

NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

CAESAR AND THE PIRATES

Three important sources date the famous episode of Caesar's capture by pirates and his subsequent punishment of them to the time of his trip to Rhodes in 75/74 B.C. (Vell. Pat. 2. 42. 3; Suet. *Iul.* 4. 1–2; Aur. Vict. *De vir. ill.* 78).¹ Most modern historians have followed their lead.² Two other ancient sources, however, preserve a tradition in which this episode occurs considerably earlier. Plutarch (*Caes.* 2. 4) has the pirates capture Caesar as he returned, probably in 80, from a stay with King Nicomedes of Bithynia. Polyaeus (*Strat.* 8. 23. 1), on the other hand, places the episode in 81, while Caesar was en route to Nicomedes to procure a fleet for his commander, Minucius Thermus. This date is preferable to either of the others for the following reasons.³

First of all, Plutarch says that Caesar handed the pirates over to a certain Junius. The assumption is that this man is the M. Junius Juncus who was governor of both Asia and Bithynia in 75, and Velleius Paterculus so identifies him (2. 42. 3).⁴ Actually, Plutarch is probably referring to M. Junius Silanus. He had served as a legate or proquaestor under L. Licinius Murena and had returned to Rome with Murena to participate in his triumph in late 82 or early 81.⁵ Later in the year 81 he seems to have returned to Asia under the new governor,

M. Minucius Thermus (Cic. *Quinct.* 3), who wanted an experienced staff to help carry on military operations there.⁶

There is no difficulty in supposing that Julius Caesar handed over the captured pirates to M. Junius Silanus for punishment in Pergamum, while he himself went on to fulfill his mission to Nicomedes. Just as Thermus left the field command of the siege of Mytilene in the hands of Lucullus, he had probably also left many administrative affairs in the hands of M. Junius Silanus at Pergamum, while he attended to other business.

It is easy now to see how a source common to Velleius Paterculus, Suetonius, and Aurelius Victor consciously or unconsciously confused the date of Caesar's capture by the pirates.⁷ In 81, Caesar was on official business in Bithynia; and M. Junius Silanus was probably an important Roman official at Pergamum, the provincial capital of Asia. In 75/74 M. Junius Juncus was governor of both Bithynia and Asia. The year 75/74 would not have been a difficult or unnatural date for an incident that involved mention of Bithynia and of Caesar's dealings with a certain M. Junius in the capital of Asia.

One might argue that Plutarch's date of 80 also has merit because there is no evidence that M. Junius Silanus could not have remained at Pergamum for a second year.

1. Valerius Maximus (6. 9. 15) and Fenestella (*GLK*, I, 365; Peter, *HR Rel.*, II, 87, Frag. 30) give no date.

2. E.g., Drumann-Groebe, III (Berlin-Leipzig, 1906), 130–31, n. 1; P. Groebe, s.v. "Iulius (131)," *RE*, X (1918), 188; T. Rice Holmes, *The Roman Republic*, I (Oxford, 1923), 223; M. Gelzer, *Caesar*⁶ (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 23–24; M. Grant, *Julius Caesar* (New York, 1969), p. 28.

3. L. Herrmann argued for the acceptance of Polyaeus' date on the ground that his account was more creditable on all other points than the rest; "Deux épisodes de la vie de César," *RBPh*, XVI (1937), 577–86. As will be shown below, however, Polyaeus is open to considerable criticism on other points.

4. Cf. Broughton, *MRR*, II, 98, 100, n. 6.

5. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 64, 69, and 77.

6. Cicero simply refers to the *legatio nova* of a certain M. Junius. The use of the word *nova*, however, implies a previous legateship, and Cicero's later references to M. Junius Brutus

rule out identification of him with the M. Junius of the previous passage (*Quinct.* 65 and 69). Moreover, evidence for Thermus' use of Murena's staff can be seen in the case of L. Licinius Lucullus, who served under both (*MRR*, II, 77). Therefore, it seems reasonable to interpret Cicero's mentioning of the new legateship of M. Junius as a reference to the re-assignment of M. Junius Silanus to Asia as a legate of the new governor, Thermus.

7. One reason for consciously changing the date of this incident to 75/74 could have been propagandistic: to portray Caesar as a man who never let any inconvenient lack of legal authority prevent him from taking military action when he wanted to. In that case, 75/74 was the earliest possible time to which his punishment of the pirates could have been dated. In all the other years from 81 on, he was either conspicuously present at Rome or away on official duties by virtue of which he had some legal authority to act as he did.

That argument must be rejected, however. Caesar went to Nicomedes not, as Plutarch claims, to flee Sulla, but to procure a fleet for his commander Minucius Thermus (Suet. *Iul.* 2). It is not likely that the pirates would have captured him as he was returning in force with a fleet in 80, but rather as he set out on his mission to Bithynia in 81.⁸

Although Polyaeus appears to have preserved the most accurate account of the date and circumstances of Caesar's capture by pirates, Plutarch offers the best version of how he later defeated and punished his captors. Polyaeus claims that, upon handing over ransom money to the pirates at Miletus, Caesar gave a banquet for them and drugged their wine. When they subsequently fell asleep, he and his companions killed them all with swords that they had smuggled into the pirate camp along with the food and money (*Strat.* 8. 23. 1). Plutarch says that Caesar procured some local ships and captured the pirates in a battle off the island of Pharmacusa, where they had held him, near Miletus. He further reports that Caesar took the captive pirates to Pergamum in Asia where he eventually had them crucified (*Caes.* 2. 3–4).

Plutarch seems to be preferable to Polyaeus on these points. Suetonius (*Iul.* 4. 1) and Valerius Maximus (6. 9. 15) both connect Caesar's capture with the island of Pharma-

cusa. Although Polyaeus was probably correct that Caesar was captured off the island of Lesbos, where his commander Minucius Thermus was besieging Mytilene (*Strat.* 8. 23. 1), Caesar may well have been held on an island named Pharmacusa, as Plutarch claimed. This name, which is closely related to the verb *φαρμακώ* (to drug), could easily have suggested the stealthy stratagem that Polyaeus attributed to Caesar. Polyaeus is fond of using drugged wine as an example of a crafty trick (5. 10. 1 and 6. 3–7. 43). One can easily imagine how the story suggested itself to him when he read of the island of Pharmacusa in connection with Caesar and the pirates.⁹

Plutarch's report that Caesar took the captive pirates all the way from Pharmacusa to Pergamum for crucifixion also makes good sense.¹⁰ Pergamum was the capital of the province and was within easy communication of Mytilene, where Caesar's superior was overseeing a siege. It would have been appropriate for Caesar to have brought his captives there for proper punishment, while he set about to fulfill the mission which Minucius Thermus had assigned him and which the pirates had so rudely interrupted.¹¹

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8. One might also wish to argue that Caesar's adventure with the pirates is more likely to have happened when he was involved in campaigns aimed directly at them in 78 or again in 73. After participating in Thermus' triumph, he had returned to the East in 78 under P. Servilius Isauricus on a campaign against Cilician pirates. He did not stay long enough, however, to have become involved in an incident such as the one under discussion (Suet. *Iul.* 3). In 73 he served on the staff of M. Antonius Creticus during another pirate war. Again, however, his service lasted too short a time for an episode such as this one to have occurred, since he returned to Rome upon hearing of his co-optation into the college of pontiffs (Vell. Pat. 2. 43. 1). Cf. *MRR*, II, 113, 115, n. 6.

9. Cf. J. Melber, "Ueber die Quellen und den Wert der

Stratagemensammlung Polyäns: Ein Beitrag zur griechische Historiographie," *Jahrbücher für klass. Philologie*, Suppl. XIV (1885–86), 674–81. Herrmann (n. 3), p. 585, is correct in arguing that, just because the trick was used by others before Caesar, it does not mean that Caesar could not have used it. Nevertheless, the nature of the name Pharmacusa makes the story too pat in this case.

10. Crucifixion is the punishment mentioned by all other sources that specify the punishment (Vell. Pat. 2. 42. 3; Suet. *Iul.* 74; Val. Max. 6. 9. 15; Aur. Vict. *De vir. ill.* 78).

11. I should like to thank Professor Thomas A. Suits of the University of Connecticut and Professor William C. McDermott of the University of Pennsylvania for several helpful comments and suggestions.

ON SEPARATING THE SOCRATIC FROM THE PLATONIC IN *PHAEDO* 118

It may be expecting too much of human nature to hope that any scholarly controversy of this sort will ever be settled, but I would like to point out an important but frequently

neglected distinction in order to clarify a perennial issue which revives whenever the last part of Plato's *Phaedo* is discussed in print. The passage in question reads: