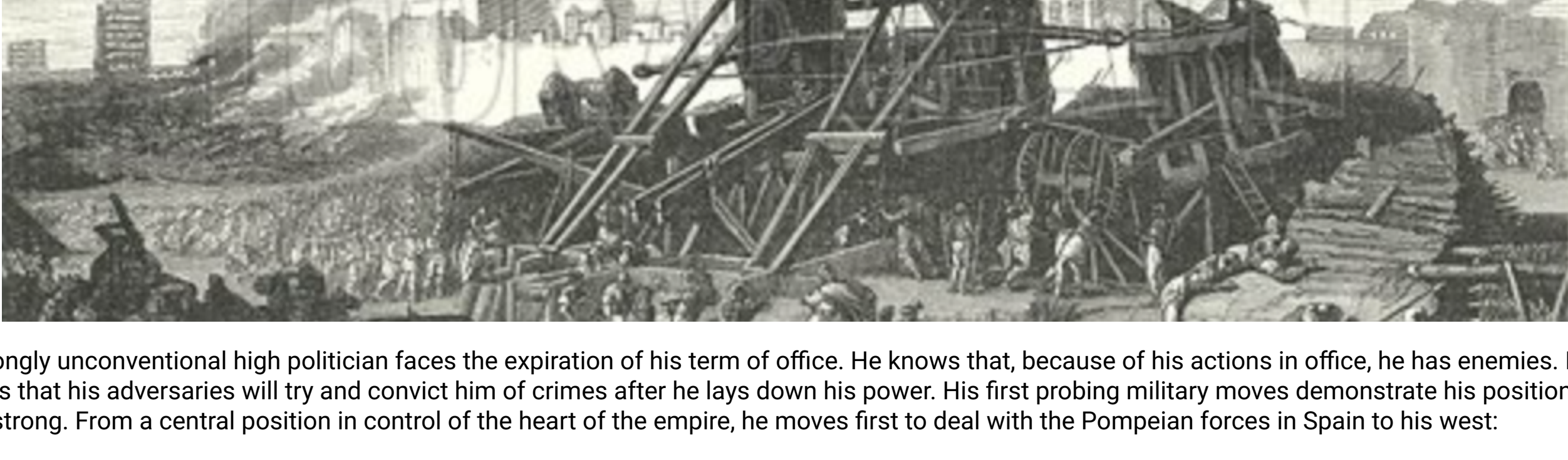


# Grasping Reality with Both Hands

The weblog of Brad DeLong. Comments (mostly) welcome, or email me at [delong@hey.com](mailto:delong@hey.com) with "delong-weblog" as the subject.  
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## Rendezvous in Spain, at Ilerda; Livelogging the Fall of the Roman Repubvlic



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. His first probing military moves demonstrate his position is very strong. From a central position in control of the heart of the empire, he moves first to deal with the Pompeian forces in Spain to his west:

**Gaius Julius Caesar:** *The Civil War:* 'The First Spanish Campaign: Fabius's orders were to make haste to seize the passes over the Pyrenees, which at that time were being held by the troops of Pompey's lieutenant, Lucius Afranius. He ordered the remaining legions, which were wintering farther away, to follow on. Fabius, obeying orders, lost no time in dislodging the guards from the pass and proceeded by forced marches to encounter Afranius's army...

...Afranius held Hither Spain with three legions; of Pompey's other lieutenants, Petreius and Varro, the latter held Further Spain from the pass of Castulo to the river Anas with two legions, and Petreius held the territory of the Vettones, from the river Anas, and Lusitania, also with two legions. On the arrival of Lucius Vibullius Rufus they re-allocated their spheres of duty. Petreius was to proceed from Lusitania through the territory of the Vettones, with all his forces, to join Afranius, while Varro was to hold the whole of Further Spain with those legions which he commanded.

These arrangements were duly made, and Petreius summoned cavalry and auxiliary troops from all over Lusitania, while Afranius summoned soldiers from Celtiberia, from the Cantabrians and from all the barbarian tribes on the western seaboard. Petreius mustered his forces and passed quickly through the Vettones to join Afranius. The two of them then conferred together and decided to conduct their campaign in the region of Ilerda, because of the favourable opportunities offered by the terrain there. Afranius, as shown above, had three legions, and Petreius two, and there were also about eighty cohorts of auxiliaries—those from Hither Spain armed with long shields, and those from Further Spain with targets—as well as about five thousand cavalry drawn from both provinces.

Caesar had sent six legions ahead to Spain; he had no auxiliary infantry; he had about three thousand cavalry, whom he had had with him in all his previous campaigns, and a similar number from Gaul, whom he himself had collected by summoning individually all the noblest and bravest members of the Gallic tribes. To these he had added some first-class men from the Aquitani and the mountain tribes bordering on the province of Gaul.

He had heard that Pompey was on his way through Mauretania with his legions, making for Spain, and would shortly arrive. At once, he borrowed money from the tribunes and centurions and distributed it among his troops, thus killing two birds with one stone—he took a security for the loyalty of the centurions, and won the good-will of the troops by his bounty.

Fabius was attempting, by letters and emissaries, to suborn the neighbouring tribes. He had built two bridges over the river Sicoris, four miles apart, and sent men across them to forage, since he had used up all the supplies of fodder on the near side of the river during the preceding days. The commanders of the Pompeian army were doing much the same thing and for the same reason, and there were frequent skirmishes between their cavalry forces.

On one occasion, two of Fabius's legions had gone out, as was the daily custom, to guard the foragers. They had crossed the river by the nearer bridge and the wagons and all the cavalry were following, when there was a sudden squall of wind and a rush of water that broke down the bridge and cut off a good part of the cavalry. Petreius and Afranius realized what had happened when they saw earth and wood-work being carried down the river, and Afranius quickly led four legions and all the cavalry across the bridge connecting the town with his camp, and went to encounter Fabius's two legions.

On word of his approach, Lucius Plancus, who was in command of the legions, bowed to necessity and took up his position on high ground, with his two legions facing in opposite directions to avoid being surrounded by the cavalry. In this way, although fighting against superior numbers, he held out against strong attacks by the legions and the cavalry. When the cavalry had engaged, both sides saw some distance away the standards of two legions, which Fabius had sent across by the farther bridge, suspecting that just this would happen, i.e. that the enemy commanders would take advantage of their good luck to try to overpower our men. The arrival of these legions put an end to the fighting, and both sides led their forces back to camp.

Two days later Caesar arrived with nine hundred cavalry, whom he had kept as a personal bodyguard...

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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/urns-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 [Ahenonbarbus] 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 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 a primary source for the start of the Roman Civil War in addition to Gaius Julius Caesar's deceptively powerful plain-spoken "just the facts" narrative in his *Commentaries on the Civil War*—a narrative that is also a clever and sophisticated lawyer's brief. Our one other primary source: Marcus Tullius Cicero's letters to his BFF Titus Pomponius Atticus. Caesar, in his *The Civil War*, makes himself out to be reasonable, rational, decisive, and clever. Cicero, in his *Letters to Atticus* is a contrast. He 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: he makes himself out to be 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: Either he surrendered... and then submitted to trial... or he... was quickly crushed.... Cicero appears to have believed that either the Senate surrendered to Caesar and let him... put Cataline's conspiracy into action but legally... and then ruled With the support of his electoral coalition of mountebank ex-debtors and ex-veterans to whom he had given land; or... Pompey... crushed Cesar militarily... follow[ed] up with proscriptions and executions after which he would rule as a second Sulla. What is not at all clear to me is what Pompey thought would happen.... My guess, reading between the lines of Plutarch, is that Pompey found himself allied with the Senate in January-February of -49, but not in command of anything—as shown by Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus's behavior at Corfinium, attempting to trap Pompey into fighting alongside him in central Italy. And 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 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-optimite-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-optimite-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* <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/the-optimite-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* <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/caesar-besieges-domitius-in-corfnum-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* <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/07/caesar-captures-corfnum-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...

*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 to Greece. Caesar decides not to follow, but to turn and first defeat the Pompeian armies in Spain. It is now 18 Mar -49...

*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, now that the Pompeians and the High Optimates have fled, offers to share power with the dysfunctional Senate but, filibustered and vetoed by Optimate tribunes, he consolidates his hold on the center of the empire and heads for Spain...

*Treachery at Massilia: April-May -49: Liveblogging the Fall of the Roman Republic* <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, and then they go back on their word. Pompeians to whom Caesar had shown clemency at Corfinum have again taken up weapons against him: Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus at Massilia, and Vibullius Rufus to command the Pompeian legions in Spain...

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