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Republican Prose

Sulla: Restoration or Innovation

Constitutional Crisis and the Social War (90-88 BC)

- Legislation in 95 BC set up to punish those claiming citizenship illegally.
- Legalisation put forward by M. Livius Drusus to enfranchise Italian allies.
- Rome Italian allies revolt – Rome offers full citizenship to all who side with her.
- Huge increase in potentially eligible voters in the popular assemblies.
- Defeat of Italian "confederacy".

"Such was the course of events throughout Italy as regards the Social War, which had raged with violence thus far, until the whole of Italy came into the Roman state except, for the present, the Lucanians and the Samnites, who also seem to have obtained what they desired somewhat later. Each body of allies was enrolled in tribes of its own, like those who had been admitted to citizenship before, so that they might not, by being mingled with the old citizens, vote them down in the elections by force of numbers." – **Appian *BC* 1.53**.

Mithridates VI of Pontus

- Conflict between Mithridates and Nicomedes IV of Bithynia and Ariobarzanes I of Cappodocia.
- Execution of Aquillius, Mithridates hailed as liberator.

"Such was the awful fate that befell the Romans and Italians throughout the province of Asia, men, women, and children, their freedmen and slaves, all who were of Italian blood; by which it was made very plain that it was quite as much hatred of the Romans as fear of Mithridates that impelled the Asiatics to commit these atrocities." – **Appian *Mith*. 23**.

Sulla Marches on Rome

- L. Cornelius Sulla assigned command against Mithridates.
- Sulpicius transferred the Mithridatic command to Marius by a plebiscite.
- Sulla marches from Nola and seizes Rome – Marius and Sulpicius declared public enemies.

"…he thought only of his enemies, and without any regard or even pity for friends and kindred and relations, made his entry by the aid of fire… he set a price on the head of Marius, an act both ungrateful and impolitic, since it was in his house that he had found refuge and surrendered himself a little before this..." – **Plutarch *Sulla* 9.7, 10.1**.

More bloodshed in Rome

- Cinna driven from city by Cn. Octavius, returns from Nola with army.
- Marius returns from Africa – raises forces in Etruria.
- City surrenders – enemies of Marius and Cinna purged.
- Cinna and Marius consuls for 86 BC – Sulla declared public enemy.

"So, then, Marius died, seventeen days after entering upon his seventh consulship. And immediately Rome was filled with great rejoicing and a confident hope that she was rid of a grievous tyranny; but in a few days the people perceived that they had got a new and vigorous master in exchange for the old one; such bitterness and cruelty did the younger Marius display, putting to death the best and most esteemed citizens." – **Plutarch *Marius* 46.5**.

Affairs in the East

- Death of Flaccus and campaigns of Fimbria.
- Treaty of Dardanus – 85 BC.
- Sulla takes over army of Fimbria – 20,000 talent indemnity imposed on those cities who had sided with the king.

"A great and pitiless slaughter ensued in Athens, the inhabitants, for want of nourishment, were too weak to flee. Sulla ordered an indiscriminate massacre, not sparing women or children. He was angry that they had so suddenly joined the barbarians without cause, and had displayed such violent animosity toward himself." – **Appian *Mith*. 38**.

Sulla becomes Dictator

- Sulla lands at Brundisium in 83, defeats Norbanus – army of Scipio Asiagenus goes over to Sulla.
- Army of Samnites and Lucanians destroyed at Colline Gate (Nov 82).
- C. Marius (son) commits suicide at Praeneste.

"For he proclaimed himself dictator, reviving this particular office after a lapse of a hundred and twenty years. Moreover, an act was passed granting him immunity for all his past acts, and for the future, power of life and death, of confiscation, of colonization, of founding or demolishing cities, and of taking away or bestowing kingdoms at his pleasure." – **Plutarch *Sulla* 33.1**.

Proscriptions

"Sulla himself called the Roman people together in an assembly [2nd / 3rd Nov 82 BC]… He finished by saying that he would bring about a change which would be beneficial to the people if they would obey him, but of his enemies he would spare none, but would visit them with the utmost severity. **He would take vengeance by strong measures** on the praetors, quaestors, military tribunes, and everybody else who had committed any hostile act after the day when the consul Scipio violated the agreement made with him. After saying this **he forthwith proscribed about forty senators and 1600 knights**. **He seems to have been the first to make a formal list of those whom he punished, to offer prizes to assassins and rewards to informers, and to threaten with punishment those who should conceal the proscribed**. Shortly afterward he added the names other senators to the proscription. Some of these, taken unawares, were killed wherever they were caught, in their houses, in the streets, or in the temples. Others were hurled through mid-air and thrown at Sulla's feet. Others were dragged through the city and trampled on…" **Appian *BC* 1.95**.

Julius Caesar and Sulla

“…married Cornelia, daughter of that Cinna who was four times consul, by whom he afterwards had a daughter Julia; and the dictator Sulla could by no means force him to put away his wife. Therefore besides being punished by the loss of his priesthood… forced to go into hiding, and though suffering from a severe attack of quartan fever, to change from one covert to another almost every night, and save himself from Sulla's detectives by bribes. But at last, through the good offices of the Vestal virgins and of his near kinsmen, Mamercus Aemilius and Aurelius Cotta, he obtained forgiveness… "Have your way and take him; only bear in mind that the man you are so eager to save will one day deal the death blow to the cause of the aristocracy, which you have joined with me in upholding; for in this Caesar there is more than one Marius.“ **– Suetonius *Divus Julius* 1**.

“..when he was deliberating about putting him to death and some said there was no reason for killing a mere boy like him, he declared that they had no sense if they did not see in this boy many Mariuses.” **– Plutarch *Julius Caesar* 1.4**.

Impact and Legality

- The proscribed was the victim of *interdictio* (depriving individual of citizen rights) – possible *infamia* after death.
- Sale of confiscated goods at below market value – enrichment of associates of Sulla (Crassus, Catiline L. Domitius Ahenobarbus).

“Moreover, proscriptions were made not only in Rome, but also in every city of Italy… Those who fell victims to political resentment and private hatred were as nothing compared with those who were butchered for the sake of their property… Quintus Aurelius, a quiet and inoffensive man, who thought his only share in the general calamity was to condole with others in their misfortunes, came into the forum and read the list of the proscribed, and finding his own name there, said, "Ah! woe is me! my Alban estate is prosecuting me." And he had not gone far before he was dispatched by some one who had hunted him down.” – **Plutarch *Sulla* 31.5-6**.

Sulla's Veterans

- *Ager publicus* and *ager* of punished cities.
- Establishment of 12 colonies – Livy *Per.* 77.7 (Aleria, Arretium, Capitolum, Faesulae, Pompeii, Praeneste, Suessula, Urbana, Vibinum).
- M. Aemilius Lepidus sides with disposed Etrurian landowners (78 BC).
- Q. Lutatius Catulus drives Lepidus to Sardinia.

"…he distributed to the twenty-three legions that had served under him a great deal of land in the various communities, as I have already related, some of which was public property and some taken from the communities by way of fine… there were 120,000 men throughout Italy who had recently served under him in war and had received large gifts of money and land from him…" – **Appian *BC* 1.100, 104**.

The New Republic

Constitutional Reforms

- Likely all implemented in 81 BC (rather than any measure in 87).
- Increasing in size of depleted senate, perhaps up to some 450 now – many “new men” from equestrian order and Italian towns.
- Establishment of 20 quaestorships.
- New permanent jury courts filled by senators (*quaestiones*).
- Falling into abeyance of *princeps senatus*.
- New members of the senate now drawn automatically from ex-quaestors, not selection by Censors.
- Inner and outer circles.

Magistrates and Pro-Magistrates

- Consuls and praetors increasingly spending their term of office within Rome.
- Present at most debates, new structure to discussions – clashes between consuls.
- Pro-magistrates, e.g. proconsuls and propraetors sent to provinces.
- New emphasis on courts for the praetors.
- Abolition of the censorship.
- 20 quaestors, 4 aediles, 8 praetors, 2 consuls.
- 10 years period before resuming same office.

Conduct in the Provinces

- More control over provincial commanders - *Maiestas* (treason) laws.
- More specific geographical areas fixed as borders of provinces.

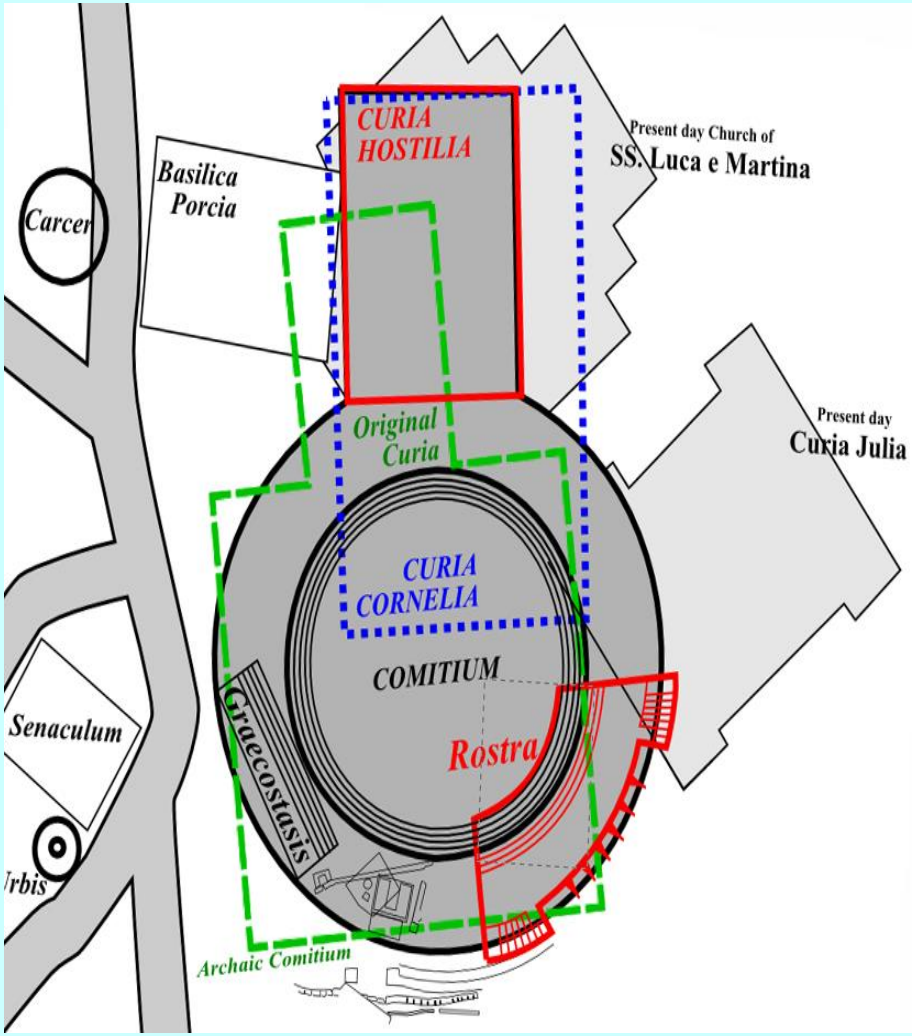
The Office of Tribune

- Drastic reduction in power of ten tribunes.
- No longer able to introduce legislation to plebeian assembly.
- Limited to protecting citizens from arbitrary abuses of magistrates.
- Political dead-end.

"The tribunes, striking while the iron was hot, themselves took the military oath to support Cinna, and administered it each to the soldiers under him… They proposed many other measures for curtailing the power of the tribunes, which had become extremely tyrannical…" – **Appian *BC* 1.59, 66**.

The People and the New Republic

- Abeyance of *contiones* made from the *rostra*.
- Ratifying laws already approved by the Senate.
- Abolition of the grain dole.
- Freeing of 10,000 slaves taken from the proscribed – *Liberti Cornelii*.



Retirement and Death

Sulla lays down the Dictatorship

- Gives up dictatorship in 81 BC? – becomes Consul in 80 BC (or by 79 BC?).
- Causes for retirement – illness?, feelings of political failure or success?, prominence of rivals?
- Emphasis on restoration and rule of law?

"…ordered them [his servants] to strangle him [Granius]; but with the strain which he put upon his voice and body, he ruptured his abscess and lost a great quantity of blood. In consequence of this his strength failed, and after a night of wretchedness, he died, leaving two young children by Metella." – **Plutarch *Sulla* 37.4**.

Sulla’s Funeral

“Many now joined themselves eagerly to Lepidus, purposing to deprive Sulla's body of the usual burial honours; but **Pompey**, although offended at Sulla (for he alone, of all his friends, was not mentioned in his will), diverted some from their purpose by his kindly influence and entreaties, and others by his threats, and then **conveyed the body to Rome**… And it is said that the women contributed such a vast quantity of spices for it, that, apart from what was carried on **two hundred and ten litters, a large image of Sulla himself, and another image of a lictor**, was moulded out of costly frankincense and cinnamon… his monument stands in the Campus Martius, and the inscription on it, they say, is one which he wrote for it himself, and the substance of it is, that no friend ever surpassed him in kindness, and no enemy in mischief.” – **Plutarch *Sulla* 38**.

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