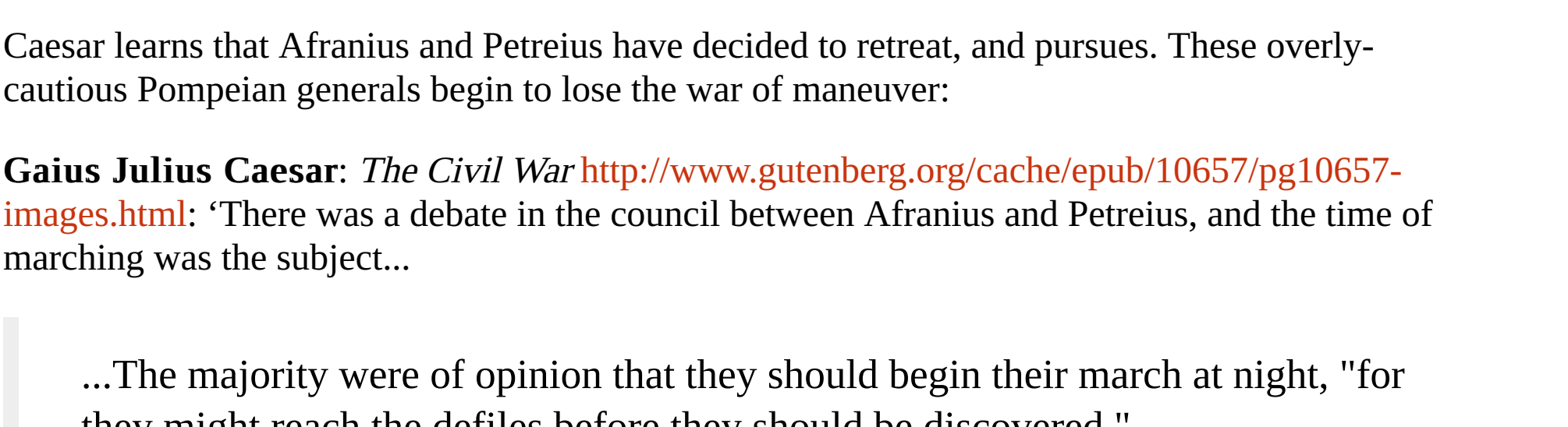


# Grasping Reality with Both Hands

The weblog  
of Brad DeLong. Since 1999.  
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## Caesar Steals a March on the Pompeians: Liveblogging the Fall of the Roman Republic



Caesar learns that Afranius and Petreius have decided to retreat, and pursues. These overly-cautious Pompeian generals begin to lose the war of maneuver:

**Gaius Julius Caesar:** *The Civil War* <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/10657/pg10657-images.html>: ‘There was a debate in the council between Afranius and Petreius, and the time of marching was the subject...

...The majority were of opinion that they should begin their march at night, "for they might reach the defiles before they should be discovered."

Others, because a shout had been raised the night before in Caesar's camp, used this as an argument that they could not leave the camp unnoticed:

that Caesar's cavalry were patrolling the whole night, and that all the ways and roads were beset; that battles at night ought to be avoided, because in civil dissension, a soldier once daunted is more apt to consult his fears than his oath; that the daylight raised a strong sense of shame in the eyes of all, and that the presence of the tribunes and centurions had the same effect: by these things the soldiers would be restrained and awed to their duty. Wherefore they should, by all means, attempt to force their way by day; for, though a trifling loss might be sustained, yet the post which they desired might be secured with safety to the main body of the army....

This opinion prevailed in the council, and the next day, at the dawn, they resolved to set forward.

Caesar, having taken a view of the country, the moment the sky began to grow white, led his forces from the camp and marched at the head of his army by a long circuit, keeping to no regular road; for the road which led to the Ebro and Octogesa was occupied by the enemy's camp, which lay in Caesar's way. His soldiers were obliged to cross extensive and difficult valleys. Craggy cliffs, in several places, interrupted their march, insomuch that their arms had to be handed to one another, and the soldiers were forced to perform a great part of their march unarmed, and were lifted up the rocks by each other.

But not a man murmured at the fatigue, because they imagined that there would be a period to all their toils if they could cut off the enemy from the Ebro and intercept their convoys.

At first, Afranius's soldiers ran in high spirits from their camp to look at us, and in contumelious language upbraided us, "that we were forced, for want of necessary subsistence, to run away, and return to Ilerda." For our route was different from what we proposed, and we appeared to be going a contrary way. But their generals applauded their own prudence in keeping within their camp, and it was a strong confirmation of their opinion, that they saw we marched without waggons or baggage, which made them confident that we could not long endure want.

But when they saw our army gradually wheel to the right, and observed our van was already passing the line of their camp, there was nobody so stupid, or averse to fatigue, as not to think it necessary to march from the camp immediately, and oppose us. The cry to arms was raised, and all the army, except a few which were left to guard the camp, set out and marched the direct road to the Ebro...

#history #livebloggingthefalloftheromanrepublic #politics #2020-08-16

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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/burns-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-optimat-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-optimat-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-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...

*The Optimate Faction Panics and Abandons Rome* <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/the-optimat-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/2020/08/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-livelogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-repubvlic.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-livelogging-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-livelogging-the-fall-of-the-roman-republic.html>...

*Floods and Supply Lines* <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/08/floods-and-supply-liner-livelogging-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-livelogging-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...

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