CICERO, SALLUST AND CATILINE

It has usually been the fashion, with honourable exceptions, to form a high general estimate of Cicero. Occasional protests against his fluent scurrility and unscrupulous tactics in court have not clouded the glory of his literary achievements. For his success as a politician, there is less enthusiastic acclaim; the idealistic hopes of achieving "concordia ordinum" were beaten down, it is held, by the gross forces of personal ambition and corruption against which this honest intellectual could make no progress.

The high point of his political achievements was, on his own showing, the over-celebrated consulship of 63; and of this the crowning glory was the total preservation of the State from the menace of Catiline. But was Catiline a great menace, or indeed any menace at all, to the *res publica*? Even some ancient historians were aware that his importance was exaggerated by Cicero,[1] and most moderns would be prepared to agree that the joint efforts of the eloquent consul and ol Sallust have inflated a very small affair and minor political careerist into the centre-piece and the arch-villian of the unstable and unpleasant political world of the late Republic. This being the case, I should perhaps apologise for adding to the already excessive body of writing on the matter. A recent writer, Z. Yavetz, has said: "It is possible that the importance of Catiline's conspiracy is over-estimated by some modern historians".[2] To me this appears a magnificent understatement. Not only has its importance been greatly exaggerated; the scale, extent, duration and aims of the conspiracy, perhaps its very existence, have all been vastly over-stated; only in the fertile imagination of Cicero himself could many of the alleged facts have had their origin. Hence, my excuse for adding to the existing material on this storm in a tea-cup is that I hope by calling attention to the conspicuous implausibilities in the accepted story, to contribute to a reduction in the emphasis laid upon the Catilinarian affair in the study of Roman history and perhaps even of literature.[3]

[1] See Dio Cass. 38. 42.

[2] Z. Yavetz, The Failure of Catiline's Conspiracy, *Historia* 12, 1963, pp. 485–499.

[3] One of the less creditable reasons for the prominence of the Catilinarian Conspiracy in books and courses on Roman history is that it is fully (sic?) recorded; we tend to study, and especially to teach, what appears to be easy of access rather than what is important or what is historically valid.

It will be obvious that the work of many scholars has been laid under contribution in compiling this study. Without disrespect to any of them, I should wish to mention particularly Hardy, Last, Steidle, Earl and Sir Ronald Syme, to whose writings I have not usually made detailed reference in the notes. In addition, I must record my debt to Professor P. R. C. Weaver, who made an important initial suggestion and proposed improvements in the argument; and to those colleagues who made comments and criticisms when a draft of the paper was read at the AULLA Conference in Sydney in August 1967.

I shall endeavour to show, first, that the aims and procedures of the alleged conspiracy, especially as recorded in the earliest connected and most detailed narrative, that of Sallust,[4] are highly implausible or even self-contradictory; and that the amount of support allegedly obtained by Catiline evaporates under scrutiny until it is almost negligible: secondly, as an inference from the above, that the whole affair was largely invented by Cicero for his own Machiavellian purposes, and that he had ample motives for the elaborate piece of stage-management which allowed him to appear as the saviour of the state.

I

The Ciceronian/Sallustian account of the conspiracy[5] is either extremely vague or completely contradictory about the aims of Catiline and his supporters. I shall not discuss the once believed-in "First Catilinarian Conspiracy," a phantom now, it is to be hoped, exorcised for ever,[6] though brief reference will be made to certain of the allegations. But the "Second" or more properly "The" Catilinarian Conspiracy is almost equally disquieting as a record of ineffectiveness in political intrigue; it does little credit to the skill of the Roman nobility and their clients in their favourite sport; for a dozen murderous attempts, and several cases of attempted arson, we do not hear of one house burned down, not one consular killed or even wounded. If, as Cicero roundly declares, Catiline's aim was the total destruction of the state, never has there been a more dismal failure.

[4] Sallust's account is almost entirely based on Cicero's speeches, see H. Last, Sallust & Caesar in the Bellum Catilinae, *Mélanges Marouzeau* 1948, p. 362. The joint authority of these two respected figures was reinforced by the references to Catiline of Vergil and Juvenal, who of course relied on a purely literary tradition for their notions of this 'great sinner'. The many minor and several major variants in the accounts of Suetonius, Plutarch and Appian do little to confirm one's belief in the validity of the total story. To Dio I have generally given little weight, for similar reasons; and he is even further removed in time than the other minor sources.

[5] In this section I am particularly indebted to E. G. Hardy, *The Catilinarian Conspiracy*, 1924 (= JRS 7, 1917, 153–228).

[6] Finally by R. Syme, *Sallust* (1964) pp. 88–96, (see the authorities there cited), and by R. Seager, The First Catilinarian Conspiracy, *Historia* 13, 1964, 338.

But there must have been objectives more immediate than the total destruction of the Roman state. How could this ideal end be attained? What positive steps were to be taken which would lead towards it? The affair is called by Sallust (Cat. Coni. 4. 4) *facinus in primis ... memorabile ... sceleris atque periculi novitate.*[7] But if he means armed revolt, the only facinus actually perpetrated, this was certainly not unprecedented, and hardly even memorable within the bloody record of the late Republic. To go no further afield, the attempted coup of Lepidus in 78 seems to have been similar in scale, and ended in considerable slaughter. (There were other interesting common features; the first outbreak was at Faesulae, and the Senate in this case too passed the *S. C. ultimum.*[8]) *Novitas* seems excluded in Catiline's case by this, to say nothing of other, incidents. Sallust himself records (Cat. 5.2) that *bella intestina* had been Catiline's youthful diet, further evidence against originality in 63; he goes on to state that Catiline's object was *sibi regnum parare* – hardly an unexampled aim, given the late-republican connotation of *regnum*, which could certainly have been applied to Sulla's dictatorship, and was alleged to have been used by Lentulus of Cinna too (47. 2). It is ironic that Cicero himself did not escape the same accusation, from Torquatus (Cic. *Pro Sulla* 21).

The first, and undoubtedly genuine, aim of Catiline was to secure the consulship. This is not in itself a revolutionary programme, and might indeed suggest that whatever ultimate plans he was concealing, he intended to proceed by constitutional means – and he seems to have been an indefatigable candidate, turning up year after unsuccessful year. Plutarch (Cic. 11) says, referring to the consulship for 63, that Catiline wished to obtain the office as a strong base for further action. But what action? How would he use or abuse the consular imperium? One must suppose, through legislation; but the consulship was not the sole prerequisite for revolutionary legislation. As a patrician, Catiline of course could not be tribune; but without resorting to the device used by Clodius a few years later, he could surely, if his support was so widespread, find an eligible tribune – and Sallust drew attention to the restored importance of the tribunate in these very years (Cat. 38. 1).

Was violence to be used to obtain the consulship, or was high office to be used (superfluously) to wield violence? The constitutional approach, which we will call 'Plan A', perhaps does not exclude the possibility of removing rivals by assassination. However, it does exclude the raising of illegitimate armed forces; and if Catiline took the longer view, that the power he needed would

[7] See the discussion of this passage by W. Steidle in 'Sallusts historische Monographien' (*Historia* Einzelschriften 3, 1958) pp. 2 sqq. His attempt to justify Sallust's claim is not altogether convincing.

[8] As Lepidus held consular imperium, the threat he posed may well have been greater. For the casualties, Orosius 5. 22; Faesulae, Licinianus p. 34 F; the *S C ultimum* Sall. Hist. I 77, 22 M.

ultimately be attained only as proconsul in command of an army, he had better not queer his pitch with voters and senators by premature attempts at armed domination of the state.[9]

The insistence of all ancient authorities on the general indebtedness or "need" of most of Catiline's supporters or potential supporters indicates a general belief that *novae tabulae* were the main plank in Catiline's platform. This, of course, could be achieved by constitutional means, in theory at least, though so extreme a legal measure had not yet been introduced – perhaps this was the unprecedented danger, the unheard-of crime?[10] However in Catiline's speeches as recorded by Sallust (Cat. 20. 16 and 21. 1) an armed revolt ('Plan B') is first implicitly, then explicitly foreshadowed. But the Sallustian story is even more inconsistent over Catiline's aims than over his methods and actions; observe at 21. 2 the oddly-assorted list of advantages to be gained: – *tabulas novas, proscriptionem locupletium, magistratus, sacerdotia, rapinas, alia omnia quae bellum* (sic) ... *fert.*[11] Yet in the next breath (21. 3) Catiline's main hopes and efforts are directed towards the consulship for 63, with C. Antonius as his prospective and complaisant colleague; what he urges on his supporters is not arson or murder, but energetic canvassing for his election! 'Plan A', then, is a normal constitutional procedure, whose methods will not be notably less scrupulous than those of Catiline's contemporaries; its long-term aim may yet be *regnum* if that term is used with a certain flexibility of imagination.[12] But Sallust, following Cicero, has conflated it with 'Plan B', for wholesale murder, arson, and armed revolt; if such a plan existed at all, only the third item was ever put into effect, and that in a belated and ineffective manner that suggests a hasty improvisation; the other items were perhaps never contemplated, as will be suggested below.

But the constitutional plan failed because, we are told, the *nobiles* laid aside their *superbia* and *invidia* to the extent of permitting the election of the *novus homo*, Cicero.[13] The rank and file of the conspirators felt this as a serious

[9] For the 'constitutional plan' cf: T. Rice Holmes, *The Roman Republic* I, 456. It seems unnecessary to illustrate here the well-known and frequently adopted principle of first obtaining an army, more or less legitimately, and then beginning to dictate, or uproot institutions.

[10] The proposal of Flaccus in 86 had reduced debts by a mere 75% (*argentum aere solutum est*, Sall. Cat. 33. 2) and this was conventionally considered a *'lex turpissima'* (Vell. Pat. II 23); the final 25% was evidently the last straw.

[11] The list here has a very rough correspondence with the *'gratia potentia honos divitiae apud illos sunt'* of 20. 8.

[12] See above, p. 197, and compare the way in which Appian reflects the Ciceronian/Sallustian phraseology ἐς ὑπατείαν . . . ὡς τῇδε παροδεύων ἐς τυραννίδα. II, 1, 2. As long ago as 1876 C. John had pointed out that Catiline's urge for *dominatio* was an invention of Sallust. (Die Entstehungsgeschichte der catilinarischen Verschwörung; *JklPh*Suppl. 8, 1875–6, 706–726).

[13] On the question of Cicero's claim (echoed by Sallust) that this was unprecedented

blow, we are informed (Sall. Cat. 24. 1); nevertheless, Catiline's frenzied activity continued and even increased; 'Plan B' was well under way (*arma per Italiam locis opportunis parare*).[14] And if one compares the statement of Appian that Catiline now abstained from politics entirely, the suggestion is that 'Plan A' was totally forgotten.

The rest of the section in Sallust is perhaps the most diverting of all the flights of fancy concerning Catiline's alleged methods and intentions. By his influence over certain high-class but superannuated courtesans, no longer able to maintain the luxurious standards of living which their youthful charms had gained them, he hoped

(i) to stir up the city slaves

(ii) to fire the city (this oft-repeated allegation is first put forward by Sallust in this curious context)

(iii) procure the support, or alternatively the death, of their husbands, all influential men.

Now why should ex-courtesans, no longer possessed of either wealth or beauty, be in a particularly advantageous position for arousing the slaves? And since when had the city slaves been a menace to orderly government? It was on the *latifundia* of Sicily, or in the gladiatorial *familiae* of Campania, that the great slave revolts had originated. What is more, Sallust later declares that Catiline was averse to seeking the support of slaves, even at a time when he was committed to open rebellion and needed every available body. So the first of the alleged aims is seen to be ridiculous. Next, while the slaves, once *sollicitati*, would be useful for the purpose named, it is not obvious why they should be more useful than free men.[15] As for the third item, Sallust would appear to have a curious notion of the marital relationship, even in the context of Late Republican Rome. Catiline was (or was believed to be) on good terms with his wife Orestilla; and this is confirmed by the letter, supposed genuine by a good many scholars, in Sall. Cat. 35. The alternatives he is alleged to have offered these ladies would at least suggest that Catiline had more influence over them than had their respective husbands.[16] My view is that the only possible

in recent years, see D. C. Earl, "The Early Career of Sallust", *Historia* 15, 1966, 302; several other *novi homines* had gained the consulship between 100 and 63 B.C.

[14] The minimal effect of these allegedly intensive preparations is shown below, (p. 204); while it is clear that not even the smallest attempt to raise a force had been undertaken *at this stage* : cf. n. 18 below.

[15] The genuineness of the allegations regarding arson will be discussed below, p. 203 sq.

[16] One could not exclude the possibility of Catiline employing blackmail to induce the women to comply with his wishes; but this would be to add further and superfluous hypotheses to this farrago of nonsense. Appian has rationalised the story; the women were after all wealthy and Catiline expected to get money from them as a reward for killing their husbands off, II 1. 2.

explanation of Sallust's inclusion of this picturesque group, never heard of again, is that he was seeking to reinforce the theory of the general backing of the *egentes* for Catiline by seeking fresh and striking examples of it, in his imagination or in the anti-Catilinarian propaganda on which he drew. Sallust's taste for the melodramatic goes even further than this; he avers that Lentulus and Cethegus arranged for a number of sons to kill their distinguished fathers (43. 2). This I cannot imagine that anyone ever believed; and it certainly did not happen.

But soon we come back to 'Plan A'; *nihilo minus in proximum annum consulatum petebat* (26. 1); though in order to attain this, violence has become indispensable – *omnibus modis insidias parabat Ciceroni*. It was not, however, the *novus homo* who was the patrician Catiline's rival for election,[17] and until towards the *end* of 63 there was no hostility between them. Certainly not before being defeated once more at the polls, and more probably some time later, Catiline decided on open revolt, 'Plan B', while retaining certain elements of the more violent version of the prior alternative (27. 1). Also, a coup within the city itself was proposed, for the first time, as an accompaniment or sequel to the fire to be arranged. Hence Manlius was allegedly busy in Etruria, rousing the populace (*plebem*, 27. 4). But, *either* to disguise the change of plan *or* because constitutional procedure was still possible (and of course it was; Catiline's *virtus* might not be *repulsae nescia sordidae* but it undoubtedly held an element of perseverance, or obstinacy) he attended the Senate meeting, where Cicero's notorious invective, the First Catilinarian oration, failed to produce any action against his intended scapegoat: Catiline was allowed to walk out of the meeting and leave the city unhindered. The reason for this fiasco was, undoubtedly, the lack of evidence to support Cicero's wild charges, which were far less precise and circumstantial even than they appear after some revision at the hands of Sallust.

It was on this occasion that Catiline appears to have used certain metaphorical language, which, after due misrepresentation by Cicero and his agents, was responsible for the notion of an incendiary plot. *Incendium meum ruina restinguam* (31. 9) became "He's not only going to set fire to the place, he's going to wreck everything completely!"

Catiline, faced with such a perverse interpretation of his intentions, spread far and wide as it was by the patriotic consul's efficient propaganda machine, had one last desperate recourse, that of open force. He would wear the cap Cicero had made for him. He put into operation 'Plan B'; how far this had

[17] If another patrician were elected, Catiline could not attain the second consulship; but there was only one other patrician candidate, P. Sulpicius Galba, and the main rivalry lay between the four plebeian candidates (Ascon. In Tog. Cand. p. 73). cf. R. Syme, *Sallust*, p. 91, on the candidates for 65.

even entered his mind previously we cannot know.[18] At any rate, some kind of a headquarters was set up at Faesulae,[19] under Manlius.

It may be that Manlius' rising in Etruria had no original connection with Catiline. Sallust at 24. 2, says that Catiline borrowed money to send to Manlius, as soon as Cicero and Antonius were elected; at 27. 1 after Catiline's *next* failure, he "sent Manlius to Faesulae" (i.e., the earlier statement is merely a back-projection?) At what stage did they really come into collaboration? A phrase of Cicero's (in Cat. II 20) suggests that Catiline, as a higher ranking personage, who had actually wielded imperium as praetor, 'took over the command from Manlius' (*Manlius, cui nunc Catilina succedit*).

The letter sent by Manlius to Q. Marcius Rex says nothing of Catiline; it purports to be written by Manlius in his own name and that of the 'miseri' associated with him, and asks the government to deal less harshly with them and restore the rights of individuals on which praetors are infringing. If this is a genuine document, (which however I must admit was not my first impression) it supports the view that the union of Manlius and Catiline was a marriage of convenience, or a'shotgun wedding' forced on by Cicero.

To get in a blow before the government could mobilise its forces (32. 1) would give the rebels a slight chance of survival – for the immediate future, though not of course in the long run. Having raised his irregulars in Etruria, Catiline was to march on the capital. At the same time the subsidiary violence planned for the city was to be carried out. Appian (2. 1, 3) links these two procedures in a way that might appear rational. He says that Catiline's plan was to invade the burning city; in the confusion resulting from this emergency and from the murder of the consuls (et al. ad lib.), it might have been possible to seize control. But Faesulae was much too distant for a march on Rome, without giving the government time to prepare its defence. When Catiline actually left Rome, he did not make all speed to Manlius, but loitered about, apparently heading for Massilia; and the government could surely in a fort-

[18] According to the *communis opinio*, Sallust has shifted dateable events in the narrative; on this see Steidle op. cit. 93–4. So an unverifiable statement about the activities of Manlius in Etruria is no less likely to have been ante-dated. It is true that Cicero makes reference to '*Manliana castra*' in the First Catilinarian speech; he does not however indicate that any action had been taken by the government to deal with a military rising, and so '*castra*' would appear to be yet another rhetorical fancy. It was not until some time after the departure of Catiline that he and Manlius were declared *hostes* (Sall. Cat. 36. 2.) though on the evidence of a private letter, Sallust records, Q. Marcius Rex was sent to Faesulae with his troops to deal with Manlius who was reported to have taken up arms on 27 Oct. (30. 1).

[19] As mentioned above, Faesulae was also the scene of the opening of the Lepidus affair; the inhabitants had risen and massacred or expelled the Sullan *coloni*, which fact would seem to render it a dangerous base for Catiline if he relied on the support of the veterans; see below p. 204 sqq. on Catiline's supporters.

night, or maybe even a month, muster a force adequate to oppose this ragged ill-armed rabble.

If there were any other evidence than Cicero's (in Cat. 1. 7) for the attempted seizure of Praeneste, one might suppose this move aimed at providing a more accessible base of operations. However, Sallust's account shows the conspirators aiming at using the confusion resulting from their intended conflagration for the opposite purpose, namely escape, (*erumperent* 43. 2). Cicero had to pretend that he had won a great success when Catiline "*erupit*," though it could hardly have suited the interest of security if the rebel leader could so easily place himself at the head of a supposedly dangerous force. One must conclude that neither intention was *known* to be that of the conspirators. Furthermore, civil action, by means of a tribunician *contio* to "complain" (sic!) about Cicero's misuse of his consular position was allegedly still in the programme (43. 1), while the letter recorded by Sallust (35) in its vague phrases indicates only that Catiline, infuriated by election failures, is planning some other means of gaining his rightful political deserts; and the letter of Lentulus, which has the better claim to be considered genuine, is to say the least extremely guarded, though of course easily interpreted *in malam partem* by the skilful barrister.

Even Sallust admits his awareness that not all of the allegations were plausible; they were *ficta ... ab eis qui Ciceronis invidiam ... leniri credebant atrocitate sceleris* (22 fin.). For "*ab eis qui*" should we read "*a Cicerone ipso*?"

II

If Catiline and his associates had revolutionary and violent plans, long in the hatching (which we have seen is at least highly dubious) they were the most inefficient gang of criminals ever assembled outside the pages of comic fiction. Repeated and ignominious failures to achieve even a single assassination, a feat commonplace enough in Roman political annals, render the whole affair ludicrous.

The (non-existent, see above n. 6) "First Conspiracy" is here briefly cited as utilizing, in its scenario, the motives and procedures attributed by Cicero/Sallust to the Second. It involved the murder of the consuls for 65 on the day of their accession, to the advantage of the disappointed Autronius and Catiline; while somehow Piso was to get control of the Spanish provinces, in the face of their legitimate governors. The murder did not take place, but Piso went to Spain anyway, and was himself (conveniently) murdered. A bigger and better plan for murder was then devised for February; not merely the consuls but "most of the senators" were now designated for the knife. This time, Catiline gave the signal too soon, and no blood was shed. If we have now been convinced of the falsity of these wild stories, it should not be difficult to extend our disbelief to parallel allegations regarding the conspiracy proper.

After the election of Cicero, a year and a half later, Catiline was to murder the successful candidates *in campo* (i.e. *during* the comitia?) but *neque insidiae ... prospere cessere* (26. 5). A similar procedure was planned for the *dies comitiorum* in 63, with the same negative outcome. A frenzied period of activity followed this, the fourth fiasco; but once again without effecting an assassination or anything else. At last we reach an incident for which there may appear to be some real evidence instead of mere allegations, the attempt of two conspirators to enter Cicero's house and kill him there. But even here, one finds cause for doubt; in the first place, our authorities are not at all in agreement about the identity of the two assassins,[20] next, no one was either arrested on the spot or subsequently prosecuted *de vi*, so far as we know, and this despite the foreknowledge of the consul, warned by Fulvia as he claimed.[21]

This was not, it is implied, the last unsuccessful attempt, if we are to take literally Sallust's phrase (32, 1) *neque insidiae consuli procedebant*. Cicero himself refers (in Cat. 1. 15) to the attempted murder of Cotta and Torquatus, to the intended murder both of himself and of Catiline's competitors at the consular comitia of 63 (id. 11), and to the *caedes optimatium* set down for *a.d.V. Kal. Nov.* of 63 (id. 7). During the year, he asserts, there were repeated attempts at assassination (*quotiens ... conatus es*, ib. 15) which he was able to avoid "by ducking slightly!" The desperate assassins in whom we are asked to believe could hardly have been so easily foiled. They could, it seems, be simply deterred by other methods also; when the consul employed the brilliant device of appearing in public wearing a "*lorica*," the people, according to Dio, 37. 29. 5, were so moved by hostility to Catiline's men that the latter dared do nothing. No wonder Cethegus railed at their *ignavia*!

The attempted arson shows an equally dismal record of failure. At Sall. Cat. 24, 4, the arch-villain is reported (as mentioned above) as believing he could use the good offices of certain debauched society women to set fire to the city. Of this, as one might guess, nothing seems to have come. But, along with one of the many intended assassinations, Sallust records Catiline's continuing pur-

[20] 'duo equites' Cic. in *Cat.* I. 9
(Cic. *Pro Sulla* 52 names C. Cornelius as one)
C. Cornelius & L. Vargunteius Sall. *Cat.* 28. 1
Marcius & Cethegus Plut. *Cic.* 16. 1
Lentulus & Cethegus Appian 2. 1. 3
Dio gives no names; Suetonius & Velleius do not refer to the incident. Cicero's words exclude Lentulus, Cethegus and Vargunteius.

[21] The information said to have been passed on to Cicero by Fulvia cannot be used to explain away all the continual failures of the conspirators to fulfil their plans; it is itself difficult to believe in, if it continued, as we are told, for seventeen months without Catiline and his associates suspecting a leak. Cf. D. C. Earl, *The Political Thought of Sallust*, 1961, p. 87. Cicero's reference to the prosecution of Vargunteius (*Pro Sulla* 6) would suggest a repercussion from this alleged attempt, were it not that he mentions four other names in the same context.

pose as *parare incendia* (27. 1) adding the fascinating detail that he proposed seizing vantagepoints in the city with armed men. Again, no result. In 32. 1 we find that the incendiaries' plans have been forestalled by the consul's special guards. Yet despite this, the intention of the conspirators to proceed with their arson is restated in 43. 2, with circumstantial detail (repeated by Appian, B.C. 2. 1. 3). The populace of Rome was supposed to be supporting the conspirators, up to this time;[22] it can hardly have escaped their notice if guards were posted throughout the city with fire-fighting equipment as well as arms. Did nobody suspect, or ask an idle question of the men on duty? The consul's interest was not to conceal but to advertise the alleged dastardly intentions of his and the state's enemies. And if they really intended to start a fire, no amount of guards could have prevented such action, and once started, it would have been hard to check; accidental fires in Rome were frequent and devastating.

As a final example of the incompetence of Catiline's men, we may take the insurrections which were to have taken place at the appropriate time in various parts of Italy.[23] These were quelled by a handful of arrests in two areas only; the conspirators are stated to have advertised their seditious attempt by suspicious nocturnal meetings (always a bad sign; darkness is the appropriate setting for evil) and movements of loads of weapons. Not content with these elementary errors, like their leader on an earlier occasion, they acted too soon, and in a crazy manner; *veluti per dementiam cuncta simul agebant.* Whatever they may actually have intended or done, it was not dangerous to any but themselves.

III

Catiline's Supporters

If we do not go so far as to say, in view of the foregoing, that the principle which linked the conspirators was ineptitude in plotting, it must be put down, on the authority of Cicero and Sallust, to indebtedness, or straitened financial circumstances. These unfortunate conditions are common enough at all times, and may have been particularly so in the rather disordered society and economy of Rome and Italy in the generation after the Social War. The various lists put forward by Sallust, together with that of Cicero (in Cat. II 18 sqq.) are echoed by the judgment of Plutarch (Cic. 10) that the revolutionary situation was due to the unequal distribution of wealth.[24]

[22] The alleged support for Catiline and subsequent volte-face of the *plebs urbana* is discussed below, p. 206.

[23] An interesting example is Campania, where agents were to start a slave-revolt (Sall. *Cat.* 30. 2, 7.), but Cicero at a later date declared that the area was totally devoid of Catilinarian supporters, *Pro Sulla* 55.

[24] This statement, however, is offset by the factors Plutarch himself mentions, *ib.* 12., namely (i) the pressing of claims by those unfairly restricted by the *Leges Corneliae* (ii)

Cicero's list, upon which Sallust drew – and embroidered – contains seven categories:

(i) heavily-indebted property-owners, who were not genuine revolutionary material (and therefore need not be considered)

(ii) indebted persons who sought the *political* advancement to be obtained through a *coup*

(iii) the Sullan *coloni* who had failed to prosper, through extravagance, and were looking for a second gratuity

(iv) other peasant farmers, corrupted by the example of group (iii)

(v) the indebted element which is *mixtum et turbulentum* and whose death in a revolt will be no loss to the state

(vi) criminals

(vii) young and dissipated gentry.

To the debt-principle is added the principle of political, social and moral irresponsibility. We can see that Sallust's procedure in listing classes of supporters was identical; all corrupt persons naturally flocked to the banner of such a corrupt leader, especially if they were in debt. His first list (Cat. 14) begins with the morally corrupt (after all, it is the corruption of society that is his theme), and continues with spendthrifts and debtors, convicted or unconvicted criminals, professional perjurers and murderers. Later, we hear of the indebted in general, and of *Sullani milites* (16. 4).

A little further on the precise list is given; precise, that is, as regards the few leading personalities, but totally imprecise otherwise, apart from fifteen names, and adding nothing to the conventional categories.[25] We find eleven senators, four equites – in neither case an impressive figure! – a number of the municipal *nobiles*, and several other Roman *nobiles* who hoped for *dominatio*, but were not, so to speak, card-carrying Party members (*paulo occultius* – and so very difficult to identify!), and indeed *iuventus pleraque* (sic!) – with a hint, only, of the backing of Crassus.

A further adornment to the roll comes at 24. 3 with the disreputable ladies mentioned above; Sallust likes to include both sides of every topic[26] and here too the immorality of the fair sex is needed to complement the debauchery of the male members of the conspiracy. The list is then crowned (for the time

the *Rogatio Serviliana* which was said to be supported by many eminent men. There is no evidence that Catiline had anything to do with this, unless one is prepared to see a link through C. Antonius who is said to have aspired to a seat on Rullus' proposed Commission of Ten, and was also allegedly cognisant of Catiline's revolutionary plans.

[25] Appian's version (l. c.) includes also foreigners and slaves, and is merely evidence for the growth of the legend.

[26] Typical examples of the often illogical inclusion of complementary or opposing factors by Sallustian rhetoric are "*ea* (sc. avaritia) – *neque copia neque inopia minuitur*" Cat. 11. 3; "*animus – neque vigiliis neque quietibus sedari poterat*" id. 15. 4; "*honesta atque inhonesta vendere*" id. 30. 4.

being) by the portrait of Sempronia, the companion piece to that of Catiline; but as many scholars have remarked she seems to have had nothing to do with the plot at all, and *a fortiori* we may well dispense with the anonymous female debauchees as well.

At 28. 4 we appear to be presented with more supporters; in fact, the same supporters differently described. The lower orders in Etruria, i.e. the victims of the Sullan land-appropriations, are now found as bed-fellows with their hated supersessors; they are perhaps the same as, or include, those described as *latrones, quoiusque generis.*

Did these categories include any substantial portion of the *plebs urbana*? Apparently not, for Cicero's speeches *ad Quirites* of course imply that none of his hearers had any connection with these disreputable and dangerous elements; while Sallust describes the gloom that seized the community when it was heard that Manlius was in arms (31. 1) and the panic-stricken behaviour of the women. He does indeed declare, a little later, that *omnino cuncta plebes novarum rerum studio Catilinae incepto probabat* (37. 1). But this is not a record of historical fact, only the statement of an axiom from Sallust's political phrase-book;[27] the lower orders are always ready for change, even for violent change. The list of groups favourable to the revolution which follows is not supporting evidence, for it is merely a rehash of the earlier one. Introduced by the impressive-sounding statement *Sed urbana plebs eo praeceps erat*,[28] it depends mainly on the argument that Rome was a cesspool to which all the worst elements found their way – one might compare Cicero's phrase *faex Romuli*. Criminals, bankrupts, spendthrifts, Sulla's veterans, the unemployed, the sons of Sulla's victims, all the opponents of the Senatorial regime, represent potentially a vast mass of backers for Catiline; Sallust accordingly finds himself under the necessity of explaining their failure to lift a finger in open support of the eventual rising by explaining that they only favoured Catiline until they heard of the intended arson; this they considered to be going too far (*immoderatum*), and hastily transferred their enthusiasm to Cicero as the saving agent. *Varium et mutabile semper volgus*; Sallust, like Cicero, has no more time for the lower orders than for the corrupt nobles. In reality, as has been shown above, if such repeated and elaborate preparations had been made, as well as precautions taken against it, the conspirator's intended arson could hardly have been kept a secret; and the alleged change of heart is therefore seen to be as imaginary as the

[27] For the political catchwords see the discussion in W. Steidle, Sallusts historische Monographien, *Historia* Einzelschr. 3, 1958, esp. pp. 12 sqq.

[28] '*eo*' is my conjecture for the difficult and superfluous 'ea' of the codd. '*Praeceps*' in the present sense is used both with 'ad' and with a dative case, so that it seems likely that an adverb of motion could also be used. For a mistake over a similar small word, cf. the last sentence of the same section, where for *id eo* of the better, and *id adeo* of the inferior manuscripts we should read *id ideo* – a simple case of haplography.

alleged support of *cuncta plebes*. Further, Catiline had a reputation as a bitter enemy of the populares (cf. Ascon. in Tog. Cand. 78) and the supposedly wholesale support of the *Sullani* would not endear him to the *plebs urbana*.[29]

Cicero in the speech Pro Murena, 78, remarks on the widespread extent of the conspiracy; no one knows, he observes with some justice, how widely it spreads. But the facts are very different. Firstly, the Allobroges were never supporters of the conspiracy, and to use their envoys' willingness to serve Cicero's plans as evidence of Gallic complicity with Catiline is simply perverse. Gabinius had had to try to impress them by inventing powerful supporters (41. 6) and they quickly reported his approaches to their patron, Quintus Fabius Sanga. Secondly it was claimed that the attraction of the revolutionary movement was so strong that after Catiline's departure a number of persons, not previously involved, left the city to join him. However, the only name maintained is that of one who failed to join him, Fulvius; this prominence is no doubt due to the news-value of his end, but still does not prove that there were many others. Later, Tarquinius was alleged (and not even by Sallust: *aiebant*, 43. 3) to have been arrested while on his way to join the rebel forces; but Tarquinius' story was subsequently rejected even by the excited and already prejudiced Senate. And there was at least the suspicion that Cicero had suborned him.[30]

Lastly, one may consider the actual armed forces that Catiline was able to muster. These amounted, according to an inference from Sallust's words, to about two thousand or more, plus three times that number of unarmed men (56. 2).[31] Consequently, all he could do was to evade action until such time as his confederates in Rome should bring off a successful coup; in that case, he

[29] The view put forward long ago by Beesly (Catiline, Clodius & Tiberius, 1878) that Catiline had a genuine revolutionary programme of reform, could only rest on literal acceptance of the implausible statements about widespread support for the conspiracy.

[30] Cicero was not prepared, despite pressure from Catulus and Piso, to implicate Caesar as well as Crassus. The subsequent discussion will show that Cicero had a motive for trying to discredit Crassus, an elder statesman who far outranked him, but none, at that time, for an attack on the relatively unimportant figure of Caesar. He may well have failed to foresee the future importance of Julius as totally as he failed to foresee that of Octavian; and it would be natural that he should, for the plausible view of G. Stanton, in a paper delivered at the AULLA conference in Sydney, August 1967, is that Caesar was in 63 a failed politician who could only advance himself by bribery on a huge scale and by illegality. *Contra*, Plut. Cic. 20.; but cf. n. 36 below.

[31] By Appian's time the number has grown (cf. note 25 above) to 20,000 men, of whom a quarter were armed (2. 2. 7.). In any case Appian changes the site of the battle, and has Antonius in command, so that little trust can be placed in his account at any point. Dio, 37. 37 speaks of 'no small force' and says that while Catiline and 3000 others fell on the battle-field, Antonius and Metellus were beseiging Faesulae. If the government had plenty of men (and commanders to spare!) the latter action would be logical. One could explain Sallust's failure to mention it by appealing to the 'artistic' presentation of his narrative.

hoped, everyone would come flocking to his standard.[32] But the news from Rome was of a very different kind, and *plerique dilabuntur*. This is strange, for we have both Sallust's earlier assurances (36. 5) that no one betrayed the conspiracy to gain the reward offered by the Senate, and that no one took advantage of the free pardon offered those who deserted Catiline by a given date; and we also have the phenomenon of every one of the remaining adherents fighting to the death on the battlefield of Pistoria. It is of course true that there would be degrees of devotion amongst any set of followers, particularly such a heterogeneous collection as has been suggested by Cicero and Sallust. Yet there seems to be some inconsistency here as in other features of the story; a possible explanation for the total casualties at Pistoria is suggested below, while the earlier *constantia* of the conspirators has been invented or exaggerated to magnify the supposed danger from these unprincipled desperadoes. One might well suggest that the reason why none betrayed the conspiracy was the simple one that there was nothing to betray.

The only possible conclusions from the implausible and quite inconsistent mass of allegations discussed above are

either (i) that Catiline and his followers were incapable of planning or running a revolution; their vacillation and lack of determination, except on the final battle-field when it was too late, show that they never represented a real danger to the state, and certainly nothing like the portentous menace depicted by ancient authors; so that Cicero is guilty of gross exaggeration, at the least;

or (ii) that the plans and the deeds attributed to them had no existence in fact, at least until Cicero's "confrontation" of Catiline, by that time disgusted at his successive defeats, led to the latter's departure to an area where disaffection was known to be brewing; this was in Etruria where a considerable proportion of the rural population fell into two classes, the dispossessed, and the unsuccessful soldier-settlers. Here Catiline tried to raise a force, with indifferent success; owing to the enormous publicity given by Cicero to the whole affair there were a couple of minor disturbances or manifestations of unrest elsewhere, but no fighting, except at Pistoria. Thus the damp squib fizzled out – and Cicero is guilty of fabrication on an impressive scale.

IV. Cicero's Motive

In the mid-sixties, by far the greatest and most powerful figure in the Roman world was Cn. Pompeius. Against the total subjection of the state to

[32] Even of this ill-equipped rabble a great many were slaves, apparently, so that the citizen element in the force is considerably reduced. We cannot accept both of Sallust's statements (a) that Catiline had tried to stir up slave revolts earlier, and (b) that in this

Pompey, which the lessons of recent history caused some to apprehend, there were various movements and intrigues. But it is unrealistic to suppose that there was any kind of split, or enmity, between the old allies, Pompey and M. Licinius Crassus. The view that they were inimical rivals, quite commonly held, seems to rest entirely upon certain statements of Suetonius and Plutarch, which are subjective inferences from later events, or interpretations of certain facts, not records of fact.[33] The facts are different; they show complete cooperation between the two men in 71–70, in 60–59, in 55–4; and little evidence can be adduced to show any discontinuity in friendly relations in the intervals. Crassus' moves at the period relevant to the present study (concerning Egypt, and – if it were his concern – the *Rogatio Serviliana*) do not really indicate any hostility to Pompey, unless one has already decided that as the hostility existed, these activities must be interpreted as anti-Pompeian. They might, *per se*, be pro-Pompeian, but not pro-senatorial; hence Cicero's opposition.[34]

Crassus, in 63 as at other times, held the second place to Pompey and was more or less in alliance with him. If Cicero had aspirations to political eminence (and we may take it that he did), he must either try for the third position, for which he no doubt thought his eloquence and cunning well qualified him; or go even further and aim at supplanting Crassus as Pompey's closest associate. We know from his letters[35] that he fancied himself as a close friend of

desperate situation he would not accept the support of slaves. If the latter is true, it suits better the disgruntled Roman nobleman, seeking violent redress against his faction – rivals, but retaining certain class prejudices to the last.

[33] Suetonius, *Div. Jul.* 19. 2; (Caesar in 59) *Pompeioque M. Crassum reconciliavit veterem inimicum ex consulatu, quem summa discordia simul gesserant* (sic!) so App. 2. 9. but *before* Caesar's consulship. Plut. *Pomp.* 22–3 (= *Crass.* 12) tells of reconciliation by the agency of one C. Aurelius, an unimportant equestrian, at the *end* of the consular year 70; Appian I 121 tells a similar story about the *beginning* of the year – perhaps another of his rationalisations of implausible traditions. Yet another version in Plut. *Lucullus* 42. 5–6 where the opposition of Lucullus and Cato to Pompey's request to the Senate forces him into the arms of Crassus and Caesar. Dio 37. 54 has Caesar uniting the factions of Crassus and Pompey δι' ἔχθρας ἀλλήλοις ... ὄντας; by his time the tradition of enmity was well crystallised. Plutarch's oversimplified, moralising view of political affairs must put any two contemporary figures into rivalry or opposition; cf. e.g. his treatment of the relations between Aristeides and Themistocles. The only passage providing any kind of circumstantial plausibility is that in the life of Crassus; but even here no evidence at all is offered as to why a reconciliation was necessary; the statement that they were enemies is not substantiated and is entirely a backprojection from the events of 51–48 (see also n. 37 inf.). This view is also taken by Adcock, *Marcus Crassus, Millionaire*, 1966, 28.
On the Suetonius passage see L. R. Taylor, Caesar and the Roman Nobility, *TAPhA* 73, 1942, 17.

[34] See note 37 infra.

[35] As early as *ad Att.* I, 1, 2. Pompey is claimed as *amicus* – but not a very *certus amicus* as Atticus is being asked to make sure that Pompey's votes do go to Cicero. In *Fam.* V 7 (? June 62) we hear that Pompey had failed to congratulate Cicero on the Catiline affair.

Magnus, about this time and even a year or two later; could his oversanguine hope of the second place in the state have been the reason for his unsuccessful attempt to implicate Crassus in the Catiline affair? (Sall. Cat. 48.)[36] But Cicero did not carry the guns to defeat Crassus, whose hold on the nobiles and others is made apparent by the outcry at the inspired allegations.[37] As a *novus homo* Cicero had only the *clientela* gained by his court practice; this was certainly not a negligible quantity, but unequally matched against the forces of the Establishment, the '*Family Compact*' as it has been called.[38] Moreover, he had not courted the *populares* by supporting popular legislation other than the *Lex Manilia* (when he seems to have seized the opportunity of backing a certain winner), precisely because he had identified himself with the moneyed classes; he would like to identify with the senatorial aristocracy too, if only they would let him, in preference to the despised lower orders, whom he could flatter on occasion. It was only when it came to swaying an audience that he could compete with a man of such *auctoritas* as Crassus. This he did not realise at this time, and sought to make the utmost capital out of his year as consul, in order to obtain a position of *auctoritas* as near as possible to that of the two great men. He needed more than mere efficient administration – good govern-

This can no longer be a matter for surprise. Then *ad Att.* I, 13. (Pompey) '*nos amat, aperte laudat, occulte ... invidet*'. *Att.* I, 18. 6. '*Familiaris noster – sic est enim – volo te hoc scire*'. *Att. I, 19. 4* Cicero's (qualified) support of the Lex Flavia sponsored by Pompey id. 7 *quidam improbi qui contentionem fore aliquam mihi cum Pompeio ... arbitrarentur* (preceded by report of a supposed compliment from Magnus on his contribution to the '*salus imperi et orbis*'!) *Att.* II, 1, May 60 (if there were any breach between Cicero and Pompey, the whole political situation would be awry).

Att. II 3. 3 (Dec. 60) Cornelius Balbus assured Cicero that Caesar would consult Cicero and Pompey at all times and would try to unite (*coniungeret*) Pompey and Crassus. (But what Balbus said is not evidence, and *coniungeret* – as Adcock has pointed out, *Marcus Crassus, Millionaire*, 1966 p. 43 – does not mean that any reconciliation was necessary). But Cicero sees a slight rift within the lute – *sed me* κατακλείς *mea illa commovet quae est in libro* III – and we may suspect the grapes were beginning to turn sour.

[36] The 'refusal' of Cicero (Sall. *Cat.* 49. 1.) to implicate Caesar also is explained in n. 30 above. Crassus and Caesar were scarcely comparable at this time; the latter was, no doubt, up-and-coming, as praetor-designate and pontifex, but he had behind him no military career, and for his lavish expenditure to win popularity he needed either the support of Crassus or a successful foreign war, if not both. Crassus on the other hand was an elder statesman, consular of some years standing and ex-censor, while he also had a modicum of military *gloria* to adorn the status his financial interests gave him.

[37] The *clientela* of Crassus is said by Sallust, ib., to consist of *mali*; and since Pompey was at this period opposed by the *boni*, i.e. the Senatorial factions, the two were more likely to act in association than in opposition. Crassus (and Caesar too) had not supported Cicero's candidature, but rather that of C. Antonius, and perhaps of Catiline too. (Ascon. In Tog. Cand. 74).

[38] I borrow this phrase from E. D. Eagle's article, Catiline and the Concordia Ordinum, *Phoenix* 3, 1949, 15, a valuable study.

ment makes no headlines – but some positive achievement, such as the repression of a revolutionary movement, the prestige resulting from which, when added to his eloquence and unscrupulousness, would render him invaluable to the leading dynast. If the year should pass uneventfully, he would emerge as just one of a list of more or less undistinguished consulars, and his great chance would be gone for ever.

Accordingly he decided the year 63 was to provide the occasion for him to appear in a leading, almost a unique, political role; and the Conspiracy of Catiline was, one might say, made to order (Cicero's order) for that purpose. In the end, his scheme failed, for the Third Man turned out to be the neglected praetor-designate of 63, whose advice against the execution of the prisoners Cicero so scornfully ignored. The Triumvirate first cold-shouldered Cicero, then threw him to the wolves.[39] Had the gamble succeeded – and at the time Cicero convinced himself that it had – the saviour and protector of Rome against her enemy within might have stood almost on a level with the destroyer of her enemies abroad; their combined *auctoritas* might well become *potentia*, not *paucorum*, in Sallust's phrase, but *duorum*, or at least *trium*.

It will of course be objected that Cicero's whole approach to politics was different from this; that his great slogans "*concordia ordinum*" and "*otium cum dignitate*" indicate the political idealist, not the unscrupulous seeker after personal advancement and the "*gloria*" pursued by all noble Romans. But whatever his admirable qualities, and however eloquently and persuasively he puts forward ideal governments and societies, it can hardly be open to doubt that Cicero was not guileless, or that his statements, both public and private, often conceal more than they convey. In other fields of activity, forensic or marital, the orator displayed a quite remarkable lack of scruple; in political oratory, the scurrilous attacks on Clodius are surpassed by the incredible invective against Antony; Juvenal may have admired the "Second Philippic", but he was a practitioner of that trade too. It may be urged that Cicero composed the attacks on Antony when he was old, disappointed and disillusioned; while accepting such a proposition, it is not necessary to assume that the leopard had changed his spots. It is quite unrealistic to imagine Cicero as a starry-eyed, pure-souled idealist in one part only of his activities; and his own cynical reference to Cato behaving as if he were in Plato's Utopia, instead of amongst the "faex Romuli", suggests rather that he was well acquainted with those expedients which politicians explain as "political necessity." Cicero knew Roman politics for a sewer, and was willing to immerse himself therein, while

[39] If Cicero was responsible for the attempt to incriminate Crassus, and in view of his violent reaction to Caesar's counsel of moderation, it is hardly surprising that Pompey did not protect Cicero from being disciplined at the hands of his fellow-triumvirs by exile. Sterner measures were employed by the Second Triumvirate.

proclaiming his own undefiledness, the more emphatically by contrast with a Catiline, a Clodius, an Antony.[40]

Concordia ordinum, if it were a programme at all, must have involved some gain for Cicero personally; it was not likely to have been totally altruistic – political programmes rarely are.[41] Its basis was, one may assess, that he, as leader of the equestrian moneyed class, should be accepted as an ally of, or collaborator with, the *nobiles*; if the *nobiles* were being overborne by a dynast (most likely a *popularis*) then he had to be acceptable equally to that dynast, leaving any recalcitrant *nobiles* to bite their finger nails, but most of them to accept the dual guidance of a Pompey and a Cicero. A few years later, when this programme was seen to be as illusory as a truly idealistic one would have been, he varied the tune to *otium cum dignitate* – which equally emphasised the retention of the status quo and the quelling of any threat to property.

There had been, it is hardly necessary to recall, a number of fairly recent attempts to upset the status quo. Cicero's official (and probably his personal) attitude to these was, as a rule, one of disapproval if not of outright condemnation. It is possible that Plutarch's observation (quoted above p. 204) on the revolutionary situation as between the "haves" and the "have-nots" represents a very real tension in both Italian society and Roman politics at the time; it may, however, in Plutarch's manner, be largely an inference from Cicero and Sallust, on whom Plutarch leaned no less heavily than many moderns. The "*egentes*" will have seemed to Cicero, even allowing for his exaggeration and tendentiousness in public pronouncements, to present a real danger to the existing order; they were numerous, and needed only a leader.[42] No one would doubt the adequacy of their motivation for revolutionary legislation, if not for revolution; their domination would mean the wrecking of the comfortable situation of the complacent middle class, whose spokesman Cicero claimed to be. Therefore, it was in the role of protector of the established order against these enemies that he must appear.

[40] The estimation of Cicero's character has of course always had to reckon with the fact that most of what we 'know' about him comes from his own pen. Most scholars nowadays have their eyes open to the misrepresentation of which he was capable, in court or *contio*, but in general they accept the letters as ingenuous. (A typical attitude in Tyrrell and Purser, *The Letters of Cicero*[3] I 12 sq.) However one does not always put on paper one's inmost thoughts or secret ambitions, even for the benefit of close friends or members of one's family.

[41] The debasement of the political vocabulary at this period has been studied by D. C. Earl, *The Political Thought of Sallust*, 1961, pp. 52 sqq. He shows how *concordia* was thought to be incompatible with the programme of the *populares*. See also H. Strasburger, *Concordia Ordinum*. diss. Frankfort 1931 (repr. Amsterdam 1956); S. Wirzubski, *Otium cum dignitate*, *JRS* 44, 1954, 1–14, and W. Steidle, op. cit.

[42] Hence the appositeness for Cicero's purpose of Catiline's elaborate metaphorical presentation of the situation, Cic. *Pro Murena* 51. Catiline's predilection for imagery, already noted, proved extremely valuable to Cicero.

But to defend the state against *potential* enemies is not nearly so spectacular as to defend it against actual violence. Nor is an amorphous, leaderless mass so impressive as an ambitious and unscrupulous revolutionary leader. The latter had to be found; and there he came upon his cue, in the person of "*L. Catilina, nobili genere natus, ... magna vi et animi et corporis.*" No merely contemptible person would fill the role which the dramatist Cicero had in mind. Catiline's detractors have little good to say of him, but he had his parts; as Cicero himself is at pains to point out in a slightly different context (*Pro Caelio* 12–14). It should also be remembered that in order to win support for his own candidature, Cicero had considered defending Catiline against a charge on which he thought him clearly guilty, but expected an acquittal because the right men were in the right positions. (Ad. Att. I 2.) But Catiline, whether or not seriously embarrassed by debt,[43] was thoroughly disgruntled. His repeated reverses at the polls, coupled with vexatious prosecutions, had put him in a frame of mind where his judgment could be sufficiently unsettled by Cicero's provocation to venture on a foolhardy enterprise. That provocation reached its first peak in the "*Oratio in Toga Candida,*" a thoroughgoing and ruthless attack on all phases of Catiline's life and career. Catiline's personal reputation, his private and his public life, were not above suspicion; I shall not attempt to disentangle mere allegation from fact, a task beyond the powers of Asconius, (In Tog. Cand. 82) who was doubtless in a better position to attempt it. But rumour and suspicion were adequate as grist for Cicero's mill, and enabled him to lend colour to his attack by suggesting that one who showed little scruple or moderation in some respects would be likely to act with similar lack of restraint against the established order; an argument which may be adapted for use against Cicero himself. At any rate, his plan succeeded, at first.[44]

It will have appeared, from the account given above of Catiline's alleged subversive activities, that there is no real evidence of a coup or a rising before the time, a year later, when Cicero's rabble-rousing suggested that safety lay in leaving Rome. However, *at that juncture, and not before,* he began to prepare for an armed rising, directed in particular against the growing *potentia* of Cicero.[45]

[43] Sallust's sweeping assertions are not borne out by any evidence of indebtedness, only by the assumption that Catiline's revolutionary schemes were aimed at extricating him from financial difficulties; and if the letter in 35. 3 is genuine, Catiline's own view of his financial position was not so desperate.

[44] The Senate (or a majority of its members) appears to have accepted Cicero's frenetic accusations only when provided with 'documentary evidence'. It has been fashionable to justify Cicero's gross exaggerations as to the imminent danger by the necessity of securing some strong action; for a typical view, see F. B. Marsh, *History of the Roman World 146–30* B.C.[2] 1953, 167.

[45] Plutarch, *Cic.* 23, records the story that the tribune Metellus Nepos (? in Dec. 63) moved to recall Pompey to deal with the menace, not of Catiline's rebellion, but of Cicero's δυναστεία. If true, this accords well with my view of the situation.

An open protest against the consul's abuse of his position was to be made by the tribune Bestia; but as the latter only took up office on Dec. 10, this must have been intended to take place at least a month after Catiline's departure, and peaceful, constitutional methods were therefore not yet totally discarded.

The role of the Allobrogic envoys is another piece of Cicero's elaborate stage-management. It has been shown that these Gauls were not supporters of Catiline in whatever capacity, or whatever they supposed his intentions to be.[46] Their collaboration with the consul enabled him to present the Senate with what had been totally lacking till now, any "evidence" other than hearsay and surmise about the intended coup. One P. Umbrenus, not previously heard of and of no standing (according to Cic. In Cat. 3. 14 a *libertinus*) persuaded the envoys to hold colloquia with discontented persons associated with Catiline. Subsequently they acted in all things just as the consul wished or instructed them to do; a circumstance which admits the suspicion that Umbrenus was put up by Cicero himself. T. Volturcius appears also to have been one of Cicero's men; he put on a splendid act at the Pons Mulvius, and again at the Senate hearing; a brave show of resistance to arrest, in the knowledge that he was safe; then an opening denial, to convince the now prepared Senators of his guilt, followed by an admission, which however contained almost no factual evidence; he said he knew no more than the Gauls, who had merely been asked by Lentulus to get a letter to Catiline out of Rome in their diplomatic bag. This ignorance was explained by his recent membership of the conspiracy; it was only a few days since he had joined it – "planted" on Gabinius by Cicero.

Things were going swimmingly for Cicero. On the pre-arranged testimony of the foreign envoys and a few written documents whose contents were mildly subversive in tone, the leading "conspirators" were arrested, and after the celebrated debate in the Senate which has been discussed *ad nauseam* and will be neglected here[47] Cicero secured their condemnation. Not only that, he per-

[46] The fact that the Allobroges were heavily indebted merely puts them into the same category as other groups, *equites* et al., whose support for, or indeed knowledge of, any revolutionary plans was purely hypothetical. Nor does the fact that they subsequently (and independently) revolted prove anything more than that Cicero, knowing their situation, considered them suitable bait for his trap. Indeed, it is not impossible that he promised them some inducement, the non-fulfilment of which helped to provoke their subsequent rising.

[47] It was pointed out by Sir Ronald Syme, during the discussion following the original presentation of this thesis, that the strangest feature of this peculiar debate was that the 'illegalist' Caesar spoke for conservative legitimacy of action (in fact, for no penalty at all – for the time being at least) while Cato, the stern supporter of the laws and of *mos maiorum*, urged the doubtfully legal execution. (The legal position under the *S C ultimum* is a difficult one, and requires separate treatment.) Caesar was perhaps the only member both shrewd enough to see through the consul's game and courageous enough to stand out against the current of emotion whipped up by Cicero. There is even a hint in the speech Sallust wrote for Caesar that not all a consul's allegations are to be believed; the tone is ironical and the touch may be authentic. (*Cat.* 51. 36).

sonally and in all haste had them executed; he could not leave them alive, to expose his plot when the excitement had died down. He had gone so far that he could not draw back, without admitting his own contrivance. Attempts have been made to prove that Cicero had no other course open to him, either legally or from the point of view of political expediency. However, at that moment the predominant consideration was his *own* political advantage. In such complex schemes it is difficult to avoid some miscalculation; yet if Cicero had succeeded in becoming one of the Big Three, he would not have had to face the *invidia* arising from this episode, and so we may assume he took a calculated risk. Note that all those arrested met the same fate, without any attempt being made to distinguish degrees of guilt.

The argument that Cicero executed the prisoners out of hand in the hope of escaping future retribution finds support in the extraordinary circumstances that no single prisoner was taken on the battle-field of Pistoria. Why should these allegedly degenerate and unprincipled scoundrels fight to the death – and this despite the fact that they were "routed" (*fusas copias*, Sall. Cat. 60. 7) early in the engagement? Only because the government forces had received the stringent order "no quarter." Dead men tell no tales, in prison or on the battle field. Observe that C. Antonius, if not an *amicus* of Catiline, then certainly a one-time associate, had a convenient attack of gout and took no part in the liquidation of which he had nominal charge. He could not, subsequently, be beaten with the same rod as Cicero, "*caedes civium.*"[48]

With the extermination of the scape-goat and those of his supporters who mattered, Cicero stood at the height of his glory, and hoped to find himself on the level of Pompey.[49] The gradual discomfiture of his hopes, his disillusionment and embitterment, are another story. But this, admittedly largely hypothetical, reconstruction of his activities in 64–3 seems to make better sense than the accepted version of the so-called Catilinarian Conspiracy.[50]

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[48] Technically of course those who fought under Catiline's banner (the celebrated Marian eagle, in fact!) were no longer *cives* but *hostes*; and perhaps I am attributing too much scruple to a member of the *gens Antonia*. A comparison with the final battles of the slave revolt (Plut. *Crass.* 11) may not be exact; though these rebels fell 'with all their wounds before', they knew the alternative was crucifixion, the actual fate of all the survivors.

[49] Honoured as *pater patriae* – since the Senate, even if they realised the deception, could hardly act otherwise than to laud the man who had rid the state of this imagined threat; they had voted for the death penalty and committed themselves wholeheartedly to the Ciceronian view of the conspiracy. The fact that Cicero so constantly harped on these events in later years may suggest that others had begun to allow them to recede into a more correct perspective.

[50] The principal objection to this thesis was put by Mr. R. D. Milns, who observed that there are inconsistencies and contradictions in accounts of modern political plots, e.g. the "communist plot" in Indonesia in 1966. However in the case of Catiline the tradition almost entirely stems from the version of one of the principal actors, he who had most to gain from exaggerating the importance of the affair and the criminal designs of its alleged participants.