

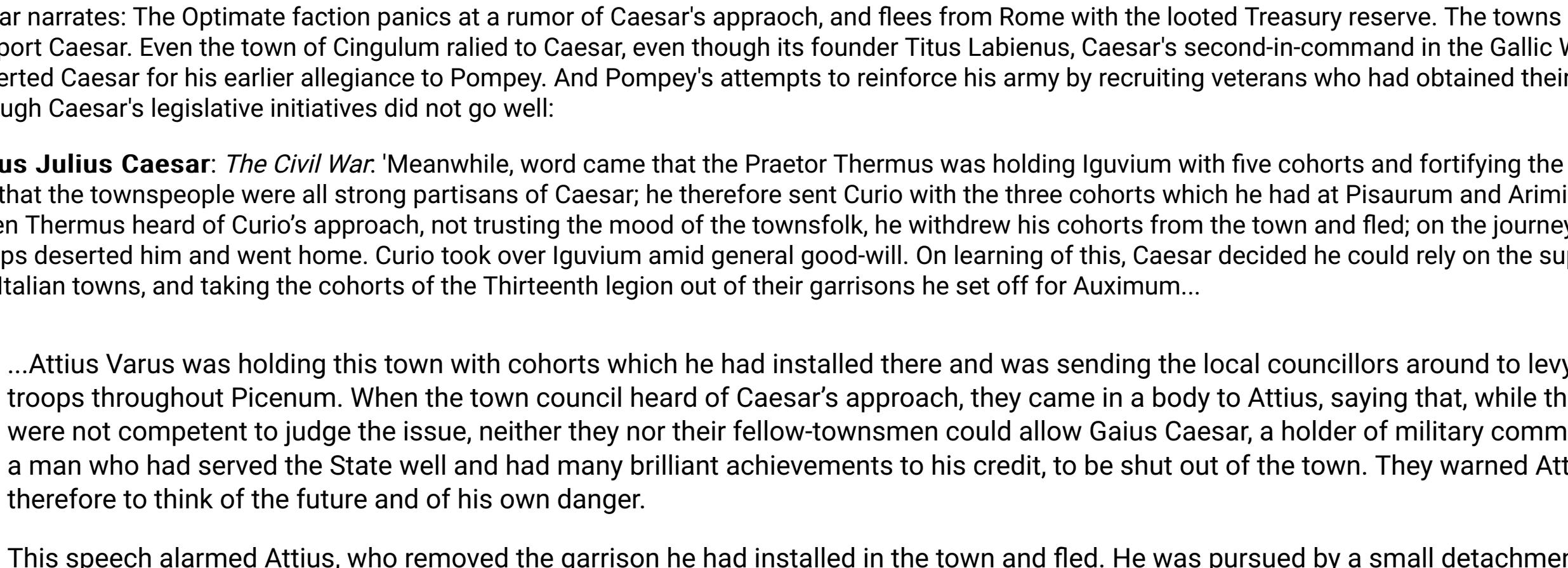
Grasping Reality with Both Hands

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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The Optimate Faction Panics and Abandons Rome: 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...

Cæsar 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 Cæsar. Even the town of Cingulum rallied to Cæsar, even though its founder Titus Labienus, Cæsar's second-in-command in the Gallic War, had deserted Cæsar for his earlier allegiance to Pompey. And Pompey's attempts to reinforce his army by recruiting veterans who had obtained their farms through Cæsar's legislative initiatives did not go well:

Gaius Julius Caesar: The Civil War: Meanwhile, word came that the Praetor Thermus was holding Iguvium with five cohorts and fortifying the town, but that the townspeople were all strong partisans of Caesar; he therefore sent Curio with the three cohorts which he had at Pisaurum and Ariminum. When Thermus heard of Curio's approach, not trusting the mood of the townsfolk, he withdrew his cohorts from the town and fled; on the journey, the troops deserted him and went home. Curio took over Iguvium amid general good-will. On learning of this, Caesar decided he could rely on the support of the Italian towns, and taking the cohorts of the Thirteenth legion out of their garrisons he set off for Auximum...

...Attius Varus was holding this town with cohorts which he had installed there and was sending the local councillors around to levy troops throughout Picenum. When the town council heard of Caesar's approach, they came in a body to Attius, saying that, while they were not competent to judge the issue, neither they nor their fellow-townsmen could allow Gaius Caesar, a holder of military command, a man who had served the State well and had many brilliant achievements to his credit, to be shut out of the town. They warned Attius therefore to think of the future and of his own danger.

This speech alarmed Attius, who removed the garrison he had installed in the town and fled. He was pursued by a small detachment from Caesar's advance guard and compelled to stop; and after a token resistance his troops deserted him and a number of them went off home, while the rest made their way to Caesar, taking with them in custody Lucius Pupius, a chief centurion, who had previously held the same rank in the army of Pompey.

Caesar commanded Attius's troops, let Pupius go, and thanked the people of Auximum, promising to remember what they had done.

The news of these events raised a panic at Rome; so much so, that when the consul Lentulus came to open the treasury, in accordance with the decree of the Senate, to withdraw funds for Pompey, he opened the treasury reserve9 and immediately fled from Rome—for there were reports that Caesar was on his way, and his cavalry with him, and would arrive at any minute. These were false alarms; nevertheless Marcellus followed his colleague, accompanied by most of the magistrates.

Pompey had left the neighbourhood of Rome the day before and was on his way to join the legions taken from Caesar, which he had stationed in Apulia for the winter. The troop-levies around Rome were suspended, as it was felt that nowhere between there and Capua could be relied on. It was at Capua that they first rallied and recovered their spirits; there they began to hold a levy among the old soldiers who had been settled there by the Julian law.

Lentulus brought into the market-place the gladiators whom Caesar kept in a school there and, promising them their freedom, he issued them with horses and ordered them to follow him; later, however, on the advice of his supporters, since his action had met with universal disapproval he dispersed them for safe-keeping among the slave-gangs in Campania.

Leaving Auximum, Caesar hurried through the district of Picenum. All the prefectures in the area gave him a hearty welcome and assisted his army with supplies of all kinds. A deputation even came from Cingulum—a town founded by Labienus and constructed at his own expense—promising to show the utmost zeal in carrying out any commands he might give. He asked them for soldiers, and these were supplied.

Meanwhile, the Twelfth legion overtook Caesar, and with this and the legion he already had he made for Asculum, which Lentulus Spinther was holding with ten cohorts. On word of Caesar's approach, Lentulus abandoned the town, and tried to take the cohorts with him, but most of them deserted, and he was left abandoned on the road with only a small force of men. He then met Vibullius Rufus, who had been sent by Pompey to Picenum to ensure the loyalty of the local inhabitants. He received a report from Lentulus of what was going on in Picenum, took over his soldiers, and dismissed him.

He then proceeded to muster what cohorts he could from the levies ordered by Pompey, as well as the six he caught fleeing from Camerino with Lucilius Hirrus, who had commanded them in garrison there, and altogether he made up thirteen cohorts. With these he made his way by forced marches to Domitius Ahenobarbus at Corfinium and reported that Caesar was on his way with two legions. Domitius, for his part, had raised about twenty cohorts from Alba, the Marsi, the Paenitani and the surrounding districts.

.#history #livebloggingthefalloftheromanrepublic #politics #2020-07-24

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The Last Civil War of the Roman Republic: 10-20 Jan -49



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...

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-optimate-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-optimate-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 Crassus 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...

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