

ROMAN HISTORY

Some Background notes to Cicero's life and times:

"She was gaining the whole world: must she at the same time lose her own soul?" H.H. Scullard in "From the Gracchi to Nero"

- the Republic would fail to meet the challenge of world domination, through selfish self-interest of individuals and groups

1. acquisition of Empire:

- from small city-state, through the Regal period to establishment of Res Publica (510bc)

- by 264bc, Rome became dominant political and military power in Italy: not through planned aggression (forbidden by religious law), but by response and reaction; creating a Confederacy of states, linked by treaty, granting of Roman citizenship or by colonisation.

consequences: Rome's domination of S. Italy brought her into conflict with Carthage. Hitherto, they had avoided conflict: Carthage's commercial interests of no concern to the Romans, a mainly agricultural people.

264-241bc First Punic War: both Rome's and Carthage's Greek allies had interests in Sicily. Carthaginians driven out, Rome having built up a strong fleet.

Sicily now put under control of a governor sent out annually; Rome's first *provincia*

218-202bc Second Punic War: Hannibal's devastating bid to atone for Carthage's ignominious earlier defeat. Rome's success under Scipio Africanus secured the Iberian peninsula which she divided into two further provinces.

200-196bc Second Macedonian War: Rome intervened, on the invitation of Greek cities, against Philip of Macedon (who had sided with Hannibal earlier), and then against Antiochus of Syria.

171-167bc war against Perseus, Philip's son: this and subsequent inter-city squabbling persuaded Rome that only armed intervention and presence would secure lasting peace.

Hence 146bc Corinth sacked, and new province of Macedonia created.

Also 146bc Carthage finally destroyed, after 3 year siege, and turned into new province Africa.

Senatus PopulusQue Romanus

- the government was the Senate, by custom, not law. 300 men, mainly landed aristocrats, senators for life, holding all chief magistracies. The people happy to let them get on with it.
- Senate dominated by *nobiles* (could boast a consul amongst ancestors); an inner circle of families, only outsiders of great ability could break through (known as *novus homo* eg. Cicero).

Political careers built on *patronage* and *amicitiae*

c.133bc further division within Senate: *optimates* and *populares*: both members of same class, but *populares* sought *tribunician support* to get their measures through, some just using people-power to further their own ambitions

According to Polybius: Rome achieved admirable blend in its government: *consuls* represented regal power; *senate* aristocratic power, and *People* democratic. The *knights* were a further addition.

lex Claudia 218bc forbade senators to have commercial interests - this left field open for *knights* esp. in new provinces, since there was no civil service. Sharp political rivalry between *senators* and *knights*, although by Cicero's day the *lex Claudia* was widely ignored.

Wealth and slavery

- Provinces brought wealth for the nobles, and decadence. Bribery at elections became common. Slavery increased after the foreign campaigns. Greek slaves fared better than most. Harsh conditions for many resulted in runaways and revolts (135bc, serious uprising in Sicily of c.70.000) Rome's military standards declined, with insubordination, indiscipline despite attempts to improve conditions. Spain was a particularly harsh posting to get! Provincial government becoming corrupt, hence institution of: *quaestio de rebus repetundis* - 149bc by the tribune L. Calpurnius Piso. The court consisted of senators, sitting in judgement on senators, subject neither to popular appeal nor tribunician veto! Knights who wanted to work with corrupt governors didn't like it.

The allies

Rome was to face a growing problem over her Italian allies, due to economic changes resulting from the wars and increasing centralisation of government - culminating in the Social War of 90 BC.

All inhabitants of Italy fell into one of two categories:

a) Roman citizens

- a) i. ordinary citizens in Rome
- ii. *municipia* - cities enjoying full Roman citizenship (originally some will only have received 'half citizenship')
- iii. 27 colonies of Roman citizens, usually on the coasts, 300 in number, could only exercise their vote in Rome itself.

b) Rome's allies

- i. *socii nominis Latini* (more privileged since made up mainly of ex-Roman citizens, who surrendered their citizenship for land in the new colonies -more or less self governing, did not have to pay tribute, but did have to supply troops)
- ii. *civitates foederatae* (ie states bound to Rome by individual treaty.)

ECONOMIC CHANGES AND THE LAND PROBLEM

The small farmers' plight after the Hannibalic Wars;

influx of wealth and slaves, devastation of small farms during long absence fighting

creation of *latifundia* (many in excess of the legal limit of 500 *iugera*, about 300 acres) by leasing of *ager publicus*

absentee landlords and *vilici*

increase of exports from provinces; sea transport cheaper

peasants forced from the land by capitalists - creation of *urban proletariat*.

THE GRACCHAN REVOLUTION

133 BC Tiberius Gracchus, a *tribune* (of distinguished family - his grandfather was Scipio Africanus), who had served at Carthage in

146BC introduced a land bill (*lex agraria*) to help the poor. It recouped land from estates in excess of 500 iugera and gave it in small allotments to the poor.

His methods were questionable:

he took the Bill straight to the people, side-stepping the Senate
he got M. Octavius deposed for having vetoed the Bill initially (in the interests of the Senate)

to finance the work of the commission (*triumviri iudicandis adsignandis*) he appropriated the wealth bequeathed by King Attalus of Pergamum

when he stood for re-election and made more 'popular noises', the Senate finally tired of him and his methods and he was killed with 300 of his followers

this act of *political violence* would lead to series of civil wars

123 BC Gaius Gracchus elected tribune and carried on and extended work of his brother; a great orator. Was re-elected in 122 BC.

His measures: included setting up new colonies in Italy, road building schemes, an attempt to extend the franchise to the Latins and granting of Latin rights to the rest of the allies, putting the equites in charge of jury courts in Rome, the introduction of laws against judicial corruption

122BC despite re-election Gracchus's popularity wanes, he was opposed by fellow tribune M. Livinius Drusus

121BC Gracchus fails to gain re-election. A *Senatus Consultum Ultimum* was passed and the consul Opimius arrested Gracchus and 3000 of his followers; summary execution without trial.

IMPORTANCE OF THE GRACCHI:

- the Italians were embittered
- the *equites* became more self-conscious as a political force
- the People more aware of its power
- new aspect of the Tribunate displayed
- the weakness of the Senate revealed

THE RISE AND FALL OF MARIUS:

Towards the end of the 1st century BC, Roman interests and security were menaced by foreign threats, particularly in N. Africa, but also on its northern borders. The generals who emerged to combat these threats introduced a new and ultimately catastrophic form of power-politics which relied on personal allegiance from the troops.

Marius: from Arpinum

- 119BC became tribune, helped by powerful Metelli family, sought political support wherever he could get it.
- 115BC became praetor, served in Spain, where he developed business interests and links with equites.
he was a NOVUS HOMO but secured link with a noble family by marrying Julia (aunt of Julius Caesar)
- 115BC - life in Rome becoming strained because of threat from Jugurtha, much superstition around, much of city destroyed by fire in 111BC

JUGURTHINE WAR

Province of Africa created in 146BC; with a neighbouring *client kingdom* of Numidia ruled by King Micipsa. The problems for Rome started in 118BC, when Micipsa died and his two sons and his nephew (Jugurtha) argued over succession. Ambitious Jugurtha eliminated the brothers, secured patronage from powerful Roman senators and by 112BC had united whole Numidian kingdom under his rule.

- 112BC Jugurtha massacred Italian residents at Cirta - Rome declared war, but long resistance
- 109BC scandal arose at Rome over bribing of many prominent Senators by Jugurtha. Client's interest being put before patriotic duty.
Marius now serving in Africa on staff of Metellus
- 107BC Marius pushes to Consulship, championed by the people against Metellus, returns to Africa with even bigger army, recruited increasingly from the PROLETARII - a dangerous precedent.

105BC Jugurtha defeated by Marius (executed in Rome the following year), helped by his Quaestor SULLA.

NB Senate and People/Equites now more at odds than ever because of senatorial corruption by Jugurtha and 'popular' elevation of general by the people.

Seeds of rivalry sown between Marius and Sulla

THE NORTHERN MENACE

113-105BC series of defeats inflicted on Roman forces by Cimbri and Teutones

104BC Marius returns from Africa, given second consulship and command in the north.

102BC given his 4th consulship, routs barbarians at Aquae Sextiae

100BC his 6th consulship, settles his veterans, enters in to uncomfortable alliance with demagogues like Saturninus but after an SCU he suppressed them as champion of the senatorial establishment

98BC Marius slips in to obscurity in Asia on an embassy

NB: Marius changed citizen militia into semi-professional army he made it a career for landless volunteers, who then looked to him for share of spoils; he introduced tactical changes (proved a great general) and foreshadowed use of imperial army on public works (fossa Mariana, Fos-Arles).

he had little political ambition himself but the evil of an alliance of military skill and political ambition was now apparent.

THE RISE AND FALL OF SULLA

The nineties: peaceful at first, with the foreign threats overcome, but trouble brewing again over the question of the ALLIES (between 123 and 91BC several proposals to give the Italians Roman citizenship all failed)

NB: The Senate's "criminally short-sighted attitude towards the Italian

allies".

- 95BC Lex Licinia Mucia - removed from Rome those wrongfully claiming to be citizens
- 91BC M. Licinius Drusus tried to secure franchise for allies (also tried to settle law - courts question) but Senate suspected him of too friendly relations with the socii and the People were just too selfish to allow Italians the franchise. He was, therefore, murdered. This signalled WAR.

The "Italian" or "Social War" - 90-88BC

i.e. the war of the SOCII (but NB the "Latin" allies remained loyal to Rome)

Reasons for the war:

1. political and social inequality - they wanted to be treated like Romans
2. felt cheated of proper recognition for their part in making Rome great (wanted "spoils")

88BC war ends quickly when Rome concedes the citizenship

Consequences of the war:

- human lives
- army cast shadow over civil life
- political unification of Italy
- local loyalties against national citizenship

SULLA:

- 88BC made consul as reward for his services in the war
received command against Mithridates in the East in preference to Marius who after successful command in the Social War coveted the posting, supported by tribune Sulpicius.
Sulla marched back from coast and "captured" Rome from the Marian factions. Marius fled to Africa amongst his old veterans .
- 87BC Marius returned and in the absence of Sulla, he and Cinna started ruthless massacre of political opponents.
- 86BC Sulla formally exiled and his laws repealed. Marius died shortly after entering his seventh consulship.
- 86-84BC Cinna in control but the shadow of Sulla looms over.
- 84BC The troops mutiny and kill Cinna

- 83BC Sulla lands at Brundisium, after victory in Greece. He raises a PRIVATE ARMY, assisted by Pompey, and defeated the two consuls. Augured ill for the Republic.
- 82BC Sulla entered Rome; battle at Colline Gate. Marian forces butchered
- 80BC Sulla undisputed master of Italy (*Sullanum Regnum*, helped by young Pompey. butchery continues to eliminate all opposition. PROSCRIPTIONS issued to acquire money and land for his veterans; had his own bodyguard - the "Cornelii"; had complete stranglehold on the army, founded 10 colonies (120,000 men). Made DICTATOR.

His reforms: both constitutional and legal. He strengthened the SEnate, handed the lawcourts back to the Senate. He organised 7 permanent "quaestiones" to cover all major crimes, with fixed penalties and no appeals.

- 79BC Sulla retired to Campania
- 78Bc Sulla died; great public funeral.

Was he forced into retirement? Was he aiming for the monarchy?

RISE of POMPEY Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (106-48BC)

He dominated the last 30 years of the Roman Republic with his personality and unorthodox public career

- 83BC raised private army to help Sulla; retained his army and sent as propraetor to suppress anti-Sullan forces in Africa and Sicily. Here he acquired reputation for ruthlessness and butchery
- 81BC returned to Rome, extorted a triumph from unwilling Sulla who gave him honorific title of "Magnus"
- 78BC suppressed Lepidus and refused to disband his army until given proconsular command against Sertorius in Spain (where he was trying to build up resistance to Sulla's Rome)
- 73BC slave revolt of Spartacus; Crassus given army to deal with it (something Sulla had always tried to avoid)
- 71BC returned from Spain in triumph and helped Crassus to finish off

the slave revolt under Spartacus

70BC rewarded with the consulship for military successes against enemies of Sullan establishment - BUT this was just a stepping stone to his OVERTHROW of the Sullan constitution

Weakness of the Senate in the 70's:

troubles abroad (Pirates and Mithridates)

troubles at home with conflicting interests of 1. the *optimates* 2.

the *populares* 3. the *equites* 4. the enfranchised Italians

70BC consulship of Pompey and Crassus swept away remnants of Sulla's constitution (eg restored the power of the tribunes)

69BC the Verres scandal broke