suggestion that the word 
epokeia could translate imperium (which is true) does not seem to hold here in light of the plural upokotiai in the text.

52 Richardson 1986, 75; Harris 1989, 123–3.
53 Livy 32.28.11.
54 Livy 32.28.11; contrast Livy 33.43.7–8 with Richardson 1986, 83, 86.
55 Richardson 1986, 95–100.
57 App. Hor. 83; cf. Rosenstein 1990, 100.
58 The sources are collected and discussed in Phang 2001, 246–7.
60 SNC 700.
61 Livy Per. 65; App. Cbr. 11; Vell. Pat. 2.12; Obsequens, 98.
62 Livy Per. 64; Sall. Jug. 37–8; Oros. Hist. contus pagam. 5.15; Eutr. Brev. 4.26; Flor. 1.36; (Jugurtha); Livy Per. 65; Plut. 1.38; Vell. Pat. 2.12 (Silanus).
63 Livy Per 65; Caes. B Gall. 1.7; Oros. Hist. contus pagam. 5.15; (Cic.); Ad Herenn. 1.15.21 (Casiod.; Livy Per. 65; Granat Licinians 33.1–17; Dio Cass. fr. 91; Plut. Luc. 27; Mar. 11; Sert. 3; Vell. Pat. 2.12; Diod. Sic. 35.1; Oros. Hist. contus pagam. 5.16; Eutr. Brev. 5.1.
64 Gabba 1976, 7–11.
68 Caes. B Gall. 1.23.3–4; 52.3; 2.27.4; see also Sabin 2000, 12.
69 Caes. B Civ. 3.91.1. Caes. B Civ. 1.46.1 suggests that a large supply of missile weapons was available. Although the action described outside Berdea in 49 was not a set battle, does suggest that regular legionaries were trained to engage in extended missile combat if necessary.

70 Sall. Cat. 59.3; Keppie 1984, 67.
72 For grants in the first half of the second century, see Brunt 1988, 241, n. 4.
74 Patterson 1993, 92–112.
75 Caes. B Civ. 1.74.1–4.
76 Caes. B Civ. 1.75.
77 Pollay 1996, 212–27.

4: THE CRISIS OF THE REPUBLIC

Jürgen von Ungern-Sternberg
(Translated by Harriet I. Flower)

TIBERIUS GRACCHUS AND THE CONFLICT OVER LAND REFORM

When Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus took office as tribune of the plebs on 10 December 134 B.C., everything in the Roman Republic seemed to be in fine working order. Rome’s dangerous rival Carthage had been destroyed; the kingdom of Macedonia had become a province; the whole world of the Hellenistic states was now under Roman control. Rome faced the annoyance of a slave revolt in Sicily and a guerilla war around the town of Numantia in Spain, but neither conflict posed a serious threat, and both were already in the process of being brought to a successful conclusion. In the city of Rome itself, the leading men of the most prominent political families, the nobility of office (nobiliss.), dominated political life from their seats in the senate. They knew how to bring one or the other recalcitrant magistrate to heel, and the same applied to the occasional tribune of the plebs who might prove too independent.1 They were flexible enough to integrate talented and ambitious social climbers into their ranks and clever enough to include all the citizens in the making of political decisions in the various types of assemblies – and particularly to entrust to them the choice between the rival candidates in the competition for political office.3

Less than a year later, everything had fundamentally changed, according to Appian of Alexandria, writing in the preface to his history of the Roman civil wars. A political clash had ended in assassination and death; further fighting would follow, first in the city and then for the city, eventually culminating in the short-lived domination of Caesar and finally in the establishment of the principate by Augustus. These
events provided a grand and bloody spectacle, with its share of terrifying scenes and famous names. In its fall, the Roman Republic demonstrated once again the very energy that had made it so successful. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that historical thinking since Montesquieu has been challenged and shaped by the task of analysing the causes of the Republic’s fall.\(^6\)

Tiberius Gracchus’ initial plan gave no indication of what was to come. His concern was with a land reform that was designed to increase the number of Roman citizens who owned land and consequently the number who would qualify as soldiers according to their census rating. An earlier agrarian law, probably dating to the beginning of the second century B.C., had limited portions of public land for individual use (ager publicus) to a maximum holding of 300 iugera (125 hectares). This was actually no small amount, and yet it seems that much more had often been appropriated.\(^5\) Now this surplus land was to be doled out in small amounts to poor settlers, while previous occupants were to receive a clear title of ownership to the public land still in their possession as well as an additional 250 iugera for each of their sons.

Gracchus’ proposal for reform was moderate, and yet it met with bitter opposition from the propertied classes. It was with good reason that Gaius Laelius had given up a similar project shortly before (Plut. Ti. Grach. 8.4). However, Tiberius Gracchus could not retreat. As quaestor he had played a role in a catastrophic Roman defeat at Numantia (137 B.C.). A further failure would have been a disaster for the image (dignitas) of the young nobilis and for his future political career. As a result, he decided to implement his agrarian reform with the help of the assembly of the people but against the will of the majority in the senate.\(^5\)

According to the letter of the law (in particular, the lex Hortensia of 287 B.C.), his actions were justified since any legislation passed by the plebs in their assembly was considered legally binding for the whole of the Roman people. However, it was not customary to introduce laws without the endorsement or against the will of the senate. In this context it is understandable that the senate arranged for another tribune of the plebs, Marcus Octavius, to veto the whole proceeding. Even so, it was certainly unusual for Octavius to persist in his veto when a vast majority of the people wanted to pass the law.\(^7\) His actions contributed to an escalation of the crisis. Tiberius Gracchus was responsible for the assembly’s decision to remove his obstructive colleague from office, despite the sacrosanctity of Octavius’ position as tribune, and thus to eliminate this obstacle to his agrarian reform. The senate, in turn, refused to give the newly formed agrarian commission, which was to redistribute the land, the necessary financial resources to do its job. Tiberius Gracchus tried to obtain money by transferring from the senate, which traditionally had responsibility for foreign affairs, to the people the power to dispose freely of the royal treasury that Attalus III of Pergamum had recently left to Rome. His highhanded actions allowed his opponents in the senate to accuse him of seeking one-man rule (regnium) – a deadly accusation in Roman politics.

The unintended result of all of this was a crisis with no way out, despite the fact that neither side had yet taken any action that was technically against the law. In fact, that was the real reason for the crisis. Rome had not a written constitution, but a traditional one that had developed over time, according to which all the participants worked towards a consensus through mutual cooperation rather than making use of their full legal powers.\(^8\) In the year 133 this consensus was destroyed when the senate continued to block a sensible reform and a tribune of the plebs sought to overcome the senate's opposition by deposing a colleague from office. The masters of the Mediterranean world thought they could afford this conflict, since they were not subject to the disciplines imposed by an outside threat.

“For the nobility began to abuse their prestige and the people their liberty. Each man was taking, seizing and stealing for himself. And so everything was divided into two factions, and the state, which was in the middle, was torn apart” (Sall. Jug. 41.5).\(^9\)

In face of the threats of his political opponents, Tiberius Gracchus saw his only way out in the completely unprecedented move of seeking reelection to the tribunate for the following year. Such a decision certainly appeared to be an act of decisive and permanent rebellion to these same rivals in the senate. A disturbance in the electoral assembly and the hesitation of the consul presiding in the senate, which was meeting nearby, caused Scipio Nasica, the pontifex maximus, to seize the initiative. Gracchus and his supporters fell without resistance before the unexpected attack of the senators. Further prosecutions in the following year claimed numerous additional victims.

Ancient commentators already grasped the meaning of these events:

This was the beginning of civil bloodshed and of the free reign of swords in the city of Rome. From then on justice was overthrown by force and the strongest was preeminent.
Disagreements between citizens that in an earlier time had usually been settled through mediation were now decided by the sword. Wars were not started over the issues but according to the rewards. This state of affairs was hardly surprising. For precedents are not limited to their origins. However narrow their first path, a broad road is then created with great latitude. Once the path of justice has been abandoned, men rush headlong into wrongdoing. No man considers a way too low for himself which has brought rewards to others.

(Vell. Pst. 2.3.3–4)

In this passage, Velleius states clearly that the shedding of citizen blood brought about a fundamental change in the rules of politics at Rome. What had happened once could happen again at any time and could even be surpassed by an escalation of violence. However, a schism in political methods had preceded the use of force as a last resort in political conflict. In his use of the popular assembly to oppose the political will of the senate, Tiberius Gracchus had invented a new style of popular politics (popularis via or ratio). The defenders of the traditional leading role of the senate now began to define themselves in opposition to the new politics as "the best men" (optimates). 10

The contrast between these political approaches never led to the formation of two political parties in the modern sense, since each Roman politician’s primary interest remained his individual career (causus honorum). 11 However, the political split remained latent and threatening, like the memory of the violent end of Tiberius Gracchus. It was Tiberius’ assassination that made the year 133 a turning point in Roman history and the beginning of the crisis of the Roman Republic.

GAIUS GRACCHUS

Initially, of course, a settlement still seemed possible. A commission of three men began its work of measuring and reapportioning the land on the basis of the new agrarian law: many boundary stones attest to this activity. 12 But opposition arose from a new quarter when the commission started to confiscate public land (ager publicus) that was being used by Rome’s allies. In this way the question of the status of the allies grew out of the agrarian problem, since Rome had continued to gain the upper hand in its relationship with its Italian allies. The decision of the optimates to put a widespread stop to agrarian reform (in 129 B.C.) while being unwilling to meet any of the demands of the allies proved disastrous. Gaius Gracchus staged strong opposition to an attempt, through a tribunician law (126 B.C.), to forbid allies even to enter the city.

The younger of the two brothers had started his political activities as a member of the agrarian commission. As tribune of the plebs in 123 and 122, he now undertook a comprehensive attempt to solve Rome’s existing problems. 13 At the same time, he applied the lesson learned from his brother’s death: the supporters of a single reform project had not been sufficiently powerful to protect Tiberius from the counterattack of the optimates. Consequently, his various laws were designed to appeal to a variety of interest groups. Gaius himself represented them with a rousing style of public speaking that made him the greatest orator in Rome between Cato the censor and Cicero. 14

His initial concern was for the people of the city (plebs urbana), who were dependent for their survival on a regular supply of grain, their staple food, at a reasonable price. His grain law (lex frumentaria) was designed to meet their need. It was a practical solution, but it met with heavy opposition from the optimates, who pointed to the new burdens that would be imposed on the public treasury. In reality the optimates feared for their own personal influence, which they could exercise through private distributions of grain. Gaius’ wooing of the propertied classes, who were just beginning to define themselves as the equestrian order (ordo equester) in contrast to the senators, was more problematic. In social terms, the boundary between the two orders was fluid, but they were politically divided by their participation or nonparticipation in the running of the state. Gaius blurred this very distinction by appointing equestrians as jurors in Rome’s first permanent court to control extortion by provincial governors (quaestio de repetundis). 15 In the past, juries composed of senators, the peers of the accused, had indeed proved to be ineffectual (App. B. Civ. 1.22.92). Yet the equestrians, many of whom had financial interests in the provinces, especially as tax collectors (publicani) or as businessmen, could scarcely be considered neutral adjudicators. At the same time, Gaius increased their involvement by transferring to Rome the tax contracts for the wealthy province of Asia, the former kingdom of Pergamum, which in effect handed them over to the large corporations of tax farmers (publicani). In revisiting the land problem, he also took the landowning classes into consideration in his planning of colonies in Italy and especially in his refoundation of the destroyed city of Carthage, where bigger initial investments for settlers were needed than elsewhere. 16
activity ceased for a period of almost ten years. By the year 111, agrarian reform was brought to a conclusion in three well-crafted, overlapping laws.

It is evident that at this point the senate had overplayed its hand. Putting off problems was not the same as solving them; this was especially true for the agrarian and the allied questions. These issues, combined with the defence of the rights of the people, continued to provide material for popular politics, not in the form of a coherent “movement” but nevertheless with some degree of continuity. In addition, the popular agenda was guaranteed by the constant possibility of recalling the memory of the Gracchi, the protagonists and first martyrs of the cause. Their memory was enhanced by the reverence accorded their mother Cornelia, who was highlighted in Roman historiography with a prominence unparalleled for a woman in the Republic.

**Marius and the Jugurthan War**

The impetus for a renewed clash came from outside Rome, initially from a colonial war in Africa. In reality the intriguer Jugurtha, king of Numidia, was never able to pose a serious threat to Rome. Yet it was for this precise reason that the war dragged on and provided material ready to hand for tribuniciian attacks on the generals of the traditional office-holding caste (the nobles). The war also provided the long-desired opportunity for the new man (novus homo) Gaius Marius to reach the consulship (in 107 B.C.). With the help of his quaestor, Lucius Cornelius Sulla, he managed to arrange for the handing over of Jugurtha to the Romans, which resulted in a final victory in the war.

Marius’ return to Rome proved to be just in time for a new and more important task. Beginning in 113 B.C., the Germanic tribes of the Cimbri and Teutones had destroyed several Roman armies, most recently at Arausio, where two generals were defeated in succession (105 B.C.). In reaction to the crisis, Marius was elected for 104 B.C. to the first of five consecutive consulships: extraordinary times demanded extraordinary measures. He used his special mandate for a reform of the army that introduced both tactical and technical innovations (fighting in cohorts) but above all widened the basis for military recruitment. For the war against Jugurtha, Marius enrolled not only the regular levies but also volunteers who did not own any land (Sall. Jug. 86.2–3). These men were now called capite censi rather than by the older, less flattering name of proletarii. In this way, Marius made a decisive break in the
connection between military service and land ownership that had been taken for granted up to his time. His army reform drew the logistical consequences from the failure of the Gracchan agrarian reform program while reintroducing the same issues in a different guise into day-to-day politics in Rome. Soldiers who did not own land needed a position in civilian society after the end of their military service. Their backgrounds in the Italian countryside suggested that they needed settlement back on the land. And there had been occasional precedents for rewarding veterans with long records of service by giving them grants of land.

From as early as 103 B.C., Marius, in cooperation with the tribune Lucius Appuleius Saturninus, sought just such an arrangement for the veterans of the African war. After Marius’ victories over the Teutoones at Aquae Sextiae (102 B.C.) and the Cimbri at Vercellae (101 B.C.), he and Saturninus together planned to found a number of veterans’ colonies outside Italy in the year 100. The optimates were extremely displeased, since they were in principle opposed to the settlement of Roman citizens in the provinces. At the same time, they did not wish to admit to themselves that such obstructive tactics actually forced the general and his soldiers to undertake shared political action. In 100 B.C. the majority in the senate were admittedly also helped by the clumsy and excessively self-assured agitation of the populares in support of Saturninus. Violent incidents once again gave the senate the opportunity to declare a state of emergency (senatus consultum ultimum) against their opponents. In the event, Marius himself took the lead. At the decisive moment, he did not dare, after all, to break with the establishment.

FURTHER ATTEMPTS AT REFORM

Once again the optimates had managed to rid themselves of an inconvenient tribune of the plebs, albeit at the high price of an ever growing stalemate over reform. This became evident in the year 95 B.C., when the consuls Lucius Licinius Crassus and Quintus Macius Scaevola passed a law to send all Italians living in Rome back to their own home cities. Asconius (67–8 C.) rightly identified this law as a fundamental cause of the war with the allies, just as the Stamp Act of 1765 helped to precipitate the revolt of the North American colonies against England.

Meanwhile, a surprising turn of events produced a new reforming tribune in the person of Marcus Livius Drusus, who in 91 B.C. once again attempted a broad programme of reform that even had the support of leading senators. Just as Gaius Gracchus had done, he combined a whole package of reforms aimed at all the various groups who were politically important. His programme included a grain law as well as agrarian legislation and, most importantly, provided for the transfer of the jury courts to the senators. To facilitate this change, 300 equestrians were to be co-opted into the senate. The outcome, however, was more opposition to the programme than support, especially because the tribune had passed his law in an illegal single vote (lex satura). He had also acted contrary to religious omens (contra auspiciis), as the leader of the opposition, the consul Lucius Marcius Philippus, was quick to point out. Even though the circumstances were favourable, a reform of the state (republica) proved to be impossible. The interests of different groups, even within the ruling classes, were too sharply divided. Rome was not subject to any external threat that could have imposed compromises, although these were the years when Mithradates VI of Pontus and the Parthians first came to the attention of the Romans.

From the start, the odds were against Livius Drusus’ last great project, the extension of citizen rights to all the inhabitants of Italy. He launched his initiative in the summer of 91 B.C. in cooperation with allied leaders, such as the Marian Quintus Pompeaedi Silo, who was to become one of the two (hostile) consuls of the Italians once the revolt had started. By the time Drusus was murdered in the autumn, under circumstances that remain unclear, he had already failed and war had become inevitable. Yet by no means all the allies joined in the fight against Rome. Etruria and Umbria stayed essentially quiet, and the same can be said for the Greek cities in the south and most of Campania. The revolt was staged by the Oscans and Sabellian tribes from the Marsi to the Samnites and Lucanians, joined by cities in southern Campania (Nola and Pompeii). Even so, the conflict was dangerous and costly for Rome, especially since both sides were relying on the same training and were fighting according to the same military strategies. In essence this was an Italian civil war, and Rome was able to secure victory as soon as she made the political concession of extending her citizenship (in several laws) to all the inhabitants of Italy south of the Po valley (90/89 B.C.). A completely unanticipated result was the creation of a unified Italy that soon became Romanised through the rapid and general spreading of Roman municipal institutions to the local towns.

In the short term, however, serious consequences resulted from the prolonged fighting on Italian soil, notably in the form of a significant blurring of the boundary between military and civilian life, a boundary that had always been strictly observed by the Romans. Several generals now began to pursue their own political agendas in a prelude to the clash
between Marius and Sulla in the year 88 B.C. Through a bill proposed by the tribune of the plebs P. Sulpicius, Marius had the command against Mithrades VI transferred to himself. The consul Sulla refused to accept this, since the senate had designated the command for him. Sulla went to his army, which was encamped at Nola, and convinced the soldiers that a change of general would mean that the new commander would take different soldiers with him to the lucrative battlegrounds of Asia. Against the will of the senate, Sulla marched on Rome at the head of his army and once again secured for himself the command in Asia. At the same time, he banished and proscribed his enemies and provided the first example of a formal declaration of Roman citizens as public enemies (hostes).

Sulla's march on Rome represented an immense escalation in the level of violence compared with the deaths of the Gracchi and of Saturninus in internal armed conflicts. Sulla started the first formal civil war. Ancient observers expressed this clearly, especially Appian (B Civ. 1.269–70):

And thus sedition developed from conflict and ambition to murders, and from murderous deeds to open war. This citizen army was the first to storm its native city as if it were enemy territory. And from then onwards internal discord was only settled with weapons. The city of Rome was frequently attacked and there was fighting around the walls and all the other effects of war. The perpetrators of violence were not inhibited by any respect for the laws or the constitution or their own country.

SULLA

Starting in 90 B.C., Mithrades VI of Pontus had been able to use the universal dissatisfaction with Roman rule to achieve a rapid advance, first in Asia Minor and then also into Greece. In 88 B.C. 80,000 Romans and Italians were said to have become the victims of his bloody reprisals in Ephesus. Rome's power, however, remained overwhelming. Rome could even afford to conduct the war against Mithrades with two armies that were hostile to each other. Sulla was on the one side, and on the other the army sent out by his rivals, the leader of whom was the consul Lucius Cornelius Cinna in Rome, who had seized power in Italy in 87 B.C. and had outlawed Sulla. Nevertheless, Sulla was able to prevail on both fronts. At the peace of Dardanos (85 B.C.), Mithrades had to content himself with being allowed to retain his own kingdom of Pontus.

Sulla was now free to prepare his forces for an invasion of Italy and for a new "march on Rome" with quite different dimensions from the first one. Initially his opponents were far stronger than he, but they did not include any individual who understood the rules of civil war in the way that Sulla did. Consequently, he gained ground rapidly after landing at Brundisium in 83 B.C., especially through the support of the young Gnaeus Pompeius. Pompeius had raised an army at his own expense — completely illegally — and had been recognized by Sulla without hesitation as a "private general" (privatus cum imperio). By the end of 82 B.C., Sulla had achieved victory, accompanied by a bloody settling of scores with the Sannites, who had maintained their armed resistance to the end, and with his opponents in Rome. Many senators and equestrians were designated as public enemies and robbed of their possessions when their names were put on proscription lists.

In the meantime, however, it soon became clear that Sulla had fought not just for himself but for a cause. In 82 B.C. he was named dictator with supreme power to reorganize the state (dictator legis lati oris et reipublicae constituerant) by means of a law introduced in the assembly by the interrex Lucius Valerius Flaccus. His reforms were designed to draw a lesson from the developments of the decades since the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus. He cut back the tribunate of the plebs while at the same time putting the senate at the center of Roman political life again and giving order to the magistracies and to the administration of the laws.

Many of his measures remained in effect in the long term, including the reorganization of the permanent courts, the expansion of the priory colleges, the enlargement of the senate to 600 members, and the senate's automatic acceptance of the annually elected quaestors, of whom there were now to be twenty every year. However, Sulla was not able to achieve his real goal. The tribunate of the plebs was too deeply rooted in Roman tradition to be closely controlled by the will of the senate. Nor could it be made unattractive by his ban on former tribunes' holding further political office. But, above all, the senate had lost most of its leading members in the civil wars and proved to be incapable of playing the central role that Sulla had conceived for it. This was especially the case because new challenges were constantly arising in Rome's large empire, challenges that could not be met by the average magistrate with limited means. Furthermore, Sulla the dictator could
not erase from people's memories his own example of high-handed pursuit of personal and political goals.

**POMPEIUS**

Sulla himself had promoted the man of the hour, Pompeius, who was already self-consciously claiming the cognomen Magnus and who had, through sheer obstinacy, obtained a triumph for his victory in Africa. After Sulla's retirement and early death (78 B.C.), Pompeius served as legate to Quintus Lutatius Catulus and helped him to put down the revolt of M. Acilius Lepidus (77 B.C.). He then managed to obtain a command in Spain against Quintus Sertorius. After some mixed successes, he returned home victorious from Spain (71 B.C.) and managed to crush the last remnants of a slave revolt. As a result, he shared in the victory over Spartacus, which had actually been won by Marcus Licinius Crassus. Despite their rivalry, they joined forces for the consular elections for 70 B.C. Pompeius reached the highest office without ever having been a member of the senate.

The shared reform programme of Pompeius and Crassus eliminated important elements of Sulla's system but was by no means revolutionary. The rights of the tribunes were restored in full, censors were then elected who managed to expel sixty-four unsuitable members from the senate, and finally the long-standing battle over who should serve as jurymen in the courts was settled in a compromise. It was against the background of these reforms that Marcus Tullius Cicero achieved one of his greatest rhetorical successes in his prosecution of Gaius Verres. He forced the repressive governor of Sicily to go into exile. Amongst Verres' defenders was Quintus Hortensius, who had been the most prominent orator of the day, but from now on Cicero established himself as the lawyer most in demand.

In characteristic fashion, Pompeius had refused to become governor of a province after his consulship, as was the usual custom (Vell. Pat. 2.31.1). He was still in search of extraordinary tasks, and he did not have to wait long for one to appear. For some time the Mediterranean had been made unsafe by pirates, whose broad operations and mobility could not be successfully tackled by individual provincial governors. Consequently, it made perfect sense to enact a special law (lex Gabinia) in 67 B.C. granting Pompeius a command (imperium) over all the coastal regions, with many legates and almost unlimited financial resources. In this way the unity of the empire became visible, at least for a moment.

Pompeius had never before made such a brilliant display of his organizational talent or of his diplomatic skill. Within a few weeks, he forced the pirates to capitulate and made the Mediterranean into a truly Roman sea (mare nostrum).

And yet a greater task already awaited him, in the form of the war against Mithridates VI that was still going on despite the major victories of Lucius Licinius Lucullus. Armed with extraordinary powers through a special lex Manilia, Pompeius defeated the king and advanced over the Caucasus until he almost reached the Caspian Sea. His exploits recalled those of Alexander the Great. Afterwards he concentrated on reorganizing the East into a system of client kingdoms, of which Judaea was now also one. In 63 B.C. he had captured Jerusalem and demonstrated his victory to law-abiding Jews by entering the holy of holies in the Temple. He also annexed Syria, thus bringing a final end to the kingdom of the Seleucids.

Meanwhile, in Italy, people awaited the return of the victorious general and feared that it would resemble Sulla's. Preparations were made on all sides, by Crassus and by Caesar, who had just won his first great success with his promotion to high priest (pontifex maximus) in 63 B.C., and also by the senate, where the young Marcus Porcius Cato had just emerged for the first time in the debate over the punishment of the Catilinarian conspirators on 5 December 63 B.C. Cicero made the defeat of the Catilinarian conspiracy his main claim to fame as consul, and Sallust also helped to immortalize it with his monograph on the topic. However, its causes and its context were obscure, even for contemporaries, especially since Lucius Sergius Catilina died bravely in battle early in 62 B.C. The rapid end to the conflict deprived Pompeius of the chance for a new military mission in Italy, and it also strengthened the self-confidence of the senate and especially of Cicero himself, who now based his politics on the ephemeral political alliance between senators and equestrians, the illusion of a "harmony of the orders" (ordo equitum)

In the short term, the optimates could feel that they had been justified when Pompeius landed at Brundisium at the end of 62 B.C. and dismissed his troops. A "march on Rome" would have been possible, but it would only have led to a totalitarian régime, which, in the absence of any real justification, would not have lasted. Pompeius did want to be the leading man in Rome, but within the framework of the existing constitution. Meanwhile, the senate proved foolish in its chicanery, since it wanted neither to ratify Pompeius' settlement of the East nor to allow reasonable provision for his veterans.
The results became clear in 60 B.C., when Caesar was elected consul for the next year and made a political alliance with Pompeius and Crassus (the so-called first triumvirate). Their friendship (amicitia) could have been a traditional alliance within the framework of what was usual in Roman political life. Yet their agreement that nothing should be done in Rome that was displeasing to any of the three (ne quid ogetur in re publica quod dispiaceat ulti e tribus. Suet. Jul. 19) changed the rules of the game. There had never been a time when three men had conceived of the notion that their private arrangements should regulate what would happen in Rome. For there had never before been three men with the necessary resources and power to impose their vision on the state. Hence, it was appropriate that the historian Asinius Pollio later decided to begin his work about the civil wars with the year 60 B.C. (and that the twentieth-century historian Sir Ronald Syme should imitate him). 

Cato had already repeatedly insisted that the downfall of the Republic started with the initial friendship between Pompeius and Caesar, not with the subsequent war between them. As it turned out, Cicero refused to join the pact, thus taking perhaps the most principled stance of his political life.

From the start, the year of Caesar’s consulate was marked by the optimates’ profound distrust of a man who had always regarded popular methods (popularis via) as his political creed. With the help of Caesar’s fellow consul, Marcus Calpurnius Bibulus, the optimates pursued a policy of blind obstructionism to Caesar’s agrarian legislation and to his subsequent measures. They could not, however, prevail against the might of Pompeius’ veterans, whose opposition to the optimates helped Caesar finally gain the means to greater power. Since his legislation was being challenged by the optimates on legal grounds, he needed the political clout to defend it, even after 59 B.C. Caesar was given the provinces of Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum for five years (through a lex Vetiaria). Acting on a proposal of Pompeius, the senate then added Transalpine Gaul and thereby set the stage on which Caesar would make world history.

At the time, no one could foresee the wide geographic sweep of the military successes that Caesar would achieve in Gaul in the following years. He started with the war against the Helvetians, against the Suebian leader Ariovistus, and against the Belgi and moved on to two expeditions to Britain and two crossings of the river Rhine, which was to become the border between Gaul and Germania. Finally he captured Vercingetorix at Alesia. The Gallic war was a gigantic plundering raid designed to provide Caesar with a powerful army and with the financial means he needed to fulfill his political ambitions in Rome. He destroyed Celtic civilization and deprived hundreds of thousands of their lives or their freedom. The cool elegance of his writings (commentarii), which were designed to inform the Roman public about his deeds, cannot disguise these facts. At the same time, of course, the conquest of Gaul marked Rome’s decisive step over the Alps that led to the Romanisation of the West and consequently shaped the future of Europe for all time. In this case, a single individual, Julius Caesar, embodies the ambivalence that characterizes the Roman empire in general. The history of the Roman empire, like that of most empires built through “blood and iron,” has created a positive image, more positive than for the emergence of most other empires.

Meanwhile, political life in Rome went on, with the attention and agreement of Caesar. Rome teetered between normality and crises that were caused by the fatal of the three leading men but also by the actions of Publius Clodius Pulcher. In the year of his tribunate (58 B.C.), Clodius made the ordinary people of the city of Rome (plebs urbana) a significant power in politics for the first time. By comparison, the exile and return of Cicero (58/57 B.C.) was a second-rate phenomenon that was of primary concern only to Cicero himself, who had a great deal to say about it in various writings. Cicero’s loss of political influence ushered in the first period of his activity as a writer and produced a number of important works (notably De republica, De legibus, and De anima).

The conference at Luca in April 56 B.C. once again revealed the true relationships of power. Pompeius and Crassus received second consulships and Caesar secured an extension of his command in Gaul. These arrangements can be accurately described as “a conspiracy to divide power amongst themselves and to destroy the previous form of government” (Plut. Cat. Min. 41.2). Despite a long period of interim government (interregnum), which pushed the elections into the year 55 B.C., the three achieved their objectives. Pompeius secured a five-year command in Spain, in addition to the control over the grain supply (una annona) that he already had. Crassus was given Syria as his province, where he was to die in 53 B.C. at Carrhae in a war against the Parthians.

The year 52 B.C. opened to scenes of chaos: again no consul had been elected (resulting in a further interregnum), and the riots after the murder of Clodius on 18 January made a reconciliation between Pompeius and the optimates easier. Pompeius was elected as sole consul.
(consul sine collegio) and married Cornelia, the daughter of Metellus Scipio. He then made his new father-in-law his fellow consul. Once again a dynastic marriage put the seal on a new political alliance, just as Pompeius had previously been connected with Caesar until the death in 54 B.C. of his former wife Julia, the daughter of Caesar. In reality the new marriage was only a precarious bond between two partners who distrusted each other. Yet it was enough to cause the break between Pompeius and Caesar, a break that in turn led to the civil war.

The famous question ("Rechtfrage") concerning the limits of Caesar's command in Gaul and the conditions under which he immediately sought a new consulship in 49 or 48 B.C. (as well as the repeated attempts of the optimates to thwart his plans in 51 and 50) is only one element, albeit an important one, in the confusion of intrigue on both sides. On the one hand, hatred of Caesar was too great, on the other, his determination to get his own way at any price was too strong, to allow for a peaceful solution. As Cicero saw at the time, the Roman Republic (res publica) would in any case be the victim.

**Dictator Perpetuus**

After Caesar crossed the Rubicon with his veteran army in January 49 B.C., Pompeius was forced to abandon Italy in a hurry. Pompeius' hope lay in his strength at sea and in a victorious return, with the armies in Spain and in the East, in imitation of Sulla. But his war of attrition proved useless against an opponent who conquered Spain in short order and then himself brought the war across the Adriatic. Pompeius was decisively defeated at Pharsalus in August 48 B.C. and met a violent end as he fled to Egypt. Caesar made himself sole ruler of the whole Roman empire by 45 B.C., after further victories in Egypt (at the side of Cleopatra), Asia Minor, Africa, and Spain.

Caesar waged his wars not only with military skill but also with political acumen. He took every opportunity to spare his defeated opponents (clementia Caesaris). However, the task of consolidating the power he had won proved beyond him. In his capacity as dictator, first for ten years (46 B.C.) and then for life (dictator perpetuus, from February 44 B.C.), he passed many reforms in the short time remaining to him. His reforms included the new calendar based on the solar year, laws to reorganize the courts and the administration of the provinces, and above all far-sighted policies regarding colonization and the extension of Roman citizenship. But his rule was based on the advice of his cabinet and of his close friends, not on consultation with the senate, which had no choice but to heap him with ever new honours, resulting even in virtual deification — so unprecedented that these same honours hint at subversion.

Yet, even as things were, Rome wanted not an efficient monarch and the peace he had created but rather the Republic, despite all its weaknesses. Caesar may have shown more foresight in turning down the repeated demands for a restoration of the Republic made by Cicero and others. Yet he was setting himself up against a tradition that went back for centuries and was still vital. It is unclear whether he really wanted to be a king at the end of his life and what plans he had for the Parthian war or for the future. But "the question of ultimate intentions becomes irrelevant. Caesar was slain for what he was, not for what he might become." It is significant enough that on the Ides of March 44 B.C., republicans and disappointed Caesarians acted together under the leadership of Brutus and Cassius.

**Interpretations of the Crisis**

The crisis of the late Republic proved thought provoking both for contemporaries and for later historians throughout antiquity. At first, its causes were principally sought in the ethical sphere, especially in the decay of morals. And subsequent events made the crisis appear as a theological process that led to monarchy. Montesquieu made the rise and fall of the Roman Republic a paradigm for modern historical thought, comparable only to Gibbon's account of the Roman Empire, which he wrote some fifty years later. According to Montesquieu, it was the problems associated with the size of the empire and with its administration that made the republican constitution unable to function properly. This interpretation is surely correct, especially if one adds the observation made by Posidonius and Sallust, namely, that Rome's new role on the world stage led to the disappearance of the readiness to compromise in internal political affairs.

Since the nineteenth century, reliance on the testimony of Cicero and Sallust, as well as consideration of more modern problems, has tended to produce a characterization of the crisis in terms of the struggle between two parties, the optimates and the populares. Their conflict seemed to mirror the clash between aristocrats and democrats (or conservatives and liberals). The violence of the crisis also recalled modern revolutions, such as the great French Revolution and later ones.
subsequent debates have done much to illuminate the structure of Roman politics. They have revealed that optimates and populares were choosing between different political strategies rather than simply representing closed groups. Roman concepts of citizenship and the fabric of social relationships and obligations have been put into sharper focus.

It has also become clear that the revolutions of the modern age cannot serve as models to elucidate the conflicts of the last century of the Republic.

At the moment there is a tendency to stress the normality of political life during the late Republic. This seems justified insofar as none of the main participants was proposing a different constitution, with the result that what happened was not part of a teleological process but constituted a "crisis without an alternative." Yet it was a genuine crisis whose problems should not be minimized, notably the challenges facing the poor in the city (plebs urbana) and even more importantly the agrarian issues, including the need to make provision for veterans of the army. Through its refusal to produce a solution to these problems, the senate created serious doubts about its own legitimacy as the ultimate governing body, which in turn caused the soldiers to stage repeated "marches on Rome." In this context, it was logical that Augustus finally put an end to the crisis through a military dictatorship, even though he disguised his régime as the restoration of the traditional republican political order (res publica).

Notes

4 Monestiez, Considerations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence (Amsterdam, 1734).
6 Bernstein 1978, 160-97; Stockton 1979, 61-86.
10 Cic. Rep. 1:31: "For as you see the death of Tiberius Gracchus, and before it the whole political style of his tribunate, divided the one people into two factions." Cicero presents a partisan view in this passage by ascribing all the blame to Gracchus, yet his judgement is much more to the point here than in his famous definition of optimates and populares at Sext. 96-101.