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VETERES HOSTES, NOVI AMICI

ERICH S. GRUEN

THE EASTERN CAMPAIGNS of Pompeius Magnus were a pronounced boon for Rome. His prospective return home, however, created apprehensions. Visions of Sulla's homecoming, with its concomitant civil strife and devastation, haunted Roman memory. Pompey was eager to alleviate insecurities. In early 62 he dispatched a missive to the senate offering his hope for *otium*. Considerable relief and joy greeted the announcement. Pompey's letter is no longer available for scrutiny. But Cicero, probably in the spring of 62, penned a response:

Ex litteris tuis, quas publice misisti, cepi una cum omnibus incredibilem voluptatem. Tantam enim spem otii ostendisti, quantam ego semper omnibus te uno fretus pollicebar. Sed hoc scito, tuos veteres hostes, novos amicos, vehementer litteris percussos atque ex magna spe deturbatos iacere. [Ad Fam. 5.7.1]

Who were the *veteres hostes, novi amici*?

For most scholars the problem has posed no difficulty: Cicero's reference is to the *populares*, the "democrats," or to their leaders Crassus and Caesar.¹ The reconstruction rests on shaky presuppositions. A "popular party" is nowhere to be found in the ancient evidence; much less Crassus and Caesar as its twin mainstays. And the notion that Pompey's absence in the East inspired a series of plots against him at home should now be relegated to oblivion.² Cicero's notorious tendentiousness bears responsibility for the misconception. His speeches against the agrarian bill of Rullus in early 63 led both his audience and his commentators astray. By alleging that the measure represented an anti-Pompeian scheme, Cicero secured its dismissal. But careful attention to the orations shows that Rullus' aims, if they had Pompey in view at all, were, in fact, in the general's interests.³

More important, Crassus and Caesar simply do not fit as *veteres hostes, novi amici* of Pompey. Crassus was no *novus amicus*, nor was Caesar a

¹So, in various formulations, R. Y. Tyrrell and L. C. Purser, *The Correspondence of M. Tullius Cicero*⁸ (Dublin and London 1904) 1.187; E. Meyer, *Caesars Monarchie und das Principat des Pompeius* (Stuttgart and Berlin 1922) 38; T. Rice Holmes, *The Roman Republic* (Oxford 1923) 1.288; W. W. How, *Cicero: Select Letters* (Oxford 1926) 2.62-63; E. Ciaceri, *Cicerone e i suoi tempi* (Genoa, etc. 1941) 2.2-3; M. Gelzer, *RE* 13.895, s.v. "Tullius" (29).

²As, for example, the so-called "First Catilinarian Conspiracy," on which see R. Syme, *Sallust* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1964) 88-102; Gruen, *CP* 64 (1969) 20-24, with references to earlier literature.

³See now G. V. Sumner, *TAPA* 97 (1966) 569-582, and below.

vetus hostis. Bitter personal rivalry, untempered by brief political collaboration in 70, kept Crassus and Pompey estranged. No reconciliation in the late 60's stands on record. At about the very time that Cicero was writing his letter, Crassus ostentatiously took his possessions and withdrew from Italy, professing fear that Pompey would march on Rome (Plut. *Pomp.* 43.1). As for Caesar, his alleged friction with Pompey in the 60's is a modern fabrication. The two men were hardly of comparable stature. Caesar's activities in that decade, in fact, show consistent efforts to attach himself to the political coat-tails of the general: support for extraordinary commands, advocacy of triumphal honours, co-operation with Pompey's friends.⁴ No amount of tortuous speculation can fit Caesar and Crassus into the categories required by Cicero's words.

If not the *populares*, then the *optimates*? Such are the customarily canvassed alternatives.⁵ The latter suggestion carries no greater plausibility than the former. Some senatorial *principes*, the circle of Catulus, Lucullus, and Hortensius were indeed *veteres hostes* of Magnus, conspicuous particularly in the opposition to his eastern commands. Others, however, had supported those commissions; and numerous aristocratic names were present on Pompey's staff in the East. The old opponents had not come to love him. They and their associates continued to oppose measures sponsored in his interests in 63 and 62.⁶ Far from gaining new friends, Pompey witnessed the growing erosion of aristocratic support.⁷ Vocal conservative opinion was less sympathetic than ever to the conquering hero. Pompey was to discover that in dramatic fashion when he sought approval of his eastern arrangements. A reference to *optimates* as *novi amici* would be peculiarly inapplicable.

One would be well-advised to abandon the *populares-optimates* dichotomy. The problem may be better approached from another direction. Pompey expressed *spem oti*; his *novi amici* reacted with deep disappointment and agitation. The phrase *spes oti* merits attention. Most have taken it as designating the imminent conclusion of the Mithridatic War. But why only *spes oti* in 62? The situation in Asia Minor had long since been settled: Syria was annexed in 64; Mithridates himself perished in early 63; Palestine was subdued at the end of the campaigning season. Only administrative arrangements remained.⁸

⁴Extraordinary commands: Plut. *Pomp.* 25.4; Dio 36.43.2-4; triumphal honours: Dio 37.21.4; cf. 37.44.1-3; Suet. *Iul.* 15; co-operation with Pompey's friends, Labienus, Ampius Balbus, and Metellus Nepos, in the general's interests: Cic. *Pro. Rab. Perd. passim*; Dio 37.26-28; 37.37.1-2; Suet. *Iul.* 12; 16.1; Vell. Pat. 2.40.4; Plut. *Cato* 27-29; Cic. 23; *Schol. Bob.* 134 Stangl; cf. L. R. Taylor, *TAPA* 73 (1942) 1-24.

⁵Taylor, *TAPA* 73 (1942) 19; J. Van Ooteghem, *Pompeé le Grand* (Namur 1954) 269. The latter offers a combination: "sans doute Crassus . . . et bon nombre d'optimates."

⁶Cf. Dio 37.21.1-4; 37.43.1-3; Plut. *Cic.* 23.3-3; *Cato* 26-29; *Schol. Bob.* 134 Stangl.

⁷The process is examined in detail in Gruen, *Historia* 18 (1969) 71-108.

⁸See the account of Pompey's campaigns in Ooteghem, *Pompeé* 226-244.

Pompey's triumph was already a foregone conclusion when tribunes in 63 proposed that he could wear full triumphal regalia at the games (Vell. Pat. 2.40.4). And by December, 63 it could be urged that Pompey be brought home to crush the Catilinarian conspiracy (Plut. *Cato* 26.2; *Cic.* 23.2). An official dispatch from the general doubtless summarized his achievements in the East. But to offer no more than a hope for peace would have been excessive modesty indeed. The war was already over.⁹ Settlement of external conflict would more likely be labelled *pax*. Cicero's reference to *otium* is a reference to civil peace.¹⁰

The allusion would be appropriate. Pompey's enemies had spread stories that the conqueror of Mithridates intended to return with his army and institute a dictatorship.¹¹ Fears must have seemed well grounded when Pompey's friends, Metellus Nepos and Caesar, advocated the use of his army in Italy to subdue Catiline. Cato thwarted the effort, vowing that Pompey would enter the city with an army only over his dead body.¹² But the propaganda damage had been done. The rumours of Pompey's militaristic aims now seemed to have substance. Nepos' motion was defeated in January, 62. Timing of Pompey's letter, shortly thereafter, suits the proper context. The general's purpose was to alleviate suspicions that his return would involve disruption, violence, and an overthrow of the government. *Spes oti*, of course, is Cicero's phrase, not Pompey's. The general will simply have reported his accomplishments and announced his intentions to return to Rome without his army. The intentions, as is well known, were fulfilled in December, 62. Pompey dismissed his forces at Brundisium.¹³

The identity of the *veteres hostes*, *novi amici* can now be placed in proper focus. Which elements of Roman society would find a pacific homecoming by Pompey unwelcome? Sulla's triumphant return from the East twenty years before had brought civil war, social upheaval, and proscriptions. Sullan veterans and adherents benefited. But others saw their property confiscated, their friends executed or exiled, and their civil rights curtailed. Disabilities were imposed also upon the succeeding generation: heirs of the proscribed were without political privileges. The victims had few options. Some will have migrated to Rome, others

⁹*Cic. Prov. Cons.* 27: *cum eiusdem Pompei litteris recitatis confectis omnibus maritimis terrestribusque bellis supplicationem dierum decem decrevistis*. Reference here is very likely to the same dispatch which prompted Cicero's letter.

¹⁰*Cf. Cic. Red. Pop.* 20: *illi arti in bello ac seditione locus est, huic in pace atque otio*. So also C. Meier, *Athenaeum* 40 (1962) 123.

¹¹Vell. Pat. 2.40.2: *quippe plerique non sine exercitu venturum in urbem adfirmarunt et libertati publicae statuturum arbitrio suo modum*; Dio 37.44.3; cf. Plut. *Pomp.* 43.1; Appian *Mith.* 116.

¹²Plut. *Cato* 26.4; cf. *Cic.* 23.2-3; Dio 37.43.1-3; *Schol. Bob.* 134 Stangl.

¹³Sources in T. R. S. Broughton, *Magistrates of the Roman Republic* (New York 1952) 2.176.

became tenant farmers or casual rural labourers. The desire for recovery of landed property, we may be sure, did not lapse.¹⁴ Some of Sulla's constitutional provisions were altered in the 70's. But the social and economic arrangements remained untouched. Sullan colonists retained their gains; his victims had not secured political champions. The first challenges to those arrangements, notably, came in the mid 60's.

Faustus Sulla, son of the dictator, was prosecuted in 66. The purpose was to recover for the state goods which his father had appropriated and passed to his family. It was not the only such effort. Sulla's bounty was attacked on several occasions in 66 and 65.¹⁵ In the following year, the former executioners for Sulla came under assault in the courts, particularly those who had enriched themselves in the proscriptions.¹⁶ Agitation continued on another front in 63. Sons of the proscribed urged measures for the restoration of their political privileges and the recall of exiles. The matter stirred considerable debate.¹⁷

In this context the agrarian bill of Servilius Rullus is particularly pertinent. Connection between the Rullan bill and the efforts to reverse Sulla's enactments is explicitly affirmed by the sources.¹⁸ Cicero had been instrumental in resisting the attacks on Faustus Sulla in 66, as well as other assaults on the Sullan system. Again in 63 he opposed reinstatement of privileges for heirs of the proscribed, urging that the time was not ripe and that the Republic stands or falls with the Sullan enactments.¹⁹ Hence, it comes as no surprise that Cicero, in disputing the merits of the Rullan bill, was labelled an apologist for the Sullan *possessores*.²⁰ And there is point also in the orator's sarcastic depiction of Rullus as a "Marian tribune."²¹ The unpopularity of Sulla's colonists

¹⁴Cf. P. A. Brunt, *JRS* 52 (1962) 69-86.

¹⁵Asconius 73 Clark: *Sulla per multos annos . . . sumpserat pecunias ex vectigalibus et ex aerario populi Romani; eaque res saepe erat agitata, saepe omissa partim propter gratiam Sullanarum partium*. For the attack on Faustus Sulla, see Asconius *loc. cit.*; Cic. *Cluent.* 94; *Leg. Agrar.* 1.12. That efforts were made again in 65 is clear from Cic. *Mur.* 42.

¹⁶See especially Asconius 90-91 Clark; Plut. *Cato* 17.4-5; Suet. *Iul.* 11; cf. Dio 37.10.1-3; Cic. *Lig.* 12; *Schol. Gronov.* 293 Stangl.

¹⁷Cic. *Pis.* 4; *Leg. Agr.* 2.10; *Att.* 2.1.3; Pliny *N.H.* 7.117; Quintilian 11.1.85; Dio 37.25.3; Plut. *Cic.* 12.1.

¹⁸Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 2.10; Plut. *Cic.* 12.1-2.

¹⁹Quintilian 11.1.85: *ut Cicero de proscriptorum liberis fecit: quid enim crudelius quam homines honestis parentibus ac maioribus natos a re publica summoveri? Itaque durum id esse summus ille tractandorum animorum artifex confitetur, sed ita legibus Sullae cohaerere statum civitatis adfirmat, ut iis solutis stare ipsa non possit*. For Cicero's role in 66, see Asconius 73 Clark.

²⁰Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 3.3: *completi sunt animi auresque vestrae, Quirites, me gratificantem septem tyrannis ceterisque Sullanarum adsignationum possessoribus agrariae legi et commodis vestris obsistere*.

²¹Cic. *Leg. Agrar.* 3.7: *quid ergo ait Marianus tribunus plebis, qui nos Sullanos in invidiam rapit?*

was notorious, and, in the midst of the agitations of the 60's, the issue of their holdings was central.²² Rullus' measure did not, in fact, propose summary confiscation of the Sullan allotments: the state was to purchase property and then to redistribute it. But there can be little doubt that the potential beneficiaries would include those whose families had lost holdings in the Sullan proscriptions. Relationship of this effort to Pompeius Magnus is relevant. Land assignments on so large a scale must have had in view, among other things, the returning veterans of Pompey himself.²³ One of the bill's provisions required overseas commanders to declare the booty and spoils won in war. From this clause, however, Pompey was explicitly exempted. Rullus, it appears, had made complimentary references to the general: *hic tamen vir optimus eum, quem amat, excipit Cn. Pompeium; unde iste amor tam improvisus ac tam repentinus?* (Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 2.60). The passage strikes responsive chords. In tone and content it reads exactly like the depiction of a *vetus hostis, novus amicus*.

Ciceronian rhetoric shattered the agrarian reform of Rullus. And the other attempts to revise the Sullan settlement foundered as well. But the men who had stood to gain were not all content to accept frustration. It is, of course, no coincidence that the Catilinarian movement took shape in the months which followed the defeat of Rullus' proposal. The motives which inspired Catiline's motley group of adherents were varied. Descriptions of rapists, murderers, and madmen retailed by Cicero and Sallust may be legitimately suspected. But Catiline's scheme, whatever its aim, attracted some desperate men who had little to hope for from the contemporary social structure and everything to gain from upheaval. The Sullan proscriptions stood as a reminder. Many of the recruits were old Sullan soldiers who had squandered their property and looked forward to renewed civil war.²⁴ Catiline reminded them of profits previously secured and promised them another round of proscribing the rich.²⁵ More pertinent is the fact that Catiline's following also included individuals who had been stripped of their lands by Sulla and who laboured under social and political disabilities. Frustrated by failure of the Rullan bill, they were prepared for revolution, expecting that the next set of pro-

²²Cf. especially Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 2.68-70.

²³The case is cogently argued by Sumner, *TAPA* 97 (1966) 569-582.

²⁴Sallust *Cat.* 16.4: *plerique Sullani milites largius suo usu rapinarum et victoriae veteris memores civile bellum exoptabant.*

²⁵Sallust *Cat.* 21.2: *Catilina polliceri tabulas novas, proscriptionem locupletium, magistratus, sacerdotia, rapinas, alia omnia quae bellum atque libido victorum fert; 21.4: admonebat . . . multos victoriae Sullanæ, quibus ea praedae fuerat; Cic. Cat. 2.20: hi sunt homines ex iis coloniis quas Sulla constituit . . . in tantum aes alienum inciderunt ut, si salvi esse velint, Sulla sit iis ab inferis excitandus.*

scriptions would redound to their benefit.²⁶ These were men of rural origins, some still eking out a living in the countryside, some recent drifters into the city. Their object was land.²⁷

The plots of Catiline fell afoul of Cicero's energies and senatorial firmness. The Roman populace, as a whole, was not prepared to countenance revolution. Only one path remained open to those hoping for redistribution of property. If pretext could be found, Pompey might be induced to return to Italy in arms. Consequent disruption and warfare promised spoils for the victors in a civil war. Many recalled Sulla's triumphal campaign which raised common soldiers to positions of wealth and rank.²⁸ The desperate longed for proscriptions and were prepared to accept dictatorship.²⁹ Opportunity came when Metellus Nepos presented the proposition that Pompey return with his army. Nepos doubtless had in mind only Pompey's political advantage. The general hoped to add to his laurels by crushing Catiline, as he had in 71 by wiping out the remnants of Spartacus' rebellion.³⁰ But others urged on and supported the proposition in the interests of civil disturbances. Their aim, so Plutarch asserts, was an upsetting of the constitution, *stasis*, and civil war.³¹ The struggle over the bill involved large and boisterous crowds and even degenerated into violent scuffles.³² Metellus Nepos, his proposal rejected, withdrew from Italy to report the proceedings to Pompey.³³

In view of these events, motivation for Magnus' letter should no longer be obscure. He felt the need to disavow violence in Rome and to reaffirm his commitment to civil peace, thereby countering the hostile propaganda of Cato. Upon receipt of his missive, the senate had good cause to express elation at the *spes oti* contained therein. Only the *veteres hostes, novi amici* suffered disappointment. Cicero's words now take on intelligible meaning.

²⁶Sallust *Cat.* 28.4: *interea Manlius in Etruria plebem sollicitare, egestate simul ac dolore iniuriae novarum rerum cupidam, quod Sullae dominatione agros bonaque omnia amiserat*; 37.9: *quorum victoria Sullae parentes proscripti, bona erepta, ius libertatis imminutum erat, haud sane alio animo belli eventum expectabant*; Cic. *Mur.* 49: *quam turbam dissimillimo ex genere distinguebant homines percussi Sullani temporis calamitate*.

²⁷Cic. *Cat.* 2.20: *qui etiam non nullos agrestis homines tenuis atque egentis in eandem illam spem rapinarum veterum impulerunt*; 2.8: *nunc vero quam subito non solum ex urbe verum etiam ex agris ingentem numerum perditorum hominum conlegerat*!

²⁸Sallust *Cat.* 37.6: *multi memores Sullanae victoriae, quod ex gregariis militibus alios senatores videbant, alios ita divites ut regio victu atque cultu aetatem agerent*.

²⁹Cic. *Cat.* 2.20: *eos hoc moneo, desinant furere ac proscriptiones et dictaturas cogitare*.

³⁰Cf. Meier, *Athenaeum* 40 (1962) 103-125.

³¹Plut. *Cato* 27.1: τὸ ποθοῦν μεταβολῆς ἐλπίδι Πομπηίων ὑπῆρχε τοῦ δήμου μέρος οὐκ ὀλίγον; 28.5: ἥ τε σύγκλητος ἀθροισθεῖσα παρήγγειλεν . . . διαμάχεσθαι πρὸς τὸν νόμον, ὥς στάσιν ἐπεισάγοντα τῇ Ῥώμῃ καὶ πόλεμον ἐμφύλιον.

³²Dio 37.43.1-3; Plut. *Cato* 26-29.

³³Dio 37.43.4; Plut. *Cato* 29.1; Cic. 26.7.

The victims of Sulla's proscriptions could certainly be described as *veteres hostes* of the man who had been one of Sulla's chief agents in the late 80's. Similarly, the ironic reference to *novi amici* suits those who had hoped to benefit from the Rullan bill and had given active support to the proposals of Metellus Nepos. Pompey's letter collapsed their hopes. The general was an adherent of the status quo.³⁴

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³⁴Gratitude for suggestions and criticism is due to Professors Peter Garnsey and G. V. Sumner.