**Lecture Eight -- Sulla's Reforms Undone**

Within months of Sulla's death it was clear that his system of reforms was doomed. A reactionary consul, M. Aemilius Lepidus, attempted to repeal the Sullan settlement, and followed Sulla's example by resorting to armed conflict. The subsequent years saw the emergence of new players in the drama of the Republic's collapse, both pro-Sullan initially, but ultimately working only for themselves: Cn. Pompeius (Pompey) and M. Licinius Crassus. Making full use of the disturbances at home and abroad to advance themselves, these men rose to prominence, and, as consuls in 70 BC, saw to the final undoing of the remaining threads of the Sullan "Restoration." However, we must bear in mind that our understanding of this period is hampered, because sources from this decade of the 70s are not as complete as those of other decades.

**Overview**

**I**. Immediately after Sulla's death, the bad precedent he had set for the future was made manifest.

**A**. One of the consuls of 78 rose in armed revolt.

**1**. M. Aemilius Lepidus, a consul in 78 BC, attempted to promulgate "popularist" legislation, such as the restoration of the tribunate, and the return of confiscated land to the Italians dispossessed by Sulla's program of colonization.

**2**. Lepidus joined forces with rebel Italians in Etruria and northern Italy, and marched on Rome in 77 BC.

**3**. The Senate declared martial law and raised forces. Lepidus was defeated at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, and died shortly afterward.

**4**. That Lepidus had attempted armed insurrection in the first place as foreshadowing of worse to come.

**B**. Lepidus' revolt, and that of Q. Sertorius in Spain, helped bring Cn. Pompeius Magnus (Pompey) to prominence.

**1**. Pompey had joined Sulla as a young man in 83 BC, and had successfully fought against the Marians in Africa.

**2**. He showed his audacity by demanding a triumph for these actions from Sulla-- and getting it.

**3**. When Lepidus revolted, Pompey, though underage and never having held a magistracy, was granted the *imperium* of propraetor and given a command.

**4**. With Lepidus defeated, Pompey used his army to "suggest" to the Senate that he be given the command against a more powerful opponent: Q. Sertorius in Spain.

**5**. Sertorius was a Marian who had successfully organized Spain into a counter- Rome, complete with its own Senate and coinage. He had held out against Sulla's lieutenants, and was now reinforced by the remnants of Lepidus' defeated army.

**6**. Pompey was sent by the Senate to defeat Sertorius, which he did in a difficult six-year campaign (77-72 BC) that ended only when Sertorius was treacherously murdered by a jealous underling.

**7**. Pompey's settlement of Spain was equitable, and he earned many friends there.

**II**. While Pompey was in Spain, the plutocrat M. Licinius Crassus grew powerful at Rome, particularly as a result of a slave war in southern Italy.

**A**. Crassus had benefited financially from Sulla's proscriptions, though his early career was otherwise unremarkable.

**1**. Crassus stemmed from an old patrician family.

**2**. He greatly increased his wealth by buying up the property of the proscribed, and by engaging in a variety of business ventures, such as renting out slaves.

**3**. He deployed his wealth in vast bribing operations to secure election to magistracies, through which he advanced in proper order.

**4**. Otherwise, these years at Rome were relatively tranquil, though they proved to be a calm before the storm.

**B**. The revolt of Spartacus offered Crassus a chance for military glory, which was tarnished by the interference of Pompey.

**1**. The massive influx of slaves into Italy as a result of the growth of empire had proven problematic for Rome.

**2**. In 135-133 BC, there had been a huge revolt in Sicily that had needed a consular army to be suppressed.

**3**. In 73 BC, another great slave revolt, the last in ancient history, broke out in Capua.

**4**. The ringleader was a Thracian gladiator called Spartacus, who trained his army to fight efficiently, and they ruthlessly looted the rich properties, at first in Campania, then throughout Italy.

**5**. Armies sent against him were defeated, until Crassus, as propraetor in 71 BC, defeated Spartacus, and either returned the survivors to their owners or crucified them along the Via Appia to the gates of Rome.

**6**. Crassus' success, however, was undermined by Pompey, who returned from Spain, assisted in the mopping-up operations, and claimed some credit for suppressing the revolt. Crassus, therefore, had no love of Pompey.

**C**. Crassus and Pompey became consuls for 70 BC, and, together, saw to the final dissolution of the Sullan settlement.

**1**. Pompey's actions on returning from Spain are instructive.

**a**. On the pretext of helping to out down Spartacus, he retained his army intact.

**b**. He then camped his army near Rome and "requested" a consulship in recognition of his services -- this despite his never having held any magistracy to that point.

**c**. So "green" was Pompey when it came to being a magistrate that he asked the scholar M. Terentius Varro to prepare a handbook of advice for him.

**2**. Crassus reacted not by challenging Pompey's threatening behavior, but by imitating it. Crassus camped his army near Rome, and requested his own consulship.

**3**. The known enemies therefore became consuls in 70 BC, and staged a public reconciliation.

**4**. The remaining inconvenient elements in Sulla's settlement were removed.

**a**. The courts were taken away from sole senatorial control, and divided between senators, equestrians, and the mysterious *tribuni aerarii*.

**b**. The Senate was purged by friendly censors (the first in seventeen years); many of the expelled were Sulla's nominees.

**c**. The tribunate was restored to its full, pre-Sullan powers.

**5**. Crassus and Pompey's motivation in doing all this was no doubt to maximize their future options for manipulating the system for their own benefit. Under the Sullan settlement, they could only deal with the Senate; with that settlement overturned, they could make use of tribunes and the people as well.

**III**. The early careers of Crassus and Pompey showed that the Sullan settlement was doomed.

**A**. Sulla's attempt to turn the clock back, and to restore the Senate to supremacy had failed.

**B**. Roman politics had become too cutthroat to allow so useful a tool as the tribunate to languish unused.

**C**. More importantly, Sulla's career itself offered an indication of the dizzying heights one cold reach with military backing.

**D**. That Lepidus, openly, and Crassus and Pompey, more cryptically, followed this lead boded ill for the future.

**Pompey and Crassus**

Despite a public reconciliation staged during the consulship of 70 BC, there was no love lost between Pompey and Crassus. In the 60s BC, Pompey emerged as a popular hero who defeated the hated pirates and finally ended a conflict with an eastern despot that had been continuing since Sulla's day. In Italy, the desperate attempt by Catiline to stage a coup shows how far matters had progressed in the unraveling of the ordered government of the Republic. Meanwhile, Crassus, jealous and fearful of Pompey's stature, tried to undermine his position and began promoting the career of a little-known noble youth as a foil to Pompey's popularity. That youth's name was C. Julius Caesar.

**I**. Events in foreign affairs in the 60s BC led to Pompey's emergence as a popular military hero.

**A**. Mithridates of Pontus' war in Asia exacerbated the Mediterranean's pirate problem, which Pompey was selected to rectify with a grant of unprecedented.

**1**. Mithridates of Pontus' war in Asia exacerbated the Mediterranean's pirate problem, which Pompey was selected to rectify with a grant of unprecedented power.

**2**. Despite the best efforts of Rome's generals, the war dragged on into 67 BC.

**3**. To strengthen his position, Mithridates worked in league with the pirates of Rough Cilicia, whose activities now reached an alarming new intensity, threatening the grain supply of Rome itself.

**4**. The people became agitated and a tribune, A. Gabinius , proposed a law conferring vast *imperium* on Pompey to tackle the pirate problem.

**5**. The law was passed granting Pompey a huge degree of *imperium* (a praetor, M. Antonius, had been granted similar powers in 74 BC, but he had proven inept.

**a**. He was to have *imperium infinitum* (power not limited to a province) over all local governors in the entire Mediterranean Sea, all of its islands, and for fifty miles inland.

**b**. The grant of *imperium* was for three years to deal with the pirates.

**c**. Pompey was also appointed to oversee the grain supply of Rome for five years.

**6**. Pompey effected his three-year commission in three months, treating the pirates with leniency and settling them as traders and farmers in Cilicia.

**B**. With the pirates defeated, Pompey had his huge *imperium* transferred to Asia, so he could bring the war against Mithridates to an end.

**1**. Technically, Pompey's *imperium* had lapsed with the defeat of the pirates.

**2**. A tribune, C. Manilius, proposed a law in 66 BC transferring Pompey's *imperium* to the entire Near East, to settle affairs there.

**3**. With the law passed, Pompey devoted the next four years to defeating Mithridates, and reorganizing the entire geopolitical situation in the Roman east.

**4**. In his arrangement of eastern affairs, Pompey behaved like an absolute monarch, forming new provinces, adjusting existing ones, making alliances, and negotiating treaties, all on his own authority.

**5**. In 63 BC, Pompey's actions in the east were at an end, and he was ready to return to Rome.

**II**. Crassus moved as best he could to counter the huge power and great popularity of Pompey.

**A**. While Pompey was covering himself with glory in the east, Crassus did his best to undermine his position in Rome.

**1**. Crassus backed several measures aimed at limiting or undermining Pompey's position and strengthening his own.

**2**. He backed the career of an able young nobleman, C. Julius Caesar (born 100 BC).

**3**. With access to Crassus' coffers, Caesar advanced up the *cursus* in proper order, and in 63 BC, he won both the praetorship and the position of *pontifex maximus*, the lifetime high priesthood of Rome that conferred huge prestige on its incumbent.

**B**. Pompey's return was now imminent. Many remembered what had happened upon Sulla's advent from the east twenty years previously.

**III**. The attempted coup d'état of Catiline in 63 BC highlighted how unstable Roman politics had become.

**A**. In 63 BC, L. Sergius Catilina (Catiline) attempted a coup, but was thwarted.

**1**. A desperado who had thrice failed to gain election to the consulship, Catiline resolved on armed insurrection.

**2**. There was some suspicion that Crassus was behind the plot, yet another to undermine Pompey, but this seems unlikely.

**3**. Cicero, one of the consuls for 63 BC, uncovered Catiline's plan, orchestrated opposition to it, and oversaw the execution of several of the conspirators in Rome on December 5th.

**4**. Catiline, meanwhile, had joined his army in Etruria, and was killed in battle as his army was defeated in the field.

**B**. The whole episode speaks volumes about how unstable the Roman Republic had become as a result of seventy years of revolutionary politics.

**The First Triumvirate**

Unlike the "Second Triumvirate" which we shall study in due turn, the so-called "First Triumvirate is a term used by modern scholars to refer to the informal political alliance forged between Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar. We shall examine the motivations for this alliance, its goals, and its results, all of which had tremendous ramifications for the course of the Roman Revolution. We shall also have opportunity to meet a new and extremely colorful personality who now enters center stage of this drama as antagonist to Julius Caesar in the persona of M. Porcius Cato the Younger.

I. The year 63, the year of Cicero's consulship, and the year of Catiline's conspiracy, is also important because it marks the emergence of a new, diehard faction of conservatives in the Senate, led by M. Porcius Cato.

A. Cato the Younger was the great-grandson of the Censor, M. Porcius Cato the Elder.

B. He had risen to some prominence by arguing for capital punishment for the Catilinarian conspirators.

C. He was the unofficial spokesman for the *optimates*.

1. As tribune of the plebs in 62 BC, he spearheaded the campaign against recalling Pompey to Italy to fight Catiline.

2. Cato would lead the optimate opposition to Pompey's eastern settlement and land allotments for his veterans.

a. Crassus was also a senatorial enemy of Pompey.

II. Caesar returned from Spain in 60 BC, and was blocked in his political goals also by the same optimate faction.

A. He wanted a triumph for his fighting in Spain, but he most of all he wanted to run for the consulship of 59 BC.

III. Cato and the optimate opposition in the Senate, ironically, drove all three political enemies (Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar) into an informal alliance with one another.

A. The alliance was not strictly speaking a triumvirate, which was a special legal category in Roman politics.

B. The alliance was formed in 60 BC, it seems, at the initiation of Caesar.

IV. Caesar's consulship of 59 BC was violent, and unprecedented in its behavior.

A. Caesar by-passed all the usual procedures of the Roman constituion.

B. Pompey and Caesar publically backed the movements put forward by the consul Caesar.

C. Caesar's co-consul Calpurnius Bibulus was attacked and humiliated in public.

D. Auspices were manipulated to prevent legislation from being passed.

E. From this point on, the Sentae really ceases to have any real power over events.

V. After his consulship of 59, Cesar was given a proconsulship (governorship) of Gaul.

A. He took ten years to subdue the entirety of modern-day France, Belgium, Switzerland, Holland, and parts of Germany.

**B**. This war was considered illegal (and immoral) by many back in Rome because such expansion was not sanctioned by the Senate, nor by his proconsular *imperium*. It exceeded the authority given to him.

**1**. The siege of Alesia in modern-day France against the Gallic chieftain Vercingetorix was the greatest military achievement of his Gallic campaigns.

**2**. The entirety of his campaigns up until 51 BC, were written about by Caesar himself in his *Commentaries*, which still survive.

**Pompey and Caesar**

Caesar's achievements in Gaul caused some tensions within the Triumvirate, by now the unquestionably dominant force in domestic politics. These tensions were exploited by one of the most enigmatic figures of the day, P. Clodius Pulcher, whose career we shall examine briefly. We shall also look at how the triumvirs attempted to settle these disputes among themselves at the council of Lucca in 56 BC, and see that, despite these efforts, the triumvirate ultimately fell apart, with civil war erupting in 49 BC between the forces loyal to Caesar and the armies of the Senate under the leadership of Pompey.

**I.** Caesar's military accomplishments in Gaul caused some degree of jealousy within the Triumvirate, and concerns over what is usually dubbed "parity" among his fellow triumvirs.

**A.** P. Clodius Pulcher was to some degree responsible for exacerbating these tensions.

**1**. Clodius was born a patrician, but had himself adopted by a plebeian family so as to become eligible for the office of tribune.

**2**. As tribune in 58 BC, through the proposal of popular measures backed by intimidation and thuggery, he was perceived as a member of Caesar's camp, but this was only partially true.

**3**. After gaining ascendency over the mob, Clodius attacked Pompey.

**a**. In particular, Clodius attacked Cicero, a supporter of Pompey, banishing him in 58 BC.

**b**. Then Clodius turned his thugs on Pompey himself. Pompey organized his own gang of thugs under T. Annius Milo, which basically vied with Clodius' group over the next five years.

**D**. However, in 57 BC, Pompey restored order and stabilized Rome's grain supply, thus becoming the ascendant triumvir in Rome.

**E**. All of these circumstances raised tensions in the Triumvirate, which could then in turn become exploited by their enemies among the conservative faction of the *optimates*.

**1**. The Senate, led by Cato and Cicero, began lobbying for Caesar's recall and prosecution for his behavior as consul in 59 BC.

**II**. Caesar called a meeting at the town of Lucca, just inside his province, in 56 BC, to resolve these tensions. At this meeting, several important agreements were reached.

**A**. Caesar, whose conquest of Gaul was not complete, had his command extended for a further five years.

**B**. To balance this move, Pompey was given a five-year command in Spain, with a dispensation to exercise it through legates.

**C**. Chafing for military glory to match that of his colleagues, Crassus got a five-year command in Syria.

**D**. Crassus and Pompey were to be consuls in 55 BC.

**III**. These arrangements demonstrate the power of the Triumvirate.

**A**. These three men made these decisions among themselves, with no reference to the Senate.

**B**. Most of these measures were then forced through by means of tribunes and popular votes.

**IV**. Events in 54-49 BC brought the Triumvirate to an end, left Caesar and Pompey facing off against each other, and eventually leading to civil war.

**A**. First, in 54 BC, Julia, Caesar's daughter and Pompey's wife, dies in childbirth.

**B**. Also, in 54 BC, Crassus set off to earn his military glory by attacking the neighboring Parthian Empire on Rome's eastern frontier.

**C**. Crassus met defeat and death at the battle of Carrhae in53 BC.

**1**. His death left Caesar and Pompey alone in the Triumvirate.

**V**. In 52 BC, the situation in Rome reached a new nadir: street fighting between Clodius and Milo effectively blocked government, culminating in Clodius' murder, and the Senate House burning to the ground, igniting widespread fires in Rome.

**A**. A *senatus consultum ultimum* (final decree of the Senate) was declared, and Pompey as appointed sole consul for the year to restore order, which he did by force.

**VI**. The *optimates* exploited the growing rift between Caesar and Pompey, and forced civil war in 49 BC.

**A**. In the years 52 -- 49 BC, the calls of the *optimates* for Caesar's prosecution grew more strident.

**B**. Exploiting Pompey's vacillating character and recent good work on behalf of the state, the optimates manipulated him into believing he was the protector of tradition against the threat of Caesarian domination.

**C**. While not openly hostile to his suppose ally, Pompey nevertheless did little to block the moves against Caesar during these years.

1. As his command in Gaul drew to a close, Caesar faced political extinction, and possibly assassination, at the hands of his enemies if he returned to Rome as a private citizen.

**VII**. Caesar attempted to negotiate for an end to the deadlock, but the *optimates* blocked his every more.

**A**. In December of 50 BC, Caesar issued his final offer: he and Pompey would relinquish their commands simultaneously.

**1**. The Senate voted 370 to 22 in favor of the motion, thereby isolating the ultraconservative element.

**B**. Not to be outdone, the *optimates* prevailed on Pompey to mobilize his legions and save the Republic.

**C**. In response, Caesar moved his legions close to Italy, and on January 10th, 49 BC, he crossed the Rubicon.

**1**. In doing so Caesar declared war on the state. The greatest of all of Rome's civil wars had begun.