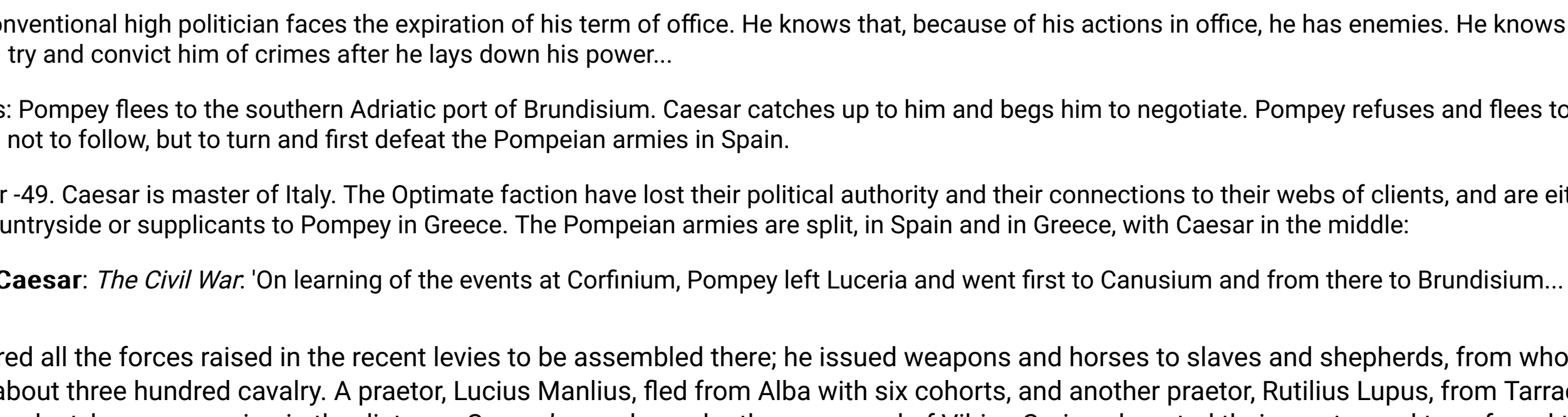


Grasping Reality with Both Hands

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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Pompey Refuses to Negotiate & Flees to Greece: Liveblogging the Fall of the Roman Republic



A strongly unconventional high politician faces the expiration of his term of office. He knows that, because of his actions in office, he has enemies. He knows that his adversaries will try and convict him of crimes after he lays down his power...

Caesar narrates: Pompey flees to the southern Adriatic port of Brundisium. Caesar catches up to him and begs him to negotiate. Pompey refuses and flees to Greece. Caesar decides not to follow, but to turn and first defeat the Pompeian armies in Spain.

It is now 18 Mar -49. Caesar is master of Italy. The Optimate faction have lost their political authority and their connections to their webs of clients, and are either rustivating in the Italian countryside or supplicants to Pompey in Greece. The Pompeian armies are split, in Spain and in Greece, with Caesar in the middle:

Gaius Julius Caesar: *The Civil War:* 'On learning of the events at Corfinium, Pompey left Luceria and went first to Canusium and from there to Brundisium...

...He ordered all the forces raised in the recent levies to be assembled there; he issued weapons and horses to slaves and shepherds, from whom he made up about three hundred cavalry. A praetor, Lucius Manlius, fled from Alba with six cohorts, and another praetor, Rutilius Lupus, from Tarracina with three. These last, however, seeing in the distance Caesar's cavalry under the command of Vibius Curius, deserted their praetor and transferred themselves and their standards to Curius. Similarly, during the rest of his journey, several cohorts joined Caesar's infantry column on the march, and some also his cavalry.

Numerius Magius of Cremona, one of Pompey's officers in charge of engineers, was captured en route and brought to Caesar, who sent him back with a message for Pompey. Since up till now there had been no opportunity for a conference, Caesar said, and since he himself would be coming to Brundisium, he thought it would be in the interests of the State and of the general welfare if he and Pompey had a talk; they could not accomplish so much while they were a long distance apart and sending their proposals by intermediaries, as they could by an exhaustive discussion face to face.

After sending this message, he himself came to Brundisium with six legions, of whom three were seasoned troops and the other three had been raised in his recent levies and made up to strength on the march. He found that the consuls had left for Dyrrachium with a large part of the army, while Pompey had remained in Brundisium with twenty cohorts; although he could not find out for certain whether he had stayed there in order to hold on to Brundisium and so control more easily the whole Adriatic from the end of Italy as well as from the Greek side, and carry on operations on both sides of the sea, or whether he had been held up by lack of shipping.

However, since he feared that Pompey might be determined not to leave Italy, he decided to blockade the harbour of Brundisium and stop its operation as a port. He set about this as follows: at the narrowest part of the entrance to the harbour, he built out a great earth breakwater on either side, where the sea was shallow, but as the work advanced and it proved impossible to keep the earth-works together in the deeper water, he placed two rafts, thirty feet square, at the ends of the breakwater and moored these with an anchor at all four corners to keep them still in the waves.

Once these were in position, he joined on other rafts of similar size and built a causeway of earth out over them, to remove any hindrance to approaching and boarding them for defence. In front and on either side he put up screens and mantlets for protection and on every fourth raft he built a tower two storeys high, to help in defence against attacks by sea and against firebrands.

Against these Pompey was fitting out large merchant ships which he had commandeered in the harbour of Brundisium. He was raising towers on them, three storeys high, and stocking these with ballistic engines and missiles of all sorts, then bringing the boats up to Caesar's works, in order to break up the rafts and disrupt the siege-works. They went on fighting at a distance like this with arrows and missiles every day.

Caesar, however, was taking care to keep open the possibility of a peaceful settlement. He was surprised that Magius, whom he had sent with proposals to Pompey, was not yet sent back to him, and indeed such persistent attempts to negotiate were a check to the speedy execution of his plans; nevertheless, he felt that he ought to persevere and try everything he could. Accordingly he sent his lieutenant Caninius Rebilus, a close friend of Scribonius Libo, to talk with the latter; his instructions were to urge Libo to try to effect a peace, and in particular to ask him to speak personally to Pompey.

The arguments put before Libo were that Caesar was certain that if Libo managed to see Pompey then hostilities could be terminated by an equitable peace, and a great deal of the credit would go to Libo if it was at his instance and by his efforts that the settlement was reached. Libo, breaking off his talk with Caninius, went to see Pompey, and presently came back with the reply that, in the absence of the consuls, no negotiations about a settlement could be conducted.

And so Caesar finally determined to abandon these repeated vain efforts and to wage war in earnest.

He had completed about half of his siege-works, which took him nine days, when the ships which had been sent back by the consuls after transporting the first part of the army over to Dyrrachium arrived back at Brundisium. Pompey at once prepared to leave Italy, either because he was alarmed by Caesar's preparations or because he had intended to do so all along.

In order to check an assault by Caesar and prevent his troops from breaking into the town while the withdrawal was in progress, he blocked up the gates, built barricades in all the streets, and dug trenches across the roads, in which sharpened stakes were fixed and wicker and earth laid on top to make a flat surface. He put fences of large pointed beams round the two roads outside the city walls which gave access to the harbour. After all these preparations, he picked a small force of archers and slingers from his veterans and stationed these, in light marching order, at intervals along the walls and on the towers, while the rest of the army, under orders, embarked in silence. He arranged to recall this covering guard at a fixed signal once all the rest had embarked, and left some swift vessels in an accessible spot to pick them up.

The people of Brundisium resented their ill-treatment by Pompey's troops and the insulting behaviour of Pompey himself, and favoured Caesar's cause. When, therefore, they learned of Pompey's intended departure, – while his men were still milling about, preoccupied with preparations for embarking, they signalled the news from the roof-tops. Caesar ordered the scaling-ladders to be got ready and the troops to arm, so as not to lose the opportunity for action.

Pompey cast off towards nightfall. The guards on the wall were recalled by the agreed signal and hurried down to the ships by marked paths. Caesar's men got their scaling-ladders up and climbed the walls, but were warned by the citizens to beware of the trenches and the concealed stakes. They therefore halted, and under the guidance of the townsfolk were conducted round by a long detour to the harbour. They put out in skiffs and dinghies and managed to catch and take possession of two of Pompey's ships, with their passengers, which had run foul of Caesar's breakwater.

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Caesar felt that the best course, to settle the issue, would be to gather a fleet and cross in pursuit of Pompey before the latter could strengthen his forces with overseas contingents. However, he was afraid of the long delay that this would involve, since Pompey by collecting all the available ships had robbed him of the means of pursuit for the time being. The remaining alternative was to wait for ships to come from remoter places, i.e. Gaul and Picenum, and from the Sicilian strait, but this, owing to the time of year, was likely to be a protracted and hazardous operation.

Meanwhile, he was unwilling to allow an established army and the two Spanish provinces, one of them under a heavy debt of gratitude to Pompey, to be confirmed in their allegiance; he did not want to let auxiliaries and cavalry be raised there and harry Italy and Gaul in his absence.

Accordingly, he gave up for the time being his plan of following Pompey and decided to proceed to Spain instead.

Pompey's Strategy and Domitius' Stand <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/turns-pompeys-strategy-and-domitius-standnoted.html>: In his *The Civil War* Gaius Julius Caesar presented "just the facts" in a way that made Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus look like a cowardly and incompetent idiot. The attractive interpretation is that Ahenobarbus was just trying to do the job of defeating Caesar, but had failed to recognize that Pompey was not his ally. Pompey, rather, was somebody whose first goal was to gain the submission of Ahenobarbus and the other Optimates, and only after that submission was gained would he even think about fighting Caesar. Still an idiot, but not an incompetent or a cowardly one: **Alfred Burns** <https://github.com/braddelong/public-files/blob/master/readings/article-burns-pompey.pdf>. In early 49, the alliance confronting Caesar consisted of the old republican senate families who under the leadership of [Lucius] Domitius [Ahenobarbus] 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...

Caesar Offers a Compromise Solution (or So Caesar Says): Liveblogging the Fall of the Roman Republic <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/caesar-offers-a-compromise-solution-or-so-caesar-says-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: The Beginning of Caesar's *Commentaries on the Civil War*, in which Caesar says that he had proposed a compromise solution to the political crisis.... "The dispatch from Gaius Caesar 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'.... Scipio spoke... 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 Optimate Faction Rejects Caesar's Compromise <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/the-optimates-faction-rejects-caesars-compromise-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: Caesar narrates the reasons that the leaders of the Optimate faction—Cato, Lentulus, Scipio, and Pompey—worked hard to set the stage for war, and how the majority of Senators in the timorous middle were robbed of the power to decide freely, and driven reluctantly to vote for Scipio's motion to rob Caesar of his protections against arrest and trial...

The Optimate Faction Arms for War, & Illegally Usurps Provincial Imperium <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/the-optimates-faction-arms-for-war-illegally-usurps-provincial-imperium-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: Caesar narrates: Whatever norms he may or may not have broken during his consulate—in order to wrest land from the hands of corrupt plutocrats and grant it to the deserving—he says, the Optimate faction does much worse. In the first seven days of the year of the consulate of Lucius Cornelius Lentulus Crus and Gaius Claudius Marcellus Maior, the Optimate faction goes beyond norm-breaking into outright illegality. And to that they add impiety. They illegally seize power, as they grant themselves proconsular and propraetorial imperium over the provinces, without the constitutionally-required popular confirmation of imperium. They impiously violate the separation of church and state by seizing temple funds for their own use. They thus incur the wrath of the gods. And they incur the enmity of all who believe in constitutional balance, as opposed to armed plutocratic dictatorship...

Caesar Presents His Case to the 13th Legion, & Negotiates Unsuccessfully with Pompey <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/caesar-presents-his-case-to-the-13th-legion-negotiates-unsuccessfully-with-pompey-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-rep.html>: Caesar presents his case to the 13th Legion, and wins its enthusiastic support. Caesar and Pompey negotiate, but Pompey refuses to give up his dominant position. He holds imperium over Spain and commanding the ten Spanish garrison legions, while also residing in the suburbs of Rome and thus dominating the discussions of the Senate. Pompey refuses to commit to setting a date for his departure for Spain...

The Optimate Faction Panics and Abandons Rome: Liveblogging the Fall of the Roman Republic <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/the-optimates-faction-panics-and-abandons-rome-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: 'Caesar narrates: The Optimate faction panics at a rumor of Caesar's approach, and flees from Rome with the looted Treasury reserve. The towns of Italy support Caesar. Even the town of Cingulum rallied to Caesar, even though its founder Titus Labienus, Caesar's second-in-command in the Gallic War, had deserted Caesar for his earlier allegiance to Pompey. And Pompey's attempts to reinforce his army by recruiting veterans who had obtained their farms through Caesar's legislative initiatives did not go well...

Caesar Besieges Domitius in Corfinum: Liveblogging the Fall of the Roman Republic <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/caesar-besieges-domitius-in-corfinum-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus began raising troops, and by the start of February -49 had 13000 soldiers in the town of Corfinum. On 09 Feb -49 Domitius decided to stand at Corfinum rather than retreat to the south of Italy. So he wrote to Pompey... urged that the Optimate faction join its military forces together at Corfinum to outnumber and fight Caesar. Pompey disagreed. Why did he decide that he, Pompey, "cannot risk the whole war in a single battle, especially under the circumstances"?...

Caesar Captures Corfinum: Liveblogging the Fall of the Roman Republic <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/caesar-captures-corfinum-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: 'Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus's deception that Pompey is coming to the Optimates' aid in Corfinum falls apart, Ahenobarbus tries to flee, Lentulus Spinther begs for his life, Caesar grants clemency to all, and adds the three Optimate and Pompeian legions to his army. Before Corfinum Caesar had had two legions in Italy to the Optimate and Pompeian six. After Corfinum (with the arrival of Legio VIII plus new recruits) Caesar has seven legions in Italy to the Pompeian three. It is now 21 Feb -49: **Gaius Julius Caesar:** *The Civil War:* 'Domitius's looks, however, belied his words; indeed, his whole demeanour was much more anxious and fearful than usual. When to this was added the fact that, contrary to his usual custom, he spent a lot of time talking to his friends in private, making plans, while avoiding a meeting of the officers or an assembly of the troops, then the truth could not be concealed or misrepresented for long...

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