Model UN

Position Paper by: Cameron Craig

Name: Marcus Licinius Crassus

Location: Roman Republic 71 BC

Character: Marcus Crassus was a highly respected Roman general and politician that helped turn the Roman Republic into the widely known Roman Empire. His main goal was to defeat the powerful rebels leading by himself to show all of the Roman Empire he is fit for political power. He had won great respect and political power by winning the 3RD Servile Revolt and destroying the slave rebellion lead by Spartacus.

After the Rebel army had defeated another Roman attack after attack, Crassus stepped up when the roman senate did not take this revolt seriously and crases offered to train, equip and lead new troops using his own coin. Using decimation, a lottery type system executing one out of every ten men from drawing lots, Crassus had to build up the morale of the soldiers because they were fearful of the rebels because of other roman failures. He was to seem more dangerous than the enemy to ensure his soldiers fought with all their strength.

Another role Marcus Crassus toke over was the strategic planning on destroying the Rebel encampment at the Bruttium peninsula. To trap the rebels in this location Crassus and his men made a trench from sea to sea to block off the rebels from exiting. Although, in a snowstorm the rebels escaped building bridges out of dirt and tree branches. But Crassus was determined in defeating them.

The roman senate had summoned respected Roman generals Pompey and Varro Lucullus from sea to help Crassus on his campaign. Instead of being trapped by three different armies, the rebels attempted to attack the army Crassus at full strength to get away from Pompey and Varro. At the battle of the Siler River, Crassus defeated the entire rebel army capturing over 6000 slaves who were to be crucified. Some slaves escaped but were taken care of when Pompey arrived.

Crassus gained absurd amount of fame for destroying the dangerous rebels and was given political power helping him become censor by election in 65 BC. Crassus led a prosperous and extremely wealthy life becoming the richest man ever out of the Roman Empire (8.4 billion US in today’s money).He made powerful alliances with Pompey, the general summoned to help him on his campaign, and Julius Caesar by financing Caesar’s election for Pontifex Maximus and Caesar’s military campaigns. He did not only achieve wealth but fame and power as well when he became Julius Caesar’s consul in 59 BC.

3RD Servile Revolt Key Events

The last Servile Revolt was a rebellion of slaves against the Roman Republic causing many causalities on both sides; the entire rebellion starting because of the brutal treatment of slaves all over the Roman Empire. The slaves were one of the most important factor in the economy as it provided cheap labour in abundance. A vast number of slaves, usually weak or not needed slaves, would go in to the dangerous Sicily mines, the worst place for a slave to go to. The current Roman laws stated that slaves could be injured, abused or even killed with no consequence for the owners. As a result of this poor treatment slaves out of Sicily rose up to make the first and second Servile Revolt which ending horribly for the slaves. They never got out of Sicily so the Roman senate payed little attention because the city of Rome was not in danger.

In this time period the gladiatorial games were extremely popular putting trained slaves to fight against each other for the entertainment of Romans. These slaves were usually condemned criminals and prisoners of war with previous fighting experience. In 73 BC, approximately 200 gladiators from a gladiator school in Capua attempted an escape on their master Lentulus Batiatus. Even though only 70 of the gladiators escaped, they were able to free other slaves in Capua and then retreated to Mount Vesuvius, an easily defendable area. Lead by Spartacus, Crixus and Onomaus, this was the start of the 3rd Servile Revolt.

The rebel slaves attacked Campania, a rich vacation area which got the attention of the Roman Senate. The Senate sent a Roman praetor Gaius Claudius Glaber to attack the rebels with a small force of 3000 men. Glaber blocked off the only way down from Mount Vesuvius hoping to starve out the rebels. Although, the rebels were strong willed and climbed down the opposite side of the mountain using branches and vines flanking and defeating Glaber. When the Senate heard about his defeat, they sent another praetor to defeat the rebels. The rebels were victorious and took the Romans armor and weapons for their future rebellion. With these victories, the Spartacus and the rebels were able to recruit more and more slaves to get a total of over 70 000 in their rebellious cause.

The rebel leaders Spartacus and Crixus had separate thoughts on what to do next. Crixus wanted to continue raiding in southern Italy while Spartacus wanted to escape to freedom in the Alps. They went their separate ways and Crixus took approximately 30 000 slaves to raid. Roman praetor Lucius Gellius Publicola attacked and defeat Crixus and two thirds of his followers. Spartacus had heard of Crixus’ death coming towards southern Italy defeating three other praetors including Gellius.

After hearing of Spartacus’ victories a wealthy previous praetor named Marcus Licinius Crassus volunteered to go against the seemed to be unstoppable rebels. He used his own coin to finance the attacks and soldiers. The Senate gave him a praetorship and 8 legions of approximately 50 000 trained Roman infantrymen. To build the morale up of the Roman soldiers, Crassus revived decimation and wanted the soldiers to be more afraid of him than the enemy.

Crassus had many small victories against the rebels which seemed to turn the tide of the war for the Romans. To make sure of the win, the Senate summoned two general and their armies from the sea to help Crassus. Spartacus, hearing of this news, tried to make a truce with Crassus, but he refused. Spartacus did not want to be attacked from three fronts from three different armies so he attacked Crassus at full strength at Siler River to hopefully escape north. Crassus and his army defeated the rebels, killing Spartacus and capturing over 6000 slaves to be crucified. One of the incoming generals, Pompey, killed the remaining rebel slaves with his army.

Crassus and Pompey were elected censors in 70 BC because of their important victory and were then elected consuls to Julius Caesar in 59 BC. Slaves were treated more fairly since the 3rd revolt and many Roman citizen did not want another rebellion. The legal rights for slaves also changed about 20 years later related to killing your old or infirm slaves counting as murder. The use and mistreatment of slaves had greatly improved in the Roman Empire giving a new perception on slaves in Roman law and society.

Changes/Suggestions

Possible alterations the Roman side of the war should have done could have given the victory sooner than it should have been. One prevalent possible altercation comes to mind is the Roman Senate paying more attention to the rebellion at the beginning. They should have taken it seriously sending in large amounts of trained forces before the rebels numbers got so large. Or when sending in Glaber and the praetor after him, the Senate should have provided more troops so the rebels could not win and take their armor and weapons for future encounters. Also, Marcus Crassus should have intervened much sooner helping the financial situation on the Roman side of the war. If the war was ended sooner, the senate wouldn’t have to summon the two generals and could let them raid and expand where they were originally. These alterations would have helped the Romans win the war sooner.