

## **V. The Fall of the Roman Republic**

### A. Pompey and Crassus

#### 1. The Laws of Sulla

- a) As dictator of Rome, Sulla not only killed all his enemies, he created a new set of laws for Rome.
- b) Sulla ordered that the tribunes should lose all their powers except the right to physically protect plebeians.
- c) Sulla also tried to give the Senate more power over the consuls by making new rules about who could become a consul.
  - i) Only candidates over 40 years of age would be eligible.
  - ii) Only candidates who had previously had been quaestors (a taxation officer) would be eligible.
- d) In a surprise move, after being a dictator for three years and creating his new laws, Sulla abdicated.

#### 2. The Rise of Pompey

- a) Immediately after Sulla abdicated, Rome was faced with a crisis that tested whether the new laws would be respected.
- b) Supporters of Marius joined forces with the native tribes of Spain in rebellion against Rome.
- c) Only one man seemed capable of defeating this enemy: a general named Pompey, who had previously been an officer under Sulla.
- d) To be the “proconsul” (commander of a provincial army) in a place like Spain one first had to have been a consul, according to the laws of Sulla. But Pompey was less than thirty years old, and he had never even been a quaestor.
- e) The Romans chose to ignore the Sullan laws in order to make Pompey the proconsul of Spain.
- f) Pompey ultimately defeated the rebels, and became a national hero for his successful campaign.

#### 3. The Rise of Crassus

- a) While Pompey was dealing with the crisis in Spain, a *third* servile war erupted in 73 BC.
- b) This slave uprising was led by a man named Spartacus, whose forces were not merely domestic servants, but gladiators!
- c) Three Roman armies sent against the gladiators failed. Only another Sullan officer, now a fantastically rich aristocrat, named Crassus, was able to put down the rebellion.

#### 4. Dual alliance of Pompey and Crassus

- a) Pompey and Crassus both wanted power for themselves.
- b) The two generals converged on Rome with their armies, and it seemed like there might be a civil war.
- c) Instead, however, Pompey and Crassus preferred to ally with each other.
- d) They obtained the support of the plebeians to be made consuls, in exchange for a promise to overturn the Sullan laws.
- e) As promised, once in office, the consuls restored the powers of the tribunes.
- f) Neither Pompey nor Crassus was ready or willing to attempt to make themselves sole ruler of Rome, however, and their alliance did not immediately change the government.
- g) Pompey was assigned command of Roman forces in the Mediterranean to rid the sea of pirates, and then he took over the Roman army in the East against Mithradates.
- h) While he was away still other individuals tried to become the leaders of the Roman government.

### B. Cicero

#### 1. Champion of the Republic

- a) Marcus Tullius Cicero was a lawyer who wished to restore the Roman Republic.
- b) As a quaestor in Sicily, he had observed first hand the corruption of Roman imperial administration.
- c) As a praetor (a judge) in Rome he agreed to prosecute the former governor of Sicily, named Verres, for corruption.
- d) No one believed such a case could succeed, but Cicero was so diligent in preparing the case that Verres' guilt was proven beyond any doubt and he was forced to flee Rome.
- e) Cicero's willingness to fight for the people of Sicily against its privileged Roman rulers made him an inspirational figure for all those who hoped that Rome could be reformed.
- f) Cicero was chosen as consul in 63 BC.

#### 2. Conspiracy of Catiline

- a) As consul, Cicero had to defeat a conspiracy against the government by a bankrupt politician named Catiline.
- b) Catiline and his followers blamed the Roman government for their woes, and they believed that the government was corrupt beyond saving. Their intention was to murder the leaders of the government and seize power for themselves.
- c) Cicero and his supporters discovered the plot and foiled it.

- d) Surprisingly, historians are not sure if Catiline was as bad as he seems. It is certainly true that the Roman government was so corrupt that it could not be saved.

## C. Julius Caesar

### 1. Rise to Power

- a) While Pompey was away from Rome, an aristocrat named Julius Caesar tried to make himself just as powerful.
- b) Caesar was from a wealthy clan (the “Julii”) and he used his wealth to throw gladiatorial games, which made him very popular.
- c) Caesar, like Cicero, also attempted to prosecute a corrupt Roman official, but his case against a Roman administrator in Macedonia named Cornelius Dolabella failed. Still, it allowed him to pose as a popular champion against corruption.
- d) Caesar was also popular for working to bring the remaining supporters of Sulla to justice.
- e) Finally, Caesar made sure to befriend Crassus so that he could influence him when Pompey returned.

### 2. The First Triumvirate (60 – 53 BC)

- a) When Pompey returned from the East, he had not only defeated Mithradates, but also conquered Syria, Phoenicia, and Judea (today Israel). His triumph was the most spectacular of any Roman general in history.
- b) Caesar acted as the mediator between Pompey and Crassus to guide them into a new alliance. Only this time it included him!
- c) Caesar was thus the architect of the First Triumvirate, a temporary political alliance between himself, Pompey, and Crassus. The alliance was designed to keep the peace, and to allow the three men to rule Rome together.

### 3. Conquest of Gaul (58 - 51 BC)

- a) As part of the initial bargain, Pompey and Crassus helped Caesar to become consul in 59 BC.
- b) During his term, he also secured the command of Roman forces in Gaul for a five year period to follow.
- c) Then, in 58 BC, Caesar began the conquest of the remainder of Gaul. (Cisalpine Gaul – Gaul on the Italian side of the Alps – was already in Roman hands. Transalpine Gaul – Gaul across the Alps – was only partly in Roman hands. Caesar conquered the remainder in its entirety.)
- d) In 52 BC, the Gallic hero Vercingetorix, was forced to submit to Rome's authority once and for all.

- e) The Romanization of Gaul by Caesar transformed its history. Gaul, which later became France, has culture, language and history that show Rome's influence, compared to Germany, which was not Romanized.

#### 4. Alea Jacta Est!

- a) With a vast and populous province at his disposal and loyal legions under his personal command, Caesar was now able to rival Crassus and Pompey independently and take power for himself.
- b) Crassus felt threatened by Caesar's growing power, and decided to campaign with the Roman army in Mesopotamia. There his army was ruined and he himself was killed, leaving only Pompey against Caesar.
- c) The Roman senate ordered Caesar to disband his army and return to Rome as a private citizen. Instead he led his army across the stream called the Rubicon, which separated Gaul from the Roman homeland.
- d) This amounted to a declaration of war against the Roman state.
- e) As he crossed the stream, Caesar pronounced the words "Alea iacta est!" -- "The die is cast." He was making himself an outlaw, and he was committed to an ambitious plan of action whose outcome was uncertain. There was no turning back.