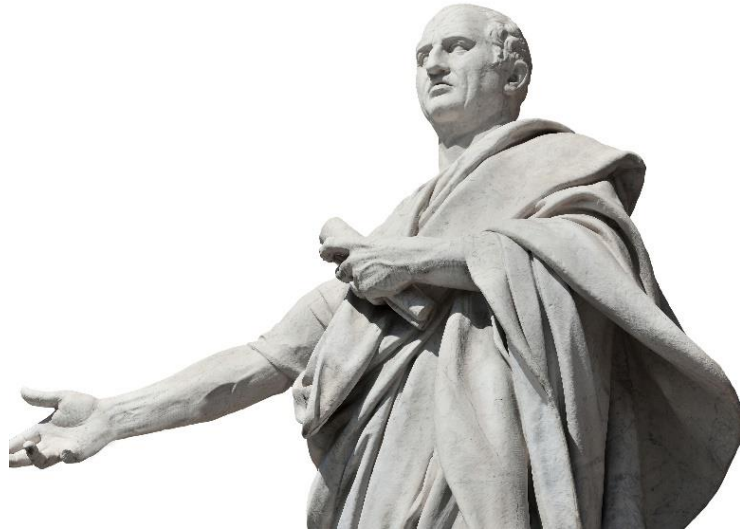


BELLARIA LXXIV



CICERO EPISTULAE II

Introduction



Sulla

In 63 BC Cicero as consul dealt with the dangerous *coup d'état* of Catiline—Cicero's finest hour, to which he never ceased to look back. But Cicero's decision to execute five of the conspirators without trial brought him lasting unpopularity among those in favour of Catiline's attempt. But for all Cicero's success, the big story in 62 BC was the impending return to Rome of Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus: Pompey the Great.

The previous forty years had seen the Roman republic shaken to its core by the emergence of a series of dynasts – Marius, Cinna, Sulla—with private armies at their back, ignoring traditional rule by the Senate and attempting to win power by military means. Civil war had wracked Rome. Sulla had restored something like senatorial government before retiring in AD 71, and in AD 70 the brilliant general Pompey, garlanded for his military triumphs against Sulla's enemies and others, in defiance of all legal precedent and with no experience of office at all, became consul at the age of 36. In 67 BC, against senatorial opposition, he was given a commission to clear the Mediterranean of pirates which he used to extend Roman power over much of Western Asia (i.e. Turkey, Syria, Palestine and Armenia) and to reorganize as he saw fit.

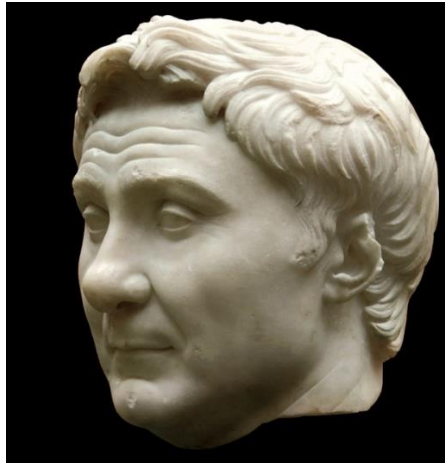
And now he was about to return to Rome—but would he disband his army?
Here Cicero reaches out the hand of friendship.

Summer 62 BC

TO POMPEY, IN ASIA MINOR

From Rome

[*ad fam.* 5.7]



Pompey the Great

From the despatches that you have made public I have, in common with everyone else, received unbelievable pleasure; for you have given us that strong hope of peace, of which, in sole reliance on you, I was assuring everyone. But I must inform you that your old enemies—your ‘new friends’ [i.e. Caesar and Crassus]—have received a severe blow from this news, and, being disappointed in the high hopes they were entertaining, are deeply worried.

ex litteris tuis, quas publice misisti, cepi una cum omnibus incredibilem uoluptatem; tantam enim spem otii ostendisti, quantam ego semper omnibus te uno fretus pollicebar; sed hoc scito, tuos ueteres hostes—nouos amicos—uehementer litteris percussos atque ex magna spe deturbatos iacere.

We make a natural pairing

Though your private letter to me contained a somewhat slight expression of your affection, yet I can assure you it gave me pleasure: for there is nothing in which I habitually find greater satisfaction than in the consciousness of serving my friends; and if on any occasion I do not meet with an adequate return, I am not at all sorry to have the balance of kindness in my favour. Of this I feel no doubt—even if my extraordinary zeal in your behalf has failed to unite you to me [Cicero had supported Pompey’s adventures in Asia]—that the interests of the state will certainly effect a mutual attachment and coalition between us.

ad me autem litteras quas misisti, quamquam exiguam significationem tuae erga me uoluntatis habebant, tamen mihi scito iucundas fuisse; nulla enim re tam laetari soleo quam meorum officiorum conscientia, quibus si quando non mutue respondetur, apud me plus officii residere facillime patior: illud non dubito, quin—si te mea summa erga te studia parum mihi adiunxerunt—res publica nos inter nos conciliatura coniuncturaque sit.

I understand your reluctance to congratulate me

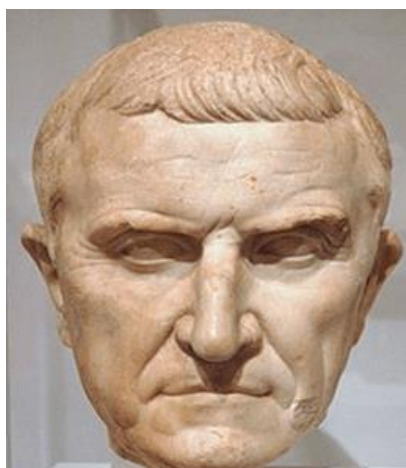
To let you know, however, what I missed in your letter I will write with the candour which my own disposition and our common friendship demand. I did expect some congratulation in your letter on my achievements, for the sake at once of the ties between us and of the Republic. This I presume to have been omitted by you from a fear of hurting anyone's feelings [e.g. people like Caesar who disapproved of the executions].

ac, ne ignores, quid ego in tuis litteris desiderarim, scribam aperte, sicut et mea natura et nostra amicitia postulat: res eas gessi, quarum aliquam in tuis litteris et nostrae necessitudinis et rei publicae causa gratulationem expectavi, quam ego abs te praetermissam esse arbitror, quod uererere, ne cuius animum offenderes.

But we can still be allies

But let me tell you that what I did for the salvation of the country is approved by the judgment and testimony of the whole world. You are a much greater man than [Scipio] Africanus [the younger, destroyer of Carthage], but I am not much inferior to Laelius either [his close friend]; and when you come home you will recognize that I have acted with such prudence and spirit, that you will not be ashamed of being coupled with me in politics as well as in private friendship.

sed scito ea, quae nos pro salute patriae gessimus, orbis terrae iudicio ac testimonio comprobari, quae, cum ueneris, tanto consilio tantaque animi magnitudine a me gesta esse cognosces, ut tibi multo maiori, quam Africanus fuit, me non multo minorem quam Laelium facile et in re publica et in amicitia adiunctum esse patiare.



Crassus

§§ Pompey now set about ratifying his Asian settlement and getting land for his veteran soldiers to retire on (the 'agrarian settlement', below). But a senatorial clique, led by Marcus Porcius Cato (the Younger), fearing Pompey's ascendancy, obstructed his not unreasonable demands. The result was that Pompey teamed up with Caesar and Crassus (Pompey's co-consul in 70 BC and just as wealthy) to form a 'triumvirate' and impose their will on Roman politics. Cicero, a committed republican constitutionalist (no friend of Caesar but bitterly disappointed in Pompey, in whom he had placed his trust) could not bring himself to accept their unrepeatable offer.

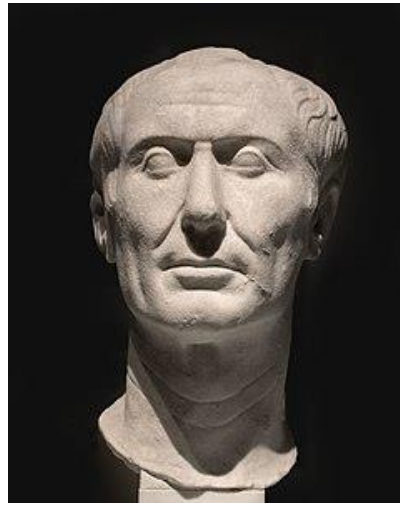
December 60 BC

TO ATTICUS

From Rome

[*ad Att.* 2.3]

Can I support Caesar?



Julius Caesar

I now come to January and my political attitude, in which, after the manner of the Socratics, I shall put the two sides; at the end, however, as they were accustomed to do, the one which I approve. It is, indeed, a matter for profound reflection. For I must either firmly oppose the agrarian law—which will involve a certain struggle, but a struggle full of glory—or I must remain altogether passive, which is about equivalent to retiring to Solonium or Antium; or, lastly, I must actually assist the bill, which I am told Caesar fully expects from me without any doubt.

uenio nunc ad mensem Ianuarium et ad ὑπόστασιν nostram ac πολιτείαν, in qua Σωκρατικῶς εἰς ἑκάτερον sed tamen ad extremum, ut illi solebant, τὴν ἀρέσκουσαν. est res sane magni consilii; nam aut fortiter resistendum est legi agrariae, in quo est quaedam dimicatio sed plena laudis, aut quiescendum, quod est non dissimile atque ire in Solonium aut Antium, aut etiam adiuuandum, quod a me aiunt Caesarem sic exspectare ut non dubitet.

I see the advantages

For Cornelius has been with me (I mean Cornelius Balbus, Caesar's intimate), and solemnly assured me that he meant to avail himself of my advice and Pompey's in everything, and intended to endeavour to reconcile Crassus with Pompey. In this last course there are the following advantages: a very close union with Pompey, and, if I choose, with Caesar also; a reconciliation with my political enemies, peace with the common herd, ease for my old age.

nam fuit apud me Cornelius, hunc dico Balbum, Caesaris familiarem. is adfirmabat illum omnibus in rebus meo et Pompei consilio usurum daturumque operam ut cum Pompeio Crassum coniungeret. hic sunt haec, coniunctio mihi summa cum Pompeio, si placet, etiam cum Caesare, reditus in gratiam cum inimicis, pax cum multitudine, senectutis otium.

But it would not serve our country

But the conclusion of the third book of my own poem has a strong hold on me:

‘Meanwhile the tenor of thy youth’s first spring,
which still as consul thou with all thy soul and all thy manhood heldest,
see thou keep, and swell the chorus of all good men’s praise.’

These verses Calliope herself dictated to me in that book, which contains much written in an aristocratic spirit, and I cannot, therefore, doubt that I shall always hold that ‘The best of omens is our country’s cause.’

sed me κατάκλεις mea illa commouet quae est in libro tertio:

*‘interea cursus, quos prima a parte iuuentae
quosque adeo consul uirtute animoque petisti,
hos retine atque auge famam laudesque bonorum.’*

*haec mihi cum in eo libro in quo multa sunt scripta ἀριστοκρατικῶς Calliope ipsa
praescripserit, non opinor esse dubitandum quin semper nobis uideatur εἰς οἰωνὸς
ἄριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πάτρης [Iliad 12.243].*

But let us reserve all this for our walks during the Compitalia. Remember the day before the Compitalia. I will order the bath to be heated, and Terentia [his wife] is going to invite Pomponia [Atticus’ wife]. We will add your mother to the party. Please bring me Theophrastus’ *de ambitione* from my brother’s library.

*sed haec ambulationibus compitaliciis reseruemus. tu pridie compitalia memento.
balineum calferi iubebo. et Pomponiam Terentia rogat; matrem adiungemus.
Theophrastou περὶ φιλοτιμίας adfer mihi de libris Quinti fratris.*



Introduction: the road to civil war

In 59 BC Caesar became consul and, ignoring all normal procedures, pushed through legislation to keep Pompey and Crassus happy and award himself a five-year provincial command in north Italy and Gaul (extended later till 49 BC). He also wanted Cicero dead. Pompey was no help to Cicero, and in 58 BC Clodius drove Cicero into exile over the issue of the executed Catilinarian conspirators. Cicero fled to Greece but in eighteen months was back when Clodius and Pompey fell out and Clodius was killed in a street fight. Cicero now played an independent political hand but after the triumvirate renewed the deal at Luca in 56 BC, Pompey warned Cicero to lay off the politics. After Crassus was killed in an attack on Parthia in 54 BC, the success and increasing reputation of Caesar from his Gallic campaigns left Pompey feeling vulnerable. The result was that Cato welcomed Pompey back as the Senate’s

man, and in 52 BC Pompey was elected sole consul to deal with street fighting and electoral corruption in Rome. It fast became clear that Caesar and Pompey were heading for a confrontation.

In 51 BC Cicero was removed from the scene with the governorship of Cilicia in S. Turkey and returned as the crisis blew up. His efforts at reconciliation failed. Pompey fled to Greece to carry on the war from there. But in a brief letter to Cicero dated March 5 49 BC Caesar said he hoped to meet Cicero in Rome 'to let me see you there so that I may be able to avail myself of your advice, influence, standing and help in all matters'.

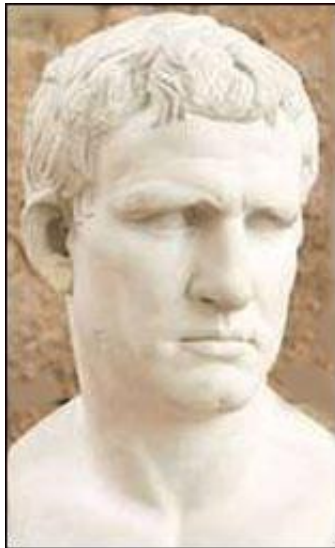
Cicero now reflected, in Greek, how a good man dealt with a tyrant, and on March 28 reported back to Atticus his conversation with Caesar.

March 12 49 BC

TO ATTICUS

From Formiae

[*ad Att.* 9.4]



Titus Pomponius Atticus

Although any feeling of respite is for me confined to the time I spend in writing to you or reading a letter from you, yet I am myself at a loss for a subject for my letters, and I feel certain that the same is the case with you. For the topics usually filling familiar letters, written with an easy mind, are excluded by the critical nature of these times; while those connected with the crisis we have already worn threadbare.

Nevertheless, not to surrender myself wholly to sorrowful reflections, I have selected certain theses, so to speak, which have at once a general bearing on a citizen's duty, and a particular relation to the present crisis:

ego etsi tam diu requiesco quam diu aut ad te scribo aut tuas litteras lego, tamen et ipse egeo argumento epistularum et tibi idem accidere certo scio. quae enim soluto animo familiariter scribi solent ea temporibus his excluduntur, quae autem sunt horum temporum ea iam contriuimus.

sed tamen ne me totum aegritudini dedam, sumpsit mihi quasdam tamquam θέσεις quae et πολιτικάί sunt et temporum horum, ut et abducam animum ab querelis et in eo ipso de quo agitur exercear. eae sunt huius modi:

- Ought one to remain in one's country when under a tyrant?
- If one's country is under a tyrant ought one to labour at all hazards for the abolition of the tyranny, even at the risk of the total destruction of the city?
- Or ought we to be on our guard against the man attempting the abolition, lest he should rise too high himself?
- Ought one to assist one's country when under a tyrant by seizing opportunities and by argument rather than by war?
- Is it acting like a good citizen to quit one's country when under a tyrant for any other land, and there to remain quiet, or ought one to face any and every danger for liberty's sake?
- Ought one to wage war upon and besiege one's native town, if it is under a tyrant?

εἰ μενετέον ἐν τῇ πατρίδι τυραννουμένης αὐτῆς.

εἰ παντὶ τρόπῳ τυραννίδος κατάλυσιν πραγματευτέον, κἂν μέλλῃ διὰ τοῦτο περὶ τῶν ὄλων ἢ πόλις κινδυνεύσειν

ἢ εὐλαβητέον τὸν καταλύοντα μὴ αὐτὸς αἴρηται.

εἰ πειρατέον ἀρήγειν τῇ πατρίδι τυραννουμένην καιρῷ καὶ λόγῳ μᾶλλον ἢ πολέμῳ.

εἰ πολιτικὸν τὸ ἡσυχάζειν ἀναχωρήσαντά ποι τῆς πατρίδος τυραννουμένης ἢ διὰ παντὸς ἰτέον κινδύνου τῆς ἐλευθερίας πέρι.

εἰ πόλεμον ἐπακτέον τῇ χώρᾳ καὶ πολιορκητέον αὐτὴν τυραννουμένην.

- Even if one does not approve an abolition of a tyranny by war, ought one still to enrol oneself in the ranks of the loyalists?
- Ought one in politics to share the dangers of one's benefactors and friends, even though one does not think their general policy to be wise?
- Should a man who has done conspicuous services to his country, and on that very account has been shamefully treated and exposed to envy, voluntarily place himself in danger for his country, or may he be permitted at length to take thought for himself and those nearest and dearest to him, giving up all political struggles against the stronger party?

εἰ καὶ μὴ δοκιμάζοντα τὴν διὰ πολέμου κατάλυσιν τῆς τυραννίδος συναπογραπτέον ὅμως τοῖς ἀρίστοις.

εἰ τοῖς εὐεργέταις καὶ φίλοις συγκινδυνευτέον ἐν τοῖς πολιτικοῖς κἂν μὴ δοκῶσιν εὖ βεβουλευῆσθαι περὶ τῶν ὄλων.

εἰ ὁ μεγάλα τὴν πατρίδα εὐεργετήσας δι' αὐτό τε τοῦτο ἀνήκεστα παθὼν καὶ φθονηθεὶς κινδυνεύσειεν ἂν ἐθέλοντῆς ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος ἢ ἐφετέον αὐτῷ ἑαυτοῦ ποτε καὶ τῶν οἰκειοτάτων ποιεῖσθαι πρόνοιαν ἀφεμένῳ τὰς πρὸς τοὺς ἰσχύοντας διαπολιτείας.



By keeping myself at work on questions such as these, and discussing both sides both in Greek and Latin, I at once distract my mind for a time from its anxieties, and at the same time attempt the solution of a problem now very much to the point. But I fear you may find me unseasonable; for if the bearer of this keeps up the proper pace, it will reach you exactly on your ague day.

in his ego me consultationibus exercens et disserens in utramque partem tum Graece tum Latine et abduco parumper animum a molestiis et τὸν προύγου τι delibero. sed uereor ne tibi ἄκαιρος sim. si enim recte ambulauit is qui hanc epistulam tulit, in ipsum tuum diem incidit.

March 28 49 BC

TO ATTICUS

From Formiae

[*ad Att.* 9.18]

I stuck to my position

I followed your advice in both particulars: for I spoke in such a manner as rather to gain his respect than his thanks, and I stuck to the resolution of not going to Rome. I found myself mistaken in one respect—in thinking that he would be easily satisfied. I never saw anything less so. He kept remarking that I was passing judgement against him, that the rest would be the slower to come, if I did not do so. I remarked that their case was unlike mine.

utrumque ex tuo consilio; nam et oratio fuit ea nostra ut bene potius ille de nobis existimaret quam gratias ageret, et in eo mansimus, ne ad urbem. illa fefellerunt facilem quod putaramus; nihil uidi minus. damnari se nostro iudicio, tardiores fore reliquos, si nos non uenerimus, dicere. ego dissimilem illorum esse causam.

After much discussion he said, 'Come, then, and discuss the question of peace.' 'At my own discretion?' said I. 'Am I to lay down rules to you?' said he. 'My motion will be this', said I, 'that the senate disapproves of any move to Spain or taking armies across to Greece, and,' I added, 'I shall have much to say in commiseration of Pompey.' Thereupon he said, 'Of course, I don't wish such things said.' 'So I supposed,' said I, 'but that is why I do not wish to be there, because I must either speak in this sense, and say many things which I could not possibly pass over, if present, or I must stay away.'

cum multa, 'ueni igitur et age de pace.' 'meone 'inquam 'arbitratu?' 'an tibi' inquit 'ego praescribam?' 'sic' inquam 'agam, senatui non placere in Hispanias iri nec exercitus in Graeciam transportari, multaque, inquam 'de Gnaeo deplorabo.' tum ille, 'ego uero ista dici nolo.' 'ita putabam', inquam; 'sed ego eo nolo adesse quod aut sic mihi dicendum est multaque quae nullo modo possem silere, si adessem, aut non ueniendum.'

The upshot was that, by way of ending the discussion, he requested that I would think it over. I couldn't say no to that. So we parted. I feel certain, therefore, that he has no love for me. But I felt warm satisfaction with myself, which hasn't been the case for some time past.

summa fuit, ut ille quasi exitum quaerens, 'ut deliberarem.' non fuit negandum. ita discessimus. credo igitur hunc me non amare. at ego me amaui, quod mihi iam pridem usu non uenit.

Caesar's gang

For the rest, good heavens! What a crew! What an inferno! to use your word. What a gang of bankrupts and desperadoes! What is one to say of a son of Servius and a son of Titinius having been in the camp by which Pompey was besieged? Six legions! He is extraordinarily vigilant, extraordinarily bold: I see no limit to the mischief. Now, at any rate, it is time for you to bring out your counsels. This is where you drew the line.

reliqua, o di! qui comitatus, quae, ut tu soles dicere, nekuia! o rem perditam! o copias desperatas! quid quod Serui filius, quod Titini in iis castris fuerunt quibus Pompeius circumsideretur! sex legiones; multum uigilat, audet. nullum uideo finem mali. nunc certe promenda tibi sunt consilia. hoc fuerat extremum.

His ruthlessness

Yet his closing remark in our interview, which I had almost forgotten to mention, was very offensive, that if he was not allowed to avail himself of my counsels, he would avail himself of such as he could, and would scruple at nothing. 'So you have seen with your own eyes,' [say you], 'that the man is such as you described him to be. Did it cost you a sigh?' It did indeed.

illa tamen κατάκλεις illius est odiosa quam paene praeterii, si sibi consiliis nostris uti non liceret, usurum quorum posset ad omniaque esse descensurum. 'uidisti igitur uirum, ut scripseras? ingemuisti?' certe.

§§ Despite Cicero's decision not to yield to Caesar, Caesar still made every effort to persuade Cicero not to join Pompey in Greece, as the next letter (which has *The Godfather* written all over it) makes all too clear.

April 16 49 BC

FROM CAESAR IMPERATOR TO CICERO IMPERATOR

From near Massilia

[*ad Att. X.8B*]



Do you want good relations with me or not?

Although I was convinced that you would take no rash or ill-judged action, nevertheless my anxiety about what people are saying has impelled me to write to you and urge, in the name of our friendship, that you should not make any move, now that things have gone my way, which you did not see fit to make while matters were undecided. For you will have seriously damaged the good relations between our two selves—as well as acting against your own interests—if you display resistance to the trend of events (everything having manifestly turned out to our advantage and the disadvantage of the other side). It would then be evident that your action resulted not from support of a cause, since the cause is the same as it was when you decided to hold aloof, but from your objection to something that I have done.

etsi te nihil temere, nihil imprudenter facturum iudicaram, tamen permotus hominum fama scribendum ad te existimaui et pro nostra benevolentia petendum ne quo progredereis proclinata iam re quo integra etiam progrediendum tibi non existimasses. namque et amicitiae grauiorem iniuriam feceris et tibi minus commode consulueris, si non fortunae obsecutus uideberis (omnia enim secundissima nobis, aduersissima illis accidisse uidentur), nec causam secutus (eadem enim tum fuit cum ab eorum consiliis abesse iudicasti), sed meum aliquod factum condemnauisse.

Look to your own interests

And that would be the severest blow you could inflict on me. Our friendship entitles me to ask you not to do it. Besides, what could be more appropriate for a man of peace and integrity, and a good citizen, than to keep out of civil disturbance? There were many who felt that to be so, but were prevented from acting as they wished because of the dangers that would have been involved. Weigh up the evidence provided by my career and by your own assessment of our friendly relations, and you will find abstention from the quarrel the safest and most honourable course.

quo mihi grauius abs te nihil accidere potest. quod ne facias pro iure nostrae amicitiae a te peto. postremo quid uiro bono et quieto et bono ciui magis conuenit quam abesse a ciuilibus controuersiis? quod non nulli cum probarent, periculi causa sequi non potuerunt; tu explorato et uitae meae testimonio et amicitiae iudicio neque tutius neque honestius reperies quicquam quam ab omni contentione abesse.

§§ In the event, Cicero did join Pompey but was not impressed with anything he saw. Pompey was defeated at Pharsalus (August 9 48 BC), fled to Egypt and was murdered on landing. Cicero returned to Rome.

In the following letter, written eighteen months later, Cicero looks back and reflects on those turbulent years.

Mid-April 46 BC

TO M. MARIUS

From Rome

[*ad fam* 7.3]



Very often, as I reflect upon the miseries in which we have all alike been living these many years past, and, as far as I can see, are likely to be living, I am accustomed to recall that time when we last met: indeed, I remember the exact day. Having arrived at my Pompeian villa on the evening of the 12th of May [49 BC], in the consulship of Lentulus and Marcellus, you came to see me in a state of anxiety.

persaepe mihi cogitanti de communibus miseriis, in quibus tot annos uersamur et, ut uideo, uersabimur, solet in mentem uenire illius temporis, quo proxime fuimus una; quin etiam ipsum diem memoria teneo: nam a. d. IIII. Idus Maias Lentulo et Marcello consulibus, cum in Pompeianum uesperu uenissem, tu mihi sollicito animo praesto fuisti.

I was wrong to join up with Pompey

What was making you uneasy was your reflection both on my duty and my danger. If I remained in Italy, you feared my being wanting to my duty: if I set out to the camp, you were agitated by the thought of my danger. At that time you certainly found me so unnerved as to be unable to unravel the tangle and see what was best to be done. Nevertheless, I preferred to be ruled by honour and reputation, rather than to consider the safety of my life. Of this decision I afterwards repented, not so much on account of the danger I incurred, as because of the many fatal weaknesses which I found on arrival at my destination.

sollicitum autem te habebat cogitatio cum officij, tum etiam periculi mei: si manerem in Italia, uerebare, ne officio deessem; si proficiscerer ad bellum, periculum te meum commouebat. Quo tempore uidisti profecto me quoque ita conturbatum, ut non explicarem, quid esset optimum factu; pudori tamen malui famaeeque cedere quam salutis meae rationem ducere. Cuius me mei facti poenituit non tam propter periculum meum quam propter uitia multa, quae ibi offendi, quo ueneram:

In the first place, troops neither numerous nor on a proper war footing; in the second place, beyond the general and a few others—I am speaking of the men of rank—the rest, to begin with, greedy for plunder in conducting the war itself, and moreover so bloodthirsty in their talk, that I shuddered at the idea of victory itself: and, lastly, immense indebtedness on the part of the men of the highest position. In short, there was nothing good except the cause.

primum neque magnas copias neque bellicosas; deinde extra ducem paucosque praeterea—de principibus loquor—reliquos primum in ipso bello rapaces, deinde in oratione ita crudeles, ut ipsam uictoriam horrerem; maximum autem aes alienum amplissimorum uirorum: quid quaeris? nihil boni praeter causam.



Battle of Pharsalus

My advice was ignored

Despairing of victory when I saw these things, I first began advising a peace, which had always been my policy; next, finding Pompey vehemently opposed to that idea, I proceeded to advise him to adopt delaying tactics. Of this he at times expressed approval, and seemed likely to adopt the suggestion; and he perhaps would have done so, had it not been that as a result of a certain engagement he began to feel confidence in his soldiers. From that day forth that eminent man ceased to be anything of a general. He accepted battle against the most highly seasoned legions with an army of raw recruits and hastily collected men. Having been shamefully beaten, with the loss also of his camp, he fled alone.

quae cum uidissem, desperans uictoriam primum coepi suadere pacem, cuius fueram semper auctor; deinde, cum ab ea sententia Pompeius ualde abhorreret, suadere institui, ut bellum duceret: hoc interdum probabat et in ea sententia

uidebatur fore et fuisset fortasse, nisi quadam ex pugna coepisset suis militibus confidere. ex eo tempore uir ille summus nullus imperator fuit: signa tirone et collecticio exercitu cum legionibus robustissimis contulit; uictus turpissime amissis etiam castris solus fugit.

Pompey's defeat ended my interest in the war



This I regarded as the end of the war, as far as I was concerned, nor did I imagine that, having been found unequal to the struggle while still unbeaten, we should have the upper hand after a crushing defeat. I abandoned a war in which the alternatives were to fall on the field of battle, or to fall into some ambush, or to come into the conqueror's hands, or to take refuge with Juba [king of Numidia, an ally of Pompey], or to select some place of residence as practically an exile, or to die by one's own hand. At least there was no other alternative, if you had neither the will nor the courage to trust yourself to the victor.

hunc ego mihi belli finem feci nec putavi, cum integri pares non fuisset, fractos nos superiores fore: discessi ab eo bello, in quo aut in acie cadendum fuit aut in aliquas insidias incidendum aut deueniendum in uictoris manus aut ad lubam confugiendum aut capiendus tamquam exsilio locus aut consciscenda mors uoluntaria; certe nihil fuit praeterea, si te uictori nolles aut non auderes committere.

I am almost an exile in my own country

Now, of all these alternatives I have mentioned, none is more endurable than exile, especially to a man with clean hands, when no dishonour attaches to it: and I may also add, when you lose a city, in which there is nothing that you can look at without pain. For my part, I preferred to remain with my own family—if a man may nowadays call anything his own—and also on my own property.

What actually happened I foretold in every particular. I came home, not because that offered the best condition of life, but that after all, if some form of a constitution remained, I might be there as though in my own country, and if not, as though in exile. For inflicting death on myself there seemed no adequate reason: many reasons why I should wish for it. For it is an old saying, 'When you cease to be what once you were, there is no reason why you should wish to live.'

ex omnibus autem iis, quae dixi, incommodis nihil tolerabilius exsilio, praesertim innocenti, ubi nulla adiuncta est turpitudine, addo etiam, cum ea urbe careas, in qua nihil sit, quod uidere possis sine dolore: ego cum meis, si quidquam nunc cuiusquam est, etiam in meis esse malui.

quae acciderunt, omnia dixi futura; ueni domum, non quo optima uiuendi condicio esset, sed tamen, si esset aliqua forma rei publicae, tamquam in patria ut essem, si nulla, tamquam in exsilio. mortem mihi cur consciscerem, causa non uisa est, cur optarem, multae causae; uetus est enim: ubi non sis, qui fueris, non esse, cur uelis uiuere.

I have my consolations

But after all it is a great consolation to be free of blame, especially as I have two things upon which to rely for support—acquaintance with the noblest kind of learning and the glory of the most brilliant achievements: of which the former will never be torn from me while I live, the latter not even after my death.

I have written these things to you somewhat fully, and have bored you with them, because I knew you to be most devoted both to myself and to the Republic.

sed tamen uacare culpa magnum est solatium, praesertim cum habeam duas res, quibus me sustentem, optimarum artium scientiam et maximarum rerum gloriam, quarum altera mihi uiuo numquam eripietur, altera ne mortuo quidem.

haec ad te scripsi uerbosius et tibi molestus fui, quod te cum mei, tum rei publicae cognoui amantissimum.

I did all I could for peace



Mytilene

I wanted you to be acquainted with my entire views, that in the first place you might know that it was never a wish of mine that any one individual should have more power than the Republic as a whole; but that, when by someone's fault a particular person did become so powerful as to make resistance to him impossible, I was for peace: that when the army was lost, as well as the leader in whom alone our hopes had been fixed, I wished to put an end to the war for everyone else also: and, when that proved impossible, that I did so for myself. But that now, if our state exists, I am a citizen of it; if it does not, that I am an exile in a place quite as suited for the position, as if I had betaken myself to Rhodes or Mytilene.

notum tibi omne meum consilium esse uolui, ut primum scires me numquam uoluisse plus quemquam posse quam uniuersam rem publicam, postea autem quam alicuius culpa tantum ualeret unus, ut obsisti non posset, me uoluisse pacem; amisso exercitu et eo duce, in quo spes fuerat uno, me uoluisse etiam reliquis omnibus, postquam non potuerim, mihi ipsi finem fecisse belli; nunc autem, si haec ciuitas est, ciuem esse me, si non, exulem esse non incommodiore loco, quam si Rhodum me aut Mytilenas contulissem.

Such is my defence

I should have preferred to discuss this with you personally, but as that was somewhat remote, I determined to inform you by letter, that you might have something to say, if you ever fell in with any of my critics. For there are men who, though my death would have been utterly useless to the state, regard it as a crime that I am still alive, and who I am certain think that those who perished were not numerous enough. Though, if these persons had listened to me, they would now, however unfair the terms of peace, have been living in honour; for while inferior in arms they would have been superior in the merits of their cause.

Here's a letter somewhat more wordy than perhaps you would have wished; and that I shall hold to be your opinion, unless you send me a still longer one in reply. If I can get through with some business which I wish to settle, I shall, I hope, see you before long.

haec tecum coram malueram; sed, quia longius fiebat, uolui per litteras eadem, ut haberes, quid diceres, si quando in uituperatores meos incidisses; sunt enim, qui, cum meus interitus nihil fuerit rei publicae profuturus, criminis loco putent esse, quod uiuam, quibus ego certo scio non uideri satis multos perisse: qui, si me audissent, quamuis iniqua pace, honeste tamen uiuerent; armis enim inferiores, non causa fuissent.

habes epistulam uerbosiozem fortasse, quam uelles; quod tibi ita uideri putabo, nisi mihi longiorem remiseris. ego, si, quae uolo, expediero, breui tempore te, ut spero, uidebo.

§§ In this next letter, Cicero admits that the long struggle is finally over. Indeed, for many years now he had been devoting himself to and finding comfort in philosophy, inventing in the process the Latin needed to convert Greek terms into Roman language and thought.

But on the Ides of March 44 BC ... to which this series will turn later.

Mid-July 46 BC

TO PAETUS

From Tusculum

[*ad fam.* 9.16]



Gold in fire

For I receive such attentions, such courtesies from all Caesar's favourites as make me believe myself beloved by them. For, though genuine love is not easily distinguished from feigned, unless some crisis occurs of a kind to test faithful affection by its danger, as gold in the fire, there are other indications of a general nature. But I only employ one proof to convince me that I am loved from the heart and in sincerity—namely, that my fortune and theirs is of such a kind as to preclude any motive on their part for pretending.

sic enim color, sic obseruor ab omnibus iis, qui a Caesare diliguntur, ut ab iis me amari putem; tametsi non facile diiudicatur amor uerus et fictus, nisi aliquod incidat eiusmodi tempus, ut, quasi aurum igni, sic beneuolentia fidelis periculo aliquo perspicui possit, cetera sunt signa communia; sed ego uno utor argumento, quamobrem me ex animo uereque arbitrer diligere—quia et nostra fortuna ea est et illorum, ut simulandi causa non sit.

In regard, again, to the man who now possesses all power, I see no reason for my being alarmed: except the fact that, once depart from law, everything is uncertain; and that nothing can be guaranteed as to the future which depends on another man's will, not to say caprice. Be that as it may, personally his feelings have in no respect been wounded by me. For in that particular point I have exhibited the greatest self-control.

For, as in old times I used to reckon that to speak without reserve was a privilege of mine, since to my exertions the existence of liberty in the state was owing, so, now that that is lost, I think it is my duty to say nothing calculated to offend either his wishes or those of his favourites.

de illo autem, quem penes est omnis potestas, nihil uideo, quod timeam, nisi quod omnia sunt incerta, cum a iure discessum est, nec praestari quidquam potest, quale futurum sit, quod positum est in alterius uoluntate, ne dicam libidine; sed tamen eius ipsius nulla re a me offensus est animus; est enim adhibita in ea re ipsa summa a nobis moderatio;

ut enim olim arbitrabar esse meum libere loqui, cuius opera esset in ciuitate libertas, sic ea nunc amissa nihil loqui, quod offendat aut illius aut eorum, qui ab illo diliguntur, uoluntatem.

Next week: Family life