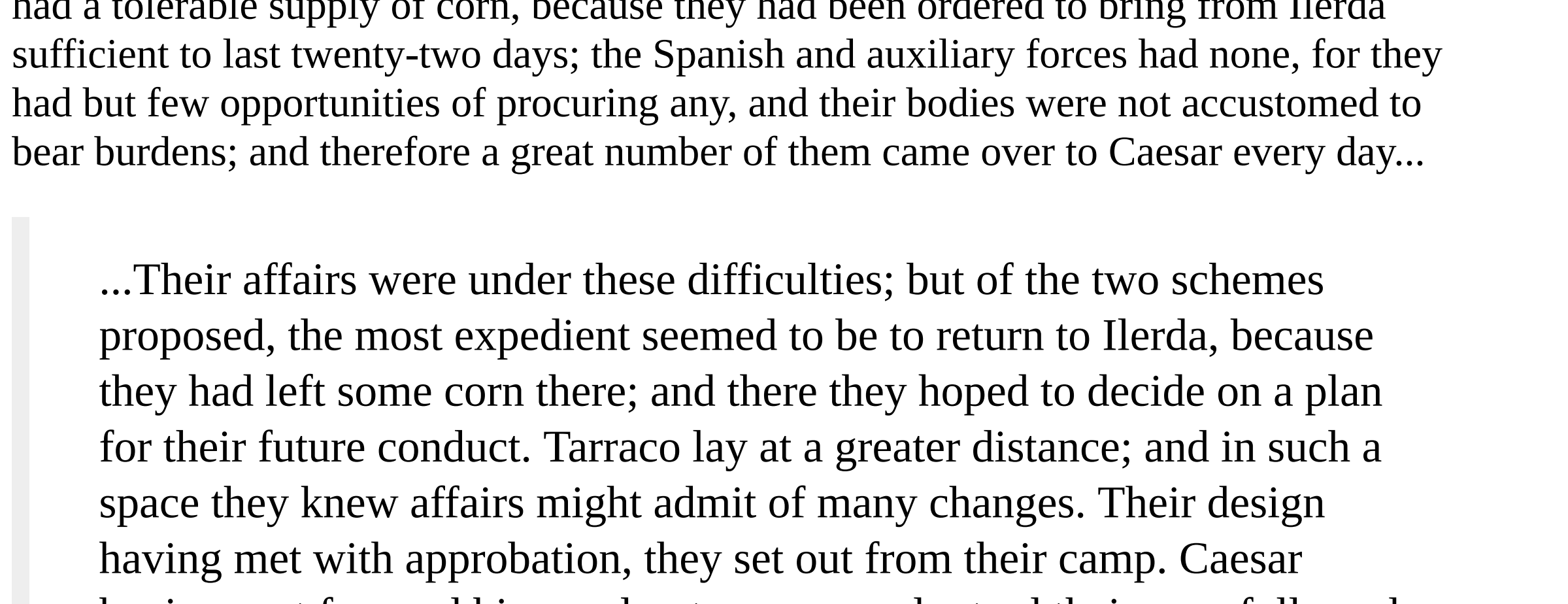


Grasping Reality with Both Hands

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Caesar's Army Traps the Pompeians: Liveblogging the Fall of the Roman Republic



The Pompeians attempt to retreat, and then fortify themselves on unfavorable ground with neither water nor forage available:

Gaius Julius Caesar: *The Civil War*

<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/10657/pg10657-images.html>: ‘Afranius's men were distressed in foraging, and procured water with difficulty. The legionary soldiers had a tolerable supply of corn, because they had been ordered to bring from Ilerda sufficient to last twenty-two days; the Spanish and auxiliary forces had none, for they had but few opportunities of procuring any, and their bodies were not accustomed to bear burdens; and therefore a great number of them came over to Caesar every day...

...Their affairs were under these difficulties; but of the two schemes proposed, the most expedient seemed to be to return to Ilerda, because they had left some corn there; and there they hoped to decide on a plan for their future conduct. Tarraco lay at a greater distance; and in such a space they knew affairs might admit of many changes. Their design having met with approbation, they set out from their camp. Caesar having sent forward his cavalry, to annoy and retard their rear, followed close after with his legions. Not a moment passed in which their rear was not engaged with our horse.

Their manner of fighting was this: the light cohorts closed their rear, and frequently made a stand on the level grounds. If they had a mountain to ascend, the very nature of the place readily secured them from any danger; for the advanced guards, from the rising grounds, protected the rest in their ascent. When they approached a valley or declivity, and the advanced men could not impart assistance to the tardy, our horse threw their darts at them from the rising grounds with advantage; then their affairs were in a perilous situation; the only plan left was, that whenever they came near such places, they should give orders to the legions to halt, and by a violent effort repulse our horse; and these being forced to give way, they should suddenly, with the utmost speed, run all together down to the valley, and having passed it, should face about again on the next hill.

For so far were they from deriving any assistance from their horse (of which they had a large number), that they were obliged to receive them into the centre of their army, and themselves protect them, as they were daunted by former battles. And on their march no one could quit the line without being taken by Caesar's horse.

Whilst skirmishes were fought in this manner, they advanced but slowly and gradually, and frequently halted to help their rear, as then happened. For having advanced four miles, and being very much harassed by our horse, they took post on a high mountain, and there entrenched themselves on the front only, facing the enemy; and did not take their baggage off their cattle. When they perceived that Caesar's camp was pitched, and the tents fixed up, and his horse sent out to forage, they suddenly rushed out about twelve o'clock the same day, and, having hopes that we should be delayed by the absence of our horse, they began to march, which Caesar perceiving, followed them with the legions that remained.

He left a few cohorts to guard his baggage, and ordered the foragers to be called home at the tenth hour, and the horse to follow him. The horse shortly returned to their daily duty on march, and charged the rear so vigorously, that they almost forced them to fly; and several privates and some centurions were killed. The main body of Caesar's army was at hand, and universal ruin threatened them.

Then indeed, not having opportunity either to choose a convenient position for their camp, or to march forward, they were obliged to halt, and to encamp at a distance from water, and on ground naturally unfavourable. But for the reasons already given, Caesar did not attack them, nor suffer a tent to be pitched that day, that his men might be the readier to pursue them whether they attempted to run off by night or by day. Observing the defect in their position, they spent the whole night in extending their works, and turn their camp to ours. The next day, at dawn, they do the same, and spend the whole day in that manner, but in proportion as they advanced their works, and extended their camp, they were farther distant from the water; and one evil was remedied by another.

The first night, no one went out for water. The next day, they left a guard in the camp, and led out all their forces to water: but not a person was sent to look for forage. Caesar was more desirous that they should be humbled by these means, and forced to come to terms, than decide the contest by battle. Yet he endeavoured to surround them with a wall and trench, that he might be able to check their most sudden sally, to which he imagined that they must have recourse.

Hereupon, urged by want of fodder, that they might be the readier for a march, they killed all their baggage cattle...

#history #livebloggingthefalloftheromanrepublic
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Foreshadowing from Gaius Sallustius Crispus <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/foreshadowing-from-gaius-sallustius-crispus-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: 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. Let us start with some foreshadowing from Gaius Sallustius Crispus...

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 but, 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...

Marcus Tullius Cicero's Take on the First Three Months of -49 <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/marcus-tullius-ciceros-take-on-the-first-three-months-of-49-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: ‘We have another primary source... in addition to Gaius Julius Caesar's deceptively powerful plain-spoken "just the facts" narrative: Cicero. Caesar makes himself out to be reasonable, rational, decisive, and clever. Cicero... lets his hair down. He is writing to someone he trusts to love him without reservation. He is completely unconcerned with making himself appear to be less flawed than he appears. And the impression he leaves is absolutely dreadful: erratic, emotional, dithering, and idiotic...

Reflecting on the First Three Months of -49 <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/reflecting-on-the-first-three-months-of-49-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: ‘The key question for the first three months of the year -49 is: what did the factions anticipate would happen in that year? The Optimates seemed to think that they had Caesar cornered. My guess is that Pompey found himself allied with the Senate in January-February of -49, but not in command. So he retreated to Greece, where he was in undisputed command...

Caesar Offers a Compromise Solution (or So Caesar Says) <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, but the firebreathers had rejected it: ‘Scipio... "if [the Senate] hesitated and showed weakness, then, should they want [Pompey's] 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...

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, beyond norm-breaking into outright illegality. And to that they add impiety...

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-republic.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...

The Optimate Faction Panics and Abandons Rome <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 and flees. The towns of Italy support Caesar. 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 <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/caesar-besieges-domitius-in-corfinum-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus concentrates 13000 soldiers in the town of Corfinum and decides to make a stand. Pompey calls him an idiot. He, Pompey, "cannot risk the whole war in a single battle, especially under the circumstances"...

Caesar Captures Corfinum <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. Before Corfinum Caesar had had two legions in Italy to the Optimate and Pompeian six. After Corfinum Caesar has seven legions in Italy to the Pompeian three...

Pompey Refuses to Negotiate & Flees to Greece <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/pompey-refuses-to-negotiate-flees-to-greece-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: Pompey flees to the southern Adriatic port of Brundisium. Caesar catches up to him and begs him to negotiate. Pompey refuses and flees. Caesar decides not to follow, but to turn and first defeat the Pompeian armies in Spain...

Cementing Caesarian Control of the Center of the Empire: Late March -49 <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/cementing-caesarian-control-of-the-center-of-the-empire-late-march-49-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: Caesar offers to share power with the dysfunctional Senate but, filibustered and vetoed by Optimate tribunes, he consolidates his hold and heads for Spain...

Treachery at Massilia: April-May -49 <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/treachery-at-massilia-april-may-49-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: The Massiliotes profess neutrality—until Pompeian reinforcements arrive. Pompeians to whom Caesar had shown clemency at Corfinum have again taken up weapons against him again...

Rendezvous in Spain, at Ilerda <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/08/rendezvous-in-spain-at-ilerda-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: Caesar moves to deal with the Pompeian forces in Spain to his west...

Caesar Begins His First Spanish Campaign <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/08/caesar-begins-his-first-spanish-campaign-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: Caesar has his men build a fortified camp close enough to the Pompeian base that the soldiers will inevitably start to fraternize...

Heavy But Inconclusive Skirmishing Between the Military Camps at Ilerda <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/08/heavy-but-inconclusive-skirmishing-between-the-military-camps-at-ilerda-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>...

Floods and Supply Lines <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/08/floods-and-supply-liner-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: Caesar faces logistical difficulties...

Caesar Turns the Tables on the Pompeian Skirmishers <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/08/caesar-turns-the-tables-on-the-pompeian-skirmishers-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: ‘Caesar overcomes his logistical difficulties...

The Caesarian Navy Led by Decimus Brutus Wins a Victory at Massilia <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/08/the-caesarian-navy-led-by-decimus-brutus-wins-a-victory-at-massilia-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>...

Afranius & Petreius Fear Caesar's Cavalry & Decide to Retreat <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/08/afranius-petreius-fear-caesars-cavalry-decide-to-retreat-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: ‘Logistics and diplomacy reverse the situation at Ilerda in northeast Spain, as Caesar gains an advantage in allied cavalry that makes Afranius and Petreius fear their position will soon become logistically untenable...

Caesar Pursues the Retreating Pompeians <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/08/caesar-pursues-the-retreating-pompeians-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: ‘Caesar learns that Afranius and Petreius have decided to retreat. So when they do, he sets his army in hot pursuit...

Caesar Steals a March on the Pompeians <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/08/caesar-steals-a-march-on-the-pompeians-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic-1.html#more>: ‘Caesar learns that Afranius and Petreius have decided to retreat, and pursues. These overly-cautious Pompeian generals begin to lose the war of maneuver...

Caesar Cuts the Pompeians Off from the Ebro & their Line of Retreat <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/08/caesar-cuts-the-pompeians-off-from-the-ebro-their-line-of-retreat-liveblogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>: ‘And he begins trying to woo the soldiers over to his side. The Pompeian generals Afranius and Petreius react badly—and so it becomes clementia vs. crudelitas...

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