

XXX. Cicero and the *Ager campanus*

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Not long ago, Mr. Balsdon argued very forcefully¹ that the version of the attack on the *lex Campana* early in 56 which Cicero set out in his famous letter to Spinther in 54 (*Fam.* 1.9; TP 153; How 25) is a fraud. So far, indeed, from Cicero's having taken the prominent part which he assigns to himself in that letter, "we may reasonably doubt whether he spoke at all in the debate on 5th. April".

Balsdon rests his case on the evidence of two contemporary letters which Marcus Cicero wrote to his brother Quintus in 56. In the earlier of them (*QFr* 2.5.1; TP 106), he wrote on 8 April: "Eodem die (*sc.* 5 April) vehementer actum de agro Campano clamore senatus prope contionali. Acriorem causam inopia pecuniae faciebat et annonae caritas." Certainly, we have here no hint of any leading part played by Cicero. Later on (after 15 May, the day for which, he told Spinther, he had himself proposed a formal debate on the *ager Campanus* at a *frequens senatus*) he again writes to Quintus (*QFr* 2.6.2; TP 117): "Ante quod idibus et postridie fuerat dictum de agro Campano actum iri, non est actum. In hac causa mihi aqua haeret." "That is all," says Balsdon. (In fact, it is not all, as we shall see later.)

Balsdon sums up thus:

Where Cicero's description of his own doings is concerned, evidence from silence is very strong evidence indeed; so we may reasonably doubt whether he spoke at all in the debate on 5th. April.^{1a} He was evidently proposing to speak on 15th. May, and out of this single fact he has constructed, after an interval of over two years, an episode far more heroic than in fact it ever was. Historians are

¹ *JRS* 47 (1957) 18–20.

In referring to Cicero's correspondence, I have added the numeration of Tyrrell and Purser's edition (*The Correspondence of Cicero* [Dublin 1885–1933]) and, where applicable, that of How's selection (*Cicero Select Letters* [Oxford 1925]). They are cited as **TP** and **How**.

^{1a} On this point, see below, note 15.

credulous indeed who, against the contemporary evidence of his letters to Quintus, take the later evidence of *Ad Fam.* 1.9 *au pied de la lettre*.

I will begin at once by agreeing that the letter to Spinther is Cicero's "*apologia pro vita recenti sua*," his explanation, that is, of how he had come to let Spinther down over the Egyptian appointment, and why he had come to terms with the dynasts. We must handle such a letter very carefully indeed, bearing in mind that Cicero will seek to present his actions in the most favorable light possible. We must be on the watch for embroidery, for exaggeration, for that *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi* of which Cicero is the supreme master, for downright lies, even—if Cicero thought he could get away with them. But here we come to the nub of the question: could Cicero have hoped to get away with serious distortions or downright lies in this letter?

To me it seems that a historian "must be credulous indeed" if he can for one moment believe either that Spinther would be likely to swallow the whopping lies that Balsdon has Cicero tell him, or that Cicero could ever have dreamed that he would swallow them. And yet, if Cicero was flagrantly lying, and Spinther knew it, the whole object of the letter would be destroyed. Spinther would know him for a liar, and refuse credence to any of the items in the letter which he could not check. Cicero was not such a fool as that! One of the master propagandists and moulders of opinion in history is far beyond such clumsiness. Balsdon—so it seems to me—has fallen into the trap of supposing that Spinther was dependent on the same sources of evidence as we ourselves are. "Had Spinther (or any other reader)," he writes, "had no other evidence in front of him..." But, of course, Spinther had.

It is important to notice that Cicero's statements in his letter to Spinther are in no way evasive or equivocal; there is no blurring at the edges. He attacked (he says) the *acta* of 59 at the trial of Sestius; he cut Vatinius "to ribbons"; he followed up with other attacks on the dynasts (*Fam.* 1.9.7). Then came his proposal about the *ager Campanus* on 5 April, 56: "Mihi est senatus adensus..."; "hac a me sententia dicta..."; "hoc senatus consulto in meam sententiam facto..." (*ibid.* §§8–9). He says it three times over, and his words have only one, and that a very precise, meaning: "This *senatusconsultum* (*sc.* to discuss the *ager Campanus*

in a *frequens senatus* on 15 May, 56) having been passed on my motion." It is a statement of fact, which must be either true or false: there is no halfway house.²

Can we suppose that Spinther did not or could not know whether it was true or false? Spinther was an ex-consul. Like Cicero himself while he was away in Cilicia in 51–50, like any other Roman of importance, he took steps to see to it that while he was away from the capital he should be kept well informed about what was going on. We must bear in mind, also, that Spinther had a peculiarly lively interest in affairs at Rome at this time, thanks to his ambitions in the Egyptian direction. He would be sent copies of the *acta diurna*, as Cicero was while in Cilicia,³ and they contained information about, among other things, *senatusconsulta* and who proposed them.⁴ And this intelligence would be supplemented by letters from intimates and others specially told off for this task. We could safely state all this *a priori*, if necessary. But it is not necessary. We need only turn to *Fam.* 1.5^b (TP 103) of February 56, and in the very first line we read: "Hic quae aguntur quaeque acta sunt, ea te et litteris multorum et nuntiis cognosse arbitror." Cicero's part was only to add the cream of speculation from an informed source: "Quae autem posita sunt in coniectura quaeque videntur fore, ea puto tibi a me scribi oportere." Or take the letter immediately following (*Fam.* 1.6; TP 104. February 56): "Quae gerantur", it begins, "accipies a Pollione, qui omnibus negotiis non interfuit solum sed praefuit."

So we can see that Spinther must have known whether the statements which Cicero makes so plainly in his letter of 54 were true or false. And so we know that it is true that Cicero did make the proposal which he said he made on 5 April, 56, for Spinther would not have forgotten something as striking as that (or, if he had, could easily have checked). As I have said, Cicero was no fool in these matters, and the whole point of the letter, this *apologia*, would have been utterly ruined by a blatant and immense lie.

² For a precisely parallel use of the same technical phrase, cf. *Att.* 4.1.6 (TP 90; How 15) on Cicero's proposal that a *cura annonae* be offered to Pompey, the veracity of which has never been questioned: "Factum est senatus consultum in meam sententiam ut cum Pompeio ageretur... lexque ferretur."

³ Cf., for example, *Att.* 6.2.6 (TP 256; How 36): "Habebam acta diurna usque ad nonas Martias; e quibus intellegebam Curionis nostri constantia omnia potius actum iri quam de provinciis."

⁴ Cf. preceding note, and How's note *ad loc.*

Oddly enough, however (in the light of Balsdon's article), we find that the contemporary correspondence of 56, far from disproving the reliability of Cicero's statements in the 54 letter, actually confirms them—and sometimes in matters which the historian (or even the friend and contemporary) can seldom hope to be sure about. This chance to poke about in usually secret corners is one of the abiding delights and glories of Cicero's letters; and it is pleasant to find it exemplified here.

The first reference to the Campanian issue comes in a letter written to Quintus Cicero in December, 57 (*QFr.* 2.1; TP 93). We learn here that the question was first raised by the new Pompeian *tribunus plebis* P. Rutilius Rufus, soon to be found pressing Pompey's claims to the Egyptian appointment. It is worth quoting extensively:

Sane frequentes fuimus: omnino ad ducentos. Commorat expectationem Lupus. Egit causam agri Campani sane accurate. Auditus est magno silentio. Materiam rei non ignoras. Nihil ex nostris actionibus praetermisit. Fuerunt non nulli aculei in Caesarem, contumeliae in Gellium, expostulationes cum absente Pompeio. Causa sero perorata sententias se rogaturum negavit, ne quod onus simultatis nobis imponeret: ex superiorum temporum conviciis et ex praesenti silentio quid senatus sentiret se intellegere. Dixit Milo (at this time also a supporter of Pompey). Coepit dimittere. Tum Marcellinus (consul designate): "Noli" inquit "ex taciturnitate nostra, Lupe, quid aut probemus hoc tempore aut improbemus iudicare. Ego, quod ad me attinet itemque arbitror ceteros, idcirco taceo quod non existimo, cum Pompeius absit, causam agri Campani agi convenire." Tum ille se senatum negavit tenere.

The initiative in this matter came then from a known adherent of Pompey. A speech, apparently in support, was made by Milo, certainly working with Pompey at this time. And the consul designate, Marcellinus, professing to speak also for his fellow senators, held that the attitude of Pompey was crucial and that the matter ought not to be discussed in his absence. It seems, in fact, that, as Cary suggested,⁵ Pompey was "flying a kite" to test senatorial reactions. So, when we find Cicero in 54 telling Spinther that he (Cicero) had had no reason to suspect that Pompey was perturbed by his raising the question of the Campanian land on 5 April, 56 ("Nam hoc senatus consulto in meam

⁵ M. Cary *CQ* 17 (1923) 107, note 1.

sententiam facto Pompeius cum mihi nihil ostendisset se esse offensum," *Fam.* 1.9.9), a statement which we should not normally be able to check since it relates to Cicero's personal opinion, the facts support him.

Happily, we can do even better than that. Early in the morning, *ante lucem*, of 8 April, 56, little more than 48 hours after he had made his Campanian proposal in the Senate, Cicero wrote to his brother to tell him of a meeting he had had with Pompey the previous evening (*QFr.* 2.5.3; TP 106):

Eo die (*sc.* 7 April) cenavi apud Crassipedem. Cenatus in hortos ad Pompeium lectica latus sum. Luci eum convenire non poteram quod abfuerat. Videre autem volebam quod eram postridie Roma exiturus et quod ille in Sardiniam iter habebat. Hominem conveni et ab eo petivi ut quam primum te nobis redderet. Statim, dixit. Erat autem iturus, ut aiebat, a.d. III Id. Apr. (11 April) ut aut Labrone aut Pisis conscenderet. Tu, mi frater, simul et ille venerit, primam navigationem, dummodo idonea tempestas sit, ne omiseris.

There can be no doubt that, coming barely two days after Cicero's proposal in the Senate, this friendly chat which Cicero retails to his brother "hot from the press" abundantly confirms the words of the letter to Spinther quoted above: "Pompeius . . . mihi nihil ostendisset se esse offensum."

I should therefore claim that we can rely on it that Cicero did, on 5 April, 56, secure on his own motion a decree of the Senate that the Campanian land be discussed *frequenti senatu*⁶ on 15 May; that he believed that his action was not unwelcome to Pompey; and that Pompey gave him no hint that he was in any way put out.

Of course, we must ask why there is so curt a reference to the Campanian proposal in the contemporary letters to Quintus, especially in *QFr.* 2.5. Here we have to guess, to suggest possible explanations. This is by no means difficult. But I should

⁶ I should agree with Balsdon (above, note 1) 19–20 that the reason for the "frequens senatus" of 15 May was probably that Gabinius' application for a *supplicatio* was on the agenda for that meeting and that it was this that required a quorum of (probably 200) senators. Or it may have been a stated quorum meeting. But this does not prove Cicero a liar. Since Latin lacks a definite and an indefinite article, we may as easily translate "at the full meeting on 15 May" as "at a full meeting on 15 May." I assume that Cicero moved ("in meam sententiam"), and the Senate accepted, a motion that the *ager Campanus* be put on the agenda for discussion at the (already announced) *frequens senatus* of 15 May.

none the less maintain that, in view of the arguments already advanced, whether or not we find the answer to this question makes no difference to the fact that Cicero *did* make his proposal on 5 April.

To begin with, we ought not to fail to notice that there is a gap in the correspondence with Quintus at this time. Like Balsdon, I am no despiser of the *argumentum ex silentio*; but it cannot be deployed when there are gaps in our evidence. In *QFr.* 2.5 we have this curt reference to the proceedings in the Senate on 5 April: "Sed eodem die vehementer actum de agro Campano clamore senatus prope contionali etc."—which certainly suggests that Quintus knows what Marcus is talking about, perhaps even that Marcus had said something about it earlier. And in fact we do know that there was an immediately preceding letter which has not come down to us. In the first section of *QFr.* 2.5 we read: "Dederam ad te litteras antea, quibus erat scriptum Tulliam nostram pridie [? Non.] April. esse desponsatam." But in the preceding surviving letter in the collection (*QFr.* 2.4.2; TP 105; How 25) we have only: "De nostra Tullia . . . spero cum Crassipede nos confecisse"—i.e., the betrothal was not yet quite certain, and no date is mentioned. It follows that between these two letters of late March and 8 April, 56, there must have been another letter to Quintus announcing the fact and date of Tullia's betrothal.⁷ It could easily be that the same missing letter had something more to say of the Campanian business and of Cicero's intentions in that matter.

Secondly, it is important to remember that *QFr.* 2.5 was dashed off in a hurry before daybreak on 8 April, because Cicero was just on the point of leaving Rome that morning on a round of traveling which would make writing difficult, and he wanted to lose no time in telling Quintus about Pompey's imminent arrival in Sardinia and his promise the previous evening to send Quintus home the moment he arrived. The letter is mainly brief family chat. Cicero had no time to write much, and the letter would be sent off quickly by the first available messenger, whoever he was.

⁷ It is true that the manuscript tradition has muddled the sequence of the *QFr.* text in this area. But (a) there is general agreement about how to unravel the tangle; and (b) in any case it does not affect the present argument, which simply points out that nowhere in the extant text of these letters is there to be found this earlier letter giving both the fact and the date of Tullia's betrothal to Crassipes, although we know that one was written: "Dederam ad te litteras antea, etc.".

In the circumstances, he could not entrust confidential political matters to a letter not carried by a thoroughly reliable messenger. This difficulty of finding a reliable letter-carrier was a perennial one, and Cicero alludes to it frequently in his correspondence.⁸

Thirdly, what of the other letter to Quintus adduced by Balsdon (*QFr.* 2.6; TP 117)? Marcus has learned that Quintus is now on his way home. Quintus has written: "Let us leave things until we can talk them over in private"—"Sed cetera, ut scribis, praesenti sermoni reserventur." Agreed, says Marcus; but I must tell you about how Gabinius was done in the eye. Then on he goes: "The previous arrangement for the discussion of the Campanian land has fallen through. I am in a proper fix about it. But my pen is running away with me: let us wait until we are together"—"Ante quod idibus et postridie fuerat dictum de agro Campano actum iri, non est actum. In hac causa mihi aqua haeret. Sed plura quam constitueram: coram enim."

There is then more to this letter than Balsdon's summary dismissal of it would allow. In the first place, it is confessedly brief and elliptical, for reasons of security. In the second place, Cicero admits he had got into "a proper fix." (Why he could not have been rather more open about what Balsdon thinks was the truth I cannot see.) As Cicero wrote to Atticus not long after Lucca (*Att.* 4.5.3; TP 108; How 21): "Scio me asinum germanum

⁸ *Att.* 1.13.1 (TP 19; How 4): "Sed idcirco sum tardior, quod non invenio fidelem tabellarium. Quotus enim quisque est qui epistulam paulo graviorem ferre possit nisi eam pellectione relevavit?" *Att.* 4.1.1. (TP 90; How 15): "Cum primum Romam veni fuitque cui recte ad te litteras darem." *Fam.* 1.7 (TP 114): "Quod si rarius fiet quam tu (Spinther) expectabis, id erit causae quod non eius generis meae litterae sunt ut eas audeam temere committere. Quotiens mihi certorum hominum potestas erit, quibus recte dem, non praetermittam." The last example (of July 56) is particularly interesting. For apart from the possibility of a missing letter to Quintus, it could be that Cicero was deliberately keeping his brother in the dark in order not to worry him. Quintus had gone bail to Caesar and Pompey for Marcus' good behavior—"quod mihi pro illo spopondisti"—and might be frightened to death to hear what Cicero was intending to get up to, or had got up to, over the Campanian land—especially so if what lay behind his action was too confidential to commit to a letter "temere." Cicero's proposal on 5 April may have been a spur of the moment move, and the reasons not to be set out in a hurried note sent off by the first available messenger (who could not be relied on not to lighten the burden by reading what it said).

On the whole, since Quintus was bound to read about it before long in the *acta diurna* (which I take it he received regularly), I prefer not to think that Quintus was being kept in the dark *tout court*, but only that there were some things which could not be discussed or explained in a hurried and insecure letter.

fuisse." And how had he got into this position? By making two miscalculations.

Early in 56, impressed by the growing evidence of dissension among the dynasts, Cicero began to wax bold in his denunciations of the doings of 59. Writing to his brother in February (*QFr.* 2.3.3; TP 102; How 19), he tells him of the incident in the Senate on 8 February when Pompey as good as openly accused Crassus of plotting his assassination: "Crassumque descripsit dixitque aperte se munitiorem ad custodiendam vitam suam fore quam Africanus fuisset quem C. Carbo interemisset." This incident occurred shortly after the notorious crowd scene when Clodius had led the chant of "Down with Pompey! Up with Crassus!" This had happened on 6 February, and had ended up with a free fight between the rival gangs of Clodius and Milo (*ibid.* §2). A meeting of the Senate was summoned the next day, at the temple of Apollo outside the *pomerium* in order that Pompey (who being *cum imperio* in virtue of his *cura annonae* might not cross the *pomerium*) might be present. Pompey made a considerable impression: "Acta res est graviter a Pompeio" (*ibid.* §3). Next day (8 February) the Senate decreed that the incidents of 6 February "contra rem publicam esse facta." Gaius Cato, a supporter of Crassus ("a Crasso sustentari") "vehementer est in Pompeium invectus et eum oratione perpetua tamquam reum accusavit" (*ibid.* §§3-4). Cato was also concerned (interesting, this) to drive a wedge between Cicero and Pompey by lauding Cicero and harping on the *perfidia* of Pompey to Cicero. It was at this juncture that Pompey got to his feet and weighed in against Crassus; then, after the meeting was over, Pompey took Cicero aside and told him privately that his life was being plotted against, that Crassus was backing Gaius Cato and Clodius, and that working along with Crassus were Curio, Bibulus, and all his other *obtrectatores*. His position was very awkward: the *contionarius populus* was pretty well hostile to him, the *nobilitas* was *inimica*, the Senate was against him, the young bloods were in a restless mood. Understandably, Pompey began to summon reinforcements of men from his own barony, Picenum and the ager Gallicus (*ibid.*).

Let us at this point pause and remind ourselves that these are *facts*; these are things that actually happened. There is no question of invention on Cicero's part; he is simply telling his brother what was all (save for the private conversation with

Pompey, which there is no slightest reason to doubt and which is in perfect harmony with the rest) public knowledge at Rome. It is easy to see why Cicero should conclude by saying: "Itaque magnae mihi res iam moveri videbantur." Things were warming up nicely. Ever since 59 Cicero had held that the one hope for the opposition lay in a quarrel between the "Big Three" themselves—"una spes est salutis istorum inter istos dissensio" (*Att.* 2.7.3; TP 34. April 59). Now it seemed that the long-awaited clash was imminent.

Late in February 56 Cicero's advocacy secured the acquittal of his friend and Pompey's, Sestius. In the course of that trial Cicero had cut the prosecution witness Vatinius, Caesar's old tribune of 59, to ribbons, just as he chose: "arbitratu nostro concidimus" (*QFr.* 2.4.1; TP 105; How 20).

Next in temporal reference, though not in order of writing, comes the famous letter of 54 to Spinther. Again here we find a reference to the trial of Sestius and Pompey's support of him (§7) and the clash with Vatinius. In the course of the trial, with Pompey sitting there in court listening ("sedente Pompeio"), Cicero attacked the legislation of 59: "in quo omnia dicta sunt libertate animoque maximo de vi, de auspiciis, de donatione regnorum" (*ibid.*).⁹ And Cicero pursued the same line in the Senate, too: "neque vero hac in causa modo, sed constanter saepe in senatu" (*ibid.*). Finally, to cap it all, came his motion on 5 April on the Campanian land (§8). Pompey gave no sign of displeasure. Indeed we saw him two days later having his pleasant after-dinner chat with Cicero in his surburban villa.

Crassus and Caesar, however, grew alarmed. Pompey was making no move to restrain Cicero. An attack on the *ager Campanus* would easily be followed by an attack on Caesar's command in Gaul.¹⁰ And Suetonius tells us that the immensely formidable optimate candidate for the consulship of 55 (just how formidable is shown by the fact that in the end the dynasts had

⁹ Cf. the *In Vatinium*, *passim*.

¹⁰ What the precise proposals were at this time about the Campanian land nobody tells us, and there is not much to help us to guess. All that is clear is that they were likely to affect Caesar adversely, but not Pompey. On the whole, I find the conclusions of M. Cary in *CQ* 17 (1923) 103 f. very attractive; although I cannot accept Cary's point, that the "palinode" is evidence for Cicero's having raised the discussion of the *ager Campanus*, as at all cogent. There were plenty of other things which could account for the "palinode," e.g. his outspokenness at the trial of Sestius and elsewhere.

to field their first team of Pompey and Crassus to keep him out) L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, was going around promising that if elected he would work to secure Caesar's recall.¹¹ All this had to be stopped; the breach between Pompey and Crassus healed; Cicero and Domitius dealt with. Pompey went off to Lucca and came away from the conference a satisfied man. He at once told Cicero to hold his fire: "Pompeius ad me cum mandatis Vibullium misisset, ut integrum mihi de causa Campana ad suum reditum reservarem" (*Fam.* 1.9.10).

Pompey is far too often represented as a stupid man, lacking in political finesse, blundering about in the delicate maze of Roman politics like a powerful but clumsy carthorse. This view should be rejected. The man whose early years were marked by one of the most meteoric rises in history, whose capacity for changing horses at the right moment was so highly developed, who showed such surpassing powers of organization in his great commands, who outmaneuvered Caesar in the late fifties and forced him into a position where he had no option but to capitulate or fight with the odds heavily against him—this man was not stupid. We have to remember that for the first fifteen or so years of his career he had little opposition of his own calibre in his own field, particularly after 71 as a *popularis*. But by the late sixties and early fifties other men, too young to have been involved in the massacres of the eighties, were beginning to challenge him. It is not that Pompey suddenly loses his touch; life has become more difficult, the need for caution and maneuver more pressing.

It cannot be contested that Pompey came away from Lucca better off than he arrived.¹² He could now look forward to a second consulship and (in addition to his *cura annonae*) a five year command in Spain with the right to govern it in absence *per legatos*. It is scarcely plausible that Caesar and Crassus should have

¹¹ *Divus Julius* 24: "Sed cum Lucius Domitius consulatus candidatus palam minaretur consulem se...adempturum...ei exercitus, Crassum Pompeiumque in urbem provinciae suae Lucam extractos conpult (Caesar) ut detrudendi Domitii causa consulatum alterum peterent, perfecitque per utrumque ut in quinquennium sibi imperium prorogaretur." Of course, the fact that Suetonius does not mention Cicero and his Campanian proposal as a factor in the situation does not prove that it was not. One cannot argue from the silence of Suetonius on such matters.

¹² It is not necessary to argue here whether all these and other details were cut and dried at Lucca. I use "Lucca" as a shorthand term to cover not only the cementing of the triumvirate on the occasion of the meeting there but also the consequences that flowed, or were soon to flow, from it.

conceded this much to Pompey for the sake of his beautiful blue eyes, as How so foolishly suggested.¹³ We can rely on it that there must have been a substantial *pro quo* to match this *quid*. And what else can it have been but the assurance that Pompey would stop being awkward and line up squarely with Caesar to face the dangers that threatened? Can it possibly have been that it was only when Caesar and Crassus pointed it out to him at Lucca that Pompey woke up to the fact that Cicero was misbehaving? That Pompey was unaware that Cicero thought he did not disapprove? Yet it was not until after he came away from Lucca that he shut Cicero up.

Caesar's basic difficulty throughout was that he had been compelled to commit breaches of the law while carrying through his program in 59. That was one of the reasons why he had needed Pompey's support and the threat of Pompey's forceful intervention on his side. The consequence was that, if the balance of forces should shift, Caesar would be in a dangerous position, liable to recall and prosecution on the grounds that his measures and those of his associates had been passed *per vim, contra auspicia*, etc. So long as the dynasts were united, this was nothing to worry about; but if they should fall out, the cat would indeed be among the pigeons. Pompey could not be expected to go on backing Caesar forever if there was nothing in it for Pompey. Already in 58 serious differences were apparent: Pompey working to get Cicero back, Clodius blocking, backed by Crassus. In 57 opposition continued, until at last Caesar agreed to Cicero's recall on the understanding that he would behave himself. Even then, the centuriate assembly was used to vote Cicero's recall, presumably because even with Caesar's agreement the activities of Clodius and others made the more popular tribal assemblies unreliable. By the autumn of 57 Crassus and Pompey were openly in conflict, with Clodius, Gaius Cato, Gellius, Milo, Lupus and the rest all gaily joining in the *mêlée*. Little was left holding the partnership together but Pompey's marriage to Julia, which could hardly be a lasting or a sufficient bond if Pompey felt that his reasonable expectations were not being met. Pompey's needs of a few years earlier had been met: his eastern *acta* had been in operation *de facto* since 62 at latest, and *de jure* since 59;

¹³ How (above, note 1) (2, *Commentary* 151-52): "To his embarrassed and discredited rival (Caesar) granted most generous terms."

by late 57 there was little fear that that particular omelette would be unscrambled. By now, too, his veterans must have been settled, and no one was likely to be so rash as to try to turn them off their land. So it emerges that Pompey's interest in defending the *acta* of 59 was very thin, while his desire to secure a great command, and the prestige, patronage, power and wealth that went with it is very obvious.

The Senate once again proved obstinate. Possibly here lies the key to the behavior of Clodius and Crassus. The *boni* neither liked nor trusted Pompey; some of them, like Lucullus and Hortensius, were prepared to go to almost any lengths in their virulent hatred of him. Before the *boni* could be got to accept Pompey at this own valuation, they had to be convinced that they had no other choice—as in 52 and after. They could accept him only as a lesser evil. If the price of defeating Caesar and his dangerous programs was to accept Pompey, if there was no other way out, they could screw themselves to it. But if they believed that the triumvirate was breaking up, or had broken up, spontaneously, they would feel no incentive to overcome their hatred or distrust or dislike of Pompey and pay a fancy price for winning his support. It is impossible to say that this is what Crassus had in mind in behaving as he did, that is, that he was deliberately taking a calculated risk and seeking to anticipate any possible deal between Pompey and the Senate. But I should venture that it is at least as likely as that he simply lost his head and allowed his personal detestation of Pompey to blind him to other considerations. But, however that may be, the unseemly squabbles over the *cura annonae* and the Egyptian commission demonstrate clearly that there was no question of the triumvirate being still in business as a smoothly running and tidily organized syndicate. When it is back in business, after Lucca, things are managed better than this.

Whatever his motives, Crassus was playing a dangerous game. He may have thought he had no alternative. But Pompey was in a very strong position. If Crassus chose to play rough, Pompey did not have to cave in: he could play the same game, even go one better. His reply was to turn to the offensive, attack Crassus and his associates openly, summon reinforcements from the country. Everyone gets excited, Cicero included, and with good reason. The triumvirate is gone, and the hunt is after Caesar.

Caesar is alarmed: Pompey must be won back. He is invited to confer with Caesar and Crassus at Lucca. One assumes that there was some hard bargaining, but Pompey held very strong cards. His demands were met. Egypt was left to fade out of sight; Pompey got a fine long command in Spain, Crassus in Syria.

Such, then, was Cicero's first miscalculation. He thought that the triumvirate had broken beyond repair, and so to all outward seeming it had.¹⁴ He was used by Pompey, and dropped by Pompey when it suited that artful politician. He had not allowed enough for the flexibility and organizing talents of Caesar, who was quick to see the danger, bow to the inevitable, and arrange terms with Pompey. When Pompey did at last reach Quintus in Sardinia after his detour to Lucca, his mood had changed somewhat from that of the after-dinner chat at Rome. "Tell Marcus he must behave himself," he said: "nisi cum Marco fratre diligenter egeris, dependendum tibi est quod mihi pro illo spondisti" (*Fam.* 1.9.9).

Cicero's other big mistake was to place too much reliance on the *boni*. They had let him down: "senseram, noram, inductus relictus proiectus ab iis," he says in the "asinus germanus" letter (*Att.* 4.5.1; TP 108; How 21). Their walls had come tumbling down at the first blast of the trumpets from Lucca, and Cicero was left alone. When the Ides of May came, the Campanian debate passed by default: Cicero did not even attend the meeting of the Senate—"Id. Maii senatus frequens...me absente" (*QFr.* 2.6; TP 117). The letters written after Lucca are rich in recriminations, and Cicero's general attitude is well summed up in a letter written to Spinther in July, 56 (*Fam.* 1.7.10; TP 114):

Quod scribis te velle scire qui sit rei publicae status, summa dissensio est, set contentio dispar. Nam qui plus opibus, armis, potentia valent, perfecisse tamen mihi videntur stultitia et inconstantia adversariorum ut etiam auctoritate plus valerent. Itaque perpaucis adversantibus omnia quae ne per populum quidem sine seditione se adsequi arbitrabantur per senatum consecuti sunt: nam et stipendium Caesari decretum est et decem legati et ne lege Sempronia succederetur facile perfectum est.¹⁵

¹⁴ Cary (above, note 5) 105 makes a good point when he argues that Pompey's absence from the Ravenna conference between Caesar and Crassus is good evidence for a split.

¹⁵ In the light of the letters to Quintus and the Campanian proposal, it is important

Tyrrell and Purser observe in their note on "mihi aqua haeret" that "Cicero's difficulty was whether he should withdraw all opposition on the Campanian question or carry on with no better support than the selfish and untrustworthy senate." In reality, of course, Cicero had no choice, and the main factor was not so much the attitude of the Senate (though that was important, since given sufficient encouragement Cicero could show toughness and determination, as in 63 and 59), as the fact that Pompey was now openly opposed to such a move. "Quoniam qui nihil possunt ii me nolunt amare," he wrote to Atticus, "demos operam ut ab iis qui possunt diligamur" (*Att.* 4.5.2; TP 108; How 21). There was no relying on the *boni*, as 58 had made clear; and Pompey had sent him a blunt warning.

We have, of course, to be wary of being too clever in our reconstruction of the politics of the past. We see what happened, and how it led to what happened next; and before we realize it we are explaining it all on the assumption (often unconscious) that we are dealing, not with cause and effect only, but with plans and achievements. Real life is rougher at the edges. The best laid schemes may go awry, and many things happen which are not merely uncontrived but totally unexpected. At the simplest level we can state that the ties that bound the dynasts together had grown very weak; indeed open discord had broken out between two of the three and their leading adherents. This was highly dangerous, in that it encouraged their common enemies to mount an attack which, unless they could again concert their forces, might win home. The original alliance had been a marriage of convenience: to re-cement it new inducements had to be devised to meet new requirements and changed circumstances, for the old ones were out of date. The *boni* could not, in their optimistic mood, overcome their deep-seated and well-justified dislike and fear of Pompey—"occultior non melior," as Tacitus was to call him (*Hist.* 2.38). But Pompey would not move to defend Caesar's position unless it was made worth his while. Why should he?

to notice how objective Cicero is here: "ne lege... facile perfectum est." He had himself taken the lead with the *De provinciis consularibus* in securing this end. This, of course, would be known to Spinther, and Cicero is not hiding anything from him. It only shows how dangerous it can be to argue from the silence of Cicero's letters, if one does not bear in mind, not only the frequent need for secrecy and discretion, but the fact that the recipients could be assumed by the writer to know quite a lot of things which are not spelled out in detail.

Caesar's need was urgent, and so he was ready to pay Pompey's price. The alliance was again secured, and the dangers melted away like the morning mists in the summer sun. For, although Cicero may have been right when he said that the dominance of three men was no more popular than the old control of the nobility had been,¹⁶ there is no reason to suppose that it was any less popular. So long as the *boni* made no sincere and determined efforts to enlist widespread support, they must rely on *force majeure* to regain their lost ground—in addition to showing an incisiveness, courage, and solidarity which they lacked and which (if recent history was any guide) there was no good reason to suppose they would suddenly acquire.

How far this is simply what, given the circumstances and balance of forces, happened to happen, *sua sponte* so to speak, is a question that at once breeds argument. For my part, while stressing the uncertainties of life, and paying due respect as Caesar himself did to *tyché* and *fortuna*,¹⁷ I should certainly allow plenty of room for deliberate maneuvering, at any rate so far as broad strategy went as opposed to the flurry of hand-to-hand fighting. The main issues were certainly clear enough to be appreciated by the leading participants. There had been more to the removal of Cicero in 58 than mere spite. The bitter opposition to his recall, the openly growing public split between Pompey and Crassus, may well have owed much to a cool calculation on the part of Crassus and Clodius, in that they were aiming to hold wide the gap between Pompey and the Senate which Cicero was ideally qualified to close, and which open conflict between the dynasts could keep open; for so long as the *boni* could hope that the triumvirate would break up *istorum inter istos dissensione*, it would be hard to get them to entertain the idea of making concessions to Pompey to effect such a break-up—why pay for what you think you can get for nothing? That Pompey deliberately led Cicero on in 56 in surely very hard to deny on the evidence of the extant letters of Cicero; that in so doing he was well aware of what the consequences were likely to be cannot be questioned. When he had his chat with Cicero on the evening of 7 April, he may not have known that he would soon

¹⁶ Cf. *Att.* 2.9.2. (TP 36) of April 59: "Etenim si fuit invidiosa senatus potentia, cum ea non ad populum sed ad tris homines immoderatos redacta sit, quid iam censes fore?"

¹⁷ Caesar, *BC* 3.68.1: "Sed fortuna, quae plurimum potest cum in reliquis rebus tum praecipue in bello, parvis momentis magnas rerum commutationes efficit."

be at Lucca; but, if so, the invitation can scarcely have come as a surprise. Not until after Lucca did he sit firmly on Cicero. And Cicero was certainly well aware that he had made an ass of himself.

The famous letter to Spinther tells us, by and large, the truth. It would be silly to suppose that it tells the whole truth: rather, it is true so far as it goes. Cicero says nothing in this letter of the threat presented by the candidature of Ahenobarbus, which may have been a more important factor in the situation than the Campanian proposal and which is accorded the chief importance by Suetonius.¹⁸ The consul Marcellinus was also a considerable factor in his own right.¹⁹ Milo, Clodius, Gaius Cato, these men were not mere ciphers. And so on. Cicero was part of the pattern, not the whole pattern.

But let us also stress that Cicero was not writing a *historia contexta*, however useful he may be in helping us to write one.²⁰ He was writing a letter to a contemporary and friend on the subject of his own behavior at the time. Spinther was not an ancient historian. He knew as well as Cicero did that these other important factors existed, and did not need to have them spelled out to him. That Cicero should omit them is only to be expected; Spinther would not have forgotten their existence, nor would Cicero suppose for one moment that he had.

Granted, Cicero is always inclined to overstress his own importance. But some modern scholars are too ready to emphasize this streak of vanity and exaggeration in Cicero. He writes to intimate friends or public associates, themselves well informed about the political situation and with other correspondents as well as Cicero. Much can be taken for granted. Much, or most, is inevitably concerned with Cicero himself: what he is doing, what he is going to do, what he thinks, what he thinks other people are thinking. Being written by a prominent politician, they may unavoidably lead the unwary astray. All our letters,

¹⁸ Cf. above, note 11.

¹⁹ By various contrivances he was preventing legislative assemblies from being held, thereby blocking Gaius Cato's attempts to do down Spinther (by recalling him from Cilicia) and Milo (subject uncertain). He also managed by the same tactics to defeat some "outrageous" proposals concerning Caesar, which were not going to be vetoed (what these "monstra" were we do not know). Vid. *QFr.* 2.3.1 and 4 (TP 102; How 19) and 2.4.5 (TP 105; How 20).

²⁰ Cornelius Nepos, *Atticus* 16.3: "Quae (volumina epistularum ad Atticum) qui legat, non multum desideret historiam contextam eorum temporum."

surely, are self-centered, and contain many more instances of the first person singular than do our other writings. Cicero's letters have survived. We need not suppose that those of his contemporaries were so very different in this respect. Let us recall to mind what Tacitus said in the *Dialogus* (§21) about the poetry of Brutus and Caesar, who like Cicero "fecerunt... carmina et in bibliothecas retulerunt, non melius quam Cicero, sed felicius, quia illos fecisse pauciores sciunt".

And let us not be in too much of a hurry to write down the importance of Cicero—for he was a very important man. He was an unrivaled swayer of opinion, who was held in high esteem by large numbers of substantial men throughout Italy. Caesar had thought it worth his while to bid high for his support and co-operation in 60–59.²¹ He had been prepared to risk a good deal of unpopularity with certain important sections of opinion in order to be rid of him when he refused to cooperate. It had been worth Pompey's while to go to a good deal of trouble to get him back, and Caesar thought him sufficiently dangerous to insist on certain guarantees of good behavior before he would call off his opposition to his recall. Pompey wasted no time in warning him to behave himself after Lucca. I find it easy enough to believe that Crassus hurried off to talk to Caesar at Ravenna after Cicero had made his Campanian proposal, for there was no knowing where Cicero might go once he got the bit between his teeth. Cicero sometimes behaves in what may seem to us an abject and hysterical manner. But he was capable also of boldness, even rashness, thanks to his immense self-confidence and his Micawberish optimism, his belief that "something would turn up." He was a bold and impetuous consul in 63. He refused the tempting offers Caesar made him in 60–59. He owed his exile in 58 to his stubborn opposition to the plans of the dynasts and his refusal to heed warnings. This was no coward, but a very dangerous man.

²¹ Cf. *Att. 2.3.3* (TP 20), written in December 60: "Est res sane magni consili. Nam aut fortiter resistendum est legi agrariae, in quo est quaedam dimicatio, sed plena laudis; aut quiescendum, quod est non dissimile atque ire in Solonium aut Antium; aut etiam adiuvandum, quod a me aiunt Caesarem sic expectare ut non dubitet. Nam fuit apud me Cornelius: hunc dico Balbum, Caesaris familiarem. Is adfirmabat illum omnibus in rebus meo et Pompei consilio usurum daturumque operam ut cum Pompeio Crassum coniungeret. Hic sunt haec: coniunctio mihi summa cum Pompeio, si placet etiam cum Caesare; reditus in gratiam cum inimicis, pax cum multitudine, senectutis otium."

And he was an unrivaled orator and advocate. The dynasts were very anxious to have him defend men like Gabinius or deliver speeches like the *De provinciis consularibus*. We do not have to rely on the judgment of "old, bald-headed scholars" for an estimate of his importance, nor even on Cicero's own testimony. We can measure it by the actions of men like Caesar and Crassus, Brutus and Antony and Octavian; or read the words of the wild young poet over whose text the old, bald scholars labor so innocently (Catullus 49.1.3):

Disertissime Romuli nepotum
quot sunt quotque fuere, Marce Tulli,
quotque post aliis erunt in annis.

The author of the *First Verrine* and the *Second Philippic*, of the *Pro Caelio* and the *Pro Cluentio*, could be a dangerous adversary or a priceless ally.

In the months before Lucca, then, Cicero (and no doubt many others) had miscalculated. He had not made sufficient allowance for the versatility of Pompey, the unreliability of the *boni*, the speed and decision of Caesar's reaction, the possibility of yet another reconciliation between Pompey and Crassus. However, that the triumvirate might break beyond repair was not a silly idea: many signs had been pointing that way. And it was to happen only a few years later: shrewd observers like Caelius Rufus could be wrong then, too, this time in supposing that the *boni* would shrink from a fight.²² Wisdom after the event can give one a cozy sense of superiority over men who at the time guessed shrewdly but guessed wrong.

Lucca was a success primarily because the agreement there reached better reflected the true balance of power, especially as regards Pompey, than the earlier agreement had. In 60 and 59 Pompey had been in need of quick results—he had been getting nowhere since his return late in 62—and the urgency of his need compelled him to accept the best bargain he could get. By 56 things had changed: the boot was on the other foot. It was Caesar who now needed urgently to safeguard his legislation, to keep out Ahenobarbus, to secure the continuance of his Gallic command—none of which things was possible without the active

²² *Fam.* 8.11.3 (TP 267), late April 50: "Si—quod videntur—reformidarint, Caesar quoad volet manebit."

cooperation of Pompey. So a reappraisal was necessary. The dispositions that stemmed from Lucca were thus essentially sounder than those of 60–59, in that they better reflected the power and standing of Pompey and thereby made him a less unstable partner.

It is both interesting and instructive to reflect on the fact that from 59 to 56 the air at Rome was thick with alarums and excursions about irreparable breaches within the triumvirate; but it hung on, all the same. After Lucca, the reverse is true: it was not until very late in the day—the summer of 50 in fact—that men seriously contemplated the probability of a violent breach. Knowing the last act, we are tempted to see the compact of 60–59 as a more solid thing than did contemporaries, and that of 56–55 as far more fragile. The contemporaries were right, though, for all that the incalculable elements in life caused their expectations not to be realized. The first compact was unstable, it nearly did split—perhaps, one might say, did split—in early 56, whereas the agreement which took the Gauls and the Spains and Syria out of public control and vested them in the three most powerful men at Rome for an extended period finds a sure echo in the abiding arrangements of Augustus. So long as they held together, the three were unbeatable, and the inducement to hold together and run the world between them on equal terms with fair give and take was very tempting indeed. It was the death of Julia and the death of Crassus, the murder of Clodius and the exile of Milo, and (coming on top of this to distract Caesar for over eighteen months) the Gallic revolt and Vercingetorix²³—all of them events of immense moment, all of them chances unforeseeable and certainly incalculable beforehand—which threw the balance out of true; left Caesar exposed to attack by superior force; and led, thanks to his determination to go down fighting rather than surrender, to his speed and brilliance, and most of all to his fantastic good luck, to his final and total victory.

²³ The winter of 52–51 was the only winter of the Gallic campaign during which Caesar did not come south of the Alps into the *Cisalpinga*, at what loss of close contact with affairs at Rome is easily guessed.