THE ROMAN REVOLUTION

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1939

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

II. THE ROMAN OLIGARCHY

WHEN the patricians expelled the kings from Rome, they were careful to retain the kingly power, vested in a pair of annual magistrates; and though compelled in time to admit the plebeians to political equality, certain of the great patrician houses, Valerii, Fabii and Cornelii, none the less held in turn a dynastic and almost regal position.[1] The Senate again, being a permanent body, arrogated to itself power, and after conceding sovranty to the assembly of the People was able to frustrate its exercise. The two consuls remained at the head of the government, but policy was largely directed by ex-consuls. These men ruled, as did the Senate, not in virtue of written law, but through *auctoritas*; and the name of *principes civitatis* came suitably to be applied to the more prominent of the consulars.[2]

The consulate did not merely confer power upon its holder and dignity for life: it ennobled a family for ever. Within the Senate, itself an oligarchy, a narrow ring, namely the *nobiles*, or descendants of consular houses, whether patrician or plebeian in origin, regarded the supreme magistracy as the prerogative of birth and the prize of ambition.[3]

The patricians continued to wield an influence beyond all relation to their number; and the *nobiles*, though a wider class, formed yet a distinct minority in the Senate. The *nobiles* are predominant: yet in the last generation of the Free State, after the ordinances of Sulla the Dictator, there were many senators whose fathers had held only the lower magistracies or even new-comers, sons of Roman knights. Of the latter, in the main deriving from the local aristocracies, the holders of property, power and office in the towns of Italy, the proportion was clearly much higher than has sometimes been imagined. Of a total of six

[1] Along with Claudii, Aemilii and Manlii they formed an aristocracy within the patriciate itself, being the so-called *gentes maiores*. On the patrician *gentes*, cf. Mommsen, *Römische Forschungen* I² (1864), 69 ff.

[2] M. Gelzer, *Die Nobilität der r. Republik* (1912), 35 ff.; A. Gwosdz, *Der Begriff des r. princeps* (Diss. Breslau, 1933).

[3] Gelzer's definition (*Die Nobilität*, 21 ff.) is here accepted. 'Nobilis' may not be quite a technical term, but its connotation is pretty clear. (As Gelzer shows, Cicero, with all the goodwill in the world, cannot attribute *nobilitas* to C. Fonteius and L. Licinius Murena, descendants of ancient and famous houses of praetorian rank.) Gelzer's lucid explanation of the character of Roman society and Roman politics, namely a nexus of personal obligations, is here followed closely.

hundred senators the names of some four hundred can be identified, many of them obscure or casually known.[1] The remainder have left no record of activity or fame in a singularly well-documented epoch of history.

Not mere admission to the Senate but access to the consulate was jealously guarded by the *nobiles*. It was a scandal and a pollution if a man without ancestors aspired to the highest magistracy of the Roman Republic[2]—he might rise to the praetorship but no higher, save by a rare combination of merit, industry and protection. The *nobilitas* did not, it is true, stand like a solid rampart to bar all intruders. No need for that—the conservative Roman voter could seldom be induced to elect a man whose name had not been known for centuries as a part of the history of the Republic. Hence the *novus homo* (in the strict sense of the term the first member of a family to secure the consulate and consequent ennoblement) was a rare phenomenon at Rome.[3] Before the sovran people he might boast how he had led them to victory in a mighty contest and had broken into the citadel of the nobility:[4] he was less assertive in the Senate, more candid to his intimate friends. There was no breach in the walls—a faction among the *nobiles* had opened the gates. Cicero would have preserved both dignity and peace of mind had not ambition and vanity blinded him to the true causes of his own elevation.[5]

The political life of the Roman Republic was stamped and swayed, not by parties and programmes of a modern and parliamentary character, not by the ostensible opposition between Senate and People, *Optimates* and *Populares*, *nobiles* and *novi homines*, but by the strife for power, wealth and glory. The contestants were the *nobiles* among themselves, as individuals or in groups, open in the elections and in the courts of law, or masked by secret intrigue. As in its beginning, so in its last generation, the Roman Commonwealth, 'res publica populi

[1] P. Willems, *Le Sénat de la république romaine* I (1878), 427 ff., established this total for the Senate of 55 B.C.

[2] Sallust, *BJ* 63, 6 (cf. *BC* 23, 6): 'etiam tum alios magistratus plebs, consulatum nobilitas inter se per manus tradebat. novos nemo tam clarus neque tam egregiis factis erat, quin indignus illo honore et is quasi pollutus haberetur.' Compare the remarks of L. Sergius Catilina, a noble and a patrician: 'quod non dignos homines honore honestatos videbam' (*BC* 35, 3); 'M. Tullius, inquilinus civis urbis Romae' (ib. 31, 7).

[3] Cf. H. Strasburger, P-W XVII, 1223 ff.

[4] Cicero, *De lege agraria* II, 3 ff.

[5] The manual on electioneering written by Q. Cicero (the *Commentariolum petitionis*) reveals much of the truth about his candidature.

Romani', was a name; a feudal order of society still survived in a city-state and governed an empire. Noble families determined the history of the Republic, giving their names to its epochs. There was an age of the Scipiones: not less of the Metelli.

Though concealed by craft or convention, the *arcana imperii* of the *nobilitas* cannot evade detection.[1] Three weapons the *nobiles* held and wielded, the family, money and the political alliance (*amicitia* or *factio*, as it was variously labelled). The wide and remembered ramifications of the Roman noble clan won concentrated support for the rising politician. The *nobiles* were dynasts, their daughters princesses. Marriage with a well-connected heiress therefore became an act of policy and an alliance of powers, more important than a magistracy, more binding than any compact of oath or interest. Not that women were merely the instruments of masculine policy. Far from it: the daughters of the great houses commanded political influence in their own right, exercising a power beyond the reach of many a senator. Of such dominating forces behind the phrases and the façade of constitutional government the most remarkable was Servilia, Cato's half-sister, Brutus' mother—and Caesar's mistress.

The noble was a landed proprietor, great or small. But money was scarce and he did not wish to sell his estates: yet he required ready cash at every turn, to support the dignity of his station, to flatter the populace with magnificence of games and shows, to bribe voters and jurors, to subsidize friends and allies. Hence debts, corruption and venality at Rome, oppression and extortion in the provinces. Crassus was in the habit of observing that nobody should be called rich who was not able to maintain an army on his income.[2] Crassus should have known.

The competition was fierce and incessant. Family influence and wealth did not alone suffice. From ambition or for safety, politicians formed compacts. *Amicitia* was a weapon of politics, not a sentiment based on congeniality. Individuals capture attention and engross history, but the most revolutionary changes in Roman politics were the work of families or of a few men. A small party, zealous for reform—or rather, perhaps, from hostility to Scipio Aemilianus—put up the tribune Ti. Sempronius Gracchus. The Metelli backed Sulla. The last dynastic

[1] Compare Münzer's comments on the deliberate concealment by the *nobiles*, for their own ends, of the true character of Roman political life, *Römische Adelsparteien u. Adelsfamilien* (1920), 427 f.

[2] Cicero, *De off.* 1, 25; in a milder form, Pliny, *NH* 33, 134; Plutarch, *Crassus* 2.

compact in 60 B.C. heralded the end of the Free State; and a re-alignment of forces precipitated war and revolution ten years later.

Amicitia presupposes *inimicitia*, inherited or acquired: a statesman could not win power and influence without making many enemies. The *novus homo* had to tread warily. Anxious not to offend a great family, he must shun where possible the role of prosecutor in the law-courts and win gratitude by the defence even of notorious malefactors. The *nobilis*, however, would take pride in his feuds.[1] Yet he had ever to be on the alert, jealous to guard his *dignitas*, that is, rank, prestige and honour, against the attacks of his personal enemies.[2] The plea of security and self-defence against aggression was often invoked by a politician when he embarked upon a course of unconstitutional action.

The dynast required allies and supporters, not from his own class only. The sovran people of a free republic conferred its favours on whom it pleased.[3] Popularity with the plebs was therefore essential. It was possessed in abundance both by Caesar and by his bitter enemy, L. Domitius Ahenobarbus. To win a following at elections, to manage bribery, intimidation or rioting, the friendly offices of lowly agents such as influential freedmen were not despised. Above all, it was necessary to conciliate the second order in state and society, the Roman knights, converted into a ruinous political force by the tribune C. Gracchus when he set them in control of the law-courts and in opposition to the Senate. The *Equites* belonged, it is true, to the same social class as the great bulk of the senators: the contrast lay in rank and prestige.

The knights preferred comfort, secret power and solid profit to the burdens, the dangers and the extravagant display of a senator's life. Cicero, a knight's son from a small town, succumbed to his talents and his ambition. Not so T. Pomponius Atticus, the great banker. Had Atticus so chosen, wealth, repute and influence could easily have procured a seat in the Senate.[4] But Atticus did not wish to waste his money on senseless luxury

[1] Tacitus, *Dial.* 40, 1: 'ipsa inimicitiarum gloria.'

[2] On this concept, H. Wegehaupt, *Die Bedeutung u. Anwendung von dignitas* (Diss. Breslau, 1932): in the sense of 'personal honour', ib. 36 ff.

[3] Cicero, *Pro Sestio* 137. Office was accessible to the 'industria ac virtus' of all citizens. There was not even a property-qualification. The letter of the law likewise knew no distinction between rich and poor.

[4] Nepos, *Vita Attici* 6, 2: 'honores non petiit, cum ei paterent propter vel gratiam vel dignitatem.'

or electoral corruption, to risk station, fortune and life in futile political contests. Averse from ambition and wedded to quiet, the knights could claim no title of civic virtue, no share in the splendour and pride of the governing class. For that surrender they were scorned by senators. They did not mind.[1] Some lived remote and secure in the enjoyment of hereditary estates, content with the petty dignity of municipal office in the towns of Italy. Others, however, grasped at the spoils of empire, as *publicani* in powerful companies farming the taxes of the provinces and as bankers dominating finance, commerce and industry. The *publicani* were the fine flower of the equestrian order, the ornament and bulwark of the Roman State.[2] Cicero never spoke against these 'homines honestissimi' and never let them down: they were in the habit of requiting his services by loans or legacies.[3]

The gains of finance went into land. Men of substance and repute grew yet richer from the spoils of the provinces, bought the farms of small peasants, encroached upon public land, seized through mortgages the ancestral property of senators, and thus built up large estates in Italy. Among senators were great holders of property like Pompeius and Ahenobarbus with whole armies of tenants or slaves, and financial magnates like Crassus. But the wealth of knights often outstripped many an ancient senatorial family, giving them a greater power than the nominal holders of dignity and office.[4]

Equestrian or senatorial, the possessing classes stood for the existing order and were suitably designated as *boni*. The mainstay of this sacred army of the wealthy was clearly the financiers. Many senators were their partners, allies or advocates. Concord and firm alliance between Senate and knights would therefore arrest revolution—or even reform, for these men could not be expected to have a personal interest in redistributing property or changing the value of money. The financiers were strong enough to ruin any politician or general who sought to secure fair treatment for provincials or reform in the Roman State through the re-establishment of the peasant farmer. Among the victims

[1] Sallust, *Hist.* 1, 55, 9M: 'illa quies et otium cum libertate quae multi probi potius quam laborem cum honoribus capessebant'; Cicero, *Pro Cluentio* 153; *Pro Rabirio Postumo* 13.

[2] Cicero, *Pro Plancio* 23: 'flos enim equitum Romanorum, ornamentum civitatis, firmamentum rei publicae publicanorum ordine continetur.'

[3] For example, Fufidius, an 'eques Romanus ornatissimus', left money to Cicero (*Ad Att.* 11, 14, 3). On the activities of this man in Macedonia, cf. *In Pisonem* 86.

[4] Lucullus, owner of a palace at Tusculum, pointed out that he had a knight and a freedman for neighbours (Cicero, *De legibus* 3, 30).

of their enmity will be reckoned Lucullus, Catilina and Gabinius.

It was no accident, no mere manifestation of Roman conservatism or snobbery, that the leaders of revolution in Rome were usually impoverished or idealistic nobles, that they found support in the higher ranks of the aristocracy rather than in the lower. It is all too easy to tax the Roman nobility in the last epoch of its rule with vice and corruption, obscurantism and oppression. The knights must not be left out of the indictment. Among the old nobility persisted a tradition of service to the State that could transcend material interests and combine class-loyalty with a high ideal of Roman patriotism and imperial responsibility. Not so among the financiers.

The Roman constitution was a screen and a sham. Of the forces that lay behind or beyond it, next to the noble families the knights were the most important. Through alliance with groups of financiers, through patronage exercised in the law-courts and ties of personal allegiance contracted in every walk of life, the political dynast might win influence not merely in Rome but in the country-towns of Italy and in regions not directly concerned with Roman political life. Whether he held authority from the State or not, he could thus raise an army on his own initiative and resources.

The soldiers, now recruited from the poorest classes in Italy, were ceasing to feel allegiance to the State; military service was for livelihood, or from constraint, not a natural and normal part of a citizen's duty. The necessities of a world-empire and the ambition of generals led to the creation of extraordinary commands in the provinces. The general had to be a politician, for his legionaries were a host of clients, looking to their leader for spoil in war and estates in Italy when their campaigns were over. But not veterans only were attached to his cause—from his provincial commands the dynast won to his allegiance and personal following (*clientela*) towns and whole regions, provinces and nations, kings and tetrarchs.

Such were the resources which ambition required to win power in Rome and direct the policy of the imperial Republic as consul or as one of the *principes*. Cicero lacked the full equipment. He imagined that oratory and intrigue would suffice. A programme, it is true, he developed, negative but by no means despicable.[1]

[1] H. Strasburger, *Concordia Ordinum*, Diss. Frankfurt (Leipzig, 1931). A cardinal passage is *Pro Sestio* 97 f., on the definition of 'optimus quisque'.

It was an alliance of interest and sentiment to combat the forces of dissolution represented by the army-commanders and their political agents. It took shape at first in his consulate as *concordia ordinum* between Senate and knights against the *improbi*, but later widened to a *consensus omnium bonorum* and embraced *tota Italia*. But it was an ideal rather than a programme: there was no Ciceronian party. The Roman politician had to be the leader of a faction. Cicero fell short of that eminence both when a consul and when a consular, or senior statesman, through lack of family-connexions and *clientela*.

Within the framework of the Roman constitution, beside the consulate, was another instrument of power, the tribunate, an anomalous historical survival given new life by the party of the Gracchi and converted into a means of direct political action, negative with the veto, positive with the initiation of laws. The use of this weapon in the interests of reform or of personal ambition became a mark of the politicians who arrogated to themselves the name of *populares*—often sinister and fraudulent, no better than their rivals, the men in power, who naturally invoked the specious and venerable authority of the Senate.[1] But there were to be found in their ranks a few sincere reformers, enemies of misrule and corruption, liberal in outlook and policy. Moreover, the tribunate could be employed for conservative ends by aristocratic demagogues.[2]

With the Gracchi all the consequences of empire—social, economic and political—broke loose in the Roman State, inaugurating a century of revolution. The traditional contests of the noble families were complicated, but not abolished, by the strife of parties largely based on economic interest, of classes even, and of military leaders. Before long the Italian allies were dragged into Roman dissensions. The tribune M. Livius Drusus hoped to enlist them on the side of the dominant oligarchy. He failed, and they rose against Rome in the name of freedom and justice. On the *Bellum Italicum* supervened civil war. The party led by Marius, Cinna and Carbo was defeated. L. Cornelius

[1] Sallust, *BC* 38, 3: 'namque, uti paucis verum absolvam, post illa tempora quicumque rem publicam agitavere, honestis nominibus, alii sicuti populi iura defenderent, pars quo senatus auctoritas maxumá foret, bonum publicum simulantes pro sua quisque potentia certabant.' The passage refers to the generation after 70 B.C. Cf., however, no less pessimistic remarks about an earlier period, *Hist.* I, 12 M.

[2] There was no party of the *populares*; cf. H. Strasburger, in the articles 'Optimates' and 'Populares' (P-W, forthcoming).

Sulla prevailed and settled order at Rome again through violence and bloodshed. Sulla decimated the knights, muzzled the tribunate, and curbed the consuls. But even Sulla could not abolish his own example and preclude a successor to his domination.

Sulla resigned power after a brief tenure. Another year and he was dead (78 B.C.). The government which he established lasted for nearly twenty years. Its rule was threatened at the outset by a turbulent and ambitious consul, M. Aemilius Lepidus, claiming to restore the rights of the tribunes and supported by a resurgence of the defeated causes in Italy. The tribunes were only a pretext, but the Marian party—the proscribed and the dispossessed—was a permanent menace. The long and complicated war in Italy had barely ended. The Samnites, Sulla's enemy and Rome's, had been extirpated; and the other Sabellic peoples of the Apennine were broken and reduced. But Etruria, despoiled and resentful, rose again for Lepidus against the Roman oligarchy.[1]

Lepidus was suppressed. But disorders continued, even to a rising of the slaves in southern Italy. Then a *coup d'état* of two generals (70 B.C.), restoring the tribunate, destroyed Sulla's system but left the *nobiles* nominally in power. They were able to repel and crush the attempt of the patrician demagogue L. Sergius Catilina to raise a revolution in Italy—for Catilina attacked property as well as privilege. The government of the *nobiles*, supported by a sacred union of the possessing classes, by the influence of their *clientela* among the plebs and by due subservience towards the financial interests, might have perpetuated in Rome and Italy its harsh and hopeless rule. The Empire broke it.

The repercussions of the ten years' war in Italy echoed over all the world. The Senate was confronted by continuous warfare in the provinces and on the frontiers of its wide and cumbersome dominion—against Sertorius and the last survivors of the Marian faction in Spain, against the great Mithridates and against the Pirates. Lack of capacity among the principal members of the ruling group, or, more properly, personal ambition and political intrigue, constrained them, in mastering these manifold dangers, to derogate from oligarchic practice and confer exorbitant military power on a single general, to the salvation of Rome's empire and to their own ruin.

[1] Sallust, *Hist.* 1, 67 M; 69; 77, 6, &c.

As an oligarchy is not a figment of political theory, a specious fraud, or a mere term of abuse, but very precisely a collection of individuals, its shape and character, so far from fading away on close scrutiny, at once stands out, solid and manifest. In any age of the history of Republican Rome about twenty or thirty men, drawn from a dozen dominant families, hold a monopoly of office and power. From time to time, families rise and fall: as Rome's rule extends in Italy, the circle widens from which the nobility is recruited and renewed. None the less, though the composition of the oligarchy is slowly transformed with the transformation of the Roman State, the manner and fashion of dynastic politics changes but little; and though noble houses suffered defeat in the struggle for power, and long eclipse, they were saved from extinction by the primitive tenacity of the Roman family and the pride of their own traditions. They waited in patience to assert their ancient predominance.

When the rule of the Etruscan Tarquinii collapsed, the earliest heirs to their power were the Valerii and the Fabii.[1] To the *Fasti* of the Roman Republic these great houses each contributed forty-five consuls, exceeded only by the patrician Cornelii with their numerous branches. Sulla the Dictator, himself a patrician and a Cornelius, did his best to restore the patriciate, sadly reduced in political power in the previous generation, not so much through Marius as from internal disasters and the rise of dynastic houses of the plebeian nobility. But neither Valerii nor Fabii stand in the forefront of his oligarchy. The predominance of the Valerii had passed long ago, and the Fabii had missed a generation in the consulate.[2] The Fabii and the main line of the Cornelii Scipiones had been saved from extinction only by taking in adoption sons of the resplendent Aemilii.[3] But the power of the Cornelii was waning. Their strength now lay in the inferior Lentuli, whose lack of dangerous enterprise was compensated by domestic fertility and a tenacious instinct for survival.

Some of the patrician clans like the Furii, whose son Camillus saved Rome from the Gauls, had vanished utterly by now, or at least could show no more consuls. The Sulpicii and Manlii had lost prominence. The Servilii, old allies of the

[1] Münzer, *RA*, 53 ff.

[2] No Fabius was consul between 116 and 45 B.C.

[3] Q. Fabius Maximus Aemilianus (*cos.* 145 B.C.) and P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus (*cos.* 147, *cos.* II 134). The Fabii also adopted a Servilius (the consul of 142).

Aemilii, ambitious, treacherous, and often incompetent, were depressed by a recent catastrophe.[1] So, too, were the Aemilii:[2] but neither house resigned its claim to primacy. The Claudii, however, persisted, unchanged in their alarming versatility. There was no epoch of Rome's history but could show a Claudius intolerably arrogant towards the *nobiles* his rivals, or grasping personal power under cover of liberal politics. There were two branches of their line, unequal in talent—the Pulchri and the Nerones. The lesser was to prevail.

The patricians in the restored oligarchy held rank not so much from resources of their own as from alliance with houses of the plebeian aristocracy. The greatest of those families had earned or confirmed their title of nobility by command in war against the Samnites and the Carthaginians: some had maintained it since then, others had lapsed for a time. The Fulvii, the Sempronii and the Livii were almost extinct; and the Claudii Marcelli, in abrupt decadence, had lacked a consul for two generations.[3] But there was a prominent Lutatius, whose name recalled a great naval battle and whose father had defeated the Cimbri; there were several families of the Licinii, great soldiers and distinguished orators, not to mention other houses of repute.[4] The Marcii, in ancient dignity rivals to the patriciate, now stood high again, with several branches. L. Marcius Philippus, eloquent, alert and pliable, resisted the revolutionary designs of M. Livius Drusus, held the censorship under the domination of Marius and Cinna, passed over to Sulla in the right season, and guided by craft and counsel the first stormy years of the renovated oligarchy.[5] Among other eminent houses of the plebeian nobility in the Marian faction were the Junii and the Domitii,[6] who became firm supporters of the new order.

[1] That of Q. Servilius Caepio, *cos.* 106; cf. Münzer, *RA*, 285 ff.

[2] Cf. Münzer, *RA* 305 ff. The patriciate was in very low water in the last decade of the second century B.C.

[3] Ever since M. Marcellus, *cos.* III 152 B.C.

[4] For example the Aurelii Cottae and the Octavii (with two consuls each in the years 76–74 B.C.), the Calpurnii, the Cassii and the Antonii. C. Scribonius Curio (*cos.* 76), a man of capacity and repute, came of a senatorial family that had not previously reached the consulate.

[5] Philippus steeled the Senate to take action against Lepidus (Sallust, *Hist.* 1, 77 M); and he secured for Pompeius the command in Spain, not 'pro consule' but 'pro consulibus' (Cicero, *Phil.* 11, 18). On his high repute as a wit, cf. Cicero, *Brutus* 173; as a gourmet, Varro, *RR* 3, 3, 9. For a stemma of the Marcii, P-W XIV, 1539.

[6] For example, M. Junius Brutus (*tr. pl.* 83) and L. Junius Brutus Damasippus P-W X, 972 f.; 1025). Note also C. Marcius Censorinus (P-W XIV, 1550 f.) and

But the core and heart of Sulla's party and Sulla's oligarchy was the powerful house of the Caecilii Metelli, whom some called stupid.[1] Their heraldic badge was an elephant, commemorating a victory against the Carthaginians.[2] The Metelli prevailed by their mass and by their numbers. Their sons became consuls by prerogative or inevitable destiny; and their daughters were planted out in dynastic marriages. In their great age the Metelli overshadowed the Roman State, holding twelve consulates, censorships or triumphs in as many years.[3] Impaired by the rise and domination of the party of Marius, the Metelli got power and influence again from the alliance with Sulla. Q. Metellus Pius led an army to victory for Sulla and became consul with him in 80 B.C. The Dictator himself had taken a Metella to wife. The next pair of consuls (P. Servilius Vatia and Appius Claudius Pulcher) furnished a suitable and visible inauguration of the restored aristocracy, being the son and the husband of women of the Metelli.[4]

The dynasty of the Metelli could not rule alone. Both the framework and the bulk of the governing coalition is revealed in the relations and alliances between that house and two other groups. The first is the Claudii: in addition to three sons, Ap. Claudius Pulcher left three daughters, whose birth and beauty gained them advantageous matches and an evil repute.[5] Second and more important by far is that enigmatic faction soon to be led by a man who never became consul. Its origins lie at the very heart of Roman dynastic politics. The tribune M. Livius Drusus, whose activities did so much to precipitate the *Bellum Italicum*, left no son of his blood. His sister was twice married, to a

Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (P-W v, 1327 f.), the brother of the consul of 54. Ahenobarbus had married a daughter of Cinna (Orosius 5, 24, 16).

[1] As Scipio Aemilianus said of one of them, 'si quintum pareret mater eius, asinum fuisse parituram' (Cicero, *De oratore* 2, 267).

[2] *BMC, R. Rep.* I, 155.

[3] Velleius 2, 11, 3. On another calculation, six consulates in fifteen years (123–109 B.C.). Q. Metellus Macedonicus (*cos.* 143) had four consular sons. For the stemma, see Table I at end.

[4] Münzer, *RA*, 302 ff.; J. Carcopino, *Sylla ou la monarchie manquée* (1931), 120 ff. Sulla married Caecilia Metella, daughter of Delmaticus and previously the wife of M. Aemilius Scaurus, the *princeps senatus*. Servilius' mother was a sister of Balearicus, and Ap. Pulcher's wife was his daughter. The table in Münzer, *RA*, 304, shows these relationships clearly. Cf. Table I at end.

[5] The sons were Ap. Claudius Pulcher (*cos.* 54), C. Claudius Pulcher (*pr.* 56) and P. Clodius Pulcher (*tr. pl.* 58). Of the daughters, one was married to Q. Marcius Rex (*cos.* 68), the second and best known to Q. Metellus Celer (*cos.* 60). The youngest Clodia was the wife of L. Licinius Lucullus (*cos.* 74), who divorced her, making shocking allegations (Plutarch, *Lucullus* 34; Cicero, *Pro Milone* 73, &c.).

Servilius Caepio and to a Porcius, whence double issue, five children of diverse note, among them the great political lady Servilia and the redoubtable leader of the oligarchy in its last struggles, M. Porcius Cato.[1]

With these three groups were linked in some fashion or other almost all the chief members of the government, the *principes viri* of note during the first decade of its existence. To the old and wily Philippus in the direction of public affairs succeeded two men of contrary talent and repute, Q. Lutatius Catulus and Q. Hortensius, related by marriage.[2] The virtue and integrity of Catulus, rare in that age, earned general recognition: brilliance and vigour were lacking. Hortensius, dominant in law-courts and Senate, flaunted pomp and decoration in his life as in his oratory. Luxurious without taste or measure, the advocate got a name for high living and dishonest earnings, for his cellar, his game-park and his fish-ponds.[3]

Of the Senate's generals, Metellus Pius contended for long years in Spain, and Creticus usurped a *cognomen* for petty exploits in a pirate-ridden island. Nor were the kinsmen of the Metelli inactive. Ap. Pulcher fought in Macedonia, where he died; P. Servilius with better fortune for four years in Cilicia. Most glorious of all were the two Luculli, sons of a Metella and first cousins of Metellus Pius.[4] The elder, trained in eastern warfare under Sulla and highly trusted by him, led armies through Asia and shattered the power of Mithridates. Combining integrity with capacity, he treated the provincials in a fair and merciful fashion, incurring the deadly hatred of Roman financiers. The younger Lucullus, proconsul of Macedonia, carried the arms of Rome in victory through Thrace to the shore of Pontus and the mouth of the river Danube.

A little apart stands M. Licinius Crassus, who commanded

[1] See, above all, the researches of Münzer, *RA*, 328 ff. For the stemma, see Table II at end. The other children were Q. Servilius Caepio (P-W II A, 1775 ff.), Servilia, the second wife of L. Lucullus (Plutarch, *Lucullus* 38, cf. P-W II A, 1821), and Porcia, wife of L. Domitius Ahenobarbus (*cos.* 54).

[2] The sister of Q. Lutatius Catulus (*cos.* 78) was married to Q. Hortensius (*cos.* 69). For the stemma, Münzer, *RA*, 224; for connexions of Catulus with the Domitii Ahenobarbi and the Servilii, P-W XIII, 2073 f.

[3] For details of his opulence and villas, P-W VIII, 2475. Fish-ponds, Varro, *RR* 3, 17, 5; a private zoological garden, ib. 3, 13, 2; ten thousand barrels of wine left to his heir, Pliny, *NH* 14, 96.

[4] L. Licinius Lucullus (*cos.* 74) and his brother Marcus (*cos.* 73), who was adopted by a M. Terentius Varro, cf. P-W XIII, 414 f. L. Lucullus was married first to a Clodia, then to a Servilia, cf. above, n. 1 and p. 20, n. 5. The wife of M. Terentius Varro Lucullus is not known.

the right wing when Sulla destroyed the Samnite army at the Battle of the Colline Gate. The son of a competent orator—and assiduous himself as an advocate, though not brilliant—cautious and crafty in habit, he might seem destined by wealth, family, and paramount influence in the Senate to sustain the part of a great conservative statesman in the tradition of Philippus; and he formed a connexion with the Metelli.[1] The lust of power, that prime infirmity of the Roman noble, impelled him to devious paths and finally to dangerous elevations.

Such were the men who directed in war and peace the government after Sulla, owing primacy to birth and wealth, linked by ties of kinship and reciprocal interest. They called themselves *Optimates*: they might properly be described, in contemporary definition, as a faction or gang.[2]

The ramifications of this oligarchy were pervasive, its most weighty decisions taken in secret, known or inferred by politicians of the time, but often evading historical record and baffling posterity. It is manifest in action on various occasions, arrayed in open day to defend an extortionate provincial governor, to attack some pestilential tribune, or to curb a general hostile to the government.[3] But the *Optimates* were solid only to outward show and at intervals. Restored to power by a military despot, enriched by proscription and murder, and growing ever fatter on the spoil of the provinces, they lacked both principle to give inner coherence and courage to make the reforms that might save and justify the rule of class and privilege. The ten years' war in Italy not merely corrupted their integrity: it broke their spirit.

Certain of the earliest consuls after Sulla were old men already, and some died soon or disappeared.[4] Even in numbers there was a poor showing of consulars to guide public policy: only a few venerable relics, or recent consuls with birth but no weight.

[1] The family of his wife Tertulla is not known. But his elder son, M. Crassus, married Caecilia Metella, daughter of Creticus (*ILS* 881), presumably in the period 68–63 B.C. On the influence of Crassus with the Senate in 70 B.C., note esp. Plutarch, *Pompeius* 22: *καὶ ἐν μὲν τῇ βουλῇ μᾶλλον ἴσχυεν ὁ Κράσσος, ἐν δὲ τῷ δήμῳ μέγα τὸ Πομπηΐου κράτος ἦν.*

[2] Cicero, *De re publica* 3, 23: 'cum autem certi propter divitias aut genus aut aliquas opes rem publicam tenent, est factio, sed vocantur illi optimates.'

[3] For example, in defence of Verres or against the bills of Gabinius and Manilius. There was a fine rally at the prosecution of the tribune Cornelius—'dixerunt in eum infesti testimonia principes civitatis qui plurimum in senatu poterant Q. Hortensius, Q. Catulus, Q. Metellus Pius, M. Lucullus, M.' Lepidus' (Asconius 53 = p. 60 Clark).

[4] Only four of the consuls of 79–75 B.C. are heard of after 74.

After a time the most distinguished of the *principes*, resentful or inert, came to shun the duties of their estate. The vain Hortensius, his primacy passing, was loath to contemplate the oratorical triumphs of a younger rival; and L. Licinius Lucullus, thwarted of his triumph for years by the machinations of his enemies, turned for consolation to the arts and graces of private leisure: he transmitted to posterity, not the memory of talent and integrity, but the eternal exemplar of luxury. Secluded like indolent monsters in their parks and villas, the great *piscinarii*, Hortensius and the two Luculli, pondered at ease upon the quiet doctrines of Epicurus and confirmed from their own careers the folly of ambition, the vanity of virtue.[1]

In the decline of the older generation the sons and heirs of the dominant and interlocking groups of the governing party might assert the claims of birth and talent. There were two young Metelli, Celer and Nepos—in capacity no exception to their family.[2] Next came their cousins, the three sons of Ap. Pulcher. Of these Claudii, the character of the eldest was made no more amiable by early struggles and expedients to maintain the dignity of a family left in poverty and to provide for all his brothers and sisters;[3] the second was of little account, and the youngest, P. Clodius, brilliant and precocious, derived only the most dubious examples from the conduct of his three sisters and exploited without scruple the influence of their husbands.[4]

On the whole, when some fifteen years had elapsed since Sulla's death, the predominance of the Metelli seemed to be passing. Leadership might therefore fall to that part of the oligarchy which was concentrated about the person of Cato; and Cato was dominated by his step-sister, a woman possessed of all the rapacious ambition of the patrician Servilii and ruthless to recapture power for her house.[5] Her brother, Q. Servilius, husband of Hortensius' daughter, was cut off before his

[1] Evidence of the wealth and tastes of Lucullus, P-W XIII, 411 f. Frequent complaints of Cicero about the 'piscinarii' in 60 B.C., e.g. *Ad Att.* 1, 18, 6: 'ceteros iam nosti; qui ita sunt stulti ut amissa re publica piscinas suas fore salvas sperare videantur'; ib. 2, 9, 1: 'de istis quidem piscinarum Tritonibus.'

[2] Q. Metellus Celer (*cos.* 60) and Q. Metellus Nepos (*cos.* 57).

[3] Cf. Varro, *RR* 3, 16, 1 f. He was married to a Servilia (*Ad Att.* 12, 20, 2).

[4] He served in the East on the staffs of Lucullus (Plutarch, *Lucullus* 34) and of Q. Marcius Rex (Dio 36, 17, 2). He hoped to inherit from Rex (Cicero, *Ad Att.* 1, 16, 10).

[5] Asconius 17 = p. 19 Clark: 'ea porro apud Catonem maternam obtinebat auctoritatem.' About this woman, cf., above all, Münzer, *RA*, 336 ff.

prime.[1] But Servilia would not be thwarted by that accident. She cast about for other allies. About this time Cato married Marcia, the granddaughter of Philippus, and gave his own sister Porcia to L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, the cousin of Catulus, a young man early prominent in politics through the great estates in Italy and the *clientela* among the Roman plebs which he had inherited from an ambitious and demagogic parent.[2] Cato's other investment showed smaller prospect of remuneration—his daughter's husband, M. Calpurnius Bibulus, an honest man, a stubborn character, but of no great moment in politics.[3]

Roman noble houses, decadent or threatened by rivals in power and dignity, enlisted the vigour of *novi homines*, orators and soldiers, helping them by influence to the consulate and claiming their support in requital. From of old the Claudii were the great exponents of this policy; and the Claudii remained on the alert, expecting three consulates, but not unaided.[4]

Against *novi homines* the great families after Sulla stood with close ranks and forbidding aspect. M. Tullius Cicero, in the forefront by brilliance of oratory and industry as an advocate, pressed his candidature, championing all popular causes, but none that were hopeless or hostile to the interests of property and finance, and at the same time carefully soliciting the aid of young *nobiles* whose *clientela* carried many votes.[5] The oligarchy knew their man. They admitted Cicero to shut out Catilina.

The consulate, gained by the successful in the forty-third year, marked the acme of a man's life and often changed the tone of his political professions. Short of the consulate, it was

[1] Plutarch, *Cato minor* 11 (67 B.C.). The identity of his wife is inferred from the inscr. *ILS* 9460.

[2] His father, Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (*cos.* 96), was very influential with the plebs when tribune in 104, then carrying a law to transfer sacerdotal elections to the People: he was elected *pontifex maximus* in the next year. The son therefore inherited 'urbana gratia' (Caesar, *BC* 3, 83, 1): he is described as designate to the consulship from birth (*Ad Att.* 4, 8 b, 2), already in 70 B.C. *princeps iuventutis* (*In Verrem* II, 1, 139), and, in 65, an indispensable ally for Cicero's own candidature—'in quo uno maxime nititur ambitio nostra' (*Ad Att.* 1, 1, 4). On his huge estates and armies of *coloni*, Caesar, *BC* 1, 17, 4; 56, 3.

[3] 'Sallust', *Ad Caesarem* 2, 9, 1: 'M. Bibuli fortitudo atque animi vis in consulatum erupit; hebes lingua, magis malus quam callidus ingenio.' On his 'iracundia', Caesar, *BC* 3, 16, 3.

[4] P. Clodius was an ally of Cicero against Catilina. The Claudii were presumably trying to capture this useful orator. Terentia, Cicero's wife, afraid lest he should divorce her and marry Clodia, provoked a breach by making Cicero give testimony at the trial of Clodius for impiety (Plutarch, *Cicero* 29).

[5] *Comm. pet.* 6: 'praeterea adulescentis nobilis elabora ut habeas vel ut teneas, studiosos quos habes.' Cf. *Ad Att.* 1, 1, 4 (Ahenobarbus).

given to few at Rome to achieve distinction, save through the questionable and hazardous means of the tribunate. Yet two men stood out in this year of another's consulate and public glory, shaming the mediocrity of their elders. They were Caesar and Cato, diverse in habit and morals, but supremely great in spirit.[1]

C. Julius Caesar, of a patrician house newly arisen from long decay, largely by help from C. Marius, strained every nerve and effort through long years of political intrigue to maintain the *dignitas* of the Julii and secure the consulate in his turn.[2] His aunt was the wife of Marius. Caesar, who took Cinna's daughter in marriage, defied Sulla when he sought to break the match. When pronouncing the funeral oration upon Marius' widow, replacing the trophies of Marius on the Capitol or advocating the restoration of the proscribed, Caesar spoke for family loyalty and for a cause. But he did not compromise his future or commit his allegiance for all time. Caesar possessed close kin in certain houses of the moderate nobility;[3] and his second wife, Pompeia, doubly recalled the Sullan party—she was a granddaughter of Sulla.[4] Active ambition earned a host of enemies. But this patrician demagogue lacked fear or scruple. Contending against two of the *principes*, he won through bribery and popular favour the paramount office in the religion of the Roman State, that of *pontifex maximus*.[5] The same year furnished an added testimony of his temper. When the Senate held debate concerning the associates of Catilina, Caesar, then praetor-designate, spoke in firm condemnation of their treason but sought to avert the penalty of death.

It was the excellent consul who carried out the sentence of the

[1] Sallust, *BC* 53, 5 f.: 'multis tempestatibus haud sane quisquam Romae virtute magnus fuit. sed memoria mea ingenti virtute, divorsis moribus fuere viri duo, M. Cato et C. Caesar.'

[2] Biographical detail and scandal, influenced by the subsequent actions of the proconsul and Dictator, has produced a conventional, anachronistic and highly distorted picture of the earlier career of this Roman *nobilis*; cf. the novel but convincing arguments of H. Strasburger, *Caesars Eintritt in die Geschichte* (1938).

[3] His mother was an Aurelia, of the house of the Aurelii Cottae. For the stemma, showing also a connexion with the Rutilii, Münzer, *RA*, 327. Caesar also had in him the blood of the Marcii Reges (Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 6, 1). For the stemma of the Julii, P-W x, 183.

[4] Pompeia (Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 6, 2): the son of Q. Pompeius Rufus (*cos.* 88 B.C.) had married Sulla's eldest daughter.

[5] His competitors were Q. Lutatius Catulus and P. Servilius Vatia (Plutarch, *Caesar* 7).

high assembly. But the speech and authority that won the day was Cato's.[1] Aged thirty-three and only quaestorian in rank, this man prevailed by force of character. Cato extolled the virtues that won empire for Rome in ancient days, denounced the undeserving rich, and strove to recall the aristocracy to the duties of their station.[2] This was not convention, pretence or delusion. Upright and austere, a ferocious defender of his own class, a hard drinker and an astute politician, the authentic Cato, so far from being a visionary, claimed to be a realist of traditional Roman temper and tenacity, not inferior to the great ancestor whom he emulated almost to a parody, Cato the Censor. But it was not character and integrity only that gave Cato the primacy before consulars: he controlled a nexus of political alliances among the *nobiles*.

The *Optimates* stood sorely in need of a leader. There were dangerous rifts in the oligarchy, the wounds of feud and faction. Neither Aemilii nor Claudii were quite to be trusted. The elusive Crassus, who had supported Catilina as far as his candidature for the consulate, was a perpetual menace; and the Metelli, for survival or for power, would ally themselves with the strongest military leader, with Sulla's heir as before with Sulla.

The implacable Cato detested the financiers. He stood firm against Italians, hating them from his very infancy;[3] and he was ready to bribe the plebs of Rome with corn or money.[4] Against the military dynast now returning from the East he would oppose that alliance of stubborn spirit and political craft which his ancestor used to break the power of a monarchic patrician family, the Scipiones. *Gloria*, *dignitas* and *clientelae*, the prerogative of the aristocracy,[5] were now being monopolized by one man. Something more was involved than the privileges of an oligarchy: in the contest against Cn. Pompeius Magnus, Cato and his kinsmen

[1] This was notorious. Cicero could not deny it, cf. *Ad Att.* 12, 21, 1.

[2] Sallust, *BC* 52, 21 f.: 'sed alia fuere, quae illos magnos fecere, quae nobis nulla sunt: domi industria, foris iustum imperium, animus in consulundo liber, neque delicto neque lubidini obnoxius. pro his nos habemus luxuriam atque avaritiam, publice egestatem, privatim opulentiam. laudamus divitias, sequimur inertiam.'

[3] Plutarch, *Cato minor* 2 (anecdote of his recalcitrance towards Poppaedius the Marsian in his uncle's house). Further, his kinsman, L. Porcius Cato (*cos.* 89), was defeated and killed by the Italian insurgents in the Marsic territory (Livy, *Per.* 75).

[4] A great extension of the corn-dole was carried through by Cato in 62 B.C. (Plutarch, *Cato minor* 26).

[5] 'Sallust', *Ad Caesarem* 2, 11, 3: 'quippe cum illis maiorum virtus partam reliquerit gloriam dignitatem clientelas.' Cf. Sallust, *BJ* 85, 4: 'vetus nobilitas, maiorum fortia facta, cognatorum et adfinium opes, multae clientelae.'

saw personal honour and a family feud. The young Pompeius, treacherous and merciless, had killed the husband of Servilia and the brother of Ahenobarbus.[1] 'Adulescentulus carnifex.'[2]

[1] M. Junius Brutus (*tr. pl.* 83), the (first) husband of Servilia, a Marian and an adherent of Lepidus, capitulating at Mutina to Pompeius, was killed by him (Plutarch, *Pompeius* 16, &c.). Ahenobarbus fell in Africa in 82 B.C.: though some versions exculpate Pompeius, there is a contrary tradition. Like the killing of Cn. Papirius Carbo (*cos.* III), a benefactor of Pompeius, these acts were remembered, cf. Val. Max. 6, 2, 8; 'Sallust', *Ad Caesarem* 1, 4, 1.

[2] The phrase of Helvius of Formiae, Val. Max. 6, 2, 8.