LUCIUS SULLA

The Deadly Reformer

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Lucius Sulla

It is by now an outstanding honour to be invited to give a lecture in this series, which has established itself as among the leaders in its field—a worthy memorial to Professor Todd, who, quite apart from his own meritorious work on the novel, laid the foundations of the international standing that this University has acquired in the study of both Latin and Ancient History. Since Professor R. E. Smith, then Professor of Latin here, inaugurated the series with one of his best papers, there have been five lecturers. They comprise an Oxford Professor, two Cambridge Professors, a Provost of King's, three Knights and a CBE. And here am I, a resident alien in the United States and a Professor at a university only founded as such in 1948, standing in the same place. If I cannot equal the performance of my predecessors (and let me, without disparaging the others, pay a special tribute to the outstanding one of Professor Sir Ronald Syme), I must at least attempt to justify the honour you have paid me by choosing a subject that is surely second to none in the field of Roman history in both importance and interest.

It should now be a truism that the historian must not claim to give *the* explanation of a complex historical phenomenon. Such questions as, 'What were the causes of the Great War?' (or, 'of the fall of the Roman Republic?')—expecting, by implication, a list of neatly defined items—such questions are by now relegated to the privacy of the tutorial or the examination room, where the historian is shielded from the critical eye of his professional colleagues. But it is the historian's legitimate task to single out some of the strands in the complex weave and to trace their importance in the pattern; and it is in this humbler frame of mind that he will most usefully perform his proper task of letting the present and the past illuminate each other.

The story of Lucius Sulla arouses interest on many counts. The ruthless adventurer and sinister tyrant, transformed by success into a revered statesman, with (perhaps) uneasy doubts coming to gnaw at the faithful after his death—that figure is familiar in

our age, so much so that we need hardly mention names; even though, as far as we can tell, the pattern repeats itself without becoming familiar to contemporaries.[1] Interest is added by the nature of our sources, which have bedevilled the study of Sulla more than that of most Roman leaders of the Republic. Sulla wrote an autobiography, which he finished towards the end of his life; and this far from unbiased document was one of the main sources of information of his later biographer Plutarch, and has left noticeable traces in Appian and (as far as we can tell) in Livy. The effect was reinforced by the interested panegyric of an eminent contemporary, long renowned as the most accomplished Roman historian up to his time, L. Cornelius Sisenna, who joined Sulla's victorious cause at a late stage and made up for tardiness by enthusiasm. For the period from the Social War down to Sulla's victory, his account was never superseded except (perhaps) by Livy, who is demonstrably based on him to a considerable extent.[2] Posterity, while in principle sometimes prepared to concede the bias (and sometimes eager to defend it), has in practice been happy to accept what was offered, meeting revaluation with shocked resistance. But for better or for worse, the historian cannot abdicate his responsibility.

Lucius Cornelius Sulla, born (probably) 138BC,[3] was of ancient Patrician lineage—of that immemorial aristocracy which went back to the origins of the city and beyond—and he was proud of it. In his autobiography, he seems to have devoted about two books to the story of his ancestors.[4] One ancestor, in the direct line, was P. Cornelius Rufinus, twice consul and dictator in the time of the Samnite and Pyrrhic Wars, who was expelled from the Senate by his enemy C. Fabricius—it was said, for owning more

[1] It might be mentioned that this Lecture was delivered not long after the announcement of the death of Ho Chi Minh and the consequent laudations.

[2] I showed this in the paper now in my *Studies in Greek and Roman History* (1964) [henceforth *Studies*] 208f. The only objection raised (Candiloro, *SCO* 1963, 224f.; repeated Balsdon, *JRS* 1965, 231) is (I think) demolished *Athenaeum* 1964, 422f. (not yet known to Balsdon).

[3] The date can be deduced from the fact that he stood for the praetorship in 99, for 98 (*see* below). The sources (collected *RE*, s.v. 'Cornelius', no. 392) offer the usual vagueness due to ambiguity in the use of ordinal or cardinal numbers in stating ages. Most of the evidence is collected in *RE*, l.c. and will not be cited here, except where the details are particularly important or controversial.

[4] Fragments of the work in Peter, *HRR* i² 195f.; useful discussion CCLXXf. Fr. 2, mentioning the *flamen Dialis* (of about the middle of the third century), is quoted from Book ii.

than ten pounds of silver plate.[5] The family tradition obviously included luxury! Rufinus' expulsion meant political eclipse for his immediate descendants, though social eminence was retained: his son, it seems, was *flamen Dialis* (a post that, while conferring high rank, almost debarred its holder from political activity),[6] and that priest's son began the slow climb back to power by being praetor; of his sons, two reached the same level. It was the elder of these two men—a great-grandson of Rufinus—who was the dictator's grandfather: this P. Sulla was praetor in 186. The family was settled in praetorian status for generations, but (it seemed) unable to advance any higher, like so many families, old and new, at all periods of the Republic.[7] Of L. Sulla's father we know nothing. He himself is said to have spent his youth in dire poverty; yet his father married (after L. Sulla's mother) a wealthy wife, who later left her stepson a fortune; and the young man, of course, had a literary and Greek education such as befitted one of his class.[8] His poverty and his father's obscurity may be exaggerated: one would think that a son, grandson and great-grandson of praetors, who in (at earliest) his second marriage landed an heiress, must have got somewhere in life and must have had more than a name to offer her family. He probably held some public office—even a praetorship need not surprise us, in the period for which we lack Livy's evidence. As for his son's biographers, the *peripeteia* of the self-made man, especially if (paradoxically) he is of high birth, has always been the stock-in-trade of romantic biography; nor was it unknown even to autobiography. While Sulla was a boy, another Patrician, of more obviously decayed family, had been making his way to the top with single-minded ambition, to become Senior Senator and, for twenty-five years, politically perhaps the most powerful man of his generation. M. Aemilius Scaurus did not let people forget his success. At the beginning of his own autobiography (probably written in the nineties) he stressed the fact that his father had left him practically nothing: six slaves and 35,000 sesterces.[9]

[5] A favourite story in moralists. *See RE*, s.v. 'Cornelius', col. 1423.

[6] On the family, *see RE*, s.v. 'Cornelius', coll. 1513f. The taboos of the priest of Jupiter will be found in any handbook, e.g. Wissowa, *Rel. u. Kultus d. Römer*² 102.

[7] Best known, perhaps, the Murenae (Cic. *Mur.* 15f.); but examples are easy to find. (Note the Tremellii, Varro, *r.r.* ii 4, 2—seven generations of praetors.)

[8] Sall. *Jug.* 95,3 states what we could in any case deduce.

[9] Fr. 1 (p. 185) P.

Only a few years later, Sulla completed an autobiography. The emphasis on his poor beginnings need not surprise us. It may be presumed—as fitting in with his later character—that he also took pride in his dissolute life. Plutarch gives us the name or *nom de guerre* of a wealthy prostitute whose will provided Sulla with another fortune. (She was called Nicopolis.) We have not far to look for the origin of that story. More interesting would be some indication of the more respectable women in his life: his mother and particularly the wealthy stepmother. However, Plutarch, demonstrably using Sulla's autobiography, does not give us this information. This is unfortunate: it might well explain some puzzling facts.[10]

As Sallust tells us, and Plutarch confirms, Sulla did no military service in his youth,[11] which meant he had no political ambitions; and he seems to have held no junior office: Plutarch knows almost nothing about him before his quaestorship. Then suddenly, in 108, we find Sulla taken from the midst of his disreputable companions and walking straight into a quaestorship.[12] Of course, it may have been at this time that he acquired his fortune by double inheritance; but there might be more to it. For 108 was the year when a new man won a surprising consulship after a demagogic canvass, to succeed in due course to the command in Numidia; and it was precisely to C. Marius that Sulla was assigned as a quaestor.[13] Marius is said to have been shocked to find himself

[10] Plutarch usually does give the mother's name. The only cases, among his late Republican subjects, where he does not, are those of Pompey and Crassus. We do not know why—perhaps lack of distinction?—Pompey's mother is unknown. Crassus' mother was a Venuleia, as we happen to know (Cic. *Att.* xii 24,2: the textual variant 'Vinuleia' is hardly worth considering, since the Venuleii attain at least moderate prominence). The mothers of Marius and Cicero, perhaps surprisingly, are mentioned. There, presumably, lack of distinction was of the essence of the biography. If so, this ought to apply to Sulla, whose poor beginnings are stressed.

[11] Sallust, *Jug.* 96 is emphatic: 'rudis et ignarus belli' before his quaestorship. Plutarch certainly knows of no public (civil or military) service before the quaestorship. In theory, liability to service could not be escaped. But it is easy to imagine that well-connected young men could escape it if they tried. However, it would certainly impair their prospect of holding office.

[12] Val. Max. vi 9,6, with nice rhetoric: 'usque ad quaesturae suae comitia uitam libidine, uino, ludicrae artis amore inquinatam perduxit'. His election, at the age of thirty, is later than usual: Ti. Gracchus had been quaestor at 25, C. Gracchus (against opposition) at 27. Again, absence of ambition may account for it, or a sudden chance in 108.

[13] Plut. *Sulla* 3; Val. Max., l.c. (last note), who gives Marius' supposed reaction.

saddled with a quaestor who had left the tavern and the brothel only to attend to his election. He was the man who had attacked the decadence of the nobility, and, whatever his faults, he took soldiering seriously. No wonder he now cursed his luck.

But stay: how did he treat this young man totally without military experience[14] whom the lot had foisted upon him? The answer may surprise. That shrewd soldier, concerned to make a success of the war if he was to have a political future, left the inexperienced young libertine to levy cavalry in Italy and bring them over to Africa; there, he led them in the battle of Cirta, guarded Marius' camp, and was indeed shown every sign of respect and confidence, until he was finally sent to take charge of the nerve-racking negotiations that led to the surrender of Jugurtha by Bocchus. Surely, right from the start, responsible tasks for a man whom one had reason to distrust. It leads us to wonder about the coincidence which, in the very year that saw C. Marius' flamboyant rise to the consulship, promoted this young Patrician, with hitherto no thought of a political or military career, to a quaestorship and the chance to show his talents. The consul elect, triumphantly swept into power, might well have a say in the election of the quaestor who was to attend him in a major war; and although quaestorian *prouinciae* were normally settled by lot, we know that it was perfectly proper for a commander to pick his quaestor.[15] Perhaps this conjecture—for it can be no more—begins to make sense of the story. The sudden rise of the loose-living young Patrician may not by mere accident parallel that of the cunning *nouus homo*. Marius—a snob like all new men—had a soft spot for Patricians; it was not many years since he had married a young lady of impeccable Patrician birth, but with no consul among her direct ancestors. And he was on the look-out for talent, trying to build up a personal following for the future.[16]

The confidence shown strongly suggests previous acquaintance, indeed political clientship. Again, it might help to know whom Sulla's father married. It may once more not be by accident that we lack this information: did Sulla choose not to mention his

[14] *See* Sallust, n. 11 (above).

[15] *See* L. A. Thompson, *PACA* 1962, 17f.

[16] On Julia, *see* Suet. *Jul.* 6 and, for the stemma, *RE*, s.v. 'Iulius', coll. 183-4. The fact that she had two brothers about to begin political careers was probably important. (*See* my *For. Client.* (1958) 195, 199 and, for the aristocratic support that Marius tried to build up, 200.)

mother's or stepmother's name when he wrote about his youth? Certainly, if there were a connection with Marius, it could not be mentioned when the work was prepared for publication, a generation later.[17]

In any case, the connection now continues, visibly played down by Sulla in his autobiography, as indeed we should expect. Marius, we are told, disliked the way in which Sulla claimed credit for the victory over Jugurtha by having a signet-ring engraved with the scene of the surrender.[18] Yet when Marius was sent out, as consul for a second time, to fight the Germans, Sulla again served under him as legate.[19] In the following year (103), he continued to serve as a military tribune, an office unparalleled in that generation, at this late stage of a man's life and career. Whatever the reason for this—a special task in a difficult legion, or merely another office to aid Sulla in his later career?—it shows a remarkably close connection between the two men. Naturally, Plutarch is puzzled at the contradiction, having just told us the story of the boastful ring. He suggests a solution: Marius' continued confidence was a sign of contempt, showing that he thought Sulla not worthy of his jealousy. The solution is worthy of his source and, for all we know, may go back to it. Indeed, the difficult source situation that we have noted here shows its advantage for the alert historian: it helps to know what was thought worth disguising, where it could not be suppressed.

Distortion now continues and obfuscation becomes more patent. Marius, annoyed at Sulla's brilliant successes (would he, in a war as vital to his own future as to his country's, have wanted his officer actually to fail?), now stopped giving him important assignments, and so Sulla left his service and joined the army of Q. Lutatius Catulus, the other consul of 102. For Catulus—a worthy man, but not a great soldier, as Sulla (explicitly quoted

[17] A *close* family connection would presumably have been noted by someone, and this can hardly be suggested. A less obvious one might well escape mention, like so much similar information.

[18] Plut. *Sulla* 4. The scene, presumably, is the one that survives, for us, on the coin later issued by Sulla's son Faustus (Sydenham, *CRR*, no. 879). Once engraved on the signet, we may be certain that it would serve as the model for Sulla's son. Indeed, it may also have served as the model for the sculptures later dedicated by Bocchus (*see* p. 12).

[19] Plut., l.c. It would be interesting to know how common it was for quaestorians to serve as legates in another campaign under their former commanders. No other case is known; but we have little evidence on legates, perhaps less on quaestors. Still, Marius' own circumstances are so unusual that we can assume it must have been exceptional.

in this context) later described him—he performed outstanding services, saving him from disaster; and at this Marius grew thoroughly envious. From such small causes, Plutarch adds, do bloody civil wars take their origin.

Perhaps. But some facts are worth recalling. Q. Catulus was Marius' special protégé, owing everything to him: after three failures, he had reached the consulship when Marius' prestige stood at its highest, and he was closely related to the Caesares, Marius' relatives by marriage. As consul, he was allowed by Marius to take over part of the German War (which no other colleague of Marius had been or was to be), and even though his success in this was at the best dubious, Marius, entitled to two clear triumphs, magnanimously shared a single one with Catulus.[20] Even if Sulla had been entitled to leave his commander without asking for permission,[21] it is clear that Catulus could not have accepted him in such a case—and had he done so, Marius was not one who would lightly forgive. In fact, the Patrician libertine and the noble perennial loser make a good pair: both raised to eminence by the great *nouus homo,* whose methods in providing for his political future are characteristic. Having landed himself with a colleague politically useful, but militarily inept, Marius had to make sure that disaster did not follow. It is not surprising that he did so by ceding to him the man who had throughout his military career been Marius' most trusted and (presumably) most loyal subordinate. By his own account, Sulla at least prevented disaster and made the gesture of the joint triumph possible. This story, again, could not be told twenty years later; it is not too difficult to retrieve.

Nor is this as yet the end of the story. It can be shown, I think, that Sulla's failure to gain a praetorship in 99 and his success in 98 are not due merely to a difference in the size of the bribes, as Plutarch (i.e. Sulla) tries to make us believe: home from the successful wars, Sulla was not short of money on the first occasion. Scrutiny of the political background appears to show Sulla still involved in Marius' fortunes, with its ups and downs.[22] When

[20] *See Studies* (n. 2 above) 37f.

[21] It could be argued that a legate might not do so, but a tribune might, since his appointment was annual. But I am merely concerned to point out that, in view of Catulus' alliance with Marius at this time, the traditional account cannot be true, whatever the legal aspect.

[22] For the consuls of those years, *see MRR.* 99 was the year in which the law authorizing Metellus Numidicus' return from exile was passed; 98 the year in which Marius seems to have received his augurate in absence

and how did opposition to Marius start? The massive distortion of the sources makes it impossible to tell. But perhaps we have a clue. After a most successful promagistracy in 96-5, when he restored a king to his throne and was the first Roman to receive a Parthian embassy,[23] he was prosecuted for extortion on his return. Now, his prosecutor, C. Marcius Censorinus, was later a prominent partisan of Marius and Cinna in the first civil war. This is not conclusive for 95; but it might be a pointer that Sulla was already on the other side. Moreover, Censorinus soon abandoned the prosecution—always an extraordinary action to take. Cicero calls him 'lazy and hating legal business';[24] if this were the whole answer, why had he started on the case? No, the whole affair must fit into the battle of prosecutions in the middle nineties, which (as I once tried to show) very largely involved the *dignitas* of Marius, and which ended in a stalemate.[25] And if there is anything at all in Plutarch's remark about Marius' jealousy over Sulla's success under Catulus (but we cannot be sure of this), it might follow that it was the gradually developing hostility between Marius and Catulus (arising out of rivalry over the claim to have defeated the Germans) that forced Sulla to take sides—and made him take the side that promised to be the winning one.[26] But whatever the background, Sulla's luck, of which he was later so proud, now left him: he did not stand for the consulship, and this, in view of his single-minded ambition

and to have returned from the East in consequence. For the chronology, *see* Gabba's edition of Appian, *b.c.*i (1958), pp. 111, 114f., and (for Marius) *Studies* 171 with notes.

23 *See Studies* 157f., for the first time (as far as I am aware) working out the chronology, and discussing the Cilician proconsulship in detail.

24 'iners et inimicus fori' (*Br.* 237).

25 *Studies* 34f. Gruen, *Historia* 1966, 32f. offers a long critical commentary on that article, and I am prepared to accept some of his points. But I have found no reason to revise my view on the importance and effects of the trials of the middle nineties. On Censorinus, Gruen tries to counter my suggestion (*see* text) with a very different one: 'Censorinus may have been cooperating with another Marcius, L. Marcius Philippus' (p. 52). This is surely the sort of mechanistic prosopography that has brought the whole technique into disrepute: no connection between the Censorini and the Philippi (other than the coincidence of *nomen*) is attested, as far as I know, throughout their recorded history. My own suggestion—admittedly only tentative—is at least based on proven collaboration eight years later. Where nothing can be known for certain, rational conjecture (advanced with due caution) is surely preferable to unfounded guesswork.

26 That the hostility between Marius and Catulus was slow to develop is shown by the fact that the Greek poet Archias managed to please both of them (Cic. *Arch.* 5f., 19). But we have no detailed chronological indication.

hitherto,[27] must mean that he had no chance. We can only note the fact. I doubt if we have enough information on the politics of the nineties to attempt an interpretation.

We know, however, that it was in 92 that the political situation was brought to the boil by the conviction of P. Rutilius Rufus. This distinguished ex-consul, lawyer and philosopher, who had merely helped the proconsul Q. Mucius Scaevola to keep the exploitation of Asia by Roman financiers under control, was driven into exile after an outrageous political trial, which disgraced the class of wealthy non-senators who were in charge of the criminal juries and showed that the whole immemorial practice of senatorial control of the state was in jeopardy.[28] Even the most innocent senator, and even the most dignified, now had to fear prosecution; and the cases were not slow in starting.[29] The result was the tribunate of M. Livius Drusus, backed by some of the most eminent nobles (chief of them M. Aemilius Scaurus, the Senior Senator), who hoped to solve all the major problems of the state in a grand scheme of reforms.[30]

The results of that eventful year 91BC are beyond our immediate concerns. It was a year of turmoil, with Senate and People divided within themselves, and violence always in the air. This was the time when Sulla thought his hour had come: the leading men in the state were getting old, and there might be a chance for a new generation. He decided to stake his claim to eminence, and to leadership against Marius—a cause that would be popular in the best circles, since Marius, out of personal bitterness and disappointment, had supported the prosecution of P. Rutilius Rufus:[31] it was he, linked with the leaders of the wealthy non-senatorial circles (the 'equites', as they were later called) throughout his life, who could be blamed for the danger to the state and for the violence. And so it was now, apparently late

27 As clearly demonstrated by the omission of the aedileship, which he could well afford.

28 The main sources are collected in Greenidge-Clay[2] 125f.

29 Cic. *ap.* Asc. 21C: 'cum . . . P. Rutilio damnato nemo tam innocens uideretur ut non timeret illa' [i.e. iudicia]. For the attack on the great M. Scaurus, *see* Greenidge-Clay[2] 127. The tangled evidence is carefully sorted by Gruen, *Roman Politics and the Criminal Courts* (1968) 206, and *op. cit.* (n. 25, above) 55f.

30 This has been discussed innumerable times. For the sources *see MRR* ii 21f., for my own interpretation *For. Client.* 215f. For the political background of the reforms, *see* Gabba, *ASNP* 1964, 1f.

31 Dio, fr. 97, 3. The two men were old *inimici* (*see Studies* 39). For Sulla as protégé of the *factio* against Marius, *see* Plut. *Mar.* 32.

in 91,[32] that Bocchus dedicated on the Capitol a group of statues showing Sulla's favourite scene: the surrender of Jugurtha to him. Not unpredictably, Marius was enraged: at this time and in the circumstances of that year, the act was a slap in the face for him. He threatened to remove the offending objects—a contingency that Sulla probably faced with equanimity, since it would have been a hideous act of sacrilege that could not have failed to bring Sulla massive support. The incident is fully reported in Plutarch, but it has again failed to puzzle the incurious: recent works appear to remain silent. Yet as we survey Bocchus' innocent gesture, we must recall that a foreigner did not simply walk into Rome's most sacred temple and leave some statues there. Before an offering could be dedicated, the Senate's permission had to be obtained.[33] Clearly, the King had obtained it.[34] This, however, restores the incident to its true importance: the slap in the face for Marius had been a formal one, fully intended by the senators who had voted for the dedication. It shows that Sulla had chosen his time and his issue wisely. It is safe to say that it marks the entry of Sulla as a serious consular candidate and as a claimant to factional leadership. He might well have been consul in 90 or at the worst 89, with luck and skill.

But for the moment his ambitions were overwhelmed by national disaster. Drusus' death was followed by the Social War, and national unity took precedence. Both Marius and Sulla distinguished themselves in the War.[35] But Marius, when he failed

[32] The exact chronology cannot be recovered, since we have only Plutarch's account (*Sulla* 6 = *Marius* 32). But it must be late 91. Taken strictly, Plutarch suggests the time after Drusus' death: he says that the city was almost on fire with the dispute between Marius and Sulla, and it was only the actual outbreak of the Social War that put an end to it. Sulla may have been trying to fill the gap left by Drusus' death in the front rank of the *factio*, particularly since the death of M. Scaurus could no doubt already be foreseen. As we shall see, Sulla was, in a sense, the heir of Drusus.

[33] Cf. Livy xxviii 39,18; xliii 6,6f.; xlv 44,8; *et al.*

[34] We must bear in mind, of course, that the number of senators present may have been small: we do not know whether a quorum was required for such occasions, and if so, what was its size. But official approval must, at any rate, have been given. It would be interesting to know whether, e.g., the *princeps* M. Scaurus was present.

[35] In fact, Appian reports an act of co-operation between them (*b.c.*i 46: against the Marsi). This cannot be true, as Sulla was not fighting in this area (cf. Gabba *ad loc.*; Salmon, *Samnium and the Samnites* (1967), 352f., especially 355f., where he regards it as deliberate distortion due to Sulla's own account).

to achieve his aim of becoming the sole saviour of the Republic, retired in disgust. Sulla fought on, welding his army into a loyal personal following, by success and indulgence.[36] When the war was over, he had his reward: M. Scaurus was dead by now, and his widow (a Metella, of one of the most powerful families in Roman politics) married Sulla. This was official recognition. Even before the marriage (though hardly before it was planned), Sulla had been elected consul for 88.[37] His colleague was Q. Pompeius Rufus, a man long connected with the circle of M. Livius Drusus, into which Sulla had now been adopted. Pompeius' son was married to Sulla's daughter. With startling clarity, the manipulation of Roman politics at crucial times stands revealed. With the Social War over, normal politics could resume its course. As in the case of the Hannibalic War, a century earlier, victory appeared to have been annexed by the Establishment, which proceeded to claim the political profits. Sulla had chosen the right side. But the consulship was a means to an end: war against Mithridates had broken out in the East, a war that had excited the ambition of several men, for there were cheap triumphs to be won in the East, and massive booty. Marius and one of his relatives by marriage, C. Caesar Strabo, had been quarrelling over this command, and towards the end of 89 the city had seen riots and street-fighting, in which a young tribune (also a friend of M. Livius Drusus and a powerful public speaker), P. Sulpicius Rufus, had taken a prominent part.[38] Now it was all over. The Establishment had intervened, and Sulla was its candidate—justifiably enough, both from the political point of view (in view of his activities just before the Social War) and from the military (in view of his successes in the war itself). The consuls drew lots, and Fortune, ever on his side, awarded the eastern war to Sulla—to no one's surprise, one may think. He had won the game.

[36] Cf. the incident noted in Plut. *Sulla* 6.

[37] Plutarch (l.c.), citing Livy, relates that many people who had thought him worthy of the consulship did not think him worthy of this marriage. This is the only evidence on the relative order of the two events. It is likely that the actual arrangements for both were made at the same time. As for the marriage of Sulla's daughter to Q. Pompeius, their son was tribune in 52 (*MRR* ii 236). Even if born 87 (the latest date possible, since the father was killed in the riots of 88), he would be rather old for that office. Hence it is likely that the marriage only took place in 89 or 88, although there is no decisive evidence.

[38] For the date of this (89, not 88, since at the beginning of Sulpicius' tribunate) *see For. Client.* 230f.; *Historia* 1969, 418f.

And then it all dissolved before his eyes. Rome after the Social War and a generation of *popularis* tradition was not going to return to aristocratic control as easily as had appeared. Having won, the faction shut its eyes to the dictates of equity and of prudence. When the tribune P. Sulpicius proceeded to put a Drusan programme into effect by assuring the newly-enfranchised Italians of an equal distribution among the voting-tribes, his friend Q. Pompeius, now consul, would have none of it: the state appeared to have happily settled down to oligarchic guidance, and reform could only endanger it. The Drusan programme, for those who had supported it as a mere means to an oligarchic end, was now out of date. Sulpicius, however, was a younger man, and (like M. Drusus himself) probably based his politics on moral conviction inextricably mixed with aristocratic pride. Deeply wounded in both by his friend's desertion, he made common cause with another embittered man and, as we are explicitly told, violently reversed his political attitude. In return for the support that Marius could still command, among the equites (both financiers and country squires) who were his own class and the veterans who had fought under him, Sulpicius promised the old man the eastern command. After all, Marius himself had set the precedent, in his first consulship, when the African command, given by the Senate to Metellus Numidicus, had been transferred to him by vote of the people.[39]

Sulla, who had earlier left the city in order to prepare for his departure overseas, returned to oppose the tribune. Fighting and rioting followed, in which Pompeius' son was killed, and finally the consuls left the city and Sulpicius passed his various laws, including the one transferring the command to Marius. Again, the sources pose a question: did Sulla, when his life was in danger during the riots, take refuge in Marius' house and come to terms with Marius, withdrawing opposition to the laws in return for a safe conduct and a guarantee of confirmation in office? Did he owe his life to this bargain and then repudiate it? Sulla, inevitably, later denied it. Fortunately, in this case he aroused Plutarch's curiosity by protesting too much. He claimed he had merely been driven towards Marius' house by an armed mob, and had then made his way back to the forum and renounced his opposition to the laws. In the *Marius*, Plutarch merely cites the two versions, non-committally. By the time he came to write the

[39] Sall. *Jug.* 73,7. (The sense of the supplement is certain.)

Sulla, he had found out another crucial point: after the consuls had left, Sulpicius, while passing a law deposing Q. Pompeius, took no such action against Sulla. There is no doubt that the bargain was struck.[40]

Grave portents were later remembered. Plutarch lists them. A mouse gnawed gold in a temple and, on being caught, gave birth in the trap and devoured three of her young; and the call of a trumpet was heard coming out of the sky. Tuscan seers calculated that a *saeculum*—even a Great Year of the Heavens—was drawing to an end. In the circumstances, Marius and Sulpicius were unwise to let Sulla escape on the strength of his word. For Sulla went straight to his army in Campania—the army he had led in the Social War and moulded into a personal following—before the government's agents could reach it. What he had to tell his men made good sense to them: Marius had been given the command, and if allowed to take it over, would not dream of taking them (his enemy's army) to the rich spoils of the East. Others would reap the harvest. They responded as Sulla had expected. The officers who came to take them over were stoned, and the army marched on Rome.

It was, in a way, the result of a reform that Marius himself had introduced. It was he who, in his first consulship, had abandoned the immemorial principle that only people possessing a minimum of property should serve in the legions, and had opened the army to *proletarii*.[41] The action had undoubtedly helped to save the state in a series of military crises that could not have been met with the old resentful and numerically inadequate recruits. But he had created what we nowadays call the 'client army', and it was Sulla who first saw its implications. The new class of the dispossessed in arms, mercenaries in their own country, now inured by the Social War to the devastation of Italy, had nothing to hope for but booty, and no one from whom to expect it but their leader. These men had no stake in the *res publica*. The traditional insistence on at least a minimum property qualification for anyone entrusted with arms and taught to use them had not been mere prejudice.

But if Marius had created a revolutionary force, he was not aware of it. Rioting for political ends was by now almost traditional, accepted by both sides, ever since 133BC, as a regrettable

[40] Plut. *Mar.* 35; *Sulla* 8.

[41] Sall. *Jug.* 86,2; Val. Max. ii 3,1; Gell. xvi 10,10f. (quoting Sallust). On this step and its importance, *see* Gabba, *Athenaeum* 1951, 171f.

part of the *res publica*. But no citizen army had ever marched on Rome. Appeals to abandon the impious attempt were in vain, and Marius and Sulpicius, caught completely by surprise, made their escape, with their followers, while Sulla occupied the city. Some of his enemies (including Sulpicius) were caught and executed and Sulpicius' laws repealed: Sulla once more had his command.

Victory, however, had been bought at a price. Sulla, hitherto heir to the leadership of the most powerful faction, found that even the very faction that had supported him was far from unanimously behind him now. Where the men enthusiastically followed him against Rome, the officers (all except for a quaestor, probably his wife's relative L. Lucullus) had abandoned him to a man.[42] The Senate as a whole was hostile, the People cowed and resentful. The use of a private army of *proletarii* to set up a *regnum* did not arouse the enthusiasm of the upper class, nor the support of a People accustomed to their share of political power and its concrete advantages. The consuls (for Pompeius had returned with Sulla) had to send the army back to restore a semblance of legality before they could muster enough support to legislate with any hope of permanence: for unless they gained at least acquiescence, any measures they passed would simply be reversed when Sulla's army left for the East. A permanent armed occupation of Rome, even if it had been conceivable at this stage, was out of the question in the circumstances. However, with the army discreetly out of sight, various laws were passed. Unfortunately our tradition has confused them with Sulla's later reforms, and we cannot sort them out here; and since they did not long remain in force, it is not worth while, in this context. Such as we can discern them, they show Sulla still fumbling after a programme of reform.[43] Nor need we go into detail over what followed: Q. Pompeius' death at the hands of the first disciple of Sulla's, the father of Pompey the Great, who had the consul killed by his army which he unwisely came to take over in person; the election of a hostile consul for 87, L. Cinna; and the fact that Sulla had to permit both these blows, since the only alternative was to give up the eastern war and use his army in Italy. Now, the client army had proved loyal to its commander even against the state, provided he held out concrete

[42] App. *b.c.* i 57; *Studies* 220.

[43] App. *b.c.* i 59 (see Gabba's notes *ad loc.*); cf. Gabba, *op.cit.* (n. 30, above) 7f.

hopes of booty. They might not follow him if he did not. If he failed to deliver as promised, they might leave him for a higher bidder, or simply go home. Sulla knew his men: he ignored Rome and Italy—the hostile consul, demonstrating the solid hostility of the well-to-do to the proletarian army and its leader,[44] and the hostile army so like his own—and left for the East. The future was to show that he was right. No sooner had he left Italy than Cinna tried to overturn his arrangements. Driven out of the city by the other consul, he went straight to Campania, to part (it seems) of that very army that Sulla had left there; for the Social War was by no means wholly concluded, and some troops had to stay behind. Without the slightest difficulty Cinna gained their allegiance, to follow *him* to Rome. Sulla, leaving them behind, had disappointed them; the next man would do as well.[45]

Sulla accurately gauged the forces that he had unleashed in the state. But he had another reason for leaving. In the East, Greece might be overrun by the enemy if he delayed—or so he might claim. The truth, perhaps, was worse. Again the sources are confused.[46] A legate of the governor of Macedonia had been

[44] The elections must not (as they sometimes are) be interpreted as a sign of 'popular disapproval': what is shown by the centuriate assembly is the hostility of the propertied classes. It must be remembered (as I have tried to stress, against the propagandist distortions in some of our sources) that at this time Sulla was the leader of a mercenary army of have-nots: a phenomenon unwelcome to those classes.

[45] Sources collected Greenidge-Clay[2] 171f. Sulla, clearly, was well in advance of his generation in his precise analysis of the possibilities of the 'client army'—and in his unscrupulous rationality in adapting his actions to them.

[46] Plut. *Sulla* 11 contrasts with App. *Mithr.* 29. For a recent discussion (citing earlier bibliography) *see* M. Janke, *Histor. Unters. zu Memnon v. Herakleia* (Diss. Würzburg, 1963) 53f. Plutarch reports that the legate Q. Braetius (?) Sura defeated the Pontic troops, which had to withdraw to the sea. Appian says that the legate did not face the enemy forces, but withdrew to Piraeus, until Archelaus occupied it. As Janke shows, a notice about these events in Paus. i 20,5 (a battle in which the Romans defeat Archelaus and drive him back into Piraeus, before the beginning of the siege of Athens) must refer to the same engagement. (No Roman commander is named by Pausanias; Sulla only appears on the scene later. Probably he omitted the unknown and unimportant name he found in his source.) The version in Appian is certainly wrong, since Piraeus was held by Pontic troops and a Roman commander cannot have withdrawn to it; and, had he done so, he could not have retired to Macedonia after. (It was only Sulla who gained control of the sea.) That version is therefore due either to a misunderstanding of the source (perhaps the more likely explanation, and far from unparalleled) or possibly distortion in a pro-Sullan source (Sisenna?) not used by Plutarch. Plutarch's version

fighting against the 'Eastern hordes' of Mithridates, and there is good reason to think that he had defeated them and driven them back to the sea. If this is the right version of the story, then Sulla had reason to hurry: if he waited, his men might be altogether cheated of their victory and he himself of his projected military base. He would have only rapid conviction to expect. That this was the situation seems to be confirmed by the fact that Sulla at once ordered the legate to withdraw and leave the war to *him*. And confident of victory where a lesser man with smaller forces had been successful, he crossed to Greece and duly won it.

In Italy, meanwhile, Cinna received the aid of Marius, whose name was still worth legions, and after bitter resistance captured Rome. The disintegration of the Republic had advanced another step. The war with the Italians had brought devastation to peninsular Italy, for the first time since Hannibal. Sulla had seized Rome with a Roman army, for the first time in its history. Now, for the first time, Rome was attacked, defended, and captured after siege, all by citizen soldiers. There followed a massacre worse than Sulla's. The end of Rome seemed in sight.

However, at this point Marius died, within days of assuming his seventh consulship. Cinna was left to govern and set himself the task of trying to bring the state back to health, to restore order and confidence. For the leaders of political life, the choice was difficult: were they to stay and co-operate with the régime that had taken Rome by force and ruled it by terror? If not, what could they do? Join Sulla, who had set the precedent of doing just that? Several of the best-known men departed for various provinces, where they could keep out of the limelight. Even Q. Metellus Pius, head of the Metelli, the family that had adopted Sulla and helped him attain the consulship and the command, now chose this course as preferable to joining Sulla. No man of real consequence joined the demagogue who had led his mercenary army against Rome. In fact, all the ex-consuls (the senior statesmen who decided policy) and many other eminent men chose to stay and co-operate, in the hope of restoring peace and stability. Cinna now embarked, with fair success, on a programme of peace and reconciliation, which I have tried to follow elsewhere.[47] Before long it was clear that legitimate government was returning to Rome, and Sulla too was given a chance to co-operate, and to argue out his differences with the government after the foreign enemy had been defeated. For the moment he accepted: his forces in Greece and the government forces sent to Asia did not clash. But in fact he was soon faced with the same situation as in late 88. A vigorous offensive by those forces was winning Asia itself from Mithridates; soon the war would be won—not by L. Sulla; and what then? He had his answer. Making peace with the man who had slaughtered 80,000 Italians in Asia, and recognizing him as an ally, he helped him clear Asia of the army of the Senate and People of Rome; and when his own troops grumbled at this, he again knew the answer, from long experience. He let them spend a winter quartered on the wealthy cities of Asia. There was never another murmur. Sulla knew his men.

And then Sulla's luck (that Fortune which he proclaimed and believed was always ultimately on his side)[48] reasserted itself, decisively. Cinna, preparing for a campaign in Illyria, to train an army that might (if called upon) be able to face Sulla's veterans,[49] was killed in a mutiny. It was one of those accidents that decide great issues, far more often than some historians like to admit. Compromise had failed and the government quickly disintegrated. At once various eminent nobles (including Q. Metellus) who had been in hiding in the provinces rose in arms and collected forces against the government. In Italy, a young man, Cn. Pompeius (later Pompey the Great), called on his father's veterans, who had not minded murdering a consul, and enrolled a legion against the government in the heart of the country. In Rome itself, more and more of the leading men drifted away.

Sulla never missed a chance. Leaving Asia, with the supplies that his ally Mithridates had given him, he made for Greece, and late in 83 he crossed over to Italy. By then, many of the eminent gentlemen who had hesitated for so long were with him. As he defeated the raw levies that (owing to Cinna's failure) were all that the government could put in the field against him, more

suggests that Sulla had nothing to the contrary to report in his own account, and should all the more readily be accepted. It confirms Sulla's mastery in assessing the psychology of the client army, the chances it offered and its limitations (*see* n. 45 and text, above).

[47] *Studies* (n. 2, above) 222f.

[48] *See* especially Plut. *Sulla* 6 and cf. (whatever it means: *see* Balsdon, *JRS* 1951, 1f.) his later *agnomen* 'Felix'.

[49] *Studies* 226f., demonstrating the (fairly obvious) purpose of Cinna's Illyrian expedition against the distortion of Sullan sources and its acceptance by scholars unaware of geographical and military realities. (That the latter have not given up is shown by Balsdon, *JRS* 1965, 232.)

flocked to him. The man who had been started on his career by Marius, and had joined his enemies; the rebel who had led a private army of proletarians against Rome and had occupied it; to the disgust and deep suspicion of all right-thinking citizens, the Roman commander who had sold the forces of the Senate and People to their greatest enemy and the murderer of thousands of Italians, in order to call that enemy in as his ally against his own country—this man, through success, suddenly became the hero and champion of the nobility, the defender of the state.[50] By late 82 he had conquered Rome. Now came the proscriptions —the reign of terror in which hundreds, perhaps thousands, were arbitrarily killed, and their property confiscated, without even a pretence of trial, at the mere whim of Sulla or (as often, it seems) of one of his subordinates, satisfying a private grudge or private greed. This time, unlike 88, Sulla did nothing to spare the feelings of senators or to soothe their consciences by a show of legality. It was clear that he did not think highly enough of his new friends to bother.

However, this could not last. Order had to be restored. During 81, with full 'dictatorial' authority that permitted him to do literally whatever he chose to, he reorganized the state by means of a programme of comprehensive reform. That programme is well known in outline, and too extensive to be discussed in detail on this occasion. But the fact as such is worth noting. The man who had seemed dedicated to war and personal ambition, ruthless and treacherous at home and in the field; who had spent his leisure in luxury, affecting the company of actors and prostitutes —that man now saw himself as the new Romulus,[51] refounding the city that he had brought to the verge of destruction. In 88 he had still been feeling his way, knowing that he had no assurance that his work would be lasting, and no time to make it coherent. This time he had a coherent plan, based, of course, on the ideas of the circle that had given him what political background he had—the circle of the Metelli, of M. Scaurus and M. Livius Drusus.[52] In outline it was simple enough: to integrate the Italians into the state; to attach the People firmly to the guidance of the governing class, their traditional leaders; and to eliminate the irresponsible political power of the equites that had grown up

[50] Evidence *Studies* 229f.
[51] On Sulla as the new Romulus *see* Alföldi, *MH* 1951, 205f.
[52] *See* Gabba, *op.cit.* (n. 30, above).

since Gaius Gracchus.[53] But things had changed in the last ten years, and there were new problems to be solved, which M. Livius Drusus had not even been aware of. The new Republic had to be guarded against a host of dangers, and Sulla had thought of them all.

Here we might notice a striking aspect of the disintegration that marked the decline of the Roman Republic. Most of the time, it was not opposition to reform that destroyed the state (we have heard all about the load of guilt that attaches to those who opposed Tiberius Gracchus); it was reform itself. It was almost as though history had been out to confirm the forebodings of those traditional Optimates who saw anything new (*res nouae*) as a revolution and any change as a change for the worse. The process is perhaps a warning on the limitations of human foresight—limitations in no way due to the ancients' unfortunate ignorance of computer technology, but as real and obvious today as in antiquity. At each stage, even well-intentioned and genuine attempts to reform what seemed patent errors and abuses resulted in changes in the social and political balance that the reformer had not (perhaps could not have) foreseen. Tiberius, helpless against opposition, tried to find a way out by enhancing the power of a tribune supported by the People. That power remained, to plague the Republic henceforth. Tiberius, however, was killed, and his fate showed that deep-seated evils needed attention. One of them, in the eyes of his supporters, was the reliance on landed wealth as the sole qualification for political power.[54] Not only had it turned out to be the landed interest that prevented reform, but the cardinal principle of constitutional practice, that landed wealth could be regarded as alone sufficiently disinterested to be fit to rule, had been conspicuously proved false. Moreover, the power of the Senate in the *res publica* had been shown to be excessive.[55] C. Gracchus and his circle thought they had found the answer by introducing the whole class

[53] This programme did not disappear with Drusus' failure and death, but remained a live issue in politics. I have tried to trace its vicissitudes and importance in *Historia* 1969, 447f.
[54] I have developed this in my De Carle Lectures, delivered at the University of Otago in July-August 1969. (Publication forthcoming 1971).
[55] For the view that C. Gracchus was thinking of the 'mixed constitution', *see* Rowland, *TAPA* 1965, 361f. C. Gracchus was certainly the first Roman who clearly had in mind a comprehensive scheme of reform, so that the question of theoretical influences cannot be lightly dismissed (as it still can, I think, in the case of his brother). But *see* Nicolet, *REA* 1965, 142f.

of wealthy citizens (including financial interests) into the political process: the court that sat in judgment on senators was put into their hands, thereby giving them a check and a countervailing power. These were the men who later came to form the class called 'equites'. The result was (as the historian Varro put it[56]) 'to make the state two-headed' and to lead to serious discord. In 92, as we saw, the new class showed that it was a disturbing and not a regulating influence: power without responsibility, political leverage without political interests or indeed policies—this threatened to produce, in the literal sense, anarchy, to make the state ungovernable. Similarly the Italian problem. Introduced into Roman politics as a by-product of the Gracchan reform, as a tactical measure taken by the land commission to increase the amount of public land available for distribution;[57] made acute by the wars of the late second century, which led men to realize that equal sacrifice demanded equal recognition; it finally threatened to destroy the state. M. Drusus, using the methods made possible by Ti. Gracchus, tried to deal with both these new dangers that had developed out of the Gracchan reforms. The result was a major war with the allies and fierce hatreds within the body politic, demonstrated by the trials of 91-89.[58] Marius had tried to deal with the manpower shortage that threatened to make defence of the empire impossible and had extended the base of recruitment. The result, as we saw, was to provide a less scrupulous and less tradition-bound man with an instrument for capturing the Republic. The list could be extended. All the well-intentioned and (individually) necessary reforms of the generation since the Gracchi had fused to bring about the explosion that lasted from 91 to 80. Sulla had to start again.

One problem, that of the Italians, at least, was now out of the way. He had realized that the Italian upper class had to be used for stabilizing the Republic and not left as a threat outside it. As he had made clear some time after his landing,[59] the

[56] Varro *ap.* Non. Marc. 728 L.

[57] App. *b.c.*i 21, cf. 34. Appian's account has been questioned, but without reason or counter-evidence. Though this is not, of course, to assert that the problem would not have come up but for the commission's activities.

[58] *See Historia*, l.c. (n. 53, above), with recent bibliography.

[59] Livy, *per.* lxxxvi. Salmon has shown (*Athenaeum* 1964, 60f.) that the Social War did not merge into the civil war on Sulla's return and that there was no simple connection between them: Italy, like Rome, was divided in its allegiance (esp. pp. 68f.). Sulla landed at Brundisium without opposition (App. *b.c.* i 79), but, coming up against strong

Italians retained their citizenship and, at least in principle, were no longer confined to special tribes. (This, of course, in no way inhibited Sulla from arbitrarily punishing his enemies among them, as among citizens.[60]) The chief remaining problems, as he saw them, could be reduced to three: the demagogues who had set the People against the Senate; the existence of the equites, the new class that had power without responsibility; and—the problem that he naturally saw most clearly of all, and that marks the main change since the day of M. Drusus—the 'client army': if the state was to survive at all, he himself must have no imitators. Sulla, as we have seen, modelled his solution on the example of the circle of M. Drusus—perhaps along lines suggested by Drusus' teacher, the orator L. Crassus;[61] but with special regard to the new situation that he himself had created. All the problems could be seen as closely related: they could be subsumed under the heading of centrifugal tendencies, threatening disintegration. The answer was to give the state a single head again—and for a man like Sulla, indeed (we may say) for any Roman politician coming to that conclusion at that time, that head could only be the Senate. No other course was conceivable, and this is the basic thought behind the Sullan constitution. The Senate became supreme beyond challenge, in the legislative and judicial and, as far as possible, even in the executive and military sphere. The details all fit in with this guiding idea: the ban on tribunician initiative in the assembly; the laws binding provincial governors; the reconstitution and extension of the criminal courts; even the increases in the numbers of magistrates. For the ten

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Italian opposition in Campania (based on his cancellation of Sulpicius' laws in 88), in due course 'made a treaty with the Italians' (Livy, l.c.) committing himself to recognize their rights. Salmon suggests that the Samnites were excluded from the treaty, possibly because they objected to some aspects of its terms. (I see no evidence for his further conjecture that 'they had no part in the treaty simply because Sulla had already made up his mind to keep them out' (*op.cit.* 75).) In support of this, one might compare their attitude to the original grant of citizenship by the *lex Julia*: they had stood out for special terms, implying total Roman surrender, and had in the end won them. (*See* App. *b.c.* i 68; Gran. Lic. 20 F; the terms in Dio, fr. 102,7.)

[60] On the Samnites, cf. Strabo v 4,11; for Italy, e.g., Flor. ii 9,27, and *see* passages collected Greenidge-Clay[2] 216f.; Cic. *Caec.* 97 (Arretium), *dom.* 79 (Volaterrae).

[61] *See* n. 52 and text (above). For Crassus' young disciples, *see* Cic. *de or.* i 24f. Perhaps Crassus' *magistra oratio* in support of Caepio's law in 106 foreshadows some such ideas (*see* Cic. *de or.* i 225); and cf. *Historia* 1969, *cit.* (n. 53, above).

provinces, two ex-consuls and eight ex-praetors were in principle to be available every year, so that change might normally be annual; and enough quaestors were created to serve them and fulfil all the other requirements.[62] Sulla's special attention was devoted to what had been the chief anarchic force of the nineties, the equites. The expanded courts were transferred to the Senate, so that the two-headedness created by C. Gracchus was now repaired. It was probably Sulla, as is generally recognized, who withdrew the privilege of sitting in fourteen specially designated rows of seats at spectacles from the equites.[63] However, the Senate, if only in order to be able to deal with the vastly increased activity, had to be raised to a membership of 600 (as M. Drusus had first seen). Since the establishment had earlier been about 300, and many had dropped out owing to the wars of the last decade, a large complement had to be found—and where could it come from except from (in the widest sense) the equites, the wealthy class outside the Senate?[64] Well over 300 must have been raised to the new Senate, all of them (of course) Sulla's men.

What happened to Sulla's opponents among that class is no secret. Large numbers were proscribed,[65] their property (the basis of their importance) confiscated and redistributed, and the men themselves either killed or, if they escaped, debarred (with their families) from public service. Thus, by the complementary processes of decimation and promotion, the class as a whole was deprived of its politically prominent elements, at the same time as it was deprived of power and conspicuous distinction as a class. No wonder nothing much is heard of the equites for a decade. Those left could be assumed to be dedicated to *otium*—the unimpeded pursuit of wealth and its enjoyment. The myth

[62] Evidence collected Greenidge-Clay[2] 213f. Cf. Mommsen, *Röm. Staatsr.* ii[3] 200f.

[63] The privilege was 'restored' by the law of L. Roscius Otho in 67 (Cic. *Mur.* 40)—which is further evidence for the slowness of the equites' restoration to power and privilege. Otho's law is clearly a consequence of their return to the juries in 70, which itself was probably not due to any pressure on their part.

[64] This is not the place to enter into the discussion (raised by Nicolet's great work) on the definition of the *ordo equester* in the late Republic. I am here using the word 'equites' as it was undoubtedly used by Cicero. On the adlection to the Senate, *see* Gabba, *Athenaeum* 1956, 124f.; Hawthorn, *G & R* 1962, 53f. Those chosen were not confined to the 18 centuries.

[65] App. *b.c.* i 95 puts the number of equites proscribed at 1600. *See* Gabba's note *ad loc.* (pp. 254f.). Other sources appear to confirm some such figure.

of Sulla's hatred for the equites has often been exposed: he did nothing to diminish their business opportunities and promoted a large number of their leaders to the Senate. But as a class, they were purged, with single-minded thoroughness, of any chance of political power.

The balanced constitution that Polybius had described with admiration in the middle of the second century, and that had perhaps been in the mind of C. Gracchus, had led to total disintegration, under the blows of reform and the consequences it progressively produced. Sulla was by no means an antiquarian or a romantic, as he is often depicted. His purpose was quite simply a political solution. He accepted recent constitutional developments, even extended them, and raised them to basic principles of his system: thus the criminal courts, and the practice of sending magistrates to their overseas provinces after rather than during their year of office.[66] In the face of this, it is absurd to speak (in any proper sense of the word) of 'reaction'. No received institution was too sacred for him: thus the tribunate was pruned back to a lower position than it had ever held in recorded history. On the other hand, Italians were freely admitted to the Senate, and the support of the upper classes of Italy was recognized as vital to the survival of the Republic. A balanced constitution could work only if there was *concordia*, and *concordia* could not be revived by force. It would have to grow, and Sulla probably hoped that his arrangements would give it time to do so. The Italian problem was solved: demagogues and ambitious generals were neutralized; the political differences between the two leading orders were significantly reduced by the adlection of so many eminent equites into the Senate: equestrian interests would not lack representation there. In fact, there was now little difference of background or interests between Senate and equites: Cicero later had good hopes for their *concordia*, and though moderns often look down on him as naive, he knew Roman politics better than most men.

Meanwhile, for the balance that had broken down and led to disintegration, Sulla substituted a new degree of legal centralization, with law reinforcing what custom had either been unable

[66] That this practice had developed during the preceding generation, largely owing to the multiplication of judicial business and jury courts, is clear from our detailed evidence (easily consulted in *MRR*) and obvious on mere arithmetical grounds. *See* Mommsen, *Röm. Staatsr. cit.* (n. 62, above).

to ensure, or had never attempted to. This was far from reaction; we might describe it as a revolution, in a constitutional sense. And, clearly, Sulla meant it to work. For he at once began to dismantle the special powers he had taken. At the end of 81 (so far as we can see) he ceased to be dictator and in 80, as consul with an equal colleague (Q. Metellus Pius), he was no longer accompanied by twenty-four lictors, no longer supreme. When Cicero, in his speech defending Roscius of Ameria, appealed to him, in the course of that year, to assure the prestige of the aristocracy to which he had returned the state, the ambitious young man knew what Sulla would want to hear. By 79, Sulla was a private citizen, taking no interest in the elections for 78, except to announce his displeasure at the result.[67] Those to whom he had committed the state would have to learn to run it—supported, needless to say, by a ring of his veterans settled in colonies and on expropriated land, up and down Italy. The new *res publica* was assured of a fair start.

The personal 'enigma' of Sulla—an eternal subject of speculation and romance—is not for us to discuss here. The political enigma—that of his retirement—is an unnecessary puzzle, due, like many such, to modern myth building on ancient. Caesar—a very different man, in a very different situation—at a time when the Sullan Republic had shown that it was not viable could not understand Sulla's action;[68] later, it became a subject for debate in the schools, and as such it is still with us. In fact, he had no alternative. The time for military monarchy had not yet come—as even Caesar found out, a generation and a bloodbath later, when the Republic could in fact be seen to be dead. It took a great deal more slaughter to make it possible, and then by degrees, with caution and tact. Sulla had had his moment of *regnum*. What had long been a term of political abuse had briefly become reality. Perhaps the thought was not entirely absent, in Sulla's arbitrary cruelty and contempt for morality or public opinion, that reality should act as a deterrent. Sulla had reached the summit of *felicitas*: long ago, a Chaldaean seer had

[67] I tentatively worked out the 'time-table' of Sulla's retirement *Historia* 1962, 230f. and have given further details in a forthcoming article in *Athenaeum* (publication promised for 1970).

[68] Or perhaps *pretended* he could not: 'nihil esse rem publicam, appellationem modo sine corpore ac specie; Sullam nescisse litteras, qui dictaturam deposuerit' (Suet. *Jul.* 77). The source is T. Ampius Balbus, not a sound witness, but there are reasons for believing him here (Syme, *Roman Revolution* (1939) 53).

told him that he would live to be first among men and die at the height of good fortune. He told the story in his memoirs, not long before his death.[69] Like Marius and the prophecy of his seventh consulship, which seems to have become a driving and ultimately a consuming force in his life; like Caesar and his belief in his fortune; even so Sulla clearly believed the prophecy, especially when it began to work out. Were the signs of illness already upon him?[70] We cannot know. However, we must not ignore or underestimate the irrational motives of men, whether leaders or led, as—in an age of supreme superstition and almost limitless credulity—we still too often take pride in doing. For Sulla, in any case, there was no choice. The care he spent on his system, followed as it was by immediate withdrawal from power in planned stages, shows that he knew it.

Sulla's system basically lasted to the end of the Republic—so we have recently been reminded,[71] with convincing documentation. The old story of the overthrow of the whole system in 70, in the consulship of two of its chief profiteers, had too often lightly been repeated. It was worth stressing how solidly, in many respects, Sulla had built.

Yet the stress on survival can mislead, however useful in righting the balance. No one can deny that the *res publica* of the sixties was vastly different from that of the middle seventies. Perhaps we can now begin to define the difference. Whatever the number of detailed provisions that survived—and they included, among other important parts, the whole of the system of provincial government, perhaps the first such system ever attempted in Rome—these details were all externals. What was altered was the spirit of the system. Let us take an example from the field just mentioned. Sulla had deliberately refrained from

[69] Plut. *Sulla* 27. This was when, in his province after his praetorship, he met an embassy from the King of Parthia (ibid. 5). Compare the omen that promised Marius seven consulships and that seems to have been a motivating force in his efforts to return to prominence in and after the late nineties. (For the omen *see* Plut. *Mar.* 36; App. *b.c.* i 61; 75. It is not mentioned in recent accounts of Marius.) Compare also the fatal trust of Cn. Octavius (*cos.* 87) in soothsayers and astrologers (Plut. *Mar.* 42; App. *b.c.* i 71). This *motiv* should often be taken much more seriously than it nowadays is.

[70] For an interesting discussion of his illness and death, implying that he could indeed have known some time in advance, *see* Carney, *AClass* 1960, 64f.

[71] In an interesting study by U. Laffi (a pupil of Gabba), 'Il mito di Silla', *Athenaeum* 1967, 177f., 255f. *See* especially part I, section 2 (pp. 179f.).

annexation and, as we saw, had budgeted for (in principle) an annual change of governor for each province. In the course of the seventies and the sixties, four new provinces were created, added to the ten that Sulla had left;[72] yet no more magistrates were appointed. That change, surely, is more than merely quantitative. And this in addition to the aspects that have always been stressed, though their importance should now be reasserted from the point of view of our conclusions about the spirit of Sulla's work: the revival of the tribunate in the course of the seventies, and the reforms of 70 which completed it and recalled the equites to a share—the major share—in the courts and hence to renewed political power.[73] Balance had again taken the place of central control; the Senate was again only one group of players in the game; the *res publica* that had broken down for lack of *concordia* and that had been replaced by Sulla's radical reform was now restored, with *concordia* no nearer. Those who put the end of the Sullan system in 70 were perhaps, after all, only technically wrong. The French Revolution may perhaps in a very proper sense be said to have been killed by Napoleon (if not before), although many of its organizational details survive to our own day.

But why did the Sullan system fail? We all know that 'Sulla could not abolish his own example'.[74] Pompey, his disciple (as Sallust calls him), at once applied his technique against Sulla himself—and got away with it, with no more than a joke against him. Yet, important though this is, it is not the whole explanation. As has been rightly stressed,[75] Sulla's example also did much to *prevent* real imitation—and indeed, we have seen that this may have been in his mind. The horror of proscription hovers

[72] For the ten provinces under Sulla, *see* Mommsen, *Röm. Staatsr.* ii³ 201. After Sulla, Cyrene was organized provisionally in 74, permanently perhaps only by Pompey; Bithynia-Pontus and Syria by Pompey; and Crete by Q. Metellus Creticus or Pompey (details are not known). Cyprus was added in 58/7, but joined to Cilicia.

[73] For the politics of the seventies, *see* the interesting discussion by R. Rossi, *PP* 1965, 133f. For the removal of the limitations on the tribunate, *see* the sources collected Greenidge-Clay² 245, 250, 256. One might add (though it is not a constitutional measure) Cn. Lentulus' law of 72, cancelling the remissions of payment for the estates of the proscribed, which Sulla had granted (Sall. *hist.* iv 1 M). For the reforms of 70, *see* sources collected Greenidge-Clay² 270f. Whatever the definition of the *tribuni aerarii*, who provided the third panel of jurors after that year, Cicero usually regards their interests as identical with those of the equites.

[74] Syme, *Rom. Rev.* 17.

[75] Laffi, *op.cit.* (n. 71, above).

over Roman politics for a generation, constraining ambition and political feud. Pompey, the disciple, was no Sulla in the end (whatever Cicero at one time thought, in despair).[76] And Caesar, who could no longer understand Sulla, while imitating his technique carefully avoided the horrors so well remembered. When civil war came, Sulla's example helped to alleviate its horror, as for a long time it had postponed its coming. We must remember that it was men who had been children in 82 who forced war on Caesar and Pompey in 49;[77] not to mention those who, a few years later, brought back proscription to a city that had forgotten it.

It is hazardous to speak about the basic cause of a complex phenomenon. But if ever it was justified, perhaps this is the case. At least, there is an obvious cause that must by no means be neglected; though it has tended to be, in an age that looks for historical causes in rather a narrow range. Sulla's system failed because he had overrated the oligarchy to which he had entrusted his *res publica*. For one thing, the adlection of the leaders of the irresponsible equites into the weakened Senate held out little hope of improvement. By 70, corruption in the senatorial law-courts was so blatant that even eminent senators agreed it must be reformed[78]—not (one is tempted to say) from any serious hope of improvement, but at least so as to remove it from the sphere of political agitation. This must have been one of the

[76] Laffi, *op.cit.* 268f. (based on Syme, *op.cit.* 65) discusses the propaganda war of the late fifties and the forties that depicted Pompey as a new Sulla. (For Cicero's attitude, *see* 271f.)

[77] The 'rash and factious minority' (Syme, *op.cit.* 47) has been brilliantly delineated and analysed by Syme. Of the consulars later on Pompey's side, the oldest, L. Afranius (*cos.* 60 as a middle-aged *nouus homo*), born probably before 110, was away in Spain during the long debate on Caesar's *imperium;* the next oldest, M. Bibulus, was governing Syria. (Cicero, slightly older, was, of course, not only away from Rome, but vigorously opposed to the decision for war.) The oldest actually in Rome was P. Lentulus Spinther, who triumphed late in 51: as *cos.* 57, he must have been born in 100 at the latest and may have been a little earlier. But although a loyal partisan when the time came, he is not reported as active in the debates. L. Ahenobarbus (*cos.* 54, after a year's delay) was therefore the oldest active enemy of Caesar. He was born in 98, we may assume, Ap. Claudius (also *cos.* 54) in 97; M. Cato (never consul, but one of the moving spirits in the fight against Caesar) in 95. The consul C. Marcellus who, late in 50, handed Pompey a sword after ignominiously failing to rally the Senate to his cause, probably had had a regular *cursus* (aedile 56) and was born in 93. No one active against Caesar in 50-49, therefore, was over sixteen years old when Sulla was made dictator.

[78] Cicero makes this clear in the *Verrines*, e.g. 1*Verr.* 44.

aims of the reform of 70. And it was achieved. Corruption remained, perhaps worse than ever;[79] but responsibility was now shared, and the courts were never again a major political issue. However, corruption was not the worst element. The Empire later survived a good deal of it, as other empires have. Honesty in positions of power has far more often been an ideal, or a pretence, than a fact. The worst was that the oligarchy had lost the will and the confidence to govern. When two *Sullani* (as we saw) destroyed the spirit of the Sullan settlement in 70, there was little real resistance.[80] In fact, the myth of Sulla as restorer and patron soon wore thin. Yet there was no willingness to give up the profits—perhaps no politically easy way of doing so without great risks. Sulla had left a legacy of guilt, from which the better elements among his successors found no escape. The Sullan oligarchy had a fatal flaw: it governed with a guilty conscience.

It was not the only flaw. The post-Sullan oligarchy had no sense of mission. Even outside the selfish ambitions of the men who finally tore it apart, this can be demonstrated. Between 78 and 59, when ordered government may be said to have ceased, twenty-one consuls (over half) are not attested in provincial government. Of course, our records are far from complete, and some will have done their duty without our being aware of it. Others will have been genuinely prevented.[81] Yet surely not over half. There were men who did not want to leave the excitement of the city, or the pleasures of their villas, for the duties of service

[79] The acquittal of Clodius is only the most famous of many scandals.

[80] For the view of Catulus, *see* Cicero, l.c. (n. 78, above). It was the family of the Cottae, *ex factione media*, that was responsible for the partial abrogation of Sulla's law on the tribunate and for the judicial law of 70 (Sall. *hist.* iii 48,8 M; cf. Asc. 78 C; Greenidge-Clay² 272f.) *See also* Rossi, *op.cit.* (n. 73, above).

[81] I append my list. Certain or reasonably certain cases are marked*. *Q. Catulus (78) (fought, briefly, against M. Lepidus); D. Brutus (77); Cn. Octavius (76); *L. Gellius Publicola, *Cn. Lentulus Clodianus (72); *P. Lentulus Sura, Cn. Aufidius Orestes (71); *Cn. Pompeius, *M. Crassus (70); *Q. Hortensius (69); (*L. Metellus (68: died in office)); M' Lepidus, L. Volcacius Tullus (66); *L. Cotta (65); *L. Caesar, *C. Marcius Figulus (64); *M. Cicero (63); D. Silanus, L. Murena (62); M. Piso, *M. Messalla (Niger) (61); (*Q. Metellus Celer (60; perhaps died before he could go)); *M. Bibulus (59). On praetors we are less well informed; but the case of the jurist Ser. Sulpicius Rufus (Cic. *Mur.* 42), plus Cicero's own, cannot leave any doubt that praetors were free to refuse and that some did. The SC quoted by Caelius in 51 (Cic. *fam.* viii 8,8) suggests that a fair supply of such men was available at that time.

abroad. We all know Cicero's disgust when, in 52, the Senate exerted pressure on men like him to make them at last face their responsibilities. And although here we are even less well informed, we can be sure that there were praetors too who felt and acted like this. Yet these were among the *best* of the rulers. They had no hopes of actual gain from provincial government. The effect was a kind of Gresham's law: the bad governors drove out the good. Every Hortensius or Cicero or Bibulus gave a year to a Verres or a Catiline—not to mention a Caesar. A century earlier, religious obstacles had to be affirmed on oath if the aristocrat's burden was to be avoided.[82] This is the measure of the decline. Again, we note the unexpected consequences of reform. Sulla, looking at his own time and his own career, had seen it as his duty to provide against excessive ambition, against over-eagerness to command armies and govern provinces. He had apparently failed to think of inertia and irresponsibility.[83] Yet it was these petty vices that helped to ruin his system.

However, if the oligarchy was not fit to perform the task that Sulla had allotted to it, he himself must take a large share of the blame. There were many signs of danger before, especially in the generation since the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus. No one can say that Sulla alone caused the decline of senatorial government. But that he greatly accelerated it and gave it a totally new impetus cannot be seriously doubted. When he took a private army against Rome in 88, no one of any importance followed him: the leading citizens disapproved, and Sulla, in the end, had to come to terms. In 87, the decline becomes visible: it was difficult to give up the benefits conferred by the methods of which one disapproved, and most of those same leaders decided to defend their political gains, however brought about. But the

[82] Livy xli 15,10f. (176BC). In the same year, another praetor was excused for clear reasons of public policy (ibid. s.6). The formal reason for the change in practice was presumably that by the first century each praetor had already had a *prouincia* in the city and could claim that he was not liable to serve again *ex praetura*. Nevertheless, the change in spirit invites comment.

[83] Pompey's law of 52, reforming provincial administration on the basis of a SC of the previous year, also seems to have avoided compulsion; but the Senate expressed strong views, which could not reasonably be resisted. (*See* Cic. *fam.* xv 4,4: 'quod ego negotium [his provincial command] . . . uerecundia deterritus non recusaui; neque enim umquam ullum periculum tantum putaui quod subterfugere mallem quam uestrae auctoritati obtemperare.') In the SC of 51 (Cic. *fam.* viii 8,8), the language seems to brook no disobedience.

end was not yet. Cinna saw what was happening, tried to remedy it, and (as we saw) almost succeeded. Then came his failure, and Sulla's second intervention. And where the effects of the first had been alarming, those of the second were fatal. The vast majority of the ruling class flocked to acclaim the victorious rebel as a saviour, and it became clear that the Republic, for them, was merely a pretext for their own privilege. Those who did not share this attitude—men as different as the Patrician consul L. Scipio Asiagenus and the Sabine new man Q. Sertorius—were mercilessly weeded out. Sulla's new state was based on an absurd parody of natural selection—the survival of the unfittest.

The harm, of course, was not limited to the governing class. In 83-2, many thousands of Italians had rallied to the Republic which had been slow enough in giving them their citizen rights,[84] and had fought Sulla every inch of the way for its sake. Again, the best of them were eliminated, by massacre or exile. It is not difficult to imagine what ordinary men in Italy thought of their betters, who claimed the divine right to rule them and who now flocked to the victorious adventurer, to profit by his success. As for the next generation, we need not even imagine: we know. Thirty years later, much to Cicero's chagrin,[85] the honourable citizens of the Italian towns and countryside would not stir a finger, even on behalf of their own patrons, to defend the *res publica* that had punished their fathers for defending it, or rewarded them for deserting it. Even more than Sulla's example, it was the example of the *Sullani* that could not be abolished. Sulla's well-planned scheme of reform had handed the government over to a class of proved cowards and open self-seekers, who could neither develop confidence in themselves nor inspire it in the governed, neither give up their gains nor show themselves worthy of them. The Republic had begun to putrefy a generation before it died.[86]

[84] Only, it seems, after Cinna's policy of compromise and conciliation (of his political opponents, at the Italians' expense) had failed: Livy, *per.* lxxxiv (84BC).

[85] E.g. *Att.* vii 13a,2; viii 13,2; *et al.*

[86] The lecture is here printed essentially as delivered. My thanks are due to the Trustees of the Fund for consenting to the addition of the notes, which I hope will be useful for readers seriously interested in the subject and the period.