expressed by Pompey was part of his effort to forestall any pressure for resistance in Italy and to justify his abandonment of Domitius.<sup>99</sup> Yet, these troops had been under his command for almost a year and gave later a good account of themselves at Pharsalus.<sup>100</sup> Pompey's side was able to raise another 90 cohorts, of which approximately 60 deserted or surrendered to Caesar, while the other 30 plus the two legions eventually accompanied Pompey to the Balkan Peninsula.

On the 17th of February, in addition to a third legion that had been en route, 22 cohorts of new levies from Gaul reached Caesar at Corfinium, where Domitius was making his stand. Thus by the time Pompey left Brundisium, Caesar had brought approximately 50 cohorts into Italy, roughly the same number that Pompey took with him.<sup>101</sup> M. Gelzer estimates the number of troops in both instances at about 20,000.<sup>102</sup> Since Pompey's side had lost from 50 to 60 cohorts,<sup>103</sup> the total number of men it had had under arms in Italy at various times must have been at least 40,000. At least some of Domitius' troops at Corfinium showed a willingness to fight and even refused to believe word of

<sup>96</sup> Napoléon Ier, *Précis des Guerres de Jules César*. Correspondance de Napoléon Ier, (Paris, 1870) XXXII, Chpt. 9, 47:

C'est Rome qu'il fallait garder; c'est là que Pompée eût dû concentrer toutes ses forces. Au commencement des guerres civiles, il faut toutes les troupes réunies, parce qu'elles s'électrisent et prennent confiance dans la force du parti; elles s'attachent et s'y maintiennent fidèles. Si les trente cohortes de Domitius eussent été campées devant Rome avec les deux premières légions de Pompée; si les légions d'Espagne, celles d'Afrique, d'Egypte, de Grèce, se fussent portées par un mouvement combiné sur l'Italie par mer, il eût réuni avant César une plus grande armée que celui-ci.

<sup>97</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*. Book 4, Chpt. 11:

So haben die Regierungen und Feldherren zu allen Zeiten stets Wege um die entscheidende Schlacht herum gesucht, um entweder ihr Ziel ohne dieselbe zu erreichen oder es unvermerkt fallen zu lassen. Die Geschichte- und Theorieschreiber haben sich dann abgemüht, in diesen Feldzügen und Kriegen in irgend einem anderen Wege nicht bloß das Äquivalent, d.h. den Gegenwert der versäumten Schlachtentscheidung zu finden, sondern selbst eine höhere Kunst.

<sup>98</sup> Holmes, *op. cit.*, III, 2.

<sup>99</sup> Von Fritz, *TAPA* 73, 161; also D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *JRS*. 46 (1956), 59; Rambaud, *op. cit.*, 354-355.

<sup>100</sup> Von Fritz, *TAPA* 73, 168.

<sup>101</sup> Holmes, *op. cit.*, III, 354-358.

<sup>102</sup> Gelzer, *Pompeius*, 223.

<sup>103</sup> Holmes, 357.



Domitius' so-called desertion.<sup>104</sup> There is no reason to believe that Caesar's new levies from Gaul had more experience than Pompey's, some of which were his former discharged veterans. Thus at the time of Corfinium, Pompey had in Italy 2 legions plus Domitius' 30 cohorts plus the new levies against Caesar's 3 legions and new levies. They each had 7 legions in Spain and Gaul respectively. It appears that Pompey could have fought a holding action in Italy. A simultaneous movement to the East of his Spanish legions could have threatened Caesar from the rear and at least pinned down some of Caesar's legions in Gaul while Pompey's superior fleet began to bring in reinforcements from all parts of the empire as quickly as possible.<sup>105</sup> This apparently was also the opinion of Pompey's contemporaries. Napoleon thinks this is the plan Pompey should have adopted. One may wonder how much value may be attached to Napoleon's views as against those of the professional historians. But if his qualifications as a historian are suspect, he certainly was an expert on the art of war. Napoleon, in agreement with other military authorities, emphasizes the psychological aspects, and considers them especially important in a civil war. In such a conflict the population has the option to choose sides, to give or withhold support. All this is attested by Caesar's emphasis on psychological warfare and his ever-present concern with the morale of his troops. Examples are the care he took after the defeat of Dyrrhachium to restore the self-confidence of his troops,<sup>106</sup> and his discussion of the psychological consequence of Pompey's decision at Pharsalus to have his troops await Caesar's attack standing still.<sup>107</sup> There are of course many more examples, but the last one represents in tactics the same error Pompey committed in grand strategy: In both instances Pompey sacrificed the intangible assets of initiative and aggressive emotional momentum to what he thought were material advantages.

It appears that with the evacuation of Italy, Pompey lost the war psychologically. He was no longer the defender of the sacred soil and its institutions. He was willing to abandon it to the usurper—as many suspected—to save his own personal power. Conversely, he helped build Caesar's image as the irresistible conqueror. In a war, fought to a large extent by propaganda, he adopted a course of action which could not fail to suggest a repetition of the Sullan nightmare at every step, while he offered to Caesar the opportunity to appear as the champion of the people whom Pompey had deserted. Thus Pompey handed Caesar the propaganda opportunities that Caesar used so well. The evacuation of Italy gave Caesar the opportunity to demonstrate his *clementia*, which became his most effective psychological weapon.

<sup>104</sup> Caesar, B.C. 1. 20, 3. Cf. Von Fritz, *TAPA* 73, 164.

<sup>105</sup> Later on, when Caesar marched against Spain, Domitius was able to mobilize the Massilians against Caesar. Under his leadership they were able to immobilize three of Caesar's legions for six months. This is an indication of the effect that an eastward movement of Pompey's troops in Spain might have had.

<sup>106</sup> Caesar, B.C. 3. 73–74.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* 92.



In the senate session of January 17th, Pompey's intimation of possible withdrawal from Italy had caused general consternation.<sup>108</sup> It had opened a perspective of Italy first invaded and sacked by Caesar's Gallic hordes, then re-conquered by Pompey's foreign armies from the East in an orgy of vengeance.<sup>109</sup> Von Fritz believes the suggestion caused such a storm of opposition<sup>110</sup> that the idea of a *maius imperium* for Pompey was abandoned, and that he henceforth thought it wiser to act as if he had given up his plan.<sup>111</sup> E. Meyer ascribes the opposition to the senate's complete lack of military understanding,<sup>112</sup> but M. Gelzer points out that this statement is not tenable since the majority of the senators had held military commands at one time or another.<sup>113</sup> Pompey did not mention withdrawal any more for the next month. On the contrary, the letters to Domitius and the consuls are full of ambiguities implying a plan by Pompey to make a stand in southern Italy. Kurt von Fritz draws the conclusion that Pompey left Domitius deliberately in the dark about his intentions. We tried to show in the preceeding that Domitius' plan to force a decision in Italy at the outset of the war was by no means as hopeless as it is generally made to appear and that Domitius had every interest to force Pompey to such a course of action if he wanted to prevent a complete domination of the state by Pompey. Cicero was convinced that *dominatio* was Pompey's ultimate objective. A re-conquest of Italy by his eastern armies was the surest means for Pompey of attaining this objective. Thus he may have been swayed by far more compelling reasons for leaving Domitius to his fate than the ones he professed. Corfinium not only bought him the time to concentrate his troops near Brundisium, but it also promised to rid him of one of his most persistent opponents and rivals.

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<sup>108</sup> Appian 2. 37; Dio 41. 7.

<sup>109</sup> Cicero *Ad Att.* 8. 11. 2; 9. 2.

<sup>110</sup> Plutarch, *Pompey* 61. 1.

<sup>111</sup> Von Fritz, *TAPA* 73, 169. <sup>112</sup> Meyer, 229.

<sup>113</sup> Matthias Gelzer, *Kleine Schriften*, (Wiesbaden, 1962), II, 195.