THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CATILINARIAN CONSPIRACY

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>PROLOGUE: THE CONSPIRACY, IT SOURCES, AND INTERPRETATIONS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>THE LATE-REPUBLICAN SETTING</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>CATILINE AND THE POPULAR FRONT</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>CICERO AND THE CONSERVATIVE COALITION</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>CATILINE'S CONSPIRACY</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>CICERO'S VICTORY</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>EPILOGUE: CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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To seize control of the Roman Republic, to this conspiracy they had pledged their loyalty by an oath which was reputed to have been sealed with the drinking of human blood mixed with wine.\(^3\)

When all had arrived, the ringleader of this nefarious plot—a man of Fleming patricians, noted for the vigor of his physical and mental powers as well as for the stinging eloquence of his speech—began to address them solemnly. Referring to the failure of their earlier plans, he undoubtedly reassured them for the tepid and timorous quality of their recent activities, pointing out "the many penalties.
THE CONSPIRACY, ITS SOURCES, AND INTERPRETATIONS

In the dead of night they came together, slinking from their various abodes to an out-of-the-way spot deep in the city of Rome.\(^1\) Here they had to conceal themselves and their designs behind the secrecy of closed doors; for although their number included the highest officials and noblest names of the Roman state,\(^2\) the purpose of their meeting and the aim of their designs could by no means be considered equally commendable. They had not been summoned to indulge in one of the gay and debaucherous orgies for which they were renowned, but to receive the final instructions for their parts in a great conspiracy to seize control of the Roman Republic. To this conspiracy they had pledged their loyalty by an oath which was rumored to have been sealed with the drinking of human blood mixed with wine.\(^3\)

When all had arrived, the ringleader of this nefarious coterie—a man of flaming passions, noted for the vigor of his physical and mental powers as well as for the convincing eloquence of his speech\(^4\)—began to address them solemnly. Referring to the failure of their earlier plans, he undoubtedly rebuked them for the torpid and timorous quality of their recent activities, pointing out "the many penalties

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\(^1\) Cicero *In Catilinam* I. 4. 8-9; Sallust *Bellum Catilinae* 27. 3; Cassius Dio *Roman History* xxxvii. 3-4.

\(^2\) Sall. *Cat.* 17. 1-4; Florus *Epitoma* ii. 12. 2-3.

\(^3\) Sall. *Cat.* 22. 1; Florus *Epit.* ii. 12. 4.

\(^4\) Sall. *Cat.* 5. 1-5.
they would suffer if they were detected and the many advantages they
would obtain if successful." He reported that the armed bands which
had been raised throughout Italy were almost ready for action, and that
he wished to leave the city as soon as possible to take command of the
main force in Etruria.

Having raised their spirits and roused their courage by vigorous
incitements to action, he revealed the final arrangements for the con-
spiracy. He established the ones among them whom he would take with
him and the ones whom he would leave behind to direct the sedition
within the city. He pointed out that it was the task of this latter
group to assassinate the magistrates, to massacre a number of citizens
and to start fires simultaneously throughout the city. As the city
would then be engulfed in confusion and conflagration, he would
hastily march toward it with the revolutionary armies from the country
districts in order to take control by force and stamp out any resist­
ance which might be encountered.

But he lamented that there was one small matter which was delaying
his departure—the fact that the consul who had obstructed their pre-
vious designs was still alive. Two of the more audacious members of
the group volunteered to free him from this care and promised that they
would slay the vexatious magistrate before dawn. When all understood

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5Dio loc. cit.

6Cic. Cat. I. 4. 9; Cic. Cat. II. 6. 13; Sall. Cat. 27. 4.

7Cic. Cat. I. 4. 9; Cic. Pro Sulla 18. 52; Appian Bella Civilia
(Civil Wars) ii. 1. 3; Livy Periochae ci.

8Cic. Cat. I. 4. 9; Cic. Sull. 18. 52; Sall. Cat. 27. 4 - 28. 1;
Dio loc. cit.
their assignments and comprehended the gravity of the situation, the
meeting broke up with each holding the highest hopes for the success of
their daring venture.

This meeting occurred on the evening of November 6, 63 B.C., at
the home of a Roman senator distinguished by the nomen of Porcius. He
and most of the men present that night were of noble lineage and had
held, or were then holding, responsible positions in the republican
government. Several had reached the praetorship, one even the consul­
ship. They were summoned to that infamous nocturnal gathering by
another noble of patrician lineage, Lucius Sergius Catilina. It was
he who was the originator, the ringleader, and the driving force be­
hind this conspiracy which was to be rendered immortal by the brilliant
invectives of Marcus Tullius Cicero, the consul whom they determined
to slay that evening.

What were the political and economic conditions which nourished
such a destructive design as the Catilinarian conspiracy? What nature
of man was Catiline, and why was he motivated to undertake his perilous
plot? Who were his followers, and for what reason were they induced
to take part in the conspiracy? What were the relationships between
Catiline and the other leading politicians of late-republican Rome?
What effect did the conspiracy have upon the course of Roman history?

These are the principal questions with which one is confronted
when studying the Catilinarian conspiracy. In order to find material
which may provide answers for these questions, one must turn to the
ancient sources.

The writings of Catiline's two contemporaries, Marcus Tullius
Cicero and Gaius Sallustius Crispus, are the central sources from which
the details of the Catilinarian era are to be obtained. Cicero's senatorial orations, public addresses, court speeches, and personal correspondence provide an intimate picture of the political, social, and economic conditions of the late Republic, and vividly delineate the leading figures of this turbulent age. Although Cicero's *Invectivae In Catilinam* have immortalized his adversary as the epitome of the vicious revolutionary, one can find among his letters and later speeches a more objective appraisal of Catiline's character—an appraisal not colored by the immediate promptings of fear and personal enmity.

In the *Bellum Iugurthinum* and *Bellum Catilinae*, Sallust is as much concerned with describing and analyzing the political, social, and economic problems of the late Republic as he is with the titled subjects per se. The fact that his monographs are colored with a propopular bias does not detract from their value if properly used; for placed beside the obviously pro-optimate writings of Cicero, they enable the historian to obtain a fairly accurate picture of late-republican politics.

The strengths and weaknesses of these two literary giants fortunately complement each other: Cicero is precise in regard to chronology while Sallust is not; Sallust, on the other hand, provides vital details which Cicero was not at liberty to divulge in his public addresses, e.g., the names and activities of Cicero's informers during the conspiratorial machinations; and although Sallust is in basic agreement with Cicero in condemning the conspirators, he does so in a more detached manner, and thus, presents a more well-rounded portrait of the men in question.

Next in importance is the *Enarratio* of Quintus Asconius Pedianus
on Cicero's *Oratio In Toga Candida*. Asconius was a Roman grammarian and historian of the Julio-Claudian era whose commentaries on Cicero's speeches reveal an intimate knowledge of republican politics and personalities. He has performed a vital service for the historian of the Catilinarian era by quoting from and elaborating upon portions of Cicero's famed election address as the speech itself has not survived. This important commentary is the prime source for the heated consular election of 64 and provides much valuable information on Catiline's early career.

There are four narrative histories of the late-republican period: two in Latin—those of Velleius Paterculus and Lucius Annaeus Florus—and two in Greek—those of Appianus and Cassius Dio Coceianus. Velleius was a distinguished military commander under Augustus and Tiberius who wrote a cursory history of the Republic in his later years. The basic weakness of his *Historiae Romanae* is its brevity, especially with regard to Catiline's conspiracy. Yet Velleius does present some useful background information in a fairly objective manner, and his biographical sketches of the leading protagonists of the Ciceronian era are skillfully drawn.

The *Epitomae* of Florus, compiled during the reign of Hadrian, suffers from a superficial brevity and a strong tendency toward rhetoric. Though the chapter on the conspiracy is weak in chronology, it is still a valuable source because of its dramatic narration of many important details from the later stages of the conspiracy.

Appian was a native of Alexandria who, after obtaining Roman citizenship, became a civil servant in Rome during the mid-second century A.D. He was fascinated with the glories of Roman imperialism,
and devoted his later years to writing a series of histories dealing with Roman warfare. The *Mithridatic Wars* and *Civil Wars* are the ones pertaining to the Catilinarian era: the former with respect to the military career of Pompey, and the latter in regard to the internal struggles of the late Republic. There is a substantial chapter in the *Civil Wars* devoted to the conspiracy of Catiline which is most useful for the many valuable facts it contains. There are some omissions, e.g., Catiline's defeat in the consular election of 63, and some inaccuracies in chronology, but it certainly ranks above the two Latin narratives in overall value.

Dio, a high and trusted official under the Severi, was the farthest removed in point of time from the Catilinarian era. Yet, he spent some twenty years researching and writing a massive history of Rome from its beginnings down to 229 A.D., and the result of this Livian effort is an invaluable source for the modern historian. Of the four narratives mentioned, Dio's ranks far and above the others in extent of detail, accurate and objective presentation of facts, and correct chronology.

There are two biographers worthy of note: Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus and Plutarch. Suetonius served as secretary to the emperor Hadrian and had available extensive primary sources when compiling his *De Vita Caesarum*. Only his first work, *Divus Julius*, is of importance for the Catilinarian era. Excepting Plutarch's life of Caesar, this is the chief source on Caesar's early career and provides much useful data on the future dictator's political alignments and intrigues during his rise to power. One must be careful when reading the account though,
for Suetonius has a tendency to give Caesar more "credit" than he deserves during those early years.

Second only to Cicero in the volume of material presented for this era is "the prince of ancient biographers," Plutarch. The life of this Greek scholar spanned the late first and early second century A.D. He read extensively and travelled widely before ending his days in literary leisure as a priest of Apollo at Delphi. One of the most popular of the ancient authors, his numerous Lives of Greek and Roman statesmen have had a tremendous influence on later literature, especially drama and history. His Lives of Cicero, Crassus, Pompey and Caesar are of prime importance to the historian of the Ciceronian era as they fill up numerous gaps in the extant historical narratives. Plutarch admittedly has many faults—overemphasizing the supernatural, a passion for anecdotes, an uncritical analysis of his sources—but these are certainly outweighed by the vivid portraits and vast volume of information he has left the historian on the outstanding individuals of the ancient world.

There are a few other ancient sources which offer tidbits of information here and there—reference to these is made in the notes and bibliography—but those mentioned above are the most useful and proffer a wealth of information on this exciting era of Roman history. This researcher intends to develop from these sources an historical narrative of the Catilinarian era (66-62 B.C.) which will tender answers for the primary questions surrounding the conspiracy. The narrative will, of course, be based upon the researcher's own interpretation of the extant sources. But before proceeding to this task, some of the more important interpretations which have preceded this one must be acknowledged. It is not within the scope of this thesis
to present a comparative analysis of the viewpoints of other historians on the various problems of the conspiracy and the events surrounding it. But by mentioning some of the more outstanding interpretations, the interested reader may be aided in finding further food for thought on the Catilinarian era.

The most renowned of all Roman historians, Theodor Mommsen, viewed the Catilinarian conspiracy as a desperate plot of the "democratic party" to grab power during Pompey's absence. He portrayed Crassus and Caesar as calling the shots behind the scenes and Catiline as no more than one of their "unclean associates" who was carrying out the dirty work. Unfortunately, Mommsen's chapter on Catiline loses much of its value because of serious errors in chronology and his obvious anti-Ciceronian bias.

It is interesting to note that Shakespeare's famed contemporary, Ben Jonson, beat Mommsen to the punch with a similar line of reasoning by over two centuries. In his lengthy play, Catiline: His Conspiracy (1611), he has Crassus and Caesar backing Catiline up until the urban conspirators are captured and condemned, and then pulling out to save their own necks. The drama is well-written and reveals Jonson's thorough knowledge of the sources. It is strong with regard to characterization and motivational factors, but its faulty chronology reveals a too-heavy reliance on Sallust. The archaic English also makes the play hard to understand and enjoy unless one is fully ac-

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quainted with the more important sources (Cicero, Sallust, and Plutarch at the least).

James Anthony Froude and Rex Warner, two of Julius Caesar's more respected biographers, refute the contention that Crassus and Caesar had any part in the harebrained schemes of Catiline. They postulate that Caesar and his wealthy mentor realized that there was more to lose than gain by participation in a desperate revolutionary movement and, therefore, they were careful to disassociate themselves from Catiline after his first electoral defeat in 63.

Sequential to this view is the position that Catiline was a power unto himself in the chaotic political struggles of the late Republic. Lily Ross Taylor sees him as a prominent but malicious popular leader with a strong following of his own—a man selfishly seeking to advance himself to a position of political dominance, just as Crassus and Caesar were each striving for personal domination backed by their respective factions.

H. H. Scullard and F. B. Marsh reveal a similar opinion by depicting Catiline as the leader of the radical wing of the Populares who was forced to employ violent revolution when other means of


obtaining power had failed. Marsh even suggests that Catiline was simply trying to repeat the career of Cinna "by setting up a so-called democratic government with himself as the head." Unfortunately, the three preceding views are expressed in rather brief surveys of the late Republic, and thus the portions devoted to the conspiracy suffer from a forced lack of details.

Holding down an intermediate position between the two wings of opinion so far discussed are W. E. Heitland and E. G. Hardy. Heitland sees Crassus and Caesar as pulling the strings up until Catiline's second defeat for the consulsip, and then withdrawing their support as Catiline moves toward desperate anarchy. Though this investigator cannot agree with all the points made by Heitland, it must be admitted that his chapter on "Cicero and Catiline" is one of the best essays available on the various problems of the Catilinarian era. His essay and the Cambridge Ancient History's chapter on "Rome In The Absence Of Pompey," would serve as good starting points for the reader interested in this turbulent age.

This statement cannot be made for Hardy's monograph on The Catilinarian Conspiracy--the most thorough analysis of the Catilinarian era to date. His basic thesis is that the actions of Crassus and Caesar during this era were motivated by their desire to establish a

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W. E. Heitland, The Roman Republic (3 vols.; Cambridge: At the University Press, 1923), III.

safe position for themselves in relation to Pompey. Like Heitland, he sees Crassus and Caesar as the prime movers of the popular faction up until Catiline's second defeat. Thus, they are presented as the leaders of the "first Catilinarian conspiracy," and their legislative programs and electoral support for Catiline are seen as attempts to set up bases of power for themselves against Pompey. When Catiline struck out upon a dangerously independent course of action Hardy believes that Crassus and Caesar betrayed their former ally by giving information about his plans to the government as a means of preventing a situation in which Pompey might be enabled to return to Italy at the head of his legions. But while Cicero was subsequently crushing the conspiracy, Hardy depicts Crassus and Caesar as working behind the scenes to set up a coalition between themselves and the absent Pompey—in effect, Hardy tries to establish the triumvirate three years early!

Although he has some powerful arguments and thoroughly covers the progress of the conspiracy itself, his book suffers from serious defects: he appears to take too much liberty with the sources; he employs a dry and dull style of writing with one of the most exciting and tension-packed episodes in Roman history; and the fact that he has loaded his text with an overly generous amount of extensive Greek and Latin quotations renders the book useful only to those scholars fully versed in classical literature.

All the interpretations so far mentioned—no matter how much they differ on the various aspects of the conspiracy—agree in their refusal to condone the actions of Catiline and his fellow conspirators. Yet, there is another interpretation which presents Catiline as a heroic
reforming revolutionary. Edward Spencer Beesly\textsuperscript{17} portrays Catiline as the legitimate successor of the Gracchi, Saturninus, and Drusus to leadership of the "Popular Party." In this position he is shown striving selflessly for the welfare of the poor and downtrodden elements of Roman society in a fight to overcome the intolerable scourge of oligarchic rule. Professor Beesly performs a valuable service in emphasizing the glaring evils of the late Republic, but he has to indulge in some rather dissimulatory rhetoric in order to twist the meaning of the sources into support for his one-sided thesis.

The only recent interpretation devoted specifically to the conspiracy is an article of P. A. Brunt which presents Catiline's conspiracy as a reflection of the unrest in late-republican society.\textsuperscript{18} He examines the problems of the small farmer, the harsh debt laws, the unequal distribution of wealth, and the military in politics. He concludes that the conspiracy was the logical outgrowth of these conditions, but that it failed because Catiline had neither the resources nor the ability which Caesar was later to exhibit when he overthrew the establishment and attempted to right the wrongs of Roman society.

Although it suffers from too little length and too much generalization, it is a fairly successful attempt at raising and answering the questions of why, and from where did Catiline obtain such substantial support for his dangerous plot.

In reinterpreting the conspiracy, this researcher will attempt

\textsuperscript{17}Edward Spencer Beesly, Catiline, Clodius, and Tiberius (New York: G. E. Strechert and Co., 1921).

neither to support nor to refute the views of other historians. Rather, he intends to reconstruct the Catilinarian era in conformance with his own reading of the ancient sources. This being the case, it must be stated at the outset that the basic premises of the ancient writers on the following points will be accepted: that Catiline's conspiracy was a criminal venture to overthrow the legally constituted government of the Roman Republic; that Catiline himself was something of a reprobate; and that his intimate associates were the direlicts of the Roman nobility. The sources are in general agreement upon these points, and are thus colored with some rather lurid language when describing the character and activities of Catiline and his associates. As the Catilinarian conspiracy was one of the most dangerous and dramatic episodes in Roman history, and this narration of it is based upon the ancient sources, it will be necessary to employ some rather strong language in this thesis. The reader must therefore be cautioned not to react negatively to such slanted and emotive "purr words" as "pernicious," "nefarious," "malevolent," et cetera, for an account of the Catilinarian conspiracy would not seem very authentic without them.

This researcher feels that there is a definite need for a study in depth of the conspiracy, as the sources themselves do not provide a continuous or comprehensive narrative of the era, and are at variance with each other on many important issues surrounding the conspiracy. Furthermore, most of the interpretations discussed above are part of larger histories of Rome, and thus are afflicted with an enforced brevity. Many are outdated and exhibit faulty chronology as well. The only two historical monographs specifically dedicated to Catiline—those of Beesly and Hardy—do not meet the needs of the modern student
of the Catilinarian era. Beesly's monograph is an obviously biased polemic, while Hardy's scholarly book is useless to the reader who is not intimately familiar with classical literature.

Therefore, this investigator will attempt to fill in this void with an objective narrative of this exciting era in Roman history. The account will center around the careers of the two men most intimately connected to, and affected by the conspiracy—Catiline and his chief adversary Cicero. The former directed the rise of the conspiracy, the latter its fall.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is simply to acquaint the reader with the outstanding characteristics of the Republican political offenses during the early first century B.C.

In conformance with this purpose, a topical format, rather than a chronological chronicle, would seem more useful, and will thus be employed. In each of the sections in the Catilinarian drama centers upon the Roman Senate, the senators, factions, and politics of that body will be the prime topic of concern in this survey. Yet, the conspiracy involved all elements of Roman society, so the position of the army, provincial concerns, and the social and the political framework of the era must also come under discussion. And finally, in the prevailing climate of Rome's current military state, Roman politics, had so small effect upon the actions of Roman politicians during the Catilinarian era, the entrance of the military into politics during the late Republic must be considered.

First of all, let us turn our attention to the Senate and its factions. The Senate had long been the central governing agency of the Roman society. It was the only continuous authoritative body within the Republican constitutional framework, and thus, of necessity, had
II. THE LATE-REPUBLICAN SETTING

The Catilinarian conspiracy was not an isolated event which took place in a vacuum, but rather, it was a part and parcel of late-republican politics. If the rise and fall of the conspiracy is to be understood properly, the political setting in which it occurred must first be outlined. The purpose of this chapter, then, is simply to acquaint the reader with the outstanding characteristics of the republican political climate during the early first century B.C.

In conformance with this purpose, a topical format, rather than a chronological narrative, would seem more useful, and will thus be employed. As much of the action in the Catilinarian drama centers upon the Roman Senate, the members, factions, and policies of that body will be the prime topic of concern in this survey. Yet, the conspiracy touched all elements of Roman society, so the position of the Equites, the yeoman farmers, and the urban mob in the political framework of the era must also come under discussion. And finally, as the menacing shadow of Rome’s current military hero, Gnaeus Pompeius, had no small effect upon the actions of Roman politicians during the Catilinarian era, the entrance of the military into politics during the late Republic must be considered.

First of all, let us turn our attention to the Senate and its factions. The Senate had long been the central governing agency of the Roman world. It was the only continuous consultative body within the republican constitutional framework, and thus, of necessity, had
presided over and directed the acquisition of Rome's empire. The magistrates of the state and many of the jurors of Rome's courts were chosen from among its members, and "it had command of the treasury, assigned provinces and armies to the magistrates and promagistrates, and was recognized by foreign peoples as the governing power of Rome."\(^1\)

The Senate was still the nerve center of Roman political life in Catiline's day, but the patres conscripti were then beset with internal strife. Basically, they were divided into two factions, the members of each seeking political supremacy at the expense of their adversaries. Cicero gave a somewhat biased definition of these factions when he said:

> There have always been two classes of men in this state who have sought to engage in public affairs and to distinguish themselves in them. Of these two classes, one aimed at being, by repute and in reality, Populares, the other Optimates. Those who wished everything they said to be agreeable to the masses were reckoned as Populares, but those who acted so as to win by their policy the approval of all the best citizens were reckoned as Optimates.\(^2\)

These factions were not political parties in the sense that the term party is used today. They had no regular party organization with a permanent committee, no party caucus, nor any absolute ticket on the ballot. They were, simply, groupings of men from the noble and senatorial ranks who employed different methods to attain their like objective--political dominance.

The Optimates were a narrow circle of noble landowners who had gained control of the Senate and styled themselves as the boni, whose

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duty was to uphold the Senate's traditional position as the chief
governing body of the state. Their association was known as an
amicitia—a group of men united in common purpose by the bonds of friend­
ship and intermarriage. Through the use of the patron-client relation­
ship they contrived to control the centuriate elections in such a way
that the highest magistracies would most often fall to themselves; and
they clearly regarded the consulship as their own "to pass...on from
one to another of their number." In this way they were able to
reserve for themselves the lion's share of the spoils of empire.
Sallust commented on this when he had Catiline say:

'It is always they who receive tribute from foreign kings and
princes and rake in takes from every people and tribe... Thus
all influence, power, office, and wealth are in their hands or
where they choose to bestow them.'

The leaders of this senatorial faction in the post-Sullan or
Catilinarian period included: Quintus Lutatius Catulus, the consul of
78, who had crushed the Lepidan revolt; Quintus Hortensius, consul in
69, a great orator and an outstanding member of the Roman bar; Lucius
Licinius Lucullus, consul in 74, the excellent commander in the early
stages of the Third Mithridatic War; Quintus Caecilius Metellus
Creticus, consul in 69, the conqueror of Crete; and Marcus Porcius
Cato, elected tribune for 62, who was to emerge from the Catilinarian
episode as the new star of the optimat cause.

Their program was essentially conservative: to protect the
treasury and private property, and to maintain their control over the
governance of the empire. Many of them sincerely believed that the

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3Sall. Bellum Iugurthinum 63. 6. 4Sall. Cat. 20. 7-9.
best interests of the empire could be served by their control of the Roman government. Cato served as an excellent example of the better class of Optimates as he was constantly insisting on the "responsibilities of the Roman state to subject and allied peoples." Yet many others were totally unconcerned for the welfare of the provincials, or even, for that matter, of the poorer classes of Roman citizens. The plundering of Sicily by its optimate governor Caius Verres presented an example of this latter group.

The Populares, though often of the same noble background as the Optimates, were being hindered by the latter in their attempts to gain distinction through senatorial channels. Therefore, they styled themselves as the "proponents of the people's rights," and...

turned with the aid of the tribunes to the tribal assembly and, without the senatorial authority prescribed by the best custom for laws submitted to the people, procured from the people the enactment of laws that accomplished their designs.

As the spoils of a great empire were at stake, they were not about to sit back passively and watch the Optimates line their pockets while all that was left for themselves was "danger, defeat, prosecutions, and poverty." Thus, they took advantage of the unsettled social conditions of the time to gain their ends; by offering "reforms" to the oppressed masses of Roman society they sought to gain the offices and military commands which they desired.

The outstanding leaders of the popular front at this time were:

Caius Aurelius Cotta, who had campaigned for restoration of the

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5Taylor, op. cit., pp. 22-23. 6Cic. In Verrem

7Taylor, op. cit., p. 13. 8Sall. Cat. 20. 9.
tribunian powers in the 70's; Marcus Licinius Crassus, the conqueror of Spartacus, who as consul in 70, had restored to the tribunate its pre-Sullan legislative powers; Gaius Julius Caesar, who as aedile of 65, gained great popularity with the urban mob by his lavish gladiatorial shows; Lucius Sergius Catilina, praetor in 68, who offered debt cancellation as a campaign promise when seeking the consulship in the elections of 64 and 63; and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, who, as consul with Crassus in 70, had restored the tribune's powers, and then by receiving a series of extraordinary commands from the Comitia Tributa, had become the idol of the masses through his military exploits.

Their programs usually consisted of such measures as grain doles to the urban mob, land redistribution to dispossessed farmers, citizenship to heavily taxed allies, and debt reduction to the debtors of all classes—all of which were programs opposed to the interests of the Optimates. Although there were some genuine reformers among the Populares, most of them were more concerned with gaining personal power than with alleviating the problems of the landless city mob, the debt-ridden farmers, and the subject and allied peoples of the provinces.

As could be expected, the Optimates "strove with might and main... against these men, ostensibly in behalf of the Senate but in reality

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9Scullard, op. cit., p. 93. The legislative prerogatives of the tribunes had been greatly curtailed in the late 80's by the optimate dictator Lucius Cornelius Sulla.

10Most Roman scholars would not dispute the contention that the Gracchi, Drusus, and Sulpicius had been deeply concerned with the evils of Roman society and had attempted to bring about needed reforms. See Scullard, Ibid., Chapters II and IV for a discussion of these three popular politicians.
for their own aggrandizement."\textsuperscript{11} Since there were ten tribunes at this time, the \textbf{Optimates} could usually get one or more of their number elected to this office, and thus could oppose the programs of the \textbf{Populares} with the latter's own methods (use of veto, and introduction of legislative measures favorable to their cause); the \textbf{Optimates} could also employ "obstructions provided by the state religion which they controlled to delay...the popular bills of their opponents."\textsuperscript{12}

In essence, "the \textbf{Optimates} were working for the maintenance of an oligarchy while the great figures who adopted popular methods were usually attempting to establish personal supremacy."\textsuperscript{13} It was a struggle for power between opposing groups of the nobility, and as Sallust remarks, "each in reality was working for its own advancement."\textsuperscript{14}

In this contentious political atmosphere there was "a steady decline of morality in part of the governing class."\textsuperscript{15} As there were only two consulships and ten praetorships available each year, the struggle for office within a senatorial nobility of 500 to 600 members was necessarily fierce and expensive. Thus, bribery and spilled blood were not uncommon occurrences during the electoral campaigns. Among many of the nobility luxury, display and extravagance were the fashion, while position and prestige were the goals.\textsuperscript{16} One historian has described the political game of the era thus:

\textit{Vast wealth was to be found among the nobility, but also vast indebtedness; for politics was an expensive pursuit, and no man could hope to succeed who was not as lavish in flinging away his money as he was unscrupulous in getting it. A young}

\textsuperscript{11}Sall. Cat. 38. 1-2.  \textsuperscript{12}Taylor, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 22-23.  
\textsuperscript{13}Tbid., p. 13.  \textsuperscript{14}Sall. Cat. 38. 3.  
\textsuperscript{15}Scullard, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 183.  \textsuperscript{16}Tbid., p. 182.
man spent all he could borrow in forcing his way to office,...for office would be a certain mine of wealth. When his consulship or praetorship had expired he was assigned a province and then he made his harvest.\textsuperscript{17}

But to obtain office—and the power and wealth which came with it—the senatorial factions had to secure electoral support from the other elements of the Roman citizen body. This brings us to the second concern in this survey, the positions held by the Equites, the yeomen farmers, and the urban mob within late-republican society.

While the Senate comprised the landholding aristocracy of Rome, the Equites were the moneyed aristocracy. As the senators were forbidden by law to engage in business, it was the Equites who handled those business activities which were necessary for the governance of a great world empire (tax-farming, road construction, banking, etc.).

The Equites were men (usually from middle and upper class Roman or Italian families) who had chosen to forego the rigors of the political arena and make their fortunes through business instead. A young noble, destined for a senatorial career by his father's wishes, expressed the equestrian aversion to politics when he wrote in his autobiography:

\begin{quote}
I received the first honors of young manhood, and was once a part of the Triumviri. But I left the senatorial Curia behind and had the purple stripes on my shoulder drawn in; politics was too great a burden for my powers. My body was neither enduring, nor my mind suitable to manual labor, so I avoided the anxious campaign for office....\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Nevertheless, a career in politics was always open to young men of equestrian background who preferred "the anxious campaign for office" to the traditional business pursuits of their family. These men could

\textsuperscript{17}Beesly, op. cit., p. 5. \textsuperscript{18}Ovid Tristia iv. 10. 34-39.
expect to serve in many of the Republic's magistracies and to earn a seat in the Senate; but to achieve the consulship, Rome's highest office, was a different matter. Only the most talented could hope to attain that closely guarded pinnacle of power. Cicero was to be among that select group of equestrians who made it to the top.

Usually the equestrians stuck to business, and as men of business, they were inclined to support whichever senatorial faction or program was most beneficial to their interests. For instance, when the Populares offered a bill to the Comitia Tributa which would bestow Pompey with an extraordinary command, the Equites would support the measure in spite of optimate opposition because Pompey would probably open up new provinces for their money-lending and tax-farming activities. But, on the other hand, if a popular leader were to offer a program of debt cancellation, the Equites would quickly join ranks with the optimate clique in defense of property.

Generally, the Equites were likely to take the side of the conservative Optimates, who were for a maintenance of the status quo, rather than that of the Populares, whose schemes might endanger the equestrian financial position. Although "there was no love lost between the business men and the governing class,...upon the whole there was a tacit understanding between the two classes to divide the spoil."¹⁹

Next, the backbone of Roman society had long been the small, independent farmers of the countryside. But since the Second Punic War they had been a diminishing breed—the hapless victims of imperial

¹⁹Beesly, op. cit., p. 7.
expansion. While the acquisition of an overseas empire had brought wealth, luxury, and escape from the toils of the field to the senatorial and equestrian classes, the yeomen farmers had been burdened with long campaigns, overseas competition, untiiled fields and debts.

Much of the land which Rome had conquered from her Italian neighbors had been expropriated by the state and leased out to wealthy nobles, who combined their holdings into large estates known as latifundia. With the acquisition of Sicily and North Africa, the cereal grains produced by the small independent Roman farmers of central Italy were no longer essential to the economy. Thus, the large landowners had shifted to stock raising, vine and olive cultivation, and had brought in slave labor to work their farms.20

"But few of the small farmers possessed the capital or skill to switch over from corn-growing to other forms of production,"21 nor were they able to compete successfully with the cheap labor and efficiency of the large latifundia. When they were called away on military campaigns for long periods of time, their lands might be out of cultivation when they returned, or even worse, "if they happened to have a powerful neighbor, their parents or young children might well have been driven from their homes."22 They had to borrow money to get started again, with the result that they went into debt, "and a series of bad years placed them at the mercy of creditors anxious to acquire more land."23 If they could not meet their financial obligations, it was relatively easy for the creditors to seize their land as "it was

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20Scullard, op. cit., p. 20.  21Ibid.

22Sall. Iug. 41. 9.  23Brunt, op. cit., p. 17.
the little men who were exposed to the full rigor of the Roman law of debt."^{24}

The plight of these farmers can be seen through the words which Sallust imputes to Lucius Manlius, one of Catiline's leading rural followers:

'We are poor, needy wretches; the cruel harshness of money-lenders has robbed most of us of our homes, and all of us have lost reputation and fortune. None of us has been allowed, in accordance with the usage of our forefathers, to enjoy the protection of the law and retain our personal liberty after being stripped of our patrimony, such was the inhumanity of the moneylenders and the praetor.'^{25}

Although the conditions in Italy's small farm districts were not uniformly bad, still, many of the areas might be viewed as fertile beds where the seeds of discontent could be nourished by the revolutionary wing of the popular front.

The land problem, in turn, was increasing the instability of the political atmosphere of the cities, especially Rome. For the landless citizens and discouraged farmers had little choice other than to congregate in the metropolis where they might attach themselves to a wealthy patron or seek the public doles available there—a much easier life than the thankless toil of the farm.^{26}

Cicero relates that nobles of both the optimate and popular factions employed gangs of these urban capite censi^{27} as their clients;

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^{25}Sall. Cat. 33. 1-2. ^{26}Ibid., 37. 6-7.

^{27}Capite censi (those counted by head): these people lacked any possessions by which their citizenship status could be tabulated in the census. Therefore, they were counted by the head alone.
part of their duty being to serve as an informal following or bodyguard during election campaigns. This situation obviously stimulated violence and boded evil for the continued stability of republican institutions. The fact that this urban mob came to dominate the Comitia Tributa, Rome's chief legislative assembly, was equally deleterious to republican political life. For the urban mob did not represent the Roman citizen body as a whole, yet they could provide the majority needed to pass legislation binding over all citizens.

It was among the urban mob that the Populares sought their support, for as Sallust says:

If a man is ambitious for power, he can have no better supporters than the poor; they are not concerned about their own possessions, since they have none, and whatever will put something into their pockets is right and proper in their eyes.

Thus, the popular leaders, "by offering programs that won them a great following among the city dwellers," were then able to secure the passage of measures they needed to increase their personal power—extraordinary commands, for instance. And this brings us to possibly the most important development in Roman politics during the latter years of the Republic—the entrance of the military into active political participation.

About the time of Catiline's birth, the popular leader Gaius Marius, by appealing to the assembly, had been given supreme command of the Iugurthine War, superseding the senatorial appointment, Quintus Caecilius Metellus Numidicus. Although this in itself was contrary to long established custom, the subsequent action of Marius was even more

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28Cic. Pro Murena 23. 19; 25. 52. 29Sall. Iug. 86. 3.
30Taylor, op. cit., p. 75.
revolutionary. Sallust relates the occurrence:

He...enrolled soldiers, not according to the classes in the manner of our forefathers, but allowing anyone to volunteer, for the most part the capite censos. Some say that he did this through lack of good men, others because of a desire to curry favor, since that class had given him honor and rank.31

He probably had been motivated by both of the suggested reasons, but undoubtedly the lack of Roman citizens eligible for service had been his immediate concern. This situation had come about because of the decline of small farmers, the backbone of the Roman legions. The old method of conscripting only landholding citizens was no longer practical when Rome had a great empire to defend. So Marius had done the logical thing and enrolled the landless city mob into the Roman legions. By so doing, Marius had been able to redeem the prestige of Roman arms by finally finishing off the illusive Iugurtha, (107-104 B.C.) and to save Rome from its most serious external threat since the Gallic invasion of the fourth century. The latter point refers to the victories of Marius over the attacks of the Germans on the northern frontier (104-101 B.C.).

However, by the enlistment of the capite censos, Marius had forced the general into politics—a dangerous situation in any nation. "The soldiers were turned into the clients of the general,"32 and they looked to him for praeda when under his command, and ager when they retired; "and after they were established in colonies with grants of land they continued to regard him as their patron, to look to him for aid, and to respond to his call in time of need."33 In essence, the

31 Sall. Iug. 86. 2-3; Florus Epit. i. 36. 13.
32 Taylor, op. cit., p. 47. 33 Ibid.
general had been forced to become a politician in order to provide for
the interests of his veterans.

The three great politician-generals during Catiline's lifetime
were Gaius Marius, under the shadow of whose exploits Catiline entered
the world and grew to manhood; Lucius Cornelius Sulla, under whom he
entered upon a public career; and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, his renowned
contemporary and possibly an obstacle to his designs for power. Each
of these men had a significant influence not only upon the course of
late-republican politics, but also upon Catiline's blazing career.

Marius and Sulla were significant for the Catilinarian era in
several ways: they provided examples for Pompey, Crassus, Caesar, and
Catiline that an important consideration when attempting to attain
power should be the support of a loyal, dependent army; they left a
residue of fear in all politicians—Optimates and Populares alike—of
the possibility of further murderous proscriptions if a power general
should again march on Rome and destroy his opponents as each of them
had done during the 80's; and Sulla, especially, further intensified
the land problem by uprooting many yeoman farmers to provide land for
his veterans. In fact, Etruria, the area most severely affected by
these confiscations, was to provide a very fruitful recruiting ground
for Catiline's agents a decade later.

Although the influence of the military was becoming a dominant
factor in politics, the political conflicts of the time were still
fought out within the framework of the optimate and popular factions
of the senatorial nobility. Both Marius and Sulla, for instance, had
been senators and each had represented the interests of an opposing
faction—Marius, the Populares; Sulla, the Optimates.
Pompey, however, confused the situation somewhat by fighting first under the banner of one faction, and then the other, thus raising himself to a position of unprecedented glory and power at the expense of both. Catiline was to follow the same procedure, but with entirely different results.

Pompey had begun his career on the side of Sulla, fighting to help crush the popular Marian faction and restore the Optimates to power. During the 70's he had become that faction's "golden boy," receiving from them a series of extraordinary commands to crush revolting popular leaders (Lepidus, Sertorius, and Perperna). But his impressive string of victories soon had begun to worry the oligarchy—numquam eminentia invidia carent—and they had withdrawn their support. Pompey had quickly switched his allegiance to the popular faction and, to the consternation of the Optimates, had been elected consul for the year 70.

By sponsoring or allowing the enactment of a number of popular measures during his consulship, he had undermined optimate control in the assembly and courts. He was shortly rewarded by the popular assembly with two more extraordinary commands—which conferred upon him more powers than any general in Roman history had ever possessed. He finished off the pirates in a lightning campaign of a few months, and

34"Eminence is never without envy." Velleius Paterculus Historiae Romanae ii. 40. 4.
35Plutarch Pompey 22. 3; Scullard, op. cit., p. 98.
then proceeded to Asia where he replaced the optimate commander, Lucullus, in the command against Mithridates. Occupied by this campaign, Pompey was to remain in the East for some four years (66-62). He was already the most powerful and famous general in the history of the Republic. In the next few years he greatly augmented this mighty reputation by a series of glorious exploits in distant and little known lands on the borders of civilization, virtually placing the eastern half of the Roman world under his own patronage.

The fear of what the great Pompey might do when he returned hovered like a dark cloud over the minds, and guided the actions, of optimate and popular politicians alike during these years. For Pompey had attached himself firmly to neither of the senatorial factions. In fact, he had used both to gain his own ends. Thus, the senatorial Optimates "feared him as a possible autocrat,"37 who, when he returned, might set himself up as dictator, carry out proscriptions, and strike the death blow to senatorial control of the government. Yet he was also a threat to the Populares, such as Crassus, Caesar, and shortly, Catiline, who wanted to attain position and power for themselves, but would be prevented from doing so if the notoriously jealous Pompey decided on a one-man show.38 Therefore, the Populares were intent upon strengthening their own positions before he returned from the East, while the Optimates wanted to hold on to, and increase if possible, what power they still had.

37W. E. Heitland, A Short History of the Roman Republic (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1911), p. 378; Plut. Pomp. 43. 1; Dio xxxvii. 44. 3.

38Vell. Pat. ii. 33. 3.
Having completed this brief description of late-republican political life, it is time to turn our attention to the leading character in the Catilinarian drama and the narrative history of his times.

Late in the year 63, just after Pompey had left to undertake his extraordinary command, Lucius Sergius Catilina returned to Rome, fresh from a praetorian governorship in Africa, and intent on raising himself to Rome's highest magistracy.\(^1\) He found the city engulfed in political strife. The controversy centered on the very office he wished to obtain—the consulship.

Now that Pompey was gone and the popular party was momentarily without a rallying point, the Optimates were attempting to reassert their control over the government. The recent elections had been a severe blow to the oligarchy as Popilium had won many important posts: Crassus had gained the censorship, Caesar an aedilship, and both consulships had gone to men with popular sympathies, Publius Cornelius Sulla, and Publius Atticus Postumus. But the Optimates had struck back by employing the newly enacted law against electoral bribery to void the results of the consular election.\(^2\) Sulla and Atticus had been convicted of bribery and had to resign, and thus the stage was set for a second consular election in which the Optimates expected to be victorious.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Suetonius, "Dio Cassius in Toga Candida, 26; \(^2\) Procli, 155.

\(^2\) Dio, Fasc. 78, 14.

\(^3\) Sall. Cat. 18, 1; Suetonius, "Dio Cassius," 9, 1; "Dio Cassius in Toga Candida, 26."
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1 Asconius Enarratio Ad Orationem In Toga Candida 80; Cic. Pro Caelio 4. 10.
2 The Lex Calpurnia de ambitu was passed in 67 B.C. Ascon. Tog. Cand. 79.
3 Sall. Cat. 18. 1; Suetonius Divus Iulius 9. 1; Dio xxxvi. 44. 3.
Into this situation strode Catiline, and he, seeing the opportunity of obtaining the goal of every Roman politician, immediately threw his hat into the ring. Catiline had been born into an old and noble patrician family, but the fortunes of the Sergii had fallen to a low estate by the time of his birth. In an era of extravagant display and widespread political corruption, poverty was an unbearable status to a man of Catiline's ambition. So he had become a zealous adherent of Sulla, and had gathered in all the booty he could from the victims of the proscription—enough apparently to carry him through the next decade. He had progressed through the lower magistracies of the cursus honorum in regular order and without marked distinction, attaining the praetorship at the specified age (39) in 68. He then spent the following year as the propraetor of Africa, fleecing the provincials in an effort to fill his pocket book, which had undoubtedly been drained by extravagant living and electoral bribery.

During these years it had not been Catiline's ordinary political career, but rather his infamous private life, that had attracted the most attention. He most certainly was not one of the more virtuous members of his generation, but whether or not he actually committed all the pernicious deeds of which he has been accused is a matter of conjecture. It was alleged that, among his other bloody deeds during

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5 Ascon. Tog. Cand. 75; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2.

the Sullan proscription, Catiline actually slew his own brother, and then pursued Sulla to put the dead man's name on the list of the proscribed to make this wretched fratricide appear legal. He was accused of deflowering his own daughter, of raping a virgin priestess of Vesta, and of being on terms of criminal intimacy with young boys. A rumor that he had done away with his wife and son in order to clear the way for his union with a beautiful courtesan was also spread about during the mid-sixties.

However, not everyone knew of these rumors, and many of those who did probably ignored them, for many of Rome's prominent citizens were guilty of excesses during the Sullan era. It was well known, for instance, that Rome's great financier and censor-elect, Crassus, had become very wealthy by preying upon the misfortunes of the proscribed; and Pompey himself had undoubtedly been too hasty in butchering some of the Marian leaders. Moreover, illicit relationships were becoming more common in the gay and cosmopolitan society of Catiline's Rome, and his own courtesan, Aurelia Orestilla, was certainly not as infamous as a lovely member of the noble Clodian family was soon to become.

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9Sall. Cat. 15. 1; Ascon. Tog. Cand. 82. 10Cic. Cat. II. 2. 1.
11Cic. Cat. I. 6. 1 i; Sall. Cat. 15. 2; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2.
12Sall. Cat. 15. 2; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2.
13The infamous Clodia was immortalized by Rome's most passionate poet, Gaius Velerius Catullus (84-54 B.C.). Clodia's lascivious life and a good selection of the Catullian poems are contained in Edith Hamilton's The Roman Way ("A Mentor Book"; New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1963), pp. 75-86.
Catiline must have felt that his chances for election were rather good. He most certainly was qualified for the office. He had a noble pedigree, was a member of the Senate, and had served at home and abroad in all the requisite positions leading up to the consulship. Furthermore, he possessed many attractive personal attributes. He was endowed with great strength both of mind and body, and was renowned for his ability to endure hunger, cold, and lack of sleep. He was a man of great sensitivity and passion, with a mind that was daring and versatile, and a tongue that was eloquent enough to be fully convincing to those whose support he might solicit. He was well known for his generosity, loyalty, and devotion to friends, and his friends were numbered among all elements of society. He possessed a very adaptable nature and had been able to ingratiate himself with many diverse people. One of his contemporaries described him as a man who was able...

to guide and rule his natural disposition as occasion required, and to bend and turn it this way and that; to be serious with the austere, gay with the lax, grave with the old, amicable with the young, daring with criminals, dissolute with the depraved. Catiline was thus an ideal politician, a man who offered something to everyone. But his bright hopes were soon crushed by a development which he might well have expected--an indictment for extortion.

As was mentioned earlier, Catiline's family was as poor as it was noble; and thus, money--and the debts acquired through lack of it--were to plague Catiline throughout his career. He was an ambitious, prodigal, and luxury loving man. To live in the style in which he desired and to obtain the offices he wanted cost a great deal. By the

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14 Ascon. Tog. Cand. 73. 15 Cic. Cat. II. 5. 9.
time Catiline reached the praetorship, "he had reduced himself to poverty in order to gratify his ambition." So, when he went out to his provincial assignment in Africa, he attempted to extort out of the provincials all the money he could get. Extortion certainly was not the monopoly of the impoverished, for many well-to-do Roman politicians did the same. Yet they would usually have to face an extortion trial when they returned home. This was no great shame though, for it was often easy to bribe the jury with their provincial loot and still have enough left over to live in high style until they bribed their way into another office. Although this method of advancement was not employed by all Roman politicians, it was used by Catiline and many of his extravagant contemporaries.

When Catiline was indicted for extortion in the fall of 66 B.C., the consul in charge of the elections refused to accept his candidacy. There was nothing he could do but accept the situation, and console himself with the thought that he would most likely be able to bribe his way to an acquittal, and then be able to run for the consulship in the following year. But to a man of Catiline's temper and impatience, this was a heavy blow. He undoubtedly was angered at the Optimates for accepting the Africans' plea, and for attacking him right when he felt he had a good chance for the consulship.

The subsequent election resulted in an optimate victory. Lucius

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18 App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2.
19 Cic. Cat. I. 7. 18; Ascon. Tog. Cand. 75, 82.
20 Sall. Cat. 18. 3; Cic. Casel. 4. 10; Ascon. Tog. Cand. 80.
21 Dio xxxvi. 44. 4.
Cotta and Lucius Torquatus—both of the optimates faction—were elected to replace the ousted Populares, Sulla and Autronius. Sulla acceded to the decision of the courts, and despondently resigned himself to the sad fate of giving up the consulship to which he had been elected. But Autronius, like Catiline, was not so amenable to defeat. This blow stung him to the core and made him wish for revenge.

An opportunity for such action presented itself in the person of Gnaeus Piso, whom Sallust described as "a young noble...of the utmost recklessness, poor, and given to intrigue, who was being goaded on by need of funds and an evil character to overthrow the government." Piso approached Autronius and Catiline early in December of 66 with a revolutionary design by which they might gain power at Rome and abroad. The fact that Catiline agreed to assume a leading role in this pernicious plot revealed for the first time that he was willing to employ violent and illegal methods in order to gain power—an ominous foreshadowing of the future.

Their plan was to murder the new consuls as the latter were being sworn into office. The deed would take place atop the Capitoline hill on the first of January, 65. In the resulting confusion, Catiline and Autronius would seize the consular fasces, take power and decree that Piso be dispatched immediately with an army to occupy the two Spanish provinces (probably as a base against Pompey). Apparently, they were to be backed in this coup d'etat by sympathetic members of the nobility and their clients among the urban mob.

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22 Sall. Cat. 18. 2-5. 23 Cic. Sull. 24. 67-68.
24 Sall. Cat. 18. 4.
25 Cic. Mur. 38. 81; Sall. Cat. 18. 5-6; Livy Per. ci. Dio

A rumor about the plot must have leaked out, for it was postponed until the fifth of February. During the interval, the conspirators revised their plan from just an assassination of the consuls to a general massacre of all those senators whom they felt would be a hindrance to their designs.

On the designated day, Catiline was to take a certain position in the comitia and give a signal to the conspirators when their victims were at hand. But Catiline was overly anxious and signaled before a sufficient number of the plotters were in position, with the result that no one made a move and the whole affair came to naught. After two failures, the conspirators were wise enough to put aside their risky scheme before too many people became aware of it, thus jeopardizing their own lives.

This whole fiasco has generally come to be known as the "first Catilinarian conspiracy." But this title is obviously a misnomer because Piso was the leading spirit behind the plot, and thus, he should receive the credit due him, instead of his more renowned accomplice. This conspiracy was only significant as a "dry run" for


It is interesting to note that Suetonius (Iul. 9.) mentions neither Catiline nor Piso in connection with the conspiracy of 66-65. Instead, he assigns the chief roles in the plot to Caesar and Crassus. From the surviving sources, the only basis for such an interpretation would be Asconius' commentary on Cicero's partisan electoral speech, Oratio In Toga Candida, which was delivered in the consular campaign of 61. In chapter 71 of his commentary, Asconius mentions that Cicero accused Crassus of being the author of the conspiracy of 66-65. This seems highly improbable as Crassus had just been elected to one of Rome's more important public offices (censor for 65) and thus had no reason to jeopardize his position by involvement in the harebrained schemes of Piso, Catiline, and Autronius. It probably was not until after the conspiracy failed that he decided that these reckless nobles might be of some use to him.

Cicero's obvious purpose in giving the speech was to blacken the
the bigger things to come in Catiline's career. Yet, another year and a half would pass by before Catiline could step into the center of the Roman political arena. During this period he was to be faced by two trials and a rising pile of debts; but his activities took a back seat to those of Crassus and Caesar for a time.

With the departure of Pompey, the torch of the Populares had fallen into the hands of Crassus. This great financier and former consul was Pompey's chief rival for power within the ranks of the popular front; and while the conquering general was away, Crassus did everything in his power to gain popular support and establish bases of power for himself. One of the means of doing this was to employ his wealth and influence to bring needy but useful politicians under obligation to himself.

The failure of the "Pisan conspiracy" presented an ideal opportunity for enacting this policy. Many of the senators neither knew about nor believed in the rumored conspiracy, but apparently some of those who did were trying to have it investigated. Crassus, knowing that Piso was a deadly enemy of Pompey, and that Catiline might be a useful tool,  

reputations of his opponents and to scare the Optimates into supporting him over Catiline in the consular election. As Crassus was then supporting Catiline, he was just as fair game for Cicero's verbal broadsides as was Catiline himself.

In no existing source but Suetonius is Caesar implicated in the "Pisan conspiracy." Suetonius had a tendency to give Caesar "credit" for more than he deserved, and this is most likely the case in the accusation on his involvement in the conspiracy of 66-65.

29 The optimat consul, Torquatus, refused to believe that a conspiracy had existed. He even testified in Catiline's behalf in the latter's extortion trial of 65 B.C. Cic. Sull. 29. 81.

30 Dio xxxvi. 44. 4.
used his influence to have the affair smoothed over and forgotten, thus
indebting both to himself. He even persuaded the Senate to rid the city
of the dangerous Piso by sending him to Spain as propraetor where he
might thus serve as "a safeguard against Pompey, whose power was then
too formidable." 31 This sounded reasonable to the Optimates, who
feared Piso's rabble-rousing activities in the city, 32 and felt that
Pompey needed a check. Yet in reality, this move was Crassus' first
step in an attempt to build up bases of power which he might use as
levers against Pompey when the latter returned; for he fully expected
the grateful Piso to support him if a clash came.

As was mentioned earlier, Crassus had been elected to the
censorship for 65, and he did not hesitate to employ this office also
for strengthening his position at Pompey's expense—and the Optimates
for that matter as well. Upon assuming office he proposed two measures
which were aimed at winning him strategic support at home and abroad:
(1) the granting of full citizenship to the people living across the
Po river in Cisalpine Gaul; 33 and (2) the annexation of Egypt by his
ally in the aedileship, Julius Caesar. 34 The first proposal was
probably aimed at bringing the Gauls under his patronage and "winning
popularity in an extensive region where recruits for an army were
easily to be found." 35 The proposal to annex Egypt was even more far

31 Sall. Cat. 19. 2; Ascon. Tog. Cand. 83. 32 Dio xxxvi. 44. 5.
33 Dio xxxvii. 9. 3; Marsh, op. cit., p. 162; Scullard, op. cit., p. 110.
34 Plut. Crassus 13. 1; Suet. Iul. 11; Marsh, op. cit., p. 163; Scullard, loc. cit.
35 Marsh, op. cit., p. 162.
reaching, as Crassus apparently hoped to undermine Pompey's support among the Equites by offering Egypt as a new field for their money-making ventures, and to offset his military superiority by stationing Caesar (who it is generally believed was financially indebted to Crassus) with an army threatening Pompey's flank.

If all Crassus' schemes had come to fruition, it is obvious that he would have been in an excellent position to confront Pompey on the latter's return from the East. He would have had popular support at Rome among the Equites and the urban mob, and military support in strategically placed areas of the empire (Spain, Gaul and Egypt). But all his efforts came to naught, for one by one his plans fell through.

Apparently the Spaniards were no more disposed to Piso's activities than the Senate, for they slew the tempestuous Roman shortly after his arrival. It is quite possible that Pompey had a hand in Piso's death, for it was rumored that the murder had been arranged by Pompeian agents in Spain. Thus, Crassus' far western base of support fell first.

Then, behind the vigorous leadership of Quintus Lutatius Catulus, the Optimates blocked Crassus' other measures. Catulus, the powerful and respected former consul (78), was Crassus' associate in the censorship, and thus was able to veto the proposal of transpadane citizenship. Having reached a stalemate on this issue, both resigned the censorship without fulfilling any of their other duties.

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36 Warner, op. cit., p. 163; Scullard, op. cit., p. 111.
37 Sall. Cat. 19. 3; Dio xxxvi. 44. 5.
38 Ascon. Tog. Cand. 83. 39 Dio xxxvii. 9. 3.
then led the aristocratic opposition in the comitia against the proposed Egyptian venture. He and his optimate colleagues certainly wanted to check the power of Pompey, but they wished to do so "without raising up a rival claimant to excessive power," especially a wealthy popularis like Crassus. The Optimates were backed on this issue by "the financial interest [Equites], and their spokesman Cicero," who remained loyal to the interests of Pompey. Thus, a coalition of Rome's landed and moneyed aristocracies prevented the passage of the last and most important of Crassus' open-faced, power-grabbing schemes.

Crassus must have feared that it was too dangerous to continue his antioptimate and anti-Pompeian programs in the open, for he withdrew from the limelight and took up the role of a behind-the-scenes kingmaker. He threw his financial resources behind bold, popular politicians in order to accomplish his designs indirectly. Caesar and Catiline benefited most from Crassus' generosity. The brazen antioptimate actions of the former, and the profligate conduct of the latter could not help but arouse apprehension among Rome's conservative establishment.

Caesar's position among the Populaires was most comfortable during the mid-sixties. He had been one of the few nobles to support the measure for Pompey's eastern command, and thus had earned the great general's friendship. By supporting Crassus' Egyptian scheme he had also earned the great financier's friendship and monetary support.

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\(^{10}\)Plut. Crass. 13. 1; Suet. Iul. 11.

\(^{11}\)Heitland, Short History, p. 377.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., p. 378; Scullard, op. cit., p. 110.

\(^{13}\)Ascon. Tog. Cand. 74. \(^{14}\)Dio xxxvi. 43. 2.
Having reached only the aedileship, he posed no threat to the ambitions of Catiline, or for that matter, to the eminence of Pompey or Crassus. As the nephew of Marius, and a colorful bon vivant besides, he was fast gaining a following among the urban mob. As he was still several years away from a consulship, he perceived that the wisest policy for himself during these years would be to work on strengthening his popularity with the urban populace, to undermine the position of his natural enemies, the Optimates, and to play a helpful role to the "big time" men of the popular ranks.

In conformity with these objectives, he made himself a great favorite among the city populace by outdoing all his predecessors in the aedileship with the magnificent public shows he staged. Gladiatorial combats, theatrical performances, processions and public banquets had never before been presented on such a lavish scale. In so doing, Caesar incurred heavy debts, but he could expect aid from "Crassus, the richest of the Romans, who had need of Caesar's vigour and fire for his political campaign against Pompey." Being the heir of Marius and popular with the urban mob, Caesar was most useful to Crassus, especially in his attacks on the Optimates. Caesar retaliated against the oligarchy for defeating the Egyptian scheme by "restoring the trophies commemorating the victories of Gaius Marius over Iugurtha and over the Cimбри and Teutoni, which Sulla had long since demolished." This action was a direct attack on optimate

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Plut. Caesar 5. 5; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 1; Dio xxxvii. 8. 1.
App. BCiv. ii. 1. 1.
Suet. Iul. 11; Vell. Pat. ii. 43. 4.
prestige, for Marius had been one of the greatest of the early Populares, and his memory was revered by the common man.

Caesar's activities greatly disturbed the optimate leadership, and they took measures to oppose him. They sponsored and passed a bill "limiting the number of gladiators which anyone was allowed to keep in the city," thus checking the extravagance of Caesar's shows. Catulus publicly rebuked Caesar in the Senate for restoring the Marian trophies, but the populace had received this act of Caesar so favorably that the oligarchy did not dare remove them.  

In the year following his aedileship (61 B.C.), Caesar further attempted to humiliate the optimate faction by indicting many of them for murders committed during the Sullan proscription. Serving as judge (āvēx quaeestionis) at these trials he convicted and brought to punishment many of the accused.  

During these years (66-64 B.C.) Caesar was in a position to do no more than nip at the heels of the optimate faction. He was a long way off from the consulship. Pompey was far away, and the open activities of Crassus had been stifled by the resurgent optimate faction. There was one other leader with a popular following, though, whose chances for an upcoming consulship were excellent—Lucius Catiline. It was hard to tell on just what side of the political fence he stood. He was a member of the patriciate and senatorial nobility, and had begun his career as one of Sulla's strongest supporters. Yet, he had also revealed a bold and reckless spirit, akin to the Populares, by joining

49 Suet. Iul. 10. 2.  
50 Plut. Caes. 6. 4.  
51 Suet. Iul. 11; Dio xxxvii. 10. 2-3.
the "Pisan conspiracy." Nevertheless, because only a few men were aware of the plot, and it had been hushed up. Catiline came out of the episode nearly unblemished.

He had to face an extortion trial in the following year (65), and this prevented him from seeking the consulship for one more year. During this period his ambition for power grew ever more impatient, but he was able to gather support from many quarters. The powerful and the poor, men and women alike, courted his favor. His home became a leading social spot, a favorite "watering hole" for Rome's slick young men, to whom Catiline was unsparing in his generosity. The amusements, banquets, amours, and money he extravagantly supplied to his widening circle of friends and followers was well known throughout the city. He numbered among his associates some of Rome's noblest men, yet he also parleyed with many of questionable virtue.

Catiline was becoming the man of the hour, the man to whom the consulship beckoned with open arms. So, when his extortion trial came up in 65, he had no trouble gaining an acquittal. The best men stepped forward to defend him. Even the consul, Torquatus, whom it was rumored Catiline had conspired to kill, came to his defense. Marcus Cicero, Rome's leading lawyer, eagerly offered his services. Cicero was a homo novus of the equestrian stock who wanted to run for the

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52 App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2.
53 Plut. Cic. 10. 3; Cic. Cael. 6. 13; Ben Jonson Catiline: His Conspiracy I. 170-180.
56 Cic. Sull. 29. 81.
He hoped to earn Catiline's favor so that the latter might canvass with him for the consulship and thus better his chances. But Catiline didn't use Cicero's services; he was so sure of victory he probably did not feel that there was a need for "the lodger's" help.

Catiline was guilty of extortion and it must have cost a good deal of money to obtain his acquittal. This expense and the pile of debts he was fast acquiring from extravagant living and lavish outlays to his supporters were reducing him to poverty. He had another year to go before he could stand for the consulship (summer of 64), and needed money to maintain his present modus vivendi.

This situation presented an ideal opportunity to Crassus. As was mentioned earlier, Catiline was already indebted to Crassus for smoothing things over after the first conspiracy, and now Crassus probably felt inclined to strengthen that indebtedness with more substantial support. To have a bold, reckless, and popular politician like Catiline in his camp would be most useful, for Catiline seemed to fear neither the Optimates nor Pompey. Crassus "was willing to see anyone's influence grow in opposition to the power of his rival [Pompey]," especially if that anyone was heavily under obligation to himself, as Catiline would be. Caesar, recognizing that Catiline was on the threshold of power, also threw his support behind him.

57 App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2; Ascon. Tog. Cand. 73.
58 Cic. Epistulae Ad Atticum i. 2.
59 Because Cicero was a native of Arpinum and not Rome, Catiline derisively referred to him as inquilinus, "the lodger"--a man occupying a home not his own. App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2.
60 App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2. 61 Sall. Cat. 17. 7.
Thus, Catiline was able to continue in his prodigal ways while Crassus and Caesar attempted to bring him under their influence, succoring him with money and favoritism. During the proscription trials of 64, Caesar demonstrated his support by acquitting Catiline, who was certainly just as guilty as the rest of the accused.

So, as the campaign of 64 neared, the prospects for the popular front and their new standard-bearer appeared encouraging. But on Rome's political horizon the star of Marcus Tullius Cicero was rising—a man who was to come into direct conflict with the aims of Catiline and company.


63 Dio xxxvii. 10. 2-3; Ascon. Tog. Cand. 75, 78, 80, 81.
IV. CICERO AND THE CONSERVATIVE COALITION

Marcus Tullius Cicero, Rome's golden-tongued orator, also intended to run for the consulship in the summer of 64, and was to emerge as Catiline's chief competitor during the final stages of the campaign. Cicero had actually sought Catiline's favor during the latter's extortion trial by offering his services as counsel. Yet, he had not served in this position, and it is still uncertain whether Catiline had rebuffed him, or whether he had withdrawn the offer on his own account. In either case, an enmity arose between them during the ensuing year, and first came out into the open during the summer of 64.

Cicero, who had been born into a family of the Italian gentry with only an equestrian ranking, lacked the noble pedigree of Catiline. Yet by the mid-sixties he had risen to a position of respect and influence through his success in the courts, and the upright behavior of his public and private life.

He had begun his public career at about the same time as Catiline. But as he was neither a member of an aristocratic family, nor inclined to the arts of war, he had felt that his best opportunity for advancement was through the law courts. There he could put to use the eloquent tongue and learned vocabulary he had acquired as a young man while studying under the finest rhetoricians of the day. He had

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1 Plut. Cic. 11. 2; Ascon. Tog. Cand. 73.
2 Plut. Cic. 2-4.
chosen the right field for his endeavors, as the convincing eloquence, pleasant jesting, and biting invective of his court speeches made him one of the most popular lawyers in the decade after Sulla. When he defeated the renowned advocate Hortensius in the Verrine trial (70 B.C.), he became the acknowledged leader of the Roman bar.

During these years Cicero was progressing gradually through the offices of the *cursus honorum*, hoping ultimately to obtain the consulship and raise the status of his family name. He served as quaestor for Sicily in 75, as aedile in 70 and praetor in 66 at Rome. While holding these public positions he gained a reputation for fairness and integrity. He lived in a generous yet modest manner, and associated with the outstanding literati of the day. His reputation and influence were growing throughout Italy, and many important men—Pompey among them—considered his friendship a valuable asset. In respect to his political sympathies, Cicero had from the beginning of his career gained more fame as a supporter of the *Populares* than of the *Optimates*. In fact, he had first gained public attention by defending a man under indictment by Sulla himself. His subsequent prosecution of Verres, the optimate governor of Sicily—a trial which indirectly resulted in the Senate losing majority control of the juries to the financial class (*Equites* and *Tribuni Aerarii*)—certainly had not endeared him to the

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3 Plut. Cic. 5. 3  
4 Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 116; Plut. Cic. 7. 3.  
5 Plut. Cic. 6. 1 - 9. 1  
6 Plut. Cic. 8. 4.  
7 This was the trial of Roscius. Plut. Cic. 3. 3-4.  
8 Cic. In Verrem; Plut. Cic. 7. 3 - 8. 1.  
9 Plut. Pomp. 22. 3; Scullard, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
optimate faction; nor had his eloquent support of the popular measure which transferred the Mithridatic command from the optimate general Lucullus to the popular champion Pompey.10

But Cicero was far from being a radical popularis. On the contrary, he was conservative by nature and devoted to republican institutions, as his De Republica was later to reveal. He had sought popular support on his journey up the cursus honorum because, as a "new man," he could hardly expect the exclusive optimate faction to back him. In supporting Pompey's interests, he in turn looked for electoral support from the general's veterans and followers among the Roman populace. These elements, together with his support among his own equestrian friends in the Italian towns, would make him a formidable candidate for the higher offices.11

Cicero, as any ambitious Roman politician, had always had his sights set on the consulship. To obtain this office, he knew that he would also need some support from the noble ranks who controlled the votes of the first class in the Centuriate Assembly. Therefore, he had always endeavored to leave the door open for optimate support by tempering those attacks which he made upon their interests. For instance, when he was urging that Pompey replace Lucullus in the Mithridatic command, he was most careful to praise generously the abilities of the optimate commander.12 He also had made his services as advocate most available to the Optimates because he realized that

10Cic. Pro Lege Manilia; Dio xxxvi. 43. 2.

11Taylor, op. cit., pp. 58 and 64; Plut. Cic. 7. 2-3.

12Cic. Pro Lege Manilia passim.
his "eloquence as a pleader was...a compensation for the newness of his name."  

Cicero's strategy for winning the consular election was apparently to establish a coalition of support from the conservative elements of the Roman electorate: the Optimates, the Equites, and the somewhat conservative, Pompeian wing of the popular front. He had risen from the ranks of the Equites, and already had an extensive following with them. He deserved the support of the Pompeian group, as he had been most helpful to them. The question was: could he overcome the optimate prejudice against homines novi, and obtain their commendation for his candidacy?

Cicero's chances of achieving this adroit political feat rose in the spring of 64 as Catiline's activities, associates, and statements appeared ever more menacing to the optimate clique; and Cicero was more than willing to do his part in convincing the Optimates of Catiline's perversity.

Catiline certainly was not immune to condemnation, for by optimate standards the quality of his associates and the nature of his statements and activities had definitely degenerated in the months prior to the election. He still numbered among his friends some of the better class of Roman citizens, but he was associating more frequently with those individuals for whom no other term but depraved seems applicable. He seemed to attract and enjoy the company of "criminals and reprobates of every kind." Wantons, gluttons, gamesters, and

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profligates of every class flocked to his side and cast off their cares in the extravagant orgies he was providing. But a life of this kind could only blunt Catiline's physical and mental powers, leading to carless statements and reckless actions. Cicero remarked that "he was exhausting in lust and wantonness the forces that make for industry and assist virtue."16

His profligate activities certainly could not be expected to inspire the Optimates with confidence in his stability to handle the consulship. Nor could the rumors about his reckless statements on debt cancellation, proscription of the rich, and other harebrained ideas lead to enthusiastic support for his candidacy by Rome's conservative nobility.17

Catiline was becoming persona non grata to many of the Optimates, but was so certain of victory from the support he had, that he was oblivious to the loss of optimate backing. By the time of the election, he was openly playing the role of a radical popularis and seeking support from the popular faction of Crassus, discontented, debtor nobles like himself, and debtor farmers throughout Italy—especially the profligate veterans of Sulla in Etruria.18 Having as a running mate the only other strong contender in the campaign, Gaius Antonius, a disreputable noble like himself,19 he was quite confident of success.20 He undoubtedly looked with contempt upon the "new man's"

16Cic. Cat. II. 5. 9; Heitland, The Roman Republic III, 78.
17Sall. Cat. 21. 2-3. 18Sall. Cat. 16. 4.
19Sall. Cat. 21. 2-3; Plut. Cic. 11; Ascon. Tog. Cand. 73-74.
20App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2; Plut. Caes. ii. 1.
chances, expecting that the Optimates would reject him and split their
votes between the four other weak but acceptable noble candidates:
Publius Sulpicius Galba, Lucius Cassius Longinus, Quintus Cornificius,
and Caius Licinius Sacerdos. This attitude was a grave error though,
because Cicero was a consummate campaigner, and his convincing tongue
could be as malicious as it was eloquent.

Cicero was a master at the art of the personal campaign, and had been
laying the foundation for his electoral support for many years. He had a
wonderful facility for remembering salient facts about his many acquaintances. He had accustomed himself to remember the names
of Rome's notable citizens, the quarter of the city in which they
dwelt, where they owned country houses, and who their friends and
neighbors were. He owned several country houses himself, and often travelled throughout the peninsula, visiting friends, and
establishing contacts with municipal leaders whose votes might be most
useful in a consular election.

Titus Pomponius Atticus, one of Rome's wealthiest and most influential equestrians, was Cicero's dear friend and confidant. He
could certainly be counted on to use his influence with the Roman
nobility and Pompey's followers in behalf of Cicero's candidacy.

Cicero's own influence among the equestrian and senatorial ranks was becoming ever stronger because of his position as Rome's leading

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21 Ascon. Tog. Cand. 73; Cic. Att. i. 1.
22 Plut. Cic. 7. 2.
23 Cic. Att. i. 4; Plut. Cic. 8. 2.
24 Cornelius Nepos De Historiciis Latinis: Atticus 1-6; Cic. Att. i. 1-2.
advocate. He employed his oratorical talents in the courts mainly for the defense of important nobles. In this way, he gained many influential friends whose support was essential in a consular election. In a letter to Atticus during the campaign, he explained why he felt it would be more beneficial to his chances for election to defend one noble above another. One historian has even suggested that Cicero withdrew his offer to defend Catiline in the extortion trial of late 65 because he had perceived that the Optimates were becoming disillusioned with Catiline's profligate activities, and thus, an association with Catiline was of no value for obtaining optimate support. In any case, Cicero knew whose support he needed, and he did everything in his power to obtain it.

Thus, even though Cicero was a homo novus, and the Optimates had not allowed one of these to obtain the consulship in thirty years, he must have seemed a much more agreeable candidate to them than the reckless noble Catiline who was singing the radical tune of the Populares.

The audacious actions and lavish bribery of Catiline and Antonius during the final days of the campaign were open and flagitious violations of the Culpurnian law, and seriously disquieted the senatorial leadership. The latter attempted to strengthen the bribery law by initiating a measure which would establish more severe penalties for electoral abuses. But a pawn of the popular front, the tribune Quintus Mucius Orestinus, interceded with his veto and quashed the measure. This

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27Ibid., p. 3. 28Ascon. Tog. Cand. 74.
brazenly impudent action on the part of the radical Populares set the stage for the most important incident of the campaign—truly the turning point of the election.

As if the shameless veto of Mucius was not enough to convince wavering Optimates to desert the prodigal patrician, Cicero arose in the Senate fired with the intent of delivering a slashing invective which would—his celebrated Oratio In Toga Candida. In essence, this Speech In The White Toga was a fierce attack upon Catiline's spotted public career, and a biting expose of his scandalous private life. Cicero vividly painted a sanguinary picture of a young Catiline viciously slitting the throats of the helpless victims of the Sullan proscription, and triumphantly toting their severed, bloody, and still-throbbing skulls through the streets of Rome.\(^\text{29}\) Cicero upbraided him for harassing and despoiling the African provincials, and then profaning and belittling the Roman courts with an acquittal gained through bribery.\(^\text{30}\) He openly corroborated the rumor that Catiline, along with Piso and others, had planned to slaughter the senatorial Optimates in order to grab power for themselves.\(^\text{31}\)

Turning to Catiline's private life, Cicero accused him of violating the sacred halls of the Vestal Virgins, of committing adultery, and of living in an incestuous relation with his own daughter.\(^\text{32}\) He thus portrayed Catiline as a paragon of violence and evil whose very presence in the consulship would contaminate the dignity of that office.

\[^{29}\text{Ibid.}, 74, 75, 78, 80.\]  
\[^{30}\text{Ibid.}, 75-77, 80, 82.\]  
\[^{31}\text{Ibid.}, 82-83.\]  
\[^{32}\text{Ibid.}, 82.\]
Cicero inveighed not only against Catiline, but against his other detractors as well. He censured Antonius for despoiling the Greeks, squandering his patrimony, and for being ungrateful to himself for aiding him in a former election. He accused Quintus Mucius (the interceding tribune) of having been bribed to hinder the laws and obstruct the Senate of Rome. He hinted that Crassus and Caesar were supplying Catiline, Antonius, and their followers with lavish funds for bribing the electorate. He even went so far as to accuse Crassus of being the instigator of the first conspiracy, thus making Catiline appear as a brutish tool under the influence of a much more dangerous, wealthy, and clever popularis.

This speech had a devastating effect upon the Optimates. They may not have believed everything that Cicero had said, but he had revealed so much, and in such a convincing manner, that there was no doubt to whom the majority of their support would now go. Catiline responded abusively, belittling Cicero as an out-of-town upstart, but to no avail. The tide of opinion had been turned; the final blow to his chances of election had been sharply and eloquently struck by Cicero's tongue.

Cicero, although only an equestrian, was the safest and most obvious choice for the Optimates to back. Their support, combined with his backing from the Equites and the Pompeian Populares, gave him the coalition of votes he needed to win.

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33 Ibid., 75, 76, 78, 83.
34 Ibid., 79.
35 Ibid., 74.
36 Ibid., 84.
37 Ibid., 84; Sall. Cat. 24. 1; App. B Civ. ii. 1. 2.
When polling day came, the votes of Cicero's conservative coalition victoriously lifted him into the coveted consulship. As the four other candidates had apparently withdrawn from the fiery race, the second spot would have to be filled by either Catiline or Antonius—the lesser of two evils. Catiline had just been branded as a dangerous revolutionary, a vile profligate, and a man with a penchant for homicide. Beside this description, his patrician lineage was of little account. Antonius, while a rather degenerate fellow, was recognized as the type of "man who, of himself, would probably not take the lead either for good or for bad, but would add strength to another who took the lead." Thus, Antonius seemed safer to the electorate, and was given the nod over Catiline for the other consulship.

Cicero had achieved the position to which every Roman politician aspired. He was now consul of Rome, the supreme magistrate of the Republic. Catiline, on the other hand, had been shut out of the office which he felt was his by birth right. He had been publicly slandered, and then beaten at the polls by the man to whom he derisively referred as "the lodger." This mere equestrian had been the first homo novus in thirty years to obtain the consulship; and at his expense, no less!

Catiline had gone deeply into debt trying to obtain office. He had counted on winning the consulship and "succeeding to a province where he might gather a golden harvest and come home to live in splendor, like Lucullus." But he had failed. He was defeated, disgraced, and

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38 Plut. Cic. 11. 2.
40 Froude, op. cit., p. 144.
more deeply in debt than ever before. He was down, but not yet counted out. He intended to obtain power one way or another, and that malicious-tongued equestrian was not going to stop him. If he could get to power legally, so much the better; if not, he would take it by force.

Thus, during the following year he worked intensively to build up a strong following among all the discontented elements of Italian society. His primary goal would be to win the consular election in the following summer. If he failed in this endeavor, he would have the support needed to take power by force. But for the time being, his intrigues were to take a back seat to the machinations of Crassus, Caesar, and their agents in the popular front.

After the election, Crassus apparently withdrew his support from Catiline. The latter was a loser and had not proved to be as amenable to direction as the great financier had hoped. Such radical utterances as "debt cancellation" and "proscription of the rich" certainly could not be condoned by one of Rome's wealthiest creditors.

Crassus was still hoping to find some way to buttress his position before Pompey returned victoriously at the head of a loyal army. He remembered only too vividly how Sulla had returned to proscribe his political enemies. If Pompey were to repeat the performance of his predecessor, Crassus knew that his own name would most probably head the list. After all, had he not been Pompey's bitter rival since

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1App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2; Dio xxxvii. 10. 4; Sall. Cat. 24.

2Sall. Cat. 26. 1; Dio xxxvii. 29, 1; J. F. C. Fuller, Julius Caesar: Man, Soldier, Tyrant (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1965), pp. 62-63.

3Sall. Cat. 21. 2; Warner, op. cit., pp. 171 and 174; Marsh, op. cit., p. 167.
Sullan days? Was not his wealth an ideal target for a proscription?

Thus, he needed, and had been trying to gain, enough power and support to assure himself of a strong bargaining position by the time Pompey returned. He knew that one of Pompey's first concerns would be land for his veterans. Therefore, he concocted a scheme to get control of all available land in Italy. He could not expect to get his plan introduced by the consular office, as Cicero was bound to veto any radical measure which Antonius might try to initiate. Thus, he turned to the popular front's trusty weapon—the tribunate.

In December of 64, one of the newly elected tribunes (these officials took office a month before the consuls), Publius Servilius Rullus, was induced to propose an agrarian bill of unprecedented scope. Its nominal purpose was to provide land in Italy and the provinces for the pauper mob of Rome. However, the proposed means of carrying out this exemplary project reveal that concern for the poor was not the only motive behind it.

Most of the land planned for distribution was apparently to be Italian, but very little ager publicus was left on the peninsula. It would thus be necessary to raise a large sum of money with which the purchase of unoccupied land could be carried out. A special ten-man commission was to be set up to procure the needed funds, and to purchase and distribute the land. It was the powers which were to be granted to the commission which made the measure so potent. The commission was empowered to sell all public lands at home and abroad, and to take

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1^4Marsh, op. cit., pp. 165-66. 1^5Dio xxxvii. 25. 4

1^6Heitland, The Roman Republic, III, 86-87.
money from the public treasury in order to acquire the needed funds. It could establish colonies in Italy or the provinces as it saw fit, and it could levy and maintain as many soldiers as were needed to carry out and enforce its decisions.\footnote{\textit{Plut. Cic.} 12. 1-2.}

By the terms of this measure, the commission would have control over the newly-conquered lands of Pompey as well as the revenue which he would bring back for the treasury. Conceivably, it could also use its \textit{imperium} to raise an army and occupy Egypt, which had been bequeathed to Rome in the will of a late pharaoh.\footnote{\textit{Cic. De Leg. Agraria} I. 1-6; II. 7-27; \textit{Marsh, op. cit.}, pp. 163 and 166.}

By controlling this commission, Crassus would have an army, the treasury, the public land, and possibly even a new province at his command when Pompey returned. He would be in an excellent bargaining position, and Pompey would have no chance of setting up a dictatorship and proscribing his enemies, short of civil war.

The bill had a good chance for passage, as land distribution was always popular with the city rabble who were predominant in the \textit{Comitia Tributa}.\footnote{Taylor, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 75.} Antonius expected to be on the commission (no doubt with the intention of fattening his pocketbook), and was thus planning to give consular support to the measure when he assumed office on January 1, 63 B.C.\footnote{\textit{Plut. Cic.} 12. 3.}

To Cicero and the interests he represented, the Rullan land bill was anathema. As it was a direct attack upon the interests of Pompey,\footnote{\textit{Cic. Leg. Agr.} II. 18. 50.}
both the equestrians and the Pompeian Populares were vehemently opposed to it. It was also an attack upon the Optimates, as it would subvert the senatorial prerogatives in finance and foreign affairs. The Optimates were not favorably disposed to the increasing power of Pompey, but, on the other hand, they certainly did not wish to see rival Populares subvert the republican constitution even more while the general was away. Such a development could quite possibly lead to a civil war when Pompey returned, resulting in the establishment of a dictatorship and further proscriptions. Optimate leaders, such as Catulus, Lucullus, and Cato, were, of course, opposed to such a prospect. They wished to strengthen the position of the Senate while Pompey was away, and thus, would resist any radical designs which might undermine senatorial power.

Cicero, as a firm believer in republican institutions, was also opposed to the designs of the radical Populares. Although he now probably considered himself one of the "best men," he was also the spokesman for the Equites and Pompey's interests. So, at the same time that he did not wish to see the Senate's power diminished, neither did he wish to see equestrian and Pompeian interests slighted by an optimate controlled Senate. He had been elected by a combination of support from all three of these elements, and was expected to champion the interests of each. He therefore wished to mold them into a common front against dangerous revolutionaries like Crassus, Caesar, and Catiline. He successfully carried off this feat, bringing together what he called a coniunctio bonorum omnium\(^5\) which enabled him to defeat the radical measures and revolutionary designs of his opponents.

\(^5\)"A union of all good men": Cic. Att. 1. 16.
Cicero's first struggle was against the Rullan land bill; but even before he entered office, he struck a crippling blow to the popular front. Cicero was a good judge of character, and he knew that his fellow consul's chief interest was self-interest, and that his chief need was money to pay off his debts. As Cicero had drawn a rich provincial assignment (Macedonia), and Antonius a poor one (Gaul), he had a tool for bargaining which he used most wisely. He offered to trade assignments with Antonius if the latter would agree to support him "in defense of their country," which, in essence, meant following whatever line of policy Cicero should take.

Antonius, who was known to be a supporter not only of the Rullan measure, but also of the muddled schemes of Catiline, was wise enough to see that a sure thing was better than a hazardous hope. Therefore, he switched his allegiance from the radical Populares to the conservative coalition of Cicero.

When Cicero took office on January 1, 63 B.C., he was backed by Antonius in opposition to the land bill. He strongly attacked the measure before the Senate and in the Forum, revealing the true intents and purposes of its promoters. By some rather clever oratory, he performed the difficult feat of setting the common people against the bill even though it had been professedly brought forward in their interest. He compared the dreary toil of the farm to the exciting life

53 Plut. Cic. 12. 4. 54 Ibid., 12. 3-4.
56 Cicero gave four speeches De Lege Agraria, of which three have survived; Plut. Cic. 12. 5; Dio xxxvii. 26. 1.
of the city with its shows, political contests, corn doles, et cetera, and won them over to his position.\textsuperscript{57} The news that Pompey had returned from the Caucasus to Syria must also have added strength to Cicero's arguments against the measure.\textsuperscript{58} Having lost all basis of popular support, and with Pompey's shadow stretching closer to Italy, Rullus and Crassus withdrew the measure even before a vote could be taken in the \textit{comitia}.\textsuperscript{59}

As Crassus is identified with no further anti-Pompeian or even anti-optimate action in the following year, it has been suggested that he "resigned himself to wait quietly and see what course his rival would take."\textsuperscript{60} He had failed in all his efforts over the past two years to gain a strong position through radical means. He thus discontinued these activities and took on the demeanor of a "solid citizen." Many nobles of both optimate and popular sympathies were indebted to him for loans.\textsuperscript{61} He apparently hoped that these friendships, and his cessation from radical activities would shield him from the enmity of Pompey. It was in this position of "solid citizen" that he was to perform an invaluable service for Cicero in the latter's upcoming struggle with Catiline.

Though Crassus disentangled himself from antiestablishment legislation, he most probably did not discontinue his support of

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\item \textsuperscript{57}Cic. Leg. Agr. II. 27; Heitland, \textit{The Roman Republic}, III, pp. 86-87.
\item \textsuperscript{58}Dio xxxvii. 7a, 11. 1; Plut. Pomp. 39. 2; Marsh, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 166.
\item \textsuperscript{59}Dio xxxvii. 26. 1; Plut. Cic. 12. 5.
\item \textsuperscript{60}Marsh, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 167. \textsuperscript{61}Ibid., pp. 158-159.
\end{itemize}
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Julius Caesar. The latter was definitely a valuable friend to have, for he was popular with the urban mob and was on good terms with Pompey. Caesar may have been connected with the Rullan measure in regard to the annexation of Egypt; but with Pompey now in a position to march swiftly upon Egypt, or to sail promptly to Italy, his further activities were strictly antioptimate. In this way he could increase his own stature at optimate expense, but without running the risk of alienating Pompey.

Caesar planned to run for the praetorship in the summer election, and thus launched an antioptimate campaign especially intended to strengthen his support among the old Marian supporters. There were three tribunitial proposals with which he may have been connected: one would have lifted the ban on holding public office from the sons of those proscribed by Sulla; another would have reinstated Autronius and Sulla—the consuls-elect ousted for bribery in 66—in the Senate and granted them the right of seeking office again; and a third would have effected a remission or reduction of debts. However, Cicero, fresh from victory over the Rullan land bill, was able to lead the conservative coalition to a quick victory over these unsettling proposals.

Caesar was assuredly incensed at the defeat of these measures; but probably even more disturbed at the strength which the Optimates were gaining behind the eloquence of Cicero. The latter's influence

63Taylor, op. cit., p. 122; Heitland, The Roman Republic, III, p. 83; Scullard, op. cit., p. 112; Dio xxxvii. 25. 3-4, xliiv. 47. 4; Plut. Cic. 12. 1.
64Dio xxxvii. 26. 1; Plut. Cic. 12. 5.
arranged for the tribune Titus Labienus to indict Gaius Rabirius for treason. The latter was an elderly gentleman of the optimat faction who had taken part in the murder of Lucius Saturninus some thirty years before under the "ultimate decree." Labienus rushed a bill through the Comitia Tributa which set up an archaic-type court composed of two judges who were to investigate and pass sentence upon the defendant. It was arranged that Julius Caesar and his clansman, Lucius, be named judges.

They carried out the investigation and trial in such a way that the Senate and its use of the senatus consultum ultimum were presented in a very bad light. Poor old Rabirius, a helpless victim of circumstances, was quickly condemned by the biased judges.

The Senate, and its champion Cicero, could not allow this dangerous challenge to their authority to go uncontested. An appeal to the more conservative assembly, the Comitia Centuriata, was brought forward in behalf of Rabirius. Hortensius and Cicero, Rome's most eloquent pleaders, were his defenders.

Cicero brilliantly defended the legality, necessity, and utility of the senatus consultum ultimum, and tempered the hostility of the people by reminding them that the attack upon the demagogue Saturninus had been led by the great popular leader Marius himself. None the less, as the verdict was in doubt, the optimat praetor, Metellus Celer, ran up to the Janiculum hill and pulled down the military flag which automatically dissolved the comitia before a vote could be taken.

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68 Cic. Rab. Per. 6. 18. 69 Ibid., 2-5, 33-35.
70 Ibid., 26-31. 71 Dio xxxvii. 27. 3.
What the verdict would have been is difficult to foretell, as the sources differ in their appraisal of Rabirius' chances. But the mere fact that Caesar did not press the issue further gave a victory to the Optimates. The sympathy aroused for the helpless old senator and the eloquence of Cicero's defense had successfully neutralized Caesar's attack, and focused attention on the legality and value of the Senate's most potent weapon. Thus, "the position of the Senate as a body was if anything strengthened by the attack." In successfully vindicating the senatus consultum ultimum, Cicero preserved a constitutional instrument which was shortly to be needed, not merely for the protection of senatorial prerogative, but truly for the defense of the very fabric of Roman society.

Caesar also emerged from this trial in a better position than when he had entered upon it. He had presented himself as a noble deeply concerned for the rights of the common man against oppressive action by the oligarchy (specifically in regard to the issue that Roman citizens should not be put to death without a trial). Although the legality and necessity of the "ultimate decree" had been established by Cicero, Caesar had performed the equally important function of warning the Senate not to misuse it.

That Caesar's popularity was not impaired by his participation in the trial is revealed by the fact that he was shortly elected to his first important position—that of pontifex maximus. By obtaining

73 The S.C.U. was one of Cicero's most important weapons in defeating the revolutionary designs of Catiline.
74 Heitland, loc. cit.
75 Suet. Iul. 13; Plut. Caes. 7. 1-3; Dio xxxvii. 37. 1-2.
this sacred office (admittedly with a generous amount of bribery), he
received all the dignity and power to which the chief priest of the
Roman state religion was entitled.\textsuperscript{76}

Caesar was a superb politician and had an uncanny ability to make
the right move at the right time. He was wise enough to see that Cicero's
conservative coalition was now in effective control of Roman politics.
All but one of the measures introduced by popular front tribunes had
been defeated by Cicero's coalition.\textsuperscript{77} Caesar himself had come out of
the Rabirian incident somewhat successful, but certainly second best.
His only success had been in the quasi-political race for the chief
priesthood.

Thus, he decided to temper his activities and cease from making
any more overt attacks upon optimatite interests. He may have done so
in order to disassociate his name from the subversive activities of his
former popular front ally, Catiline. Caesar was now in as strong a
position as he could expect under the circumstances. He was definitely
popular with the urban mob and held the impressive title of pontifex
maximus. There was no reason to jeopardize his position by association
with the revolutionary Catiline. Caesar knew when to pull his punches,
Catiline did not.

As the consular election of 63 neared, Cicero and his forces had
successfully met and overcome the challenges of the popular front. Crassus
had been neutralized, and Caesar at least cooled down for a time. The

\textsuperscript{76}See Taylor, op. cit., pp. 90-97.

\textsuperscript{77}Labienus had carried a measure to democratize the selection of
the pontifex maximus, thus aiding Caesar to gain the position. Dio
loc. cit.
conservative coalition was stronger than ever, and an unaccustomed stability had emerged on the political landscape. But this was only the quiet before the storm, for Catiline was soon to burst upon the scene with some of the most nefarious and revolutionary designs ever conjured by the mind of a Roman citizen.

In the East, Catiline was left as the only popular leader of any consequence ready and willing to combat the resurgent optimates forces. Catiline was the most dangerous populare of all, for he was willing to employ any means in order to obtain the position, power, and wealth he desired.\(^1\)

That Catiline hungered after power so desperately is no surprise. As the spirit of an ancient petulant clan he was inclined by birth and tradition to seek and serve in the Republic's highest magistracies. By natural disposition he was ambitious, avaricious, and aggressive—a man accustomed to taking what he wanted when he wanted, whether it be the virginity of a young maiden, or the heads and fortunes of fellow citizens.

His haughty and pride personality prevented him from retiring gracefully to his estates after he had been defeated in the consul election of 60. The precipitating frustration of that defeat grieved his soul during the following year, and stilled his ravenous desire for power all the more. He felt that his dignity had been wronged, that an unworthy man had been promoted to the position which he himself deserved.\(^2\) He came to loathe the ingratiating who had dared to slander

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1 Tull. cat. 5, 6. \(^\text{This, 35. 3.}\)

2 Tull. Cat. 11, 165. "Catiline. I see what a shadow, as I walked!"
V. CATILINE'S CONSPIRACY

With Crassus and Caesar temporarily out of the way, and Pompey off in the East, Catiline was left as the only popular leader of any consequence ready and willing to combat the resurgent optimate forces. Catiline was the most dangerous popularis of all, for he was willing to employ any means in order to obtain the position, power, and wealth he desired.\(^1\)

That Catiline hankered after power so desperately is no surprise. As the scion of an ancient patrician clan he was inclined by birth and tradition to seek and serve in the Republic's highest magistracies. By natural disposition he was ambitious, avaricious, and aggressive—a man accustomed to taking what he wanted when he wanted, whether it be the virginity of a young maiden, or the heads and fortunes of fellow citizens.

His heritage and basic personality prevented him from retiring gracefully to his estates\(^2\) after he had been defeated in the consular election of 64. The humiliating frustration of that defeat grieved him much during the following year, and whetted his ravenous desire for power all the more. He felt that his dignitas had been wronged, that an unworthy man had been promoted to the position which he himself deserved.\(^3\) He came to loathe the inquilinus who had dared to slander

\(^1\) Sall. Cat. 5. 6. \(^2\) Ibid. 35. 3.

\(^3\) Ibid.; Jonson Cat. II. 165: "Catiline. 'To what a shaddow, am I melted!'"
him in public and defeat him at the polls. Likewise, he came to despise the optimate clique and their prosperous equestrian allies for supporting the acid-tongued homo novus. He was infused with jealous envy of the Optimates, who to him seemed to possess "influence, power, office, and wealth," while he was left with "danger, defeat, prosecutions, and poverty." Catiline was determined to change this situation, and he perceived that the means for doing so were at hand.

Within the radical wing of the popular front there were many nobles like himself who were plagued with debt and inflamed by jealousy of the optimate clique. Indeed, many "men of the highest reputation and spirit had beggared themselves on shows, feasts, and the pursuit of office," only to have their efforts obstructed by the solid phalanx of the boni. These "outs" were as disposed towards change as was Catiline. A contemporary observer remarked that they "would rather see the state embroiled than accept their own exclusion from political power."

As was mentioned in chapter two, the metropolis of Rome had become by the first century a gathering place for lazy, dispossessed, and ruined farmers from rural Italy. This continuing development was increasing the instability of the already chaotic political atmosphere of the capital. In this restless urban mob there were many malcontents who "hated the established order and hankered after innovation."  

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4 Ibid. 20. 8; Florus Epit. ii. 12. 1.  
5 Plut. Cic. 10. 4.  
6 Sall. Cat. 37. 10; Plut. Cic. 10. 1.  
7 Sall. Cat. 37. 3.
There was much discontent spread throughout the country districts as well. The confiscations of Sulla had left many small farmers bitter at the loss of their land. Many of the veteran soldiers who had displaced those farmers had failed to make good, gone into debt, and were "looking back regretfully to the loot which past victories had brought them." They were seemingly ready to join with other debt-ridden farmers (some of whom they had actually displaced) in a revolt against the present regime and its harsh debt laws. The area around Faesulae in Etruria, where most of the Sullan veterans were concentrated, was the most dangerous of all.

In the provinces, many allies and subject peoples were also unhappy. They objected to the oppression and outright robbery carried on by some of the optimate governors, as well as the exorbitant interest rates charged, and the harsh tax-farming methods employed, by the Equites. The powerful Gallic tribe of the Allobroges was especially disconcerted at this time.

These elements of discontent had no chance for redressing their grievances unless they could be brought together in a common front. In this possibility Catiline saw his means to obtain power. He would become the champion of the wretched, the leader of the oppressed; and thus backed, he would overcome Cicero's conservative coalition and rise to the pinnacle of power.

\[8^{8}\text{Ibid. 16. 4.}\]
\[9^{9}\text{Cic. Cat. II. 9. 20; Plut. Cic. 10. 3.}\]
\[10^{10}\text{Sall. Cat. 40. 1; Plut. Cic. 10. 3.}\]
\[11^{11}\text{Dio xxxvii. 10. 4.}\]
Therefore, during the year following his election defeat, Catiline concentrated on strengthening and widening his backing for the upcoming consular campaign. He already had a considerable following among the dissolute and poverty-stricken nobles of the city. Now with Crassus and Caesar unwilling to commit themselves to any dangerous maneuvers, Catiline became the natural rallying point for those radical Populares who through need and/or disposition felt inclined to move against the regime before Pompey's return. Catiline was not the least hesitant in encouraging these malcontents with the promises they wanted to hear.

Catiline's bold, generous, and forceful manner was attractive to the impressionable youth of the city. Dissatisfied with the status quo, many were easily brought under the influence of the fiery revolutionary. Catiline did his utmost to widen this following, believing they would be very useful to his designs.

He also began to firm up his support among the Sullan veterans of Etruria. This restless lot was led by Gaius Manlius, a man "who had served with distinction under Sulla," and was a strong backer of Catiline. The latter raised money on his own credit, or on that of his friends, and sent it to Manlius who had agreed to preach Catiline's cause and bring a strong contingent to Rome during the upcoming consular election.

Catiline's immediate goal was to obtain power through legal means by winning the consular election of 63. If he failed in this endeavor, he probably hoped to gain his ends illegally with the help of his election supporters.

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14 Sall. Cat. 24. 2; Plut. Cic. 14. 2.
During the summer campaign he styled himself as "the general and standard-bearer of the unfortunate," and preached a radical program which was bound to appeal to his discontented supporters. He promised his important backers in a secret meeting that, if he were elected, they could expect "a cancellation of debts, a proscription of the rich, offices, priesthoods, plunder, and all the other spoils that war and the license of victors can offer." His campaign was thus a virtual war on property and the existing regime which controlled it.

Cicero, and the conservative coalition behind him, of course, dreaded the thought of Catiline being elected consul. But they had little in the way of candidates with which to oppose him. Indeed, only three men were running against Catiline, and none of these was particularly outstanding. Servius Sulpicius, like Cicero, was a "new man" of equestrian stock. He too had earned his reputation through

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15 Cic. Mur. 25. 50.

16 Sall. Cat. 21. 2. Sallust incorrectly assigns these remarks to Catiline's campaign of 64. Catiline probably spoke of debt cancellation or reduction in the 64 campaign, but it is doubtful that he was then planning a war against society as this quotation would lead one to believe. These remarks of Catiline were probably made to his intimate supporters at the meeting which Cicero speaks about in Pro Murena 25. 50—a meeting which took place shortly before the 63 election.

Both the ancient sources and modern scholarship disagree with the chronology of Sallust in regard to Catiline's revolutionary designs. S. A. Handford states: "It is possible that Sallust, whose chronology is often confused, has transferred to the year 64 some parts of an election address which really belong to 63, when Catiline was again a candidate." Sallust, Trans. S. A. Handford ("The Penguin Classics"; Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1963), p. 166. F. B. Marsh agrees in stating that "Sallust falsely antedates Catiline's revolutionary program to 64" (op. cit., p. 433). See also Sir Ronald Syme, Sallust (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), pp. 75-77.

17 Cic. Mur. 7.
the courts, but unlike Cicero, he was at a loss as a campaigner and soon alienated the senatorial class as well as the populace.\footnote{Ibid. 21, ff.} Decimus Junius Silanus was not too well known, and had already sustained a defeat two years previously.\footnote{Cic. \textit{Att.} i. 1.} Lucius Licinius Murena had served with distinction under Lucullus in the war against Mithridates,\footnote{Cic. \textit{Mur.} 9. 20.} and had presented lavish games during his praetorship.\footnote{Ibid. 23. 46.} Although there were no consulships in his family's history, he nevertheless seemed to be the strongest of Catiline's opponents among both the oligarchy and the people.

As Catiline was employing a good deal of bribery to insure his victory, Murena also began to increase the extent of his generosity to possible supporters. Sulpicius, though having little chance of being elected, was yet an upright citizen and abhorred the corrupt election practices of his opponents. He therefore demanded that a law against bribery with harsher penalties than those of the Calpurnian law be enacted.\footnote{Ibid. 23. 46.}

Cicero saw in this move a possible means of restraining the flagrant abuses of Catiline. He thus led the move for a new \textit{lex ambitus} himself, and quickly managed to get one passed with a provision "that banishment for ten years should be added...to the penalties established for bribery."\footnote{Ibid. 23. 46.} He apparently expected that the mere threat of another prosecution would preclude any further bribery on Catiline's part.

Cicero certainly needed something to slow down Catiline's "bandwagon," for the radical candidate had gathered enough discontents in Rome to make his election seem quite probable. He was campaigning

\footnote{Ibid. 21, ff.} \footnote{Cic. \textit{Att.} i. 1.} \footnote{Cic. \textit{Mur.} 9. 20.} \footnote{Ibid. 18. 37; 19. 38.} \footnote{Ibid. 23. 46.} \footnote{Ibid. 23. 46.} \footnote{Ibid. 23. 46.} \footnote{Ibid. 23. 46.} \footnote{Dio xxxvii. 29. 1.}
with the utmost confidence, and was usually beheld... boldly and happy, accompanied by a crowd of youths, protected by informers and assassins,... and surrounded by an army of settlers from Arretium and Faesulae—a mob with here and there men of a very different type afflicted by the disaster of Sulla's regime. His countenance was so full of madness, his eyes of crime, his speech of arrogance, that it seemed as if he had already hunted out the consulship and locked it up in his home.  

Sulpicius threatened Catiline with a prosecution, but to little avail; then when Marcus Porcius Cato announced in the Senate that he was also planning to bring Catiline to trial for election abuses, the latter brazenly retorted "that if his plans were set afire he would extinguish the conflagration, not with water, but with a general ruin."  

A remark such as this was enough to shake up the Optimates and their allies, but Sulpicius really threw grease onto the flames when he indicated that he intended to prosecute Murena. This was an absurd move on Sulpicius' part, for by trying to vilify the man who was not only his, but also Catiline's, strongest opponent, he outraged the forces of the conservative coalition. He thus lost what little chances of election he might have had.  

As Cicero was backing Silanus and Murena, he felt it necessary to offset the inopportune action of Sulpicius. Information soon came to him which made this feeling all the more urgent.  

Catiline knew that Cicero had proposed the lex ambitus with the purpose of obstructing his campaign. He was by now fed up with Cicero's obstructions, and thus decided that the time had come to get rid of the bothersome consul. In a meeting with his close supporters, he laid out

26 Ibid. 23. 24.
plans to stage a riot at the polls (on the Campus Martius), during which Cicero and some of his other leading detractors were to be slain.  

Fortunately for Cicero, news of this heinous plan reached him before polling day came. Drastic action was needed as the election was to be held the next day. Cicero called the Senate and had it vote to postpone the election so that Catiline's plans could be discussed.

On the following day the senators questioned Catiline about his secret promises and dangerous designs. Instead of defending or excusing himself, he shocked the Senate with this audacious reply:

'What dreadful thing am I doing, when there are two bodies in the state, one frail with a weak head, and the other sturdy but without a head, if I myself become a head for the latter?'

He was obviously referring to the "haves" and "have nots" of Roman society—Cicero's conservative coalition, and his own party of poor dissidents. Having thus spoken, he strode triumphantly out of the Senate house, leaving behind him the groans of concerned Optimates.

Catiline's performance certainly confirmed the intention among the majority of the senators to vote against him. Nevertheless, Cicero was unable to get a senatus consultum ultimum passed as he wished. Apparently the senators believed that Cicero's charge about Catiline's intended murders was just another of the consul's dramatic "last minute" appeals to turn the tide of opinion (such as he had done the year before.

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27Dio xxxvii. 29. 2; Plut. Cic. 14. 2.

28Dio loc. cit.


with the Oratio In Toga Candida). Caesar's trial of Rabirius had made the senators hesitant to employ the "ultimate decree" except in manifest cases of national emergency. So, the Senate, figuring that Cicero was just dramatically venting some of the enmity he felt toward Catiline, let the matter pass without action.31

The inaction of the Senate was, of course, very disquieting to Cicero. His own life was in danger, and the city mob seemed favorably disposed to Catiline's candidacy. Something had to be done to insure his own protection and to defeat Catiline's election bid. If the Senate would not act as a body, he would have to take action on his own account.

Cicero therefore organized a strong bodyguard of friends and attendants who were to accompany him to the Campus Martius for the election.32 This action would protect his own person, but it might not swing the electorate against Catiline. What Cicero needed was a dramatic incident that would arouse the populace against his enemy. One thing that can be said for Cicero is that he was a master showman. He knew how to handle the populace as few politicians did. He thus carried out the following maneuvers. Men were sent about the city spreading rumors that the life of the consul was being threatened by Catiline and his supporters. The city mob undoubtedly liked the program of the radical Catiline, and assuredly reveled in his brassy manner and impudent flaunting of the Optimates. But they also respected the "new man" who had made it to the consulship through his own merits, and was the spokesman for their popular hero, Pompey. Thus, the rumors were somewhat

31 Dio xxxvii. 29. 2-3; Cic. Mur. 25. 51.
32 Cic. Cat. I. 5. 11; Cic. Mur. 26. 52; Dio xxxvii. 29. 4.
disturbing to the populace; they may have favored Catiline, yet they did not want to see any harm befall their consul.

Cicero's master stroke was the manner in which he entered the Campus. He came surrounded by his strong guard, and he himself wore a "broad and conspicuous breastplate" which he made sure everyone saw. He thereby confirmed the rumors of his danger in the minds of the citizens. This action had the desired results: Catiline's men did not dare to attack the well-guarded consul, and enough of the city mob was aroused against Catiline to insure the election of Silanus and Murena. Thus, mainly by the efforts of Cicero, Catiline had again lost in his bid to obtain power.

The unsuccessful campaign left Catiline plagued with debt, angered by repeated defeat, and distraught with unfulfilled desires. Three times he had tried to win the consulship by election; three times "the establishment" had thwarted him. As he could not attain power through legal means, he now turned to the revolutionary plan of seizing power by force. His election supporters would be the means to carry out this course of action, for they were just as anxious as he to overturn the existing politico-economic structure.

The situation in Italy was favorable for a revolution as there were no armed troops stationed on the peninsula: the legions were far off in the East with Pompey. But as the Mithridatic campaign was

36Jonson Cat. III. 234: "Cat. 'Our objects must be sought with wounds, not words.'"
37Sall. Cat. 16. 4; Florus Epit. ii. 12. 1.
coming to a close, Catiline and his supporters had to get control of Rome and a good portion of the peninsula as quickly and efficiently as possible.\(^{38}\)

Sometime shortly after the summer elections, Catiline called together his staunchest supporters and expressed his desire to lead them in a conspiracy to gain control of the Republic. He laid before them the attractive proposals of debt cancellation, land distribution, and the acquisition of the power and wealth which the optimate clique had prevented them from obtaining.\(^{39}\)

These suggestions were most attractive to the needy, profligate, and rash-spirited associates of Catiline.\(^{40}\) Though many of them had renowned family names and held senatorial membership, most all of them were hopelessly in debt on account of the extravagant debauchery which characterized their lives. A listing of their names and activities reads like a "rogues gallery" of recent Roman politics.

Publius Cornelius Lentulus, a man of distinguished birth, then held the dubious honor of being praetor for the second time. He had formerly served as consul in the year 71, but subsequently had been expelled from the Senate on account of the infamous licentiousness of his public and private life. He was thus being forced to progress through the cursus honorum a second time in order to regain the senatorial dignity.\(^{41}\) Gaius Cassius Cethegus, a senator of praetorian rank who was well known for his impatient and rash nature,\(^{42}\) had an

\(^{38}\) Jonson Cat. III. 554-556.

\(^{39}\) Dio xxxvii. 30. 2. \(^{40}\) Sall. Cat. 17. 1-6.

\(^{41}\) Plut. Cic. 17. 1; Dio xxxvii. 30. 4; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2.

\(^{42}\) Cic. Cat. III. 7. 16; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2.
obsession for collecting dangerous weapons.\textsuperscript{43} Publius Autronius Paetus, also of praetorian rank, had been one of Catiline's associates in the abortive "Pisan conspiracy" of 66-65. He had been elected to the consulship in the summer of 66, and then tried and convicted of corrupt election practices before he could even assume office. Lucius Cassius Longinus, a corpulent debauchee who had been an unsuccessful candidate in the consular election of 64, had a propensity for villainous deeds, especially incendiarism.\textsuperscript{44}

Other senators who graced this "elite company" with their aid and counsel were "Publius and Servius Sulla, the sons of Servius Sulla, Lucius Vargunteius, Quintus Annius, Marcus Porcius Laeca, Lucius Bestia, and Quintus Curius."\textsuperscript{45} There were also some discontented equestrians in the group: "Marcus Fulvius Nobilior, Lucius Statilius, Publius Gabinius Capito, and Gaius Cornelius."\textsuperscript{46} Allied to these two groups were "many members of local nobility from Italian colonies and municipalities."\textsuperscript{47}

Their bonds of union were debt, defeat, frustration, desire for change, and a common faith in the abilities of Lucius Catiline to lead them to a better status. Therefore, they readily accepted Catiline's proposals and swore an oath to remain faithful to the conspiracy which he termed "a great and noble enterprise."\textsuperscript{48}

Though it hardly seems believable, it has been reported by several

\textsuperscript{43}Cic. Cat. III. 5. 10. \textsuperscript{44}Ibid. 7. 16; 6. 14.
\textsuperscript{45}Sall. Cat. 17. 3. \textsuperscript{46}Ibid. 17. 4.
\textsuperscript{47}Ibid.; For another list of the conspirators, see Cic. Cat. III. 6.
\textsuperscript{48}Sall. Cat. 20. 3.
sources that this oath was sealed by the drinking of human blood mixed with wine. What sounds even more horrifying is the rumor that the blood was obtained from the veins of a youth sacrificed for this very ceremony. 49

The conspiracy which Catiline had outlined to his accomplices was of a twofold nature. There were to be a series of rebellions in the country districts of Italy, and a concurrent uprising in Rome.

Aware of the careers of Marius, Sulla, and Pompey, Catiline realized that he would need military support both to gain, and to hold power. Therefore, late in the summer he advised his chief rural assistant, Manlius, to start forming the Sullan veterans of Etruria into fighting bands. 50 As these famous plunderers were Catiline's staunchest supporters, the work progressed quickly. In order to organize support among discontented veterans and farmers in other portions of Italy, he sent "a certain Septimius of Camerino to the Picene district; Gaius Julius to Apulia; and others to various districts where he thought that each would be serviceable to his project." 51

While these activities were being carried out over the peninsula, Catiline and his chief assistant in the city, Lentulus, were organizing the insurrection for Rome. Their strategy called for the murder of the consuls and the leaders of the conservative coalition, simultaneous acts of arson in several parts of the city, and the occupation of strategic points with armed men. 52

49 Ibid. 22. 1-2; Florus Epit. ii. 11. 4; Dio xxxvii. 30. 3.
50 Sall. Cat. 27. 1; Dio xxxvii. 30. 5; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2;
Plut. Cic. 15. 1.
51 Sall. Cat. 27. 1; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 2.
52 Sall. Cat. 27. 2; Cic. Cat. I. 3. 7.
Thus, the overall plan of this pernicious conspiracy was to stage several military revolts in the peninsula which would be followed almost immediately by the seditious rising at Rome. The external rebellions were to be initiated by Manlius on October 27, while the city would be taken over on the following day. By means of these rebellions, centered in and directed from Rome, Catiline and his comrades would become masters of Italy. The wealth, power, and position which they so desperately desired would be theirs.

However Catiline and his fellow conspirators still had to reckon with Cicero. The latter knew that Catiline was not a man to be taken lightly, and had been wary of his designs ever since their heated electoral battle in 64. He had again kept his dangerous enemy from the consulship in 63, but he hardly expected that a man of Catiline's proud and daring nature would acquiesce in defeat and degradation. Therefore, Cicero remained alert, and diligently followed the activities of Catiline and his friends. From the reports of his contacts on the peninsula, he knew that something unhealthy was going on, but of just what it was, he was probably unsure.

Fortuna must have been smiling upon the vigilant consul, for he was soon made cognizant of the conspiracy from an unlikely source. One of the conspirators was Quintus Curius—a man who, like Lentulus, had been expelled from the Senate on account of his openly shameful conduct. As Curius fell more heavily into debt, he was unable to favor his mistress, Fulvia, with the lavish gifts to which she had become

53Cic. Cat. I. 3. 7.  
54App. BCiv. ii. 1. 3. 55Ibid.
acquainted. Not wanting to lose her affections, he promised that soon he would be a rich man and could give her all she wanted. Fulvia was curious, as women are said to be, and hounded him to tell her what he meant by his bragging until he divulged information about Catiline's scheme. Because of the dangerous nature of the insidious plan, she felt constrained to alert the respected consul, Cicero.  

Cicero realized that the word of a lady of questionable virtue was not enough to use for a public disclosure of the plot, but he saw that she could be useful in his effort to keep tabs on Catiline. Therefore, he persuaded Fulvia to use her feminine wiles, along with a substantial monetary contribution which he supplied, to induce Curius to keep him informed about the conspirators' activities.  

Cicero undoubtedly would have taken steps to avert the upcoming sedition even if he had not received evidence acceptable for public disclosure. But the information he needed soon arrived, and from Crassus no less, Catiline's former mentor.  

On the night of October 20, an unknown messenger left a packet of letters at the home of the great financier. One was intended for Crassus himself; the rest were addressed to various other members of the Senate. Crassus opened only his own, which "told him there was to be much bloodshed caused by Catiline, and advised him to escape secretly...

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56 Ibid.  
57 Sall. Cat. 26. 3. Sallust relates that this alliance between Cicero, Fulvia, and Curius took place before the election of 63. If this is so, Fulvia and Curius may have been Cicero's source of information regarding Catiline's proposed attempt to murder him at the polls. It is also possible that Cicero may have had other sources of information before the election, as Catiline's activities were not as secretive then; and Sallust is guilty of antedating other events of the conspiracy.
Crassus was frightened by this message because he knew that if Catiline were successful in his nefarious schemes, Pompey would return from the East with his powerful Roman legions and crush the conspirators in a fierce civil war. A proscription would probably follow in which Crassus would head the list, for he would be suspected of complicity in the plot on account of his past association with Catiline.

Crassus by all means wanted to avert this danger. He called together some of the other nobles to whom the letters were addressed (Scipio Metellus, Marcus Marcellus), and consulted them on the matter. They all agreed that Cicero should be informed. Without waiting for morning, they went to the consul's house and awoke him in the middle of the night to inform him of the letters.

With these messages, Cicero now had the evidence he needed to take action. Thus, he decided to convene the Senate in the morning and lay this information before it.

The author of these letters was unknown because they were not signed. Just who sent them is an interesting question. There are several possibilities. Could Catiline himself have sent them? He was indebted to Crassus for past help, and still had several friends among the nobility not included within the conspiracy. He may have wanted to protect these individuals by warning them in advance. This seems improbable as Catiline was not the type of man to let sentiment or obligation stand in the way of his desires.

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58Plut. Cic. 15. 2.

59Ibid. 15. 1-2; Dio xxxvii. 31. 1.
Could one of the other conspirators have sent the messages for the same reasons? This is more probable as his followers were certainly not as single-minded, strong-willed, or vicious as Catiline.

What about Cicero? He had probably known of the plot since late summer; the letters were not sent until late October—just a few days before the insurrections were scheduled to break out. During the interval Cicero undoubtedly had been looking for information which he could employ to expose the Catilinarian conspiracy. Having not acquired the evidence, he may have prepared these letters himself in order to provide himself with the needed information. The fact that the letters were sent to several nobles of the Senate without regard to factional preference could indicate that Cicero wanted to unite the whole Senate behind himself, not just the Optimates. If this was the case, it certainly was a wise move on Cicero's part for he achieved the desired results. 60

On the morning of October 21, 61 the Senate convened at the call of Cicero. He announced that he had knowledge of a nefarious conspiracy which was about to burst forth and wreck havoc upon the Republic. He reported that Manlius was going to initiate a rebellion in the country districts from Etruria on the 27th, and that Catiline was going to stage a massacre of the nobles and a burning of the city on the following day. 62

60 E. G. Hardy suggests that Crassus himself wrote the letters "to supply the deficiencies of Cicero's intelligence department...." He feels that Crassus and Caesar were trying to establish a modus vivendi with Pompey at this time. If Catiline's revolutionary designs were to succeed, however, Pompey would be forced into a civil war which he would undoubtedly win; he would then have no need for any agreement with Crassus and Caesar, so it was to their interest to help Cicero in thwarting Catiline. Hardy, pp. cit., pp. 62-63.

61 Cic. Cat. I. 3. 7. 62 Ibid.
He then produced the packet of letters given to him the night before, and declared that they would provide sufficient evidence to substantiate his serious allegations. He handed the letters to the men to whom they were addressed, and requested that the contents of each be read aloud. This was done, and "all alike were found to tell of the conspiracy." When Quintus Arrius, a man of praetorian rank, reported that Manlius was mustering troops in Etruria, the senators were convinced that Cicero's imputations were true.

The Senate as a body rallied to Cicero's suggestion that drastic measures were needed to meet this serious threat to the stability of the state. The "ultimate decree" was passed stating "that the consuls should take heed that the Republic suffer no harm (darent operam consules ne quid res publica detrimenti caperet)." Cicero now had the weapon he needed to defend the state against its desperate enemies. Under this decree of martial law, he and his associate Antonius could "levy troops and conduct war [even on Italian soil], apply unlimited force to citizens and allies alike, and exercise unlimited jurisdiction and command at home and abroad."  

Cicero swung into action immediately: he entrusted Quintus Metellus with the task of defending the city from the outside, while he himself handled the interior precautionary measures. Metellus was the outstanding commander of the optimate faction at that time, and was waiting outside the gates for a triumph. He had just completed the

\[63\text{Plut. Cic. 15. 3.}\quad 64\text{Ibid.}\]
\[65\text{Sall. Cat. 29. 2; Plut. Cic. 15. 4; Dio xxxvii. 31. 2-3.}\]
\[66\text{Sall. Cat. 29. 3.}\quad 67\text{Plut. Cic. 16. 1.}\]
successful subjugation of Crete, for which endeavor he had received the
cognomen Creticus. He was thus fully qualified and prepared to obstruct
any rebel activities outside the gates of Rome.

Within the gates, Cicero arranged for heavy guards to attend
himself and other important officials, and posted numerous guards
throughout the city. Because of these preparations, the conspirators
were unable to carry out their designs within the city on the scheduled
day.

During this period, Catiline, being the great dissimulator that
he was, played the role of the injured innocent—the poor patrician
whom Cicero had chosen as his favorite "whipping boy." When nothing
happened on the 26th, people began to doubt the authenticity of the
letters Cicero had produced as evidence. They probably wondered if the
homo novus was just trying to glorify himself by pretending to have
saved the state from great danger which actually existed nowhere but in
his own ambitious mind.

Then at the end of the month, one of the senators, Lucius Saenius
by name, revealed information that Manlius had indeed "taken the field
with a large army on October 27th" in the vicinity of Faesulae. Other
senators reported rumors about suspicious activities in Capua and
Apulia. The Senate now recognized the seriousness of the situation

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68 Sall. Cat. 30. 3-4; Florus Epit. i. 42.
69 Plut. Cic. 16. 1; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 3; Dio xxxvii. 31. 3.
70 Cic. Cat. i. 3. 7; Dio xxxvii. 31. 3.
71 Dio xxxvii. 31. 3.
72 Sall. Cat. 30. 1; Dio xxxvii. 31. 3. 73 Sall. Cat. 30. 2.
and passed several decrees to meet the emergency. Military commanders were sent out to various districts of Italy "with instructions to raise adequate forces to deal with the critical situation that had arisen": Quintus Marcius Rex was sent to Faesulae, Quintus Metellus Creticus to Apulia, Quintus Pompeius Rufus to Capua, and Quintus Metellus Celer to Picenum. Rewards and pardons were offered to individuals who could give information about the conspiracy. Orders were sent out that the gladiatorial schools be broken up and the gladiators be employed as guards in the endangered towns. The junior magistrates of Rome were ordered to augment the nocturnal guard patrols which Cicero had instituted throughout the city.

Though Catiline was now indicted under the lex Plautia de vi, there was no unequivocal evidence with which he could be convicted. He was still in the clear, for he had not incited a rebellion in the city, and the rural revolt of Manlius had not been undertaken in his name. Therefore, he continued to act the part of the guiltless patrician, and openly welcomed the indictment as a means of proving his innocence. He even offered to entrust himself to Cicero's care. But the wary consul was not about to spend one night under the same roof with his homicidal enemy, and sharply rejected the suggestion. Catiline probably hoped for and expected this reaction from Cicero, and thus, he was able to entrust himself to the much less vigilant Marcus Marcellus, an old friend of his.

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74 Ibid. 30. 3-5. 75 Ibid. 30. 6-7.
76 Dio xxxvii. 31. 3; Sall. Cat. 21. 4; de vi is an indictment against someone who is accused of employing force to overthrow the government.
77 Cic. Cat. I. 8. 19; Dio xxxvii. 32. 1-2.
While pretending to be preparing for a trial, Catiline was actually promoting his conspiratorial designs. However the situation must have looked pretty sad, for he had been unable to carry out his murderous designs in the city, and Manlius had begun the rural rebellion without realizing that the urban part of the plot had been obstructed. When news reached him that the nocturnal attempt to seize Praeneste on the first of November had failed, he perceived that a change of plans and a tightening-up of the conspiratorial organization must be arranged immediately.

Catiline thereupon sent word to the chief conspirators that they should meet secretly on the evening of November 6 at the home of Marcus Porcius Laeca. Eluding the nocturnal street patrols, each of the plotters made his way to the street of the scythe makers where Laeca's abode was located.

When all had arrived, Catiline began the meeting by upbraiding them for the torpid and timorous quality of their recent activities. Reminding them of the oath, he pointed out "the many penalties they would suffer if detected and the many advantages they would obtain if successful." Having roused their courage with vigorous incitements to action, Catiline discussed with them the best means of carrying out their perilous designs. It was decided that he would soon leave to take command of the Etrurian rebel forces as things were becoming too

78 Cic. Cat. I. 3. 8.
79 Cic. Sull. 18. 52; Cic. Cat. I. 4; Sall. Cat. 27. 3.
80 Dio xxxvii. 32. 3-4; Sall. Cat. 27. 3-4.
81 Dio xxxvii. 32. 4; Cic. Sull. 18. 52.
hot for him in the city. Autronius would go with him while the other leading conspirators were to remain behind to direct the sedition from within the city. Lentulus, the highest ranking conspirator (because of his former consulship), was to assume direction of the insurrection at Rome. Cethegus was to manage the massacre of the senators. The firebrand, Cassius, was placed in charge of the arson teams which were to start a general conflagration of the city. Others were assigned to plunder the treasury. 82

When the urban uprising had been initiated and the city was engulfed in confusion, Catiline would hastily march toward it with his forces from the country districts in order to take control by force and stamp out any resistance which might be encountered. It was a well thought out plan which would have completely overturned "the establishment." Rome would have fallen easy prey to Catiline's army arriving at the opportune moment.

But Catiline complained that an important task remained to be carried out before he departed. Cicero, the one man who had obstructed all their previous designs, still stood in the way of their victory. Therefore, Catiline resolved that the hindernose consul must be murdered immediately. Two of the more audacious members of the group—the equestrian Gaius Cornelius, and the senator Lucius Vargunteius—volunteered for this pernicious deed and promised to slay the vexatious magistrate before dawn. 83

82Cic. Sull. 18. 52-53; Cic. Cat. I. 4. 9; Florus Epit. ii. 12. 2; Livy Per. ciii.
83Cic. Cat. I. 4. 9; Cic. Sull. 18. 52; Sall. Cat. 27. 4 - 28. 1; Dio xxxvii. 32. 4.
When all present understood their assignments and comprehended the gravity of the situation, the meeting broke up with each of the conspiratorial leaders holding the highest hopes for the success of their daring venture.

The Catilinarian conspiracy had now entered its final and most dangerous stages. The actions of Cicero during the next month in combating this grave danger to the Republic were to bring him to the height of his political career, and assure for himself a lasting place among the world's greatest orators.
VI. CICERO'S VICTORY

While Catiline's nefarious coterie was secretly scheming to overthrow the Republic, Cicero was probably sleeping soundly, unaware that his life might shortly be brought to a violent and bloody end by the plunging daggers of his enemies.

It was customary in Cicero's day for Roman citizens to pay their respects to an important person by a **salutatio** (a ceremonial morning call). "It would sometimes happen that early visitors would find the great man not yet risen. In these cases he would often receive them in bed."¹ Cornelius and Vargunteius intended to be Cicero's earliest visitors, probably hoping to find him still reposing. It would thereby be much easier to dispatch him.²

Fortunately for Cicero, Curius was still numbered among the conspirator's inner circle, and had attended the gathering at Laeca's house. As soon as the meeting broke up he sent Fulvia to warn the slumbering consul of the impending danger.³ Cicero immediately took precautionary measures to protect himself. He summoned several eminent men to his home and informed them of the plot against his life, even naming the conspirators who were to come in the morning as greeters. He then fortified his house with a strong guard. As dawn broke,

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² Sall. Cat. 28. 1; Plut. Cic. 16. 2.
³ Sall. Cat. 28. 2; Plut. Cic. 16. 2; Jonson Cat. III. 697-707.
Cornelius and Vargunteius appeared at Cicero's door just as he had foretold. "When they were prevented from entering, they were incensed and made an outcry at the door" which all the more convinced the nobles present that Cicero was correct about the scheming of Catiline.¹

Catiline had planned to leave the city as soon as Cicero had been murdered.⁵ Though the attempted assassination on this November 7 morning had failed, Cicero probably expected that Catiline would leave the city on this day anyway. As Catiline's flight would make his guilt seem all the more apparent, Cicero waited until the following morning to call the Senate together.⁶ He then summoned the senators to the well-defended temple of Juppiter Stator with the intention of presenting to them a full account of the absent Catiline's designs.⁷

The senators were utterly astonished when Catiline strode boldly into the hall and took a seat among them as if there was nothing to the distressing rumors about his recent activities. Aghast at this outrageous exhibition of audacity, those near him rose to their feet, and vacating that portion of the hall, moved silently away.⁸ Forsaken by all, as if infected by a contagious disease, he sat alone on the

¹Plut. Cic. 16. 2; Cic. Cat. I. 4. 10; Sall. Cat. 28. 3.

⁵Cic. Cat. I. 4. 9.

⁶The Latin terminology of Cicero's First Catilinarian Oration indicates that there was an intervening day and night between the conspiratorial meeting at Laecca's house and the senatorial session. When speaking of the immediately preceding night Cicero employs the terms proxima...nocte (1. 1.); but when speaking of the night before last (the night of the conspiratorial meeting), he uses the terms noctem illum superiorem and priore nocte (4. 1.). As the conspirators' meeting took place on the night of November 6-7, and the attempted assassination on the following morning, this would mean that the Senate was not called together until the morning of November 8.

forlorn bench. Then, all eyes turned to the front of the hall as the consul rose to speak. Cicero, alarmed and indignant at the presence of this man who only the morning before had attempted to have him slain, glared directly at his adversary and launched into the following brilliant invective:

To what extent, O Catiline, will you continuously abuse our patience? For how long will that madness of yours mock us? To what end will your unbridled audacity swagger about as it does now? Are you not disturbed by the nocturnal garrison of the Palatine, by the patrols of the city, by the fear of the people, by the union of all good men, by the precaution of holding the Senate in this most fortified place, are you not even moved by the looks and countenances of these men present here today? Do you not perceive that your schemes are exposed? Do you not see that your conspiracy is already arrested and bound by the knowledge of all these men? Do you think that any of us is ignorant of what you did last night, the night before, of where you were, of whom you called together, or even of what schemes you concocted? O what times these are! O what morals! The Senate knows these things, the consul sees them: yet this man lives. Did I say lives? Nay, more, he even strides into the Senate, and partakes in the public business— all the while noting down and designating with his eyes each and every one of us for murder. Yet we, brave men that we are think we are doing enough for the Republic if we merely avoid his fury and shafts.

O Catiline, you ought long ago to have been led to your death by the order of the consul. That destruction which you have been planning for us ought to be cast upon you yourself.10

As can be seen from just this brief passage, The First Catilinarian Oration of Cicero was one of the most grandiloquent denunciatory harangues ever uttered. Cicero, standing alone before the Senate, went on to accuse Catiline in specific terms of planning revolution, murder, conflagration—in short, of a seditious plot to overthrow the very framework of republican society. He castigated him for a base and disgraceful personal life, hinting of perverse violations committed even against his own family. He then commanded his adversary "to depart

9 Sall. Cat. 31. 6. 10 Cic. Cat. 1. 1. 1-2.
from the city, for since one of them did his work with words and the
other with arms, it was necessary that a wall lie between them.\footnote{Plut. Cic. 16. 3.}{\footnote{Cic. Cat. I. 13. 33.}}

O Catiline, go forth to your impious and wicked war, bringing
to the state the greatest of benefits, to yourself destruction
and annihilation, and to those who have joined in your every
wickedness and atrocity, utter ruin.\footnote{Cic. Cat. I. 13. 33.}\footnote{Cic. Cat. I. 13. 33.}

When Cicero had finished, Catiline attempted to defend himself by
simulating innocence, by recalling his high birth and family heritage,
and by downgrading Cicero; but he was quickly silenced with shouts of
"traitor" and "assassin" from the senators.\footnote{Sall. Cat. 37. 1.}{\footnote{Sall. Cat. 37. 1.}} Dashing out of the hall,
he hurried home to appraise the adverse situation and determine his
next move.

His designs against the consul had failed, he was under indictment
de \textit{vi}, and he was considered a traitor by his fellow senators. His
continued residence in Rome was nearly impossible. Yet, he still had
a good deal of sympathy in the city mob,\footnote{Sall. Cat. 31. 7-8.}{\footnote{Sall. Cat. 31. 7-8.}} Cicero had no written
evidence against the other urban conspirators, and Manlius had raised
a force of some 20,000 men in Etruria.\footnote{Plut. Cic. 16. 4.}{\footnote{Plut. Cic. 16. 4.}} The possibility of carrying
out his conspiratorial designs was still quite good.

Thus, even though Cicero had not been eliminated, he determined
to put into action the rest of the plans decided upon at Laeca's house: he
would leave the city to take command of the rebel forces in Etruria,
while Lentulus would assume control of the sedition within the city.
That very night Catiline departed for the camp of Manlius with a goodly
number of his followers. He left instructions for Lentulus, Cethegus,
and his other audacious associates to add strength to their faction by whatever means possible, to bring the plots against the consul to a head, and to prepare for murder, arson, and other horrors of war; for he would soon lead the rebel forces upon the city.  

Even when marching for Etruria Catiline continued his dissimulations of oppressed innocence. He relayed messages to members of the Senate alleging that he was going into voluntary exile at Massilia (Marseilles) because of the odium raised against him by the harsh and unjust denunciations of Cicero and his associates.  

On the following morning (November 9), Catiline's accomplices in the city spread rumors around that he had been driven unfairly from the city without any proof of his guilt. The city populace became greatly excited over the conflicting stories of Catiline's innocence or guilt. Cicero accordingly went to the Forum and addressed the people in an effort to calm their agitation. In this Second Catilinarian Oration he revealed to the people the treacherous schemes of Catiline, and explained that he had driven the conspirator from the city into open warfare so that there would be no more doubt as to the danger threatening the state. Telling the populace where Catiline had gone and whom he had taken with him, Cicero assured them that he was diligently watching for their safety, and that he had dispatched Quintus Metellus Celer to secure the Picene and Gallic territories. He also warned the conspirators still within the city that they had best leave too, for he was vigilantly watching their movements and would not hesitate in taking severe measures to suppress any attempt at disorder.

16Sall. Cat. 32. 2; Plut. Cic. 16. 4.  
17Sall. Cat. 31. 2.  
18Cic. Cat. II. 6-7.
Catiline proceeded north by way of the Aurelian road. He stopped for a few days in the neighborhood of Arretium to confer with his lieutenant there, Gaius Flaminius, and to supply his local supporters with arms. Then, he openly assumed the fasces and the other insignia of the imperium, and advanced to the camp of Manlius.

When word reached Rome in mid-November that Catiline was indeed preparing for war in Etruria with Manlius, the Senate took immediate action by issuing several decrees: it declared the two rebel leaders public enemies; it offered a pardon to all the remaining members of the rebel forces who would lay down their arms by a specified date (except those under sentence for capital offences); it directed the consuls to enroll troops at Rome; Cicero was charged with guarding the city, and Antonius was ordered to take the field and pursue Catiline.

These decrees had no immediate effect in arresting the conspirators' plans. In fact, Catiline's rebel forces were actually increased as a number of men who were not even privy to the conspiracy left the city to join in the rebellion. Among these discontents was a certain Aulus Fulvius, the son of a senatorial noble. When hearing of his sons departure, the senator gave orders that the boy be dragged back and put to death for his treasonous action.

In the next two weeks Rome was outwardly calm as Lentulus and his

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\(^{19}\) Cic. Cat. II. 4-6. \(^{20}\) Sall. Cat. 36. 1.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.; Plut. Cic. 16. 4; Dio xxxvii. 33. 2.

\(^{22}\) He already had extraordinary powers from the senatus consultum ultimum of October 21.

\(^{23}\) Sall. Cat. 36. 2-3; Dio xxxvii. 33. 2-4.

\(^{24}\) Sall. Cat. 39. 5; Dio xxxvii. 36. 4.
associates quietly prepared for the upcoming insurrection, and waited while Catiline gathered further strength in the north.

During this time there occurred an event which reveals the basic instability of late-republican politics. Sulpicius, the defeated consular candidate, fulfilled his earlier threats and brought Murena to trial for corrupt election practices. Marcus Cato, the highly respected tribune-elect, supported Sulpicius in this absurd prosecution. Sulpicius was obviously motivated by envy of his competitor's success while Cato, a hard-nosed stoic, was adhering to his philosophical principles with an utter disregard for the needs of reality. Both were callously placing personal concerns above the welfare of the Republic; for should they succeed in condemning Murena, the state would have only one consul on January 1 to oppose the seditious conspiracy confronting it.

Cicero and the more farsighted statesmen of the Senate were appalled at this foolhardy action in a time of severe civic crisis. The great optimate orator, Hortensius, volunteered to aid Cicero in the defense, as did the popularis Crassus, who was now firmly backing the government against the treasonous schemes of Catiline's desperate crew.25

Cicero's wit sparkled at its best in this defense. He derided Sulpicius as a shabby campaigner, and satirized the rigid stoicism of Cato most effectively. But the clinching argument for acquittal was that the beginning of the new year was no time to have only one consul in office with the dangerous situation then prevailing.26 The jury was

25Cic. Mur. 4. 10: It should be quite obvious by now that Crassus had no part in the conspiracy, but rather was supporting the government.

26Cic. Mur. passim.
composed of men of property who, of course, feared any change in the status quo. Thus, they rallied to Murena's cause, and assured the government of continuing and effective leadership against Catiline's revolutionary designs.

While Catiline was marching about Etruria, gathering and training troops and inciting towns to revolt,\(^27\) Lentulus was directing the conspiratorial activities at Rome.\(^28\) He was of the same character as Catiline—a spendthrift debauchee with an overpowering ambition for sovereignty—and had easily been persuaded to join in the dangerous plot to seize power before Pompey returned. He actually believed that it was his destiny to rule Rome as a monarch, for he had been told by the prophets of the Sibyline books (believed to have mystic powers of foretelling the future) that he was the third Cornelius destined by fate for sovereignty—the first two being Lucius Cornelius Cinna and Lucius Cornelius Sulla.\(^29\)

During the latter days of November, he and his lieutenants in Rome secretly solicited the aid of those individuals who seemed "ripe for revolution by disposition or fortune,"\(^30\) and thus increased the number of the conspiracy's adherents in accordance with Catiline's

\(^{27}\)Plut. Cic. 16. 4. \(^{28}\)Sall. Cat. 39. 6.

\(^{29}\)Cic. Cat. III. 4. 9; Plut. Cic. 17. 4. What the relationship would have been between Lentulus and Catiline had the conspiracy succeeded is a question which will never receive a definitive answer. Only a supposition can be offered. Lentulus was of consular rank and believed in his destiny for sovereignty, yet Catiline was the conspiracy's instigator and certainly a more dynamic and dangerous commander. If the republican offices were maintained following the overthrow of the optimate dominated government, it seems probable that Catiline and Lentulus would have shared the consulship; with Lentulus as the figurehead, and Catiline as the effective ruler.

\(^{30}\)Sall. Cat. 39. 6.
instructions. The night of the *Saturnalia* festival (December 19) was selected for the revolt. All the other conspirators agreed upon this as a suitable date but Cethegus, who was impatient by nature and felt that it would be too long a delay. Yet as he was outvoted, he had to go along with the rest.

As far as the details of the uprising are concerned, it was decided that a goodly number of the citizenry should be slaughtered as well as the nobility; only the children of Pompey were to be spared for sure. They might be most useful as bargaining tools when the general returned. Men were assigned by lot to their various tasks: some were to aid Cethegus in the massacre of the Senate; some were to help Gabinius in the general slaughter; some were to assist Cassius in the incendiarism; others were to stop up the aqueducts and kill those who tried to fetch water; still others were to plunder the treasury. In the meantime torches, brimstone, and arms were hidden at the house of Cethegus, whence they could be distributed shortly before the sedition.

Cicero knew that Lentulus was now his paramount enemy within the city, and he therefore diligently followed the praetor's actions through the reports of his informers. But his hands were tied by a lack of documentary proof on the conspirator's guilt. Catiline was now an acknowledged enemy of the Republic, but Cicero needed further evidence.

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31 Cic. Cat. III. 4. 10; Plut. Cic. 18. 2.
32 Plut. Cic. 18. 1.
33 Ibid. 18. 2; Cic. Cat. IV. 6. 13; Florus Epit. ii. 12. 2.
34 Plut. Cic. 18. 2.
35 Cic. Cat. III. 1. 3 - 2. 4.
to prove that a "Trojan horse" was still within the city walls. The opportunity of obtaining the needed evidence soon presented itself through the loyalty of some provincial subjects.

While Lentulus was tuning the conspiratorial machine, an opportunity arose which offered the possibility of adding great strength to the revolution. The northernmost province of the Roman empire at this time was Gallia Transalpina. The Allobroges, a warlike tribe who resided in this province, had of late incurred an overburdening amount of public and private debts on account of "the rapacity of the Roman officials." They recently had dispatched two ambassadors to Rome who were to present the Senate with their complaints. When the Senate failed to respond to the legates' entreaties, Lentulus determined to take advantage of their disgruntled dispositions. He realized that the chances of the conspiracy's success would certainly be increased by the support of a fierce Gallic tribe.

Thus, he instructed Publius Umbrenus to sound the Gauls on joining the revolt. Umbrenus, one of the less important conspirators, knew the ambassadors personally from his business activities in their country. He approached them with the suggestion that the ideal remedy for their adversity would be complicity in Catiline's daring coup d'etat. He introduced them to Gabinius, an important member of the conspiracy's inner circle, and enumerated the names of many other distinguished nobles who were supposedly privy to the plot. The envoys must have been

36 Sall. Cat. 40. 1-3; Plut. Cic. 18. 3.
37 Cic. Cat. III. 2. 4; Plut. Cic. 18. 3.
impressed with the arguments of Umbrenus and Gabinius, for they agreed to lend assistance in the revolution. 38

But when the Gauls later had time to consider their decision with more care, they changed their minds. Weighing the severe consequences their country would suffer if the conspiracy failed, against the sure reward they would receive if they informed the Roman authorities of the plot, they decided to play it safe and remain loyal. They contacted the patron of their tribe at Rome, Quintus Fabius Sanga, and told him about the offer of the conspirators. He was a loyal citizen of the Republic, and thus, immediately notified Cicero of the situation. 39

Cicero wisely judged that this was the opportunity he needed to obtain clear-cut evidence against the conspirators. 40 He instructed the Gallic legates to play along with the conspirators as if they really intended to participate in the revolt. They were to request written information about the plot which was supposedly to be taken to their countrymen, 41 but, in reality, was to fall into the consul's hands.

The Allobroges carried out Cicero's instructions in masterful style. They arranged for Gabinius to introduce them to the other members of the conspiracy's inner circle. From these, they requested and obtained written agreements which they claimed would be needed to induce their tribesmen to take part in the revolution. 42 Instead of providing the written agreement, Cassius decided to proceed to Gaul

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38 Sall. Cat. III. 3; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 4.
39 Sall. Cat. III. 1-4; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 4.
40 Cic. Cat. III. 2. 4. 41 Sall. Cat. III. 1. 5.
42 Sall. Cat. III. 1-2; Cic. Cat. III. 4. 9.
himself in order to aid in rousing and directing the Gallic revolt. He left even before the Allobroges—thus saving himself from the Senate's wrath. Statilius and Gabinius apparently took control of the arson teams which Cassius had been directing.

Lentulus induced Titus Volturcius of Crotone, a friend of Gabinius and Caesarius, to accompany the Gauls on their journey north. He was to direct them to Catiline so they might confirm their agreement with the leader of the conspiracy himself. Lentulus entrusted Volturcius with an unsigned letter to Catiline suggesting the rebel leader employ the help of all orders, "even of the lowest (ab infimis)." He also relayed a verbal message inquiring why Catiline was refusing to enlist the aid of slaves, and urging him to hasten his march on Rome.

When Cicero was informed of these developments, he took prompt action to insure the capture of the damnatory letters. He contacted two brave and loyal praetors, Lucius Flaccus and Caius Pomptinus, explained the situation, and instructed them on what to do.

The envoys were intending to leave by way of the Mulvian bridge on the night of December 2. Thus, on the designated evening the praetors went with a special force of young men from the Reatian prefecture to lie in wait for the retinue of Volturcius. As the party approached the bridge, a swift surprise attack was made upon them. Volturcius bravely

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43 Sall. Cat. 44. 1-2; Jonson Cat. V. 183-187.
44 Ibid. 43. 2.
45 Ibid. 44. 3-5; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 4.
46 Sall. Cat. 44. 6.
47 Cic. Cat. III. 2. 5.
drew his sword and called on his associates to fight, but as the Allobroges perceived what was happening, they quickly surrendered and turned the letters over to the praetors. Volturcius had no choice but to surrender also.48

Early in the morning, the praetors vouchsafed the prisoners and sealed letters to Cicero.49 With the apprehension of these witnesses and the messages they were conveying, the urban phase of the Catilinarian conspiracy was doomed, for Cicero now possessed the evidence he needed to take decisive action against the seditious "Trojan horse." On that momentous December 3, the ceaseless vigilance of the consul was finally to attain fruition.

Cicero summoned the patres conscripti to the temple of Concord, and had the "big five" of the conspiracy's urban leadership rounded up and escorted to the assembly under guard;50 Lentulus, Cethegus, Statilius, Gabinius, and Caeparius were the five in question. While the senators were gathering, Cicero dispatched another trustworthy praetor, Caius Sulpicius, to search the house of Cethegus for the weapons which the Allobroges had disclosed were stockpiled there.51 These were to be employed as further evidence against the conspirators.

Cicero opened the session by introducing Volturcius. The latter was offered a pardon if he would reveal all he knew against the conspirators. He was obviously not one of the original coterie, for he

48Cic. Cat. III. 2. 5-6; Cic. Pro Flacco 50. 102; Sall. Cat. 45; Plut. Cic. 16. 4-5.
49Cic. Cat. III. 3. 6; Cic. Flac. 40. 102.
50Sall. Cat. 46. 5; Plut. Cic. 19. 1.
51Cic. Cat. III. 3. 8; Plut. Cic. 19. 2.
knew neither all the details of the plot nor all the members in it. He was merely a close friend and associate of Gabinius, and was being employed as a messenger boy. But he did know some of the conspirators, and had knowledge of the plot's general outline. He identified Autronius, Servius Sulla, and Lucius Vargunteius, among others, as being associated with the scheme. He reported that Lentulus had sent a message to Catiline advising the use of slaves in his march on the city—a wretched appeal for another bloody slave war. He also revealed that Catiline was to be urged to march toward Rome as soon as possible so he might apprehend the citizens who would be fleeing from the conflagration and massacre of the city. Next the Allobroges were brought in and related how Lentulus, Cethegus, and Statilius had furnished them with letters for their fellow countrymen. They divulged that Lucius Cassius and others had urged them to hasten into Italy as soon as possible with their fierce cavalry, and that Lentulus had assured them from the Sibylline books he was the third Cornelius destined to rule Rome. The conspirators were then forced to identify their seals and handwriting as the letters were read to the Senate. The contents of these epistles confirmed what Volturcius and the Gauls had earlier revealed, so that the plotters had no choice other than to confess to their treacherous scheming. The copious supply of newly sharpened weapons which Sulpicius had found at the home of Cethegus merely confirmed the already evident guilt of the conspirators.

52 Cic. Cat. III. 4. 8; Sall. Cat. 47. 1.
53 Cic. Cat. III. 4. 9; Sall. Cat. 47. 2; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 4.
54 Cic. Cat. III. 5; Sall. Cat. 47. 2.
55 Cic. Cat. III. 3. 8; Plut. Cic. 19. 2.
When all the dammatory evidence had been presented, Cicero requested the senators to proffer their opinions on the matter. The plotters were universally condemned, and several decrees were passed to deal with the situation. Cicero was given a vote of thanks in the highest terms of praise for his valor, wisdom, and prudence. A supplication was also decreed to the gods for their kindness in allowing Cicero "to save the city from conflagration, the citizens from massacre, and Italy from war"—an exceedingly impressive honor, for Cicero was the first Roman magistrate ever to receive such a supplicatio in a nonmilitary capacity. Praise was also imparted to the praetors, Flaccus and Pomptinus, as well as the other consul, Antonius, for their roles in opposing the conspiracy. Lentulus was forced to resign the praetorship and was defrocked of his purple-bordered senatorial toga. He and the other plotters were then given into the custody of certain senators until their fate could later be determined.

As evening had now arrived, Cicero adjourned the Senate and went forth to the multitude which was eagerly awaiting information on what had happened. The triumphant consul then delivered his Third Catilinarian Oration in which he vividly recounted how he had uncovered and taken steps to break up the pernicious conspiracy which would have wreaked havoc upon the city. A complete change in public opinion immediately

56 Cic. Cat. III. 6; Sall. Cat. 47. 2-4; Plut. Cic. 19. 2; Dio xxxvii. 34. 2.

57 Cic. Cat. III. 6. 15: He was acting under martial law, but he had neither taken the field of battle nor put off the civilian toga.

58 It is interesting to note that Crassus and Caesar each received one of the condemned culprits. This further indicates that neither of them was still connected to the schemes of Catiline (Sall. Cat. 47. 4).
took place. The prudent consul was praised to the skies for saving the homes of the poor from fire, the possessions of the wealthy from plunder, and the Republic from an attack of its old enemies, the Gauls. The schemes of Catiline, which formerly had been looked upon with favor by a good portion of the masses, were now cursed. The urban mob was not averse to civil disturbances, as they provided opportunities for plunder, but a general conflagration seemed "cruel, monstrous, and especially calamitous to themselves," since their sole possessions were the rags on their backs and the flimsy roofs over their heads.

The populace triumphantly escorted Cicero to the house of a friend where he was going to spend the night; a religious ceremony was being conducted at his own home by his wife and the Vestal Virgins in honor of the Bona Dea (Good Goddess). Cicero whiled away the night pondering the question of what punishment should be inflicted upon the conspirators. He was hesitant to employ the death penalty because of the precarious legality of such an act. The old Porcian and Sempronian laws provided Romans condemned to capital punishment with protection from over-hasty death sentences; however time was of the utmost importance with Catiline preparing to march on Rome. Cicero was in a dilemma because the responsibility for whichever course would be taken must rest on him alone, as the Senate had done its utmost in passing the senatus consultum ultimum. This placed the safety of the Republic into the consul's hands, even though it was expected that he would consult

\[59\] Sall. Cat. 48. 1-2. \[60\] Plut. Cic. 19. 3. \[61\] Ibid. 19. 4-5.

\[62\] Sall. Cat. 51. 10; Cic. Cat. III. 5. 10; Scullard, op. cit., p. 34; Mommsen, op. cit., pp. 63-64.
the Senate's opinion on the matter. Cicero did not want to be too lenient because the conspirators might escape and aid Catiline. But he feared that if he put the culprits to death, he might in the future incur the enmity of the people. They might recall that he had taken the lives of Roman citizens too hastily and without allowing the condemned men the hearing before the people to which they were entitled.

A strange portent occurred during that night which strengthened Cicero's determination to act forcefully against the conspirators. Just as he was contemplating severe action, a lustrous flame burst forth from the dying embers on the altar at his home. The holy maidens interpreted this to signify that the Good Goddess approved of the course on which the consul was meditating. They directed Cicero's wife, Terentia, to go to her husband and encourage him "to execute what he had resolved for the good of his country, since the goddess had sent a great light to increase his safety and glory." Terentia hurried to Cicero and related to him what had happened. She, his brother Quintus, and his philosophical companion Publius Nigidius, all incited his determination to take a strong line against the dangerous traitors.

The following day witnessed the airing of fraudulent testimony in the Senate, and an attempted rescue of the captive conspirators. One of the less important schemers, Lucius Tarquinius, came forward with the accusation that Marcus Crassus was privy to the conspiracy. This was an incredible charge since Crassus himself had given Cicero the evidence needed to obtain the senatus consultum ultimum of October 21.

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63 Marsh, op. cit., p. 168; Hardy, op. cit., p. 87.
64 Plut. Cic. 20. 1. 65 Ibid. 20. 2. 66 Supra, Chapt. V. p. 84.
The senators were universally outraged at such an obvious falsehood, and thus decreed Tarquinius a liar and disregarded his testimony.\(^{67}\)

It is quite possible that Cicero may have put Tarquinius up to such an accusation against the influential popularis. Crassus felt this to be the case, and subsequently held a grudge against the wiley orator.\(^{68}\) Cicero knew that Crassus had an unhealthy habit of coming forward in the defense of bad characters (e.g., after the "Pisan" or "first Catilinarian conspiracy"), and thus, may have been trying to place him in such a position that he would not be able to do so in this situation.\(^ {69}\) It would therefore be more easy to take severe measures against the conspirators.

The optimate leaders, Quintus Catulus and Gaius Piso, attempted to arouse similar suspicions against Caesar. Both were motivated by partisan politics and personal revenge:\(^{70}\) Caesar had defeated Catulus in the race for the office of pontifex maximus, and had prosecuted Piso in an extortion trial. Failing to obtain an accuser, they spread rumors about the town concerning Caesar's complicity in the conspiracy. The fact that Caesar was the state's chief priest and had been elected to a praetorship for 62,\(^{71}\) was all the more reason for him not to be inclined to jeopardize his position by involvement in Catiline's desperate schemes. Caesar was no more involved in the conspiracy than his wealthy associate; and the efforts of Catulus and Piso achieved little else than to arouse some hotheaded equestrian youths to threaten the popular leader with their swords.\(^ {72}\)

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\(^{67}\) Sall. Cat. 48. 1-6; Flut. Crass. 13. 2.

\(^{68}\) Sall. Cat. 48. 8-9; Flut. Crass. 13. 2-4.

\(^{69}\) Sall. Cat. 48. 8.

\(^{70}\) Jonson Cat. V. 86-93.

\(^{71}\) Suet. Iul. 14.

\(^{72}\) Sall. Cat. 49.
When these partisan squabbles were completed, the Senate voted rewards to Volturcius and the Allobroges for the information they had proffered on the preceding day.\(^73\)

While the Senate was occupied in these deliberations, the dependents of Lentulus and Cethegus were attempting to rouse fellow freedmen and slaves to rescue the captive conspirators, but with little success. Fortunately, Cicero was made cognizant of these moves in time, and strengthened the guards around the houses where the culprits were being held.\(^74\) He also directed the praetors "to administer the oath of enlistment to the populace" so that a citizen militia would be available to meet any emergency with force.\(^75\)

The possibility of the conspirators escaping and the supposed portent of Bona Dea convinced Cicero of the necessity for fast and firm action. He therefore summoned the Senate to meet on the following morning for the purpose of discussing the prisoners' fate.

On that solemn December 5,\(^76\) the senators came together prepared to offer their sentiments on what punishment seemed fitting for the depraved conspirators whom they had already pronounced guilty of treasonable conduct. The consul-elect, Silanus, was called upon to open the discussion with his views. He advanced the opinion that both the conspirators already in confinement and those subsequently apprehended should be punished by death.\(^77\) The majority of the senators who followed agreed with this judgment until Julius Caesar spoke.\(^78\)

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\(^{73}\)Cic. Cat. IV. 3. 5; Sall. Cat. 50. 1.

\(^{74}\)Sall. Cat. 50. 1-3; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 5; Cic. Cat. IV. 8. 17.

\(^{75}\)Dio xxxvii. 34. 4. \(^{76}\)Cic. Flac. 40. 102.

\(^{77}\)Cic. Cat. IV. 4. 7; Sall. Cat. 50. 4; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 5.

\(^{78}\)Sall. Cat. 50. 4; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 5.
Caesar presented himself as a wise, cautious, statesman, and urged moderation lest any unhealthy precedent be established which in the future might be misused on innocent men. Just as he had done in the Rabirian trial he was again defending the rights of the citizen from oppressive action on the part of the oligarchy. He suggested that their minds were clouded by hatred and fear, and that in such an atmosphere it was difficult to employ sound judgment. He intimated that a harsh and hasty punishment might later cause a reaction in public feeling against them for illegal treatment of Roman citizens. He then coolly proposed a punishment certainly more unprecedented than that of Silanus: that the prisoners' possessions be confiscated, that they be imprisoned for life in various towns throughout Italy, that these towns be considered enemies of Rome if the condemned men were allowed to escape, and that an alleviation of the prisoners' sentences be prohibited by law.

Caesar's speech had a marked effect upon the senators. Those who followed were adhering to his proposal; and even many who had gone before altered their opinions in favor of Caesar's because it seemed more advantageous for Cicero who would be "less subject to censure if he did not put the conspirators to death." Cicero, perceiving that senatorial sentiment was swaying, rose to inject his own opinion into the debate. In this Fourth Catilinarian Oration he urged the senators to place the welfare of the Republic, its

79 Supra, Chapt. IV. p. 66
80 Cic. Cat. IV. li; Sall. Cat. 51; Dio xxxvii. 36. 1-2;
81 Plut. Cic. 21. 2; Cic. Att. xii. 21; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 6;
citizens, and themselves before that of their consul. He selflessly exhorted them to vote for the just penalty, and not to fret about his safety or reputation because he was willing to bear any misfortune and danger as long as the dignity and safety of the Senate and Roman people was preserved. He condemned the wicked schemes of the conspirators, and after discussing the merits of the two chief opinions, i.e., of Silanus and Caesar, he suggested that the latter's "proposition seems to have in it injustice if commanded, difficulty if requested." Nevertheless, he went on to say that he was prepared to carry out whatever sentence they agreed upon.

Catulus then threw his support behind the death penalty. But many of the senators were still undecided when the tribune-elect, Marcus Cato, received his turn to speak. Though a very young man, he held the respect of many because of the purity of his personal life, the uprightness of his character, and the sincerity of his convictions. He reasoned that they were not dealing simply with wayward citizens, but with mortal enemies who threatened their liberty, their property, their constitution, and their very lives. It was no time for clemency or compassion, he asserted, when so much of great value was at stake. He forcast that their decision would probably have a great effect upon the army of Catiline. If they acted sternly and energetically, the courage of Catiline's followers would no doubt be shaken.

82 Cic. Cat. IV. 4. 7. 83 Plut. Cic. 21. 3.
84 Vell. Pat. ii. 35. 1-3.
85 Sall. Cat. 52.
The Senate was so greatly swayed by the righteous vigor, unadorned eloquence, and common sense of Cato's oration that it almost unanimously changed to the support of his motion and voted the imposition of the death penalty upon the conspirators. Now with the moral support of the Senate behind him, Cicero determined to carry out the execution straightway. He must have felt this necessary to prevent the possibility of another rescue attempt by some of the conspirators still at large. Accordingly, he instructed the three urban magistrates in charge of the city jail to ready the execution chamber. After posting guards along the Via Sacra which led through the Forum to the prison, he proceeded to the house on the Palatine hill where the chief conspirator was being confined. With a strong guard at his heels and the awed populace looking on, Cicero personally escorted Lentulus down the Sacred Way to the jail; the praetors brought the four other captives in like manner.

Inside the prison complex was a little chamber some twelve feet deep known as the Tullianum. It was in this dark, filthy, foul-smelling pit that the public executioner performed his wretched duties. One by one the five abandoned plotters were lowered into this hideous hole to meet their fate: strangulation.

As Cicero emerged from the jail, he laconically announced to the multitude gathered outside, "Vixerunt (They have lived)"—a sardonic way

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86Veil. Pat. ii. 35. 4; Sall. Cat. 53. 1; Florus Epit. ii. 12. 11.
87App. BCiv. ii. 1. 6.
88Sall. Cat. 55. 1-2; Plut. Cic. 22. 1-2.
89Sall. Cat. 55. 3-6; Florus Epit. ii. 12. 11.
of signifying that they were now dead. Then, accompanied by Rome's leading nobles, he triumphantly strode through the crowds toward his home. **Optimates, Populares, Equites,** and the common citizens all alike openly acknowledged how greatly indebted they were to the eloquent consul for delivering them from such a serious and imminent danger. All along the way he was greeted by the applause and acclamation of the multitudes who wished to salute him, and by curious women peering from their housetops anxious to gaze upon the man who was being hailed as the savior of his country.

Within the next few days, other citizens who were implicated in the conspiracy were rounded up and questioned by the Senate. As no unequivocal evidence was available against these individuals, nothing more severe than public condemnation or suspension from public office and counsel could be decreed. But this official leniency was not observed by many of Rome's noble **patres.** Under the old tradition of unlimited paternal authority (**patria potestas**), several nobles had their erring sons put to death.

Thus, the central goal of Catiline's conspiracy—obtaining control of Rome—had been foiled. Cicero's diligent action and brilliant oratory had effectively broken up the urban sedition, and unified virtually all elements of the Roman citizen body behind the government. With the capital securely under the control of Cicero's conservative coalition, Catiline's schemes had little hope of success.

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90 Plut. Cíc. 22. 2; App. B Civ. ii. 1. 6.
91 Plut. Cíc. 22. 3-4.
Concurrent with the government's success in Rome, its agents were obstructing the conspiratorial plans on the peninsula. Catiline had dispatched his own assistants to various parts of Italy in hope of gaining support for his revolutionary designs. He and Manlius had succeeded in raising an army of some 20,000 men and taking effective control of Etruria, but the other conspiratorial envoys had not fared so well.

They had succeeded in staging a series of outbreaks in late November and early December, but these uprisings were ill-conceived, rashly begun, and feebly supported. The disturbances in Apulia and Brutium were of little account and had easily been quashed by government officials. Those in the Picene and Gallic districts were more serious and had wider backing, but they too had been overcome. Metellus Celer had arrested, tried, and imprisoned the revolutionary supporters in Picenum, and Gaius Murena had done the same in lower Gaul (the firebrand Cassius may have been among those sentenced to rot in a Gallic prison).

Such effective action on the part of the government must have greatly disheartened Catiline and his followers in Etruria. Not knowing of Cicero's victory at Rome, their hopes of success now rested on Lentulus, Cethegus, and the other conspirators in the capital. For if the revolutionary forces could still gain control of Rome, along with Etruria, the other discontented elements on the peninsula might be inspired to rally to Catiline's movement.

He had a considerable force in Etruria, but only about a quarter of these men were properly armed. From this fact it seems safe to

93 App. BCiv. ii. 1. 7.  
94 Sall. Cat. 42.  
95 Ibid. 56. 4.  
96 App. BCiv. ii. 1. 7.
assume that the majority of his followers were the dispossessed or debtor farmers who inhabited the area. They were backing Catiline's revolutionary schemes in hopes of obtaining debt cancellation, new debt laws, and more land when the new order was established. As long as Catiline had a chance of success they could be counted on, but when the chips were down, their loyalty might easily revert to the government and more peaceful means of protest as Cato had predicted.

The hard core of Catiline's army was composed of the Sullan veterans and discontented or ruined members of the radical Populares from Rome. The former were deeply in debt and had failed to make it as farmers; they were looking back longingly to the days of plunder during the civil strife of the Sullan era. The latter were hopelessly in debt like Catiline, and had little or no chance to rise in the cursus honorum. They were anathema to the ruling Optimates, and had neither the following, talent, nor monetary resources of other Populares such as Caesar and Crassus. These two groups could be counted on to stand by Catiline in good times and bad.

Bad times soon arrived, for when the report of Cicero's victory in the capital reached the rebel army, the timid majority took fright as Cato had foretold and quickly dispersed. With only a few thousand hard core followers left and his hope of seizing Rome smashed, Catiline reasoned that the only move left was a retreat to Gaul.

Therefore, he led his loyal troops toward a pass in the Apennines just north of Pistoria. But when he arrived, he found Metellus Celer

97Cic. Cat. II. 3. 5, 9-10. 98Cic. Cat. I. 6. 11.
99Sall. Cat. 57. 1; App. BCiv. ii. 1. 7; Dio xxxvii. 39. 2.
waiting on the other side for his descent. Metellus had learned of Catiline's intentions, and accordingly had made a forced march so that he might block the conspirator's retreat. To add further discomfiture to this calamitous situation, the troops of Antonius were fast approaching Catiline's rear. The rebel force was thus hemmed in by the mountains and Metellus on one side, and by Antonius on the other side.\textsuperscript{100}

Catiline could surrender or fight. The former meant certain death, but even if it had not, there would have been no thought of surrender on Catiline's part. Such a word was foreign to the vocabulary of that ruthless, proud, and audacious man. Thus, he had to fight. The only question was whom: Metellus or Antonius? He chose Antonius, even though this meant turning his back on Gaul and risking battle with a larger force. The Greek historian Cassius Dio suggests that Catiline was hoping that his old friend and former running mate would allow himself to be beaten by the rebel forces.\textsuperscript{101} From what is known of Catiline's character, it seems more likely that he would be motivated by revenge rather than the cowardly hope of escape through a false victory. He certainly could not have appreciated the fact that Antonius had turned his coat and made a deal to support his deadly enemy Cicero. In any case, his decision fell upon the consular army to the south.

He assembled his troops on the plain below the hills and addressed them courageously. Summoning all of the eloquence his soul possessed, he exhorted his men to fight bravely, mindful of their past valor as

\textsuperscript{100}\textsuperscript{117} Sall. Cat. 57. 2-5; Dio xxxvii. 39. 2.

\textsuperscript{101}Dio xxxvii. 39. 2-3.
everything they had dreamed of was at stake: wealth, honor, glory, liberty, the future of their country, and their very lives. He then drew up the men in battle formation and sent away all the horses. There would be no retreat; it was going to be a fight to the finish and all knew it. 102

The government forces were also making ready for battle—but not with Antonius at their front. He complained of illness (could he have been fearful of facing the vicious Catiline in open combat?), and proffered the command to his chief lieutenant Marcus Petreius. The latter was a thirty year veteran of the Roman legions. He knew most of the men in the ranks and was a very able commander. He too exhorted his soldiers to bravery before the battle. He spoke with contempt for the opposing forces, calling them no more than a band of brigands. He raised the spirit of his men to a fighting pitch by reminding them that their country, children, altars and hearths were at stake. 103

The trumpets sounded and the battle commenced. The sanguinary struggle was fierce and desperate to the end: not a man in Catiline's army survived, and all the best fighters in the opposing army were either killed or seriously wounded. Catiline himself fought harder than anyone on the field, advancing farther into the enemy lines than any of his fellow soldiers. 104 In so doing he exhibited the bravery with which he had been able to attract the respect of so many followers.

102 Sall. Cat. 58. - 59. 3.
103 Ibid. 59. 4-6.
104 Ibid. 60-61; Dio xxxvii. 40.
As the Roman historian Lucius Annaeus Florus aptly wrote: "pulcherrima morte, si pro patria sic concidisset (a glorious death, if he had only fallen thus for his country)."\(^{105}\)

The news of the victory was greeted in Rome with mixed emotions: with happiness and relief that the government forces had triumphed and ended the threat of Catiline; but also with grief for the terrible loss of life encountered in the battle. However, there was consolation in the fact that it could have been much worse if Cicero had not foiled the urban phase of the conspiracy.

Catiline met his death within a month after Cicero had executed the urban conspiratorial leaders. Cicero thus left office at the peak of his political power and popularity. He was even hailed as *pater patriae* (the father of his country) through a resolution of the assembly. He was the first Roman to be honored in this manner—an honor which he well deserved for saving the Republic from the pernicious conspiracy of Catiline.\(^{106}\)

\(^{105}\)Florus Epit. ii. 12. 12.

\(^{106}\)App. BCiv. ii. 1. 7; Plut. Cic. 23. 3.
VII. EPILOGUE: CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Even if Cicero had not succeeded in thwarting the deleterious designs of Catiline, a conspiratorial victory could only have been a temporary one. Pompeius Magnus, backed by the resources of the Roman empire, undoubtedly would have returned at the head of his legions and mercilessly crushed the conspirators' new regime in a sanguinary civil war. This probably would have resulted in a Pompeian military dictatorship—something which few republican citizens could have looked forward to with favor. In fact, the threat of just such a development aided Cicero in bringing to the support of the government what he called the coniunctio bonorum omnium. By leading this "union of all good men" to victory over the desperate schemes of the conspirators, Cicero thwarted any desire Pompey might have had of marching to Rome at the head of his legions.\(^1\) By foiling the conspirators' scorching schemes, and thus preventing a subsequent civil war, Cicero saved his fellow citizens from much needless bloodshed, added a few years of life to the republican constitution, and rightfully earned the thanks and praise bestowed upon him.

Nevertheless, Cicero's political accomplishment was only temporary.

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\(^1\)The fact that "pompey's tribune," Metellus Nepos, introduced a bill to recall the general from the East that he might put down Catiline's Etrurian force could indicate that Pompey wanted to return to Rome with his legions (Dio xxxvii. 43. 1.). With such backing, it would be much easier for him to insure senatorial approval for his eastern settlement, and obtain land for his veterans. Plutarch reported that there was great fear in Rome that Pompey was intending to lead his troops on the city and establish a monarchy (Pomp. 43. 1.).
As soon as the danger had passed, his coniunctio splintered upon the renewed factional strife of the Optimates and Populares. The haggard Republic was not to see that period of otium cum dignitate for which its dedicated consul had hoped and worked.

The short-term result of the conspiracy's failure was a strengthening of the position and prestige of the optimate faction. Most of its members had looked askance upon the seditious Catiline all along, while many of the popular leaders had backed the prodigal patrician in his early bids for power; some were even under suspicion of being privy to his conspiratorial designs. Catiline had openly styled himself as a "friend of the people," and had appealed to the same discontented elements of the Roman citizen body which Crassus and Caesar were courting. Thus, the popular front was temporarily stained with the stigma of revolution, while the Optimates emerged from the episode as the party of patriotism and stability.

The story of how the resurgent Optimates foolishly abused their power, thereby forcing Pompey and Caesar down the infamous road to the Rubicon is too familiar to repeat here. The point which must be emphasized is that Cicero, by delaying civil war for a decade, inadvertently provided Caesar with the time he needed to bring his resources up to an equal or superior footing with those of Pompey. In essence then, the long-term result of Catiline's failure to overthrow the republican establishment was Caesar's success: by saving the Republic from the coniuratio of Catiline, Cicero thus preserved it for later dominatio of Caesar.

2Cic. Sest. 45. 98: "Peace with Honor"—in essence, freedom from civil strife.
The general as a dominant factor in Roman politics was an irreversible trend by the Catilinarian era. Pompey was the general of the hour—the soldier-politician who threatened both the Optimates and Populares. The intrigues which occurred in Rome while Pompey was campaigning in the eastern reaches of the empire were motivated by the desire of his fellow senators to strengthen their own positions in opposition to his.

Under the inspired leadership of the "new man" Cicero, the optimate faction was able to obstruct the ingenious schemes of Crassus and Caesar, thus forcing these two "friends of the people" to curb their radical activities for a time. Cicero's conservative coalition likewise occluded Catiline's efforts to obtain power as a popular front candidate; but Catiline refused to curb his radical activities. He had neither the resources of Crassus, nor the time to wait for future military glory like Caesar. Thus, he turned to violent revolution in order to obtain his ends before the return of Pompey could render the initiation of such action impossible. There were enough Romans discontented with the status quo to make Catiline's conspiracy a serious threat to the preservation of the established order.

It was fortunate not only for the optimate dominated government, but for the Republic as a whole, that its highest magistracy was occupied by a statesman of Cicero's caliber. The consul's diligent constancy, vigilant watchfulness, and sagacious perception thwarted the conspirators at every turn. Cicero's dramatic, spine-tingling invectives not only achieved their immediate purposes of arousing the senatores against the pernicious patrician in their midst and alienating the populi from the daring schemes of the plotters, but assuredly procured for himself a preeminent position in the history of oratory.
The political results of Cicero's statesmanship may have only been temporary, but the brilliant orations from his golden tongue and gifted pen are immortal!
Sources


Secondary Works


