that laws which provide secret ballots have deprived the aristocracy of all influence."

Cicero's constitutional writings reveal a humane conservatism. It says a great deal for his intellectual tenacity that he maintained his beliefs during the years when Caesar's astonishing career reached its climax and the pillars of the Republic finally came crashing down.

THE DRIFT TO CIVIL WAR

52-50 BC

During his sole Consulship in 52, Pompey put through a range of reforms. Some were sensibly designed to correct administrative abuses, but others were purely political and suggested that he was considering whether to align himself with Caesar, now within sight of the end of his labors in Gaul, or with the Senate. On the face of it, he still supported Caesar. Despite the displeasure of the optimates, he had arranged for legislation which gave Caesar permission to stand for a second Consulship in absentia. Caesar intended to hold office in 48—very properly observing the convention that a second Consulship could not take place until ten years had elapsed since the first.

The law that had appointed Caesar as governor of Gaul did not allow the Senate to discuss his successor before March of 50. The allocation of provinces for a given year was decided in advance, before the Consuls and Praetors who would receive them were elected. This meant that Caesar could be replaced only by the senior officeholders of 49. Although it was technically feasible for a Consul to take up a governorship while still in office, it was unusual and so in all probability Caesar could count on remaining in his post until the beginning of 48, by which time he could expect to be Consul.

It was essential that he be able to stay in his province until then. If any
interval of time arose between the end of his governorship and the start of his Consular term, and if he were compelled to come to Rome and campaign in person, his legal immunity would lapse and his enemies in the Senate, led by Cato, would undoubtedly bring him to trial for alleged breaches of the law during his first Consulship in 59. If he was found guilty, his career would be brought to a rapid premature conclusion. So Pompey's new law was vital for his political survival. Yet even if Caesar lost his immunity, few believed that he would actually appear in court. More probably, the matter would be settled by force: he would lead his legions into Italy.

Meanwhile, Pompey was still governor of Spain. (In fact, he had had his appointment renewed, although he never left Italy and sent out deputies to administer the province in his place.) So he would be in a position, if the Senate asked, to fight an invading Caesar. The terrible truth was dawning on intelligent people that the days of Sulla and Marius could be returning.

Having provided a guarantee for Caesar with one hand, Pompey apparently withdrew it with the other. As part of a package of measures designed to clean up public life, he promoted a law providing that candidates for office should canvass in person. When Caesar's friends pointed out that this blatantly contradicted the previous law excusing him from this very obligation, the Consul brushed the matter aside. The new legislation was not aimed at Caesar, Pompey claimed, and, to prove it, he added a codicil excluding him by name. But he did so on his own authority and the exception probably did not have legal validity.

A decision taken in Pompey's private life had equally unfriendly implications. After Julia's death, Caesar had hoped that his son-in-law would marry a young relative of his. Instead, Pompey chose a member of the Metellus clan, Cornelia, the daughter of a leading conservative, Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio Nasica. He arranged for his new father-in-law to become his fellow Consul during the last months of his sole term. This demonstrated in the most obvious fashion his rapprochement with the Senate and distancing from Caesar.

At about the same time, Pompey enacted another seemingly innocuous law, which imposed a five-year gap between the holding of a senior office and a subsequent governorship. Candidates for office frequently laid out huge bribes knowing that they could recoup the expenditure a year later by extorting money from their provinces. An immediate payback was now made impossible. In itself, this was a good reform, but it had unpleasant implications for Caesar. When the Senate came to discuss provincial appointments on the due date of March 50, they would not be allowed to choose from the senior officeholders of 49. They could select anyone who had held the Consulship five or more years previously, and their candidate would thus be free to take over the governorship at once rather than wait till the end of 49. The dangerous gap when Caesar would have no official post and so be liable for criminal prosecution had suddenly reappeared. The only escape from the trap was for Caesar to persuade a Tribune to veto any Senatorial decision to accelerate the appointment process in this way—something which in due course he managed to do. From now on he would have to be more vigilant.

What were the real causes of the coming conflict? Plutarch saw the question as essentially one of personal relationships. According to him:

Caesar had long ago decided that he must get rid of Pompey—just as Pompey, of course, had decided to get rid of Caesar. Crassus had been waiting for the outcome of this contest and intended to take on the winner himself, but he had died in Parthia. It was now left for the man who wanted the top position to remove the one who occupied it and for the man who occupied the top position to dispose of his feared rival. In fact, it was only recently that Pompey had come to fear Caesar. Previously he had despised him, feeling that it would be a simple task to put down the man he had raised up. But Caesar had laid his plans from the beginning. . . In the wars in Gaul he had trained his troops and increased his reputation, reaching a height of success from which he was able to compete with Pompey's past achievements.

There is truth in this account, but it is too simply described. It is uncertain when Pompey made his final choice between loyalty to Caesar and joining the optimates to thwart him. This is because he was seldom clear, one suspects even to himself, about his true political intentions. He had a way of getting himself into morally uncomfortable positions from which he hoped to extricate himself without anyone noticing. As a result it was
often hard to know what he wanted and he pleased nobody. Caesar's readiness to test the constitution, its limits, and even beyond them, disconcerted the former general. The sole Consulship had enabled Pompey to reassert himself and had given him an opportunity to edge slyly away from Caesar into the arms of the Senate.

As for Caesar, his aims and the precise nature of his relationship with Pompey were equally difficult to fathom. His public line was that he was simply claiming his rights and he used studiously moderate language in putting them forward. He must have realized that his new preeminence would inevitably lead to a clash with Pompey, but it would seem he anticipated this rather than sought it. What is uncertain is whether the repeated attempts he made at compromise were public relations (that is, he knew they would fail) or whether he genuinely hoped for a peaceful solution.

Of course, there was much more to the origins of the civil war than a clash of individual wills, important as that was. Its inception can be traced much farther back to the long struggle between the *optimates* and the *populares* which opened with the attempted reforms of Tiberius Gracchus almost a century before: between those who saw the need to modernize the Republic and those who stood for the established order of things. Marius, Sulla, even Catiline in his desperado way had tried to resolve matters, but they had all failed. Sooner or later a final decision between the contending sides had to be reached.

The new rules on governorships were a tedious irritation to Cicero. Former Consuls were being dragged out of retirement to run the empire. One of these was Cicero and much against his will he accepted the governorship of Cilicia in present-day southern Turkey. He made it clear he would do so for the minimum time possible, twelve months; he would resist any idea of an extension. “My one consolation for this colossal bore,” he told Atticus, “is that I expect it will only last a year.”

Despite his irritation Cicero rose to the challenge. As during his Quaestorship in Sicily many years before, he was an able, hardworking and fair-minded administrator. Following Crassus’s defeat and death, the region was uneasily anticipating incursions, perhaps a full-scale invasion, by the aroused and victorious Parthians. Since he himself had practically no military experience, he made sure that his Legates, or deputies, did.

One of these was his brother, Quintus, whose background both as a governor and as a general in Gaul would make him an invaluable adviser and aide. Another was the able Caius Pomptinus, who had led the ambush at the Milvian Bridge during Cicero’s Consulship and had later efficiently put down a revolt of the Allobroges in Gaul in the wake of Catilina’s conspiracy.

On the domestic as well as the political front, the two brothers were leaving trouble behind them. They spent the May Day holiday, a time of symbolic misrule when servants and slaves were waited on by their masters, at Quintus’s hideaway farm near Arpinum. Pomponia decided to stage a monumental supper. Her *casus belli* was Quintus’s continuing fondness for his freedman, Statius—a subject on which in principle she and her brother-in-law agreed. Cicero told Atticus, Pomponia’s brother, what had happened:

When we arrived, Quintus said in the kindest way: “Pomponia, will you ask the women in and I’ll get the boys? [i.e., the slaves and servants].” Both what he said and his intention and manner were perfectly pleasant, at least it seemed so to me. Pomponia however answered in our hearing, “I am a guest here myself.” That, I imagine, was because Statius had gone ahead of us to see to our luncheon. Quintus said to me: “There! This is the sort of thing I have to put up with all the time. You’ll say, “What is there in that, pray?” A good deal. I myself was quite shocked. Her words and manner were gratuitously rude. I concealed my feelings, painful as they were, and we all took our places except the lady. Quintus however had some food sent to her, which she refused. In a word, I felt my brother could not have been more forbearing nor your sister ruder... [Quintus] came over to see me the following day. He told me that Pomponia had refused to spend the night with him and that her attitude when she said good-bye was just as I had seen it. You may tell her to her face that in my judgment her manners that day left something to be desired.

Tullia, now probably in her mid- to late twenties, presented another difficulty. The marriage with her second husband, Crassipes, had not been a success and about this time they were divorced. Cicero was worried
about Tullia's future marital prospects, although—or perhaps because—she appears to have been quite a strong-minded young woman.

Leaving his domestic affairs in Terentia's hands, Cicero and his entourage made their leisurely way south to the port of Brundisium, where they were to take a ship for Athens and the east. Marcus and young Quintus, who were in their early and middle teens, were old enough to accompany their fathers and joined the expedition. Cicero called in at his villa at Cumae, where he was gratified to receive a visit from his old rival Hortensius, who had come a long way to see him despite being in poor health. Cicero pressed him to do all he could to prevent an extension of his Cilician penance, if anyone were unkind enough to propose such a thing in the Senate.

Cicero found widespread anxiety about the future among all he met. No chief political players had shown their hands. Cicero's own view remained much as it had always been; he preached moderation, compromise, and reconciliation. He was pleased to have the chance to talk things over with Pompey in the few days he spent with him at his villa outside the Greek city of Tarentum and was relieved to find that he understood where his duty lay, 'I leave him in the most patriotic frame of mind,' he told Atticus, 'fully prepared to be a bulwark against the dangers threatening.'

For all his reservations about the die-hard optimates, Cicero's deepest instincts were to support the Senate against Caesar. But he was seriously embarrassed by the fact that he had allowed himself to yield to Caesar's blandishments; he owed him many favors and, worst of all, the large loan of 800,000 sesterces Caesar had made him in 54 had yet to be liquidated. He was desperate to return the money to Caesar, but it was an awkward moment to have to do so. His personal finances were coming under additional strain, for his outlay as governor promised to be high and he would not be earning any money while he was absent.

It was the worst possible time to be away from Rome and Cicero made sure that he was kept fully up-to-date about the latest developments. He arranged for Marcus Caelius to be his political correspondent. Despite Caelius's rascally past, when he had been a friend of Clodius and a lover of his sister Clodia, Cicero had always had a soft spot for him. Even if he exercised little judgment over his own life, he was an amusing and well-informed commentator on the actions and motives of others. Caelius accepted the commission with boyish enthusiasm. Once he realized that what Cicero wanted was not gossip, rumors or even news stories but intelligent commentary, he proceeded to offer just that. He was candid as well as witty. When Cicero told him he would be meeting Pompey at Tarentum, Caelius warned him with unkind accuracy that Pompey "is apt to say one thing and think another, but is not clever enough to keep his real aims out of sight."

Caelius was not the kind of man to forgo his expectation of a return for his services. He had a tendency to pester Cicero with inappropriate requests, at one time asking him to dedicate a book to him. Elected Aedile for 50, he was keen to stage some impressive games (one of an Aedile's main duties) and asked Cicero to send him some Cilician leopards. This would have entailed exactly the kind of abuse of office which Cicero denounced in others and disapproved of. Pressed into a corner, Cicero claimed to have engaged hunters to find some. This was probably a white lie and he told a joke to extract himself. "The creatures are in remarkably short supply, and those we have are complaining bitterly because they are the only beings in my province who have to fear designs against their safety. So they are reported to have decided to leave the province and emigrate to Caria."

After a long journey which included stopovers in Athens and the island of Delos, Cicero set foot in his province on July 31, 51, exactly three months after his departure from Rome. He was in a gloomy frame of mind and felt homesick. "When all's said," he wrote to Atticus, "this isn't the kind of thing I'm pining for, it's the world, the Forum, Rome, my house, my friends. But I'll stick it out as best I can so long as it's only for a year."

Cilicia was a large mixed bag of a territory stretching along the southern coast of Asia Minor to the Amanus Mountains, which provided a natural frontier with Syria. It also included the island of Cyprus which Cato had annexed a few years previously. (There had been no very obvious reason for this, except, presumably, that the island was too small to qualify as a province in its own right and someone had to look after it.) In western Cilicia mountains ran down to the sea and an abundance of wood made it a center for shipbuilding. In the lawless years after the decline of the Seleucid Empire, the region became a base for the pirate fleets which had disrupted trade and commerce for more than a century until Pompey
solved the pirate problem once and for all in 67. He had acted with comparative leniency and settled some of the former buccaneers in the Cilician town of Soli. In the east of the province lay its main city, the port of Tarsus, and a fertile coastal plain crisscrossed by rivers. Not far to the south was the site of the battle of Issus, one of Alexander the Great’s victories over the Persians.

Cicero insisted from the outset that he meant to run a clean administration. He did his best to make sure that no provincial had to spend money entertaining him and his staff. He opened his own quarters to local people (or at least to those “whom he found agreeable”), where he offered generous if not lavish hospitality. There was no gatekeeper at his official residence to deter visitors and Cicero had a habit of rising early so that he was ready at first light to greet those who came to pay their respects. Following the advice he had once given Quintus during his governorship, he kept his temper in public and was careful not to inflict insulting punishments. He avoided traditional brutalities such as beating offenders with rods or stripping them of their clothes. As he intended, this behavior had a powerful effect on local opinion, and Cicero made sure that the political world in Rome knew of it too. He was keenly aware of the damage done to Roman interests by bad government and meant to set an example for others to follow.

He also wanted to draw the sharpest possible distinction between his regime and that of his predecessor, Clodius’s brother, Appius Claudius Pulcher. (It must sometimes have seemed to Cicero that, wherever he turned, he could not escape this demining and hostile family.) Appius’s policy as governor had been simply to enrich himself. Cicero was shocked when he saw the consequences. Writing while on the road, he described a “forlorn and, without exaggeration, permanently ruined province.” Local communities had been forced to sell prospective tax revenues to tax farmers in order to meet Appius’s rapacity for cash. “In a phrase, these people are absolutely tired of their lives.”

However, Cicero had no intention of broaching these issues directly with Appius, to whom he wrote before his arrival with scrupulous politeness. He had learned from bitter experience that one baited a Clodius at one’s peril. He tried to arrange a meeting for a debriefing, but Appius seems to have done his best to avoid Cicero and showed signs of reluctance to lay down his authority. While knowing perfectly well that the new governor had arrived at one end of the province, he continued to hold assizes at the other.

Cicero’s patience was sorely tried and eventually he wrote to Appius in terms of firm but courteous indirect protest. He also inquired nervously of the whereabouts of three military cohorts.

Malicious persons . . . said you were holding assizes in Tarsus, making both administrative and judicial decisions, although you had reason to think that your successor had arrived . . . Their talk had no effect on me. . . . But I must own candidly that I am disturbed to find three cohorts missing from my exiguous force, and those the most nearly up to strength, and to be ignorant of their whereabouts.

Cicero was right to be worried about the state of the armed forces at his disposal. Persistent reports were coming in that the Parthians were on the move and he would be expected to do what he could to resist them. The allied kingdoms, which Pompey had arranged as buffer states in his eastern settlement, looked increasingly unreliable.

Cicero urgently needed to lay his hands on the missing soldiers. Cilicia was garrisoned with two legions, but both were under strength. Some had been mutinous, although Appius had eventually pacified them by settling their arrears of pay. When campaigning abroad, the Romans usually employed as soldiers only their own citizens and relied on local levies for cavalry and lightly armed soldiers; but Cilicia was a recent acquisition and had no tradition of supplying troops to the Romans. Recruitment promised to be difficult. Cælius in Rome was just as worried about the military situation as Cicero was, but he warned that there would be little sympathy back home for his predicament. “Your army is hardly capable of defending a single pass. Unfortunately nobody allows for this: a man holding public office is expected to cope with any emergency, as though every item in complete preparedness had been put at his disposal.”

Cicero joined his army and did his best to enlist locals. As a precaution, he sent the boys, Marcus and Quintus, north to the friendly kingdom of Galatia (in modern-day Turkey), where he hoped they would be out of harm’s way at the court of its ruler, Deiotarus. Deiotarus sent him a Roman-style legion of Galatians, who turned out to be surprisingly good soldiers.
As the autumn came on, the news grew worse. The Parthians were reported to have crossed the Euphrates and there was talk that the King of Armenia was planning to invade Cappadocia, an allied kingdom to the northeast of Cilicia, in support. No word had come from the nearest province, Syria, where the new governor was the stubborn and luckless Bibulus, Caesar’s fellow Consul in 59. In fact, it was not even clear if he had arrived yet to take up his duties. Cicero commented dryly: “My best resource is winter.” He positioned his troops in the Taurus Mountains, from where he could either march north to meet a threat to Cappadocia or descend into the flatlands of eastern Cilicia near the Syrian border. In a dispatch to the Senate in mid-September he urgently appealed for more troops.

The young King of Cappadocia, Ariobarzanes, who styled himself “the Pious and Pro-Roman,” came to see the new Roman governor in a highly nervous state. He had recently inherited the throne after his father’s assassination and told Cicero that he had uncovered a plot against his own life. The idea was to install his brother, who would take an anti-Roman line. The Queen Mother was implicated and a semi-independent principality was on the point of open rebellion. Cicero advised him to take strong measures to punish the conspirators. But although Ariobarzanes asked for troops, none could be spared. It was agreed that the king could threaten their use, if necessary. As so often with young men, Cicero got on well with Ariobarzanes and when they were not talking politics they found time to discuss the differences between the Roman and Galatian systems of augury.

Hearing that the Parthian force was some way off, Cicero led his army, which he now thought “tolerably well provided,” forward towards the Syrian frontier. His cavalry fought off a brief and probably exploratory Parthian incursion. By the time he arrived at the Syrian border he heard that Caius Cassius Longinus had beaten the enemy at Antioch on the other side of the Amanus Mountains. A dour character, Cassius, Marcus Junius Brutus’s brother-in-law, was a good soldier and had taken charge of Syria after disaster had befallen Crassus at Carrhae.

Cicero learned that Bibulus had at last arrived in Syria. He later claimed (to some derision) that it had been his own presence close by that had emboldened Cassius to act. With the Parthian threat blunted at least for the time being, Cicero then led a punitive expedition against the Free Cilicians, mountain communities that had never fully acknowledged the rule of Rome. He did not take himself seriously as a general but knew that enough fighting to warrant a Triumph (or, as he called it lightheartedly, “a sprig of laurel”) would enhance his prestige in Rome.

The brief campaign was a success. His soldiers hailed him in the field as imperator, or Commander-in-Chief, an honor given to a general for leading his army to victory in person, which its recipient could use after his name (as Cicero later did when writing to Caesar). From the account he gave Atticus, it looks as if the leading role was played by Pompatusus. “On October 13 we made a great slaughter of the enemy, carrying and burning places of great strength, Pompatusus coming up at night and myself in the morning. For a few days we were encamped near Issus in the very spot where Alexander, a considerably better general than either you or I, pitched his camp against Darius.” He was not altogether displeased to hear that Bibulus had attempted some fighting of his own on the Syrian side of the mountains, out of jealousy he suspected, and come to grief, losing an entire cohort.

Cicero then moved against the well-defended Free Cilician fortress of Pindeinissum and a full-scale siege ensued, which lasted some weeks. A moat was dug and a huge mound with a high siege tower and penthouses was erected. Siege artillery was deployed and many archers. Eventually, on or about December 17, the town fell with no Roman loss of life and all the plunder was handed over to the army. “A merry Saturnalia was had by all,” Cicero told Atticus, referring to the Christmas-like winter festival which took place at this time. The campaigning season now ended and the gratified and probably grateful imperator handed over his army to Quintus, who marched it away to winter quarters. Even if he was not awarded a Triumph, he could reasonably hope for a consolation prize. the lesser victory celebration called an Ovation.

Cicero’s vow to govern eventhandedly was severely tested in the coming months. He had set out what he believed to be the principles of good administration in the letter of guidance he had sent his brother during his governorship of Asia from 61 to 59; we may conjecture that Quintus was watching closely to see if Cicero would live up to his own precepts.

One of the most common complaints by provincials was the tax burden. Here Cicero had no sympathy with them, for in his view taxes were a
payment for peace and tranquillity and for the rule of law. A more embarrassing problem, as Cicero well knew, was caused by the way public dues were collected. In the absence of a civil service, Rome sold the right to collect taxes to the highest bidder. Tax farmers often colluded with governors to make exorbitant profits. This was a subject where Cicero had to tread carefully, for he had built his career in part as a spokesman for businessmen and traders, and the local tax farmers were expecting favorable treatment.

Cicero knew that some form of compromise would be necessary. He disguised his determination to see fair play by assiduous politeness. The tax farmers complained that people would not pay what they owed, and the provincials said that they could not. The governor insisted that debts must be settled, but he allowed plenty of time for repayment and set interest rates at the legal maximum (often breached) of 1 percent per month. The provincials found this to be fair. And the tax farmers were happy enough too, for they were now sure to get their money, even if at a lower rate of return than they had originally expected. To smooth the path, Cicero buttered them up, asking them to dinner parties and doing all he could to flatter their self-esteem. At the same time he did his best to keep his staff under control, somewhat to their annoyance as they had to forgo customary pickings. He also took venal local officials aside and persuaded them quietly to repay funds they had acquired illegally.

Throughout his governorship he was never too busy to attend to developments in Rome. The optimates were pursuing their simple, single and disastrous policy of preventing Caesar from moving seamlessly from his Gallic posting to a second Consulship. They made repeated attempts to have the question of his successor discussed in the Senate, but these came to nothing, as they were invariably vetoed by one or more Tribunes in Caesar's interest (and pay). Pompey let it be known that he felt it would be unfair to consider the question of Caesar's replacement before March of the following year, the date when it would be legally permissible to do so. The disgruntled Faction, as Caesar nicknamed the optimates, had to settle for that. In an endless stream of letters Cicero pressed for compromise, but absence had weakened his influence. Cælius became Aedile in January 50, and concentrated on putting down fraud in the administration of the water supply (on which dry subject he published a well-received pamphlet). But he still found the time and energy to write to Cicero, who read his reports with mounting anxiety.

As often happens when cataclysm approaches, a fruitlessly busy inertia paralyzed the political community. Cælius wrote in February:

Our Consuls are paragons of conscientiousness—to date they have not succeeded in getting a single decree through the Senate except about fixing the date of the Latin Festival. ... The stagnation of everything here is indescribable. If I didn't have a battle on with the shopkeepers and inspectors of conduits, a coma would have seized the community. Unless the Parthians liven you up a bit over there, we are as dead as dormice.

Cælius had high expectations for his and Cicero's mutual friend, Curio, who became a Tribune in 50. He stood for election on a fiercely anti-Caesar platform and even threatened to raise again the issue of the Campanian lands, which had landed Cicero in such trouble with Caesar a few years previously. His efforts, however, were ineffective. The reason for this became clear only later: Caesar was secretly negotiating with him to change sides in return for settling his colossal debts. Curio cleverly created a smoke screen to cover his shift of allegiance and, although he soon began defending Caesar's interest, it was a while before anyone realized that he was taking instructions from Gaul.

Military operations having been satisfactorily completed, Cicero turned his attention to administrative matters. Nothing that Appius could do or say surprised him, but he was greatly taken aback when he uncovered a financial scam that he eventually traced back to Marcus Brutus, the son of Servilia, Cato's half-sister and at one time Caesar's mistress. Brutus had a reputation for honesty and austerity. An intellectual devoted to Greek philosophy, he was, at thirty-four, the diametrical opposite of disreputable contemporaries such as Curio or Cælius. He modeled himself to some extent on his uncompromisingly virtuous half-uncle, Cato, and like him did not believe in half-measures. Caesar (whom gossip wrongly whispered was his natural father) once said acutely of Brutus: "What he wants is hard to say, but when he wants it, he wants it badly."
Brutus had won the Quaestorship in 54 and served in Cilicia under Appius Claudius. Cicero was astonished to discover that this paragon of integrity, through some front men, had loaned a large sum of money to the town of Salamis in Cyprus at the extortionate interest rate of 4 percent a month (i.e., 60 percent compound interest over a year). That "very impecunious monarch" Deiotarus of Galatia was also in Brutus's debt and finding it almost impossible to keep up his repayments. This was all the more shocking given that Senators were, in theory at least, barred from moneylending.

When Brutus asked Cicero to help his agents enforce the debts, the governor's first reaction was to refuse to use his public authority for private ends. He reminded Brutus of his decision to set a 1 percent interest rate for loans in Cilicia. Privately he found the situation very awkward. "I shall be sorry to have incurred his displeasure," Cicero told Atticus in February, "but far sorrier to find that he is not the man I took him for." Matters were not helped by Brutus's unwillingness to give any ground. "He is apt in his letters to me to take a brusque, arrogant, ungracious tone even when asking a favor."

It was indeed a scandalous business: at one point Brutus's people had used the cavalry to barricade the Senate of Salamis in their Senate House, as a result of which five Senators had starved to death. Cicero could not get the affair out of his mind and it dominated his correspondence with Atticus, at wearisome length. Atticus was a part of the problem, for he took Brutus's side and, in a rare note of criticism of his friend, Cicero wrote: "My dearest Atticus, you have really cared too much for Brutus in this matter and not enough for me."

The quick passage of time saved Cicero from having to take definitive action and he bequeathed the problem to his successor. We can guess that the outcome was unsatisfactory for the Salaminians, for Brutus accompanied the succeeding governor as one of his deputies.

With the waning of the Parthian threat, Marcus and young Quintus returned from Cappadocia and continued their education under a short-tempered tutor. In his father's absence, marooned in the snowy Taurus Mountains with the army, young Quintus was proving a handful, but, his uncle told Atticus, "I shall keep him on a tighter rein." It seems that the two got on badly and, to judge by later developments, efforts to discipline the teenager failed. On March 17, Cicero conducted the sixteen-year-old Quintus's coming-of-age ceremony in his father's absence. Separation had done little to improve the elder Quintus's marriage. The quarrel at Arpinium had had deep roots and Quintus was now meditating on divorce from Pomponia, Atticus's difficult sister. He confided this to his freedman, Statius, who went around saying that Cicero approved (perhaps he was getting his own back on Pomponia, who cordially disliked him for his closeness to her husband). Cicero was furious and assured Atticus that this was the last thing he wanted. "Let me say only one thing: so far from wishing the bond between us to be in any way relaxed, I should welcome as many and as intimate links with you as possible," he wrote to Atticus, "though those of affection, and of the closest, exist already. As for Quintus, I have often found that he is apt to speak rather harshly in these matters, and again I have often mollified his irritation. I think you know this. During this foreign trip or rather service of ours I have repeatedly seen him flare up and calm down again. What he may have written to Statius I cannot say. Whatever step he proposed to take in such a matter he ought not to have written to a freedman."

The impact of these marital difficulties was greatest on young Quintus, who was very close to his mother and seems to have taken her side. While he was away Cicero allowed him to open his father's mail, in case it contained anything that needed urgent attention, and one day the boy stumbled on a reference to the possible divorce. He broke down in tears. His growing estrangement from his family in the coming years may have been partly caused by the difficulty of any talented boy growing up in the shadow of a famous relative, but perhaps a more pressing motive lay in what he saw as the ill treatment of a much-loved mother.

A worried Cicero wrote to Atticus: "He does seem very fond of his mother, as he should be, and extraordinarily fond of you. But the boy's nature, though gifted, is complex and I have plenty to do in guiding it." With Cicero's encouragement, Quintus played a part in helping to reconcile his parents. The divorce did not take place. Serious trouble was also brewing closer to home. In June 50 Cicero broached a highly sensitive topic with Atticus, writing in veiled terms and in Greek. Terentia had sent him out to Cilicia to see Cicero and his behavior had been strange. "There's something else about which I must write to you en langue voilée, and you must lay your nose to the scent. From the
confused and incoherent way he talked the other day, I formed the impression that my wife’s freedman (you know to whom I refer) has cooked the accounts regarding [a property purchase]. I am afraid that something—you’ll take my meaning. Please look into it. . . . I can’t put all I fear into words.” The implication is that his wife was somehow involved.

The divorced Tullia had now settled on a new husband and she could hardly have made a more unsatisfactory choice. Her eye had fallen on a handsome young aristocrat, Publius Cornelius Lentulus Dolabella. A reckless and womanizing playboy, he was not at all the match Cicero had been hoping for.

Tullia seems usually to have gotten her way with her indulgent father, and on this occasion he knew little of what was afoot until she and her mother presented him with a fait accompli. He made the best of a bad situation, although the marriage placed him in Appius Claudius’s bad books just when he thought he had gotten out of them. As luck would have it, Dolabella was in the process of bringing Appius to trial on a treason charge. “Here I am in my province paying Appius all kinds of compliments, when out of the blue I find his prosecutor becoming my son-in-law!”

In the summer of 50, much to his relief, Cicero had reached the end of his posting and set off for Rome, despite the brief threat of another Parthian invasion. On the journey home he had plenty of time to think about the political situation he was going to find on his return. He called at Rhodes and Athens and wrote an affectionate letter to his “darling and much-longed-for Terentia,” complimenting her on her letters to him, which “covered all items most carefully,” and asking her to come and meet him in Brundisium if her health allowed. He reached the port in late November at the same time as his wife arrived at the city gates: they met in the market square. The suspicions he had raised with Atticus had evidently been lulled, at least for the time being. He was also coming to terms with Tullia’s new husband, the playboy Dolabella. “We all find him charming, Tullia, Terentia, myself,” he told Atticus. “He is as clever and agreeable as you please. Other characteristics, of which you are aware, we must put up with.”

Cicero was in no hurry to reach Rome and did not arrive there until early January 49. He would need to retain his governor’s imperium until he crossed the city boundary, if he were to be awarded a Triumph or an Ovation, and so he stayed at Pompey’s grand country house outside the capital, accompanied by his official guard of lictors, their axes now wreathed in laurel because of his title of imperator. Cicero was back where he felt he belonged, and he did not intend to be inactive.
In the great impending crisis Cicero cast himself in the role of a disinterested mediator and bent all his efforts towards reconciling the parties. Looking back a few weeks later, he told Tiro: “From the day I arrived in Rome all my views, words and actions were unceasingly directed towards peace. But a strange madness was abroad.”

Caelius reported in June that “Pompey the Great’s digestion is now in such a poor way that he has trouble finding anything to suit him.” This may have been the preliminary symptom of a serious illness that struck him down in the summer. For a time his life was thought to be in danger. Prayers were offered for him across Italy and when he recovered, festivals were staged in towns and cities in his honor. This led Pompey to believe that he would have overwhelming public support against Caesar in the event of a conflict. “I have only to stamp my foot on the ground anywhere in Italy and armies of infantry and armies of cavalry will rise up,” Plutarch reports him as saying. But his popularity was wide rather than deep, for most people preferred peace to war. When Pompey reemerged into public life he seemed to have lost some of his old energy. Cicero noticed his lack of spirit and wondered about his future health.

Writing to Cicero in August 50, Caelius foresaw “great quarrels ahead in which strength and steel will be arbiters.” He claimed to be uncertain which way to jump; he had obligations to Caesar and his circle and, as for the optimates, he “loved the cause but hated the men.” Caelius was preparing to change sides and follow Curio onto Caesar’s payroll, but his relationship with Cicero does not seem to have suffered.

The Senate ordered both Pompey and Caesar to contribute a legion each for an expeditionary force against the Parthians to avenge Crassus. Pompey ungenerously decided that his legion would be the one he had loaned to Caesar sometime before for his Gallic campaigns, which meant that Caesar would have to give up two. The officers sent to fetch these legions reported, so inaccurately that one has to wonder if they acted with conscious warmongering deceit, much dissatisfaction and low morale among Caesar’s troops.

Cicero was deeply depressed by the direction of events, which he tended to see in personal terms. In a letter to Atticus written from Athens, the first of many such, he agonized as to how he should react.

There looms ahead a tremendous contest between them. Each counts me as his man, unless by any chance one of them is pretending—for Pompey has no doubts, judging correctly that I strongly approve of his present politics [that is, his rapprochement with the Senate]. What is more, I received letters from both of them at the same time as yours, conveying the impression that neither has a friend in the world he values more than myself. But what am I to do? I don’t mean in the last resort, for if war is to decide the issue, I am clear that defeat with one is better than victory with the other. What I mean are the practical steps that will be taken when I get back to prevent [Caesar’s] candidacy in absentia [for the Consulship] and to make him give up his army. . . . There is no room for fence-sitting.

When he asserted his preference for Pompey, Cicero was being truthful. For all his ditherings in the months and years ahead, his first priority was and remained the salvation of the Republic and, it followed, opposition to Caesar. In this he remained unalterable. However, fence-sit he did. He did not have the temperament for war and was not physically courageous—a failing to which he half-admitted: “While I am not cowardly in facing dangers; I am in guarding against them.”
His personal relations with the optimates continued to be unsatisfactory. Cato objected to Cicero's request for a Triumph. It is hard to understand why he took this line, at a time when it was self-evidently in the optimates' interest to ensure that Cicero was on their side. Perhaps Cato simply assumed that was the case, but, aware of Cicero's instinct for compromise and reconciliation, preferred to keep him at arm's length from the Senatorial leadership. Caesar immediately noticed the error of judgment and wrote to Cicero, sympathizing and offering his support.

Cicero was highly critical in private of Pompey and the Senate's handling of affairs. It was an old complaint. Caesar had not been stopped during his Consulship. He, Cicero, had been betrayed into exile. Resistance to the First Triumvirate had been feeble. The shortsighted extremism of Cato and his friends was inappropriate when dealing with "a man who fears nothing and is ready for everything." Cicero was even beginning to wonder how the optimates would behave in the future if they were victorious. On Atticus's advice, he stayed away from Rome, using as convenient cover the need to maintain his imperium in case he won his Triumph.

In Cicero's opinion, peace was the only rational policy to obtain it would mean compromise. In this he was in tune with public opinion and with the majority of Senators. On December 1, in his last coup as Tribune, Curio persuaded the Senate to vote on his proposal that both Caesar and Pompey should resign their commands and disband their armies. This ingenious motion was designed to expose the true state of feeling in the chamber. It was carried by 370 votes to 22. Curio went straight to a meeting of the General Assembly, where he was cheered and garlanded. The crowd pelted him with flowers. He had won the day: there would be no war.

This put the optimates in an awkward position. If they did not act quickly it would be too late. After a night's reflection, the presiding Consul, Caius Claudius Marcellus, supported by the Consuls-Elect, but with no Senate authorization (nor that of the other Consul, Lucius Aemilius Paulus, whom Caesar had bought with a bribe of 9 million denarii) went to Pompey, handed him a sword and asked him to take command of the Italian legions. His task was to save the Republic. Pompey accepted the invitation.

Curio's Tribuneship ended on December 12 and his place was taken by his longtime friend Mark Antony. The movement for peace was still flowing strongly and Caesar, partly for reasons of public relations but also because he may have preferred a negotiated solution, put forward some compromise proposals, well calculated to appeal to the Senatorial majority.

Events now accelerated beyond anyone's power to control them. Pompey went to Campania to raise troops and met Cicero by chance on a country road. They went together to Formiae and talked from two in the afternoon until evening. Pompey almost persuaded Cicero that a firm approach was the right one; if challenged, Caesar would probably step back and, if not, the forces of the Republic under his leadership would easily defeat him. A couple days later a gloomy Cicero sent Atticus a well-reasoned statement of possible outcomes. His prognosis included the one that actually occurred—a surprise attack by Caesar before the Senate and Pompey were ready to fight him. Cicero even wondered whether it would be possible to hold Rome.

The Faction shared Pompey's optimism. At the time and later they have been represented as hell-bent on war. This was probably not the case, for it would have meant handing over control of events to their general, and they did not trust him enough to want to see that happen. They calculated that an ultimatum backed by force would deter Caesar from seeking the Consulship that summer. This would have been a rational policy if the balance of military power had been clearly in the Senate's favor. It was not. As early as August, Caelius had seen that, although Pompey had access in the medium term to far greater resources both by sea and land, Caesar's "army is incomparably superior." It is telling that once hostilities actually started, Cato altered his tune and told the Senate that even slavery was preferable to war. Clearly he too could see where the real balance of power lay.

Cicero stayed for a time at Formiae and then made his way to Rome for consultations. The Senate appeared to be willing to give him his Triumph after all and so he lodged at Pompey's villa outside the city. The Senate's mood (or at any rate that of those who attended its meetings) had hardened so far as the political situation was concerned. On January 1, 49, the incoming Consuls won a large majority for an ultimatum instructing Caesar to disband his legions on pain of outlawry.

Cicero had not given up hope of a compromise and was determined to exploit the widespread antiwar sentiment. Three days later he attended an
informal meeting at Pompey's villa and once again argued for a peaceful solution. According to Plutarch, he supported an offer by Caesar to give up Gaul and most of his army in exchange for retaining Illyricum and two legions while waiting for his second Consulship. When Caesar's supporters suggested he would even be satisfied with one legion, Pompey wavered. But Cato shouted that he was making a fool of himself again and letting himself be taken in. The proposal was dropped. On January 7 the Senate passed the 'Final Act.' Mark Antony and a fellow Tribune, who had been tirelessly wielding their veto on Caesar's behalf and making themselves highly unpopular in the process, were warned to leave town. They fled from Rome, together with Curio and Caelius, and arrived three days later at Caesar's camp in Italian Gaul.

Although he continued to make peace offers, Caesar knew that it was time for action. He moved with all his famous 'celerity.' Most of his army was on the other side of the Alps and he had only a single legion with him in Italian Gaul, where he was waiting near the frontier for news. Suetonius gives a vivid account of Caesar's next move.

He at once sent a few troops ahead with all secrecy, and disarmed suspicion by himself attending a theatrical performance, inspecting the plans of a school for gladiators which he proposed to build and dining as usual among a crowd of guests. But at dusk he borrowed a pair of mules from a bakery near headquarters, harnessed them to a gig and set off quietly with a few of his staff. His lights went out, he lost his way and the party wandered about aimlessly for some hours; but at dawn found a guide who led them on foot along narrow lanes, until they came to the right road. Caesar overtook his advanced guard at the river Rubicon, which formed the frontier between Italian Gaul and Italy. Well aware how critical decision confronted him, he turned to his staff, remarking: "We may still draw back but, across that little bridge, we will have to fight it out."

When Caesar crossed the river, he quoted a phrase from the Greek comic playwright Menander, "Let the dice fly high," and rushed south towards Rome. He had long been known for his luck and he would need it now.

It is to Caesar's credit as a leader that his soldiers and their officers loyally followed him. Only one senior commander defected, Titus Labienus, who had helped him with the Rabirius trial in 63 and been the most able of his deputies in Gaul. They went back a long way together and it must have been a personal blow.

Caesar's troops met no resistance and town after town fell to him. In Rome discussions were under way on recruitment and the distribution of provinces. The news of Caesar's rapid advance brought them to an abrupt halt. Pompey declared, to widespread amazement and dismay, that the government should evacuate Rome. Plutarch's account captures the fevered atmosphere:

Since nearly all Italy was in confusion it was hard to understand the course of events. Refugees from outside the city poured in from all directions, while its inhabitants were rushing out of it and abandoning the city. Conditions were so stormy and disordered that the better class of person could exert little control and insubordinate elements were strong and very difficult for the authorities to keep in check. It was impossible to check the panic. No one would allow Pompey to follow his own judgment and everyone bombarded him with their own experiences—whether of fear, distress or perplexity. As a result contradictory decisions were made on one and the same day and it was impossible for Pompey to get accurate intelligence about the enemy since many people reported to him whatever they happened to hear and were upset when he did not believe them. In these circumstances Pompey issued a decree declaring a state of civil war. He ordered all Senators to follow him and announced that he would regard anybody who stayed behind as being on Caesar's side. Late in the evening he left Rome.

On January 17 large numbers of Senators and magistrates accompanied him en route to Campania, abandoning the city so hurriedly that they forgot to take the contents of the Treasury with them. A few days later, Caesar entered Rome.

Cicero met Pompey just before his departure and recalled a couple of months later that he had found him "thoroughly cowed. Nothing he did after that was to my liking. He went on blundering now here now there." Cicero was shocked as much by the incompetence and rashness of the optimates as by the catastrophe itself. On January 18 he wrote to Atticus from
the outskirts of Rome: “I have decided on the spur of the moment to leave before daybreak so as to avoid looks or talk, especially with these laureled licitors. As for what is to follow, I really don’t know what I am doing or going to do, I am so confounded by our crazy way of going on.” He retreated to his villa at Formiae, where he could watch developments in safety and consider his next move. A few days later he accepted Pompey’s request that he take responsibility for northern Campania and the seacoast. He could not decently refuse, but he assumed his duties without enthusiasm.

Cicero was naturally worried about his family’s safety. His imagination ran riot as he thought of what the “barbarians” might do to Terentia and Tullia when they took Rome. Perhaps, he suggested to Atticus, the boys should be sent to Greece where they would be out of the way. His fears were in part allayed by Tullia’s new husband, Dolabella; he was a passionate Caesarian and would guarantee the safety of Terentia and the others. Cicero arranged for the house on the Palatine to be properly barricaded and guarded; but he soon decided that the family, including (it seems) Quintus and his son, should join him at Formiae. He was greatly put out when he learned that the boys’ tutor, Dionysius, refused to come with them. A few weeks later he remarked: “He scorns me in my present plight. It is disgusting. I hate the fellow and always shall. I wish I could punish him. But his own character will do that.” Typically, Cicero could not stay angry for long and there was a reconciliation in due course, if a grudging one.

As for the nonpolitical Atticus, his friend had few anxieties. “It looks to me as though you yourself and Sextus [an intimate friend of Atticus] can properly stay on in Rome. You certainly have little cause to love our friend Pompey. Nobody has ever knocked so much off property values in town. I still have my joke, you see.”

Cicero condemned Pompey’s abandonment of Rome and was afraid that the Commander-in-Chief was thinking of evacuating Italy, for Greece or perhaps Spain, where there were loyal legions. There can be little doubt that Pompey had been knocked off balance. He had exaggerated his personal popularity and was depressed both by the easy progress Caesar was making and by his own difficulties of recruitment. The psychological impact of the evacuation of Rome had been tremendous. The damage to public opinion if Pompey now abandoned Italy would be even greater. Yet there was strategic sense in basing himself in Greece, where he would have all the resources of Asia Minor at his back. With the army of Spain in the west, commanded by Lucius Afranius, the reputed dancer, and Marcus Petreius, Caesar would then be gripped in a vise. Once he had mustered his full strength, Pompey would descend on Italy, as Sulla had done, and meet Caesar with overwhelming force. In addition he controlled a large fleet and had unchallenged mastery of the seas. Unfortunately this plan left out of account the fact that it handed the initiative to Caesar.

Cicero had still not given up all hopes of peace. His disgust at the conduct of the war made him reluctant to join Pompey as an active supporter. More important, he felt that his hand as an intermediary would be strengthened if he could present himself as (more or less) neutral. His motives were mixed, but he was right to believe that it was in his and the Republic’s interest to play a lone hand. His stance became increasingly untenable as it became clear that the war was going to continue. Unfriendly voices were already criticizing him for not joining the rest of the evacuees in Campania. His mood became volatile and edgy. It was not helped by a painful bout of ophthalmia, which lasted until May. He was finding it hard to sleep. He relied more and more on Atticus, whom he showered with letters, often daily, appealing for advice.

I am sure you find daily letters a bore, especially as I give you no news and indeed can no longer think of any new theme to write about. But while it would certainly be silly of me to send you special couriers with empty letters and for no reason, I can’t bring myself not to give a line for you to those who are going anyway, especially if they are fond of the family, and at the same time I do, believe me, find a modicum of relaxation in these miseries when I am as it were talking to you, much more still when I am reading your letters.

The military situation did not improve. Towards the middle of February Cicero visited Pompey at his headquarters in Capua before he moved his forces farther south to avoid being cornered by the enemy. What he found deepened his pessimism. The recruiting officers were afraid to do their work; the Consuls were hopeless and, as for Pompey, “How utterly down he is! No courage, no plan, no forces, no energy.” Cicero resigned
his Campanian commission, saying he could do nothing without troops and money. Letters came from Caesar full of kind words and peace proposals and so did curt missives from Pompey asking Cicero to join him. Balbus and Oppius, Caesar's confidential agents, were in constant touch. To these correspondents Cicero responded with fair words and no commitments.

Caesar was briefly delayed at the town of Corfinium where a reckless aristocrat, Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus made a vain stand. He was acting against the instructions of Pompey, who refused to come to his aid. When the town fell Caesar found about fifty Senators and equites in it, all of whom he immediately released on condition that they not take arms against him again—an assurance many of them swiftly broke. This act of clemency had a huge impact on public opinion, which began to swing in his direction, and a number of optimates returned to Rome. Caesar maintained this policy of leniency for the rest of his life. He intended it as vivid proof that he was no Sulla, set on the armed overthrow of the state.

Meanwhile Pompey continued to rebuff Caesar's offers of peace and decided to extricate himself and his legions from Italy. He marched to Brundisium, where he intended to leave for Greece. Caesar followed him at top speed. On February 20 Pompey dispatched an abrupt note to "M. Cicero Imperator," telling him to meet him at Brundisium. Cicero wrote a long, detailed reply in which he explained why it was unsafe and impractical for him to do so. He also set out a justification of his role as peacemaker, adding oblique criticisms of Pompey's performance and failure to inform him of his plans. The truth was, as Cicero admitted to Atticus, he had not yet made up his mind what to do. He was coming to believe that there was less to choose between the opposing sides than he had originally thought. The constitution would probably be destroyed whoever won the impending struggle.

Our Cnaeus is marvelously covetous of despotism on Sullan lines. *Experto crede* he has been as open about it as he ever was about anything. . . . The plan is first to strangle Rome and Italy with hunger, then to carry fire and sword through the countryside and dip into the pockets of the rich. But since I fear the same from this [i.e., Caesar's] quarter, if I did not have an obligation to repay in the other I should think it better to take whatever may come at home.

On March 9 Caesar arrived outside Brundisium, but it was too late. The Consuls had already left with part of the army to set up headquarters in Greece. Pompey was still in town, but towards nightfall on March 17 he followed after them, evading Caesar's attempt at a blockade with few losses and escaping with the remainder of his troops. Caesar was left fuming outside the walls, from which vantage point he could see the fleet's sails grow smaller in the darkening light.

"I was made anxious before . . . by my inability to think of any solution," Cicero told Atticus, who was comfortably settled in Rome. "But now that Pompey and the Consuls have left Italy, I am not merely distressed, I am consumed with grief." He wrote in the language of a disconsolate lover: "Nothing in [Pompey's] conduct seemed to deserve that I should join him as his companion in flight. But now my affection comes to the surface, the sense of loss is unbearable, books, writing, philosophy are all to no purpose." The presence of his brother doubled his anxiety: Quintus, having spent some years fighting under Caesar in Gaul, owed much more to his old commander than Cicero did and could expect to suffer the severest consequences if he defected. Nevertheless, he told Cicero that he would follow his lead.

Now that a long war was more or less certain, Caesar's interest in Cicero shifted from his potentially useful role as mediator to his value as a propaganda asset. He wanted to attract as many senior figures to his side as possible, in order to legitimize his authority, and Cicero would be a great prize. Stressing his policy of clemency and their ties of amicitia (it is not known whether Cicero had yet been able to pay back Caesar's loan), he tried to persuade the reluctant statesman to come to Rome. Caesar's plan was to visit the city briefly to meet the remnants of the Senate, after which he would go to Spain and deal with Pompey's legions there. On March 28, on his journey back from Brundisium, Caesar stopped off at Formiae for an encounter which Cicero had been dreading for some time.

Caesar was not in an accommodating mood. He complained that Cicero was passing judgment against him and that "the others would be slower to come over" to his side if he refused to do so. Cicero replied that they were in a different position. A long discussion followed, which Cicero recorded for Atticus. It went badly.

"Come along then [to a Senate meeting called for April 1] and work for peace," Caesar said.
“At my own discretion?”

“Naturally, who am I to lay down the rules for you?”

“Well, I shall take the line that the Senate does not approve of an expedition to Spain or of the transport of armies into Greece, and I shall have much to say in commiseration of Pompey.”

“This is not the kind of thing I want said.”

“So I suppose, but that is just why I don’t want to be present. Either I must speak in that strain or stay away—and much else besides which I could not possibly suppress if I was there.”

Caesar closed the conversation by asking Cicero to think matters over. He added menacingly as he left: “If I cannot make use of your advice, I will take it where I can find it. I will stop at nothing.” He meant that if moderates like Cicero would not work with him, his only alternative would be to seek help from revolutionaries.

The encounter was decisive, for both parties. Caesar must have realized that he could not push an obviously unhappy man any further. He now proceeded to Rome, where he spent a few uncomfortable days in discussion with a reluctant and much-thinned Senate. He broke into the Treasury at the Temple of Saturn and removed its contents: 15,000 bars of gold, 30,000 of silver and 30 million sesterces—a move for which he paid with the total collapse of his popularity. Then he hurried away to fight in Spain, leaving the Tribune Mark Antony in charge of Italy and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus in charge of Rome.

As for Cicero, the conversation and the behavior of Caesar’s raffish entourage—he nicknamed them the “underworld”—persuaded him that, for all his reservations, he had to side with those who were (if only ostensibly) fighting for the Republic. He could do this only by leaving Italy. But when should he set off and how? And where should he go? He thought of Athens or, somewhere completely off the beaten track, Malta. Soon he realized he was being watched by Caesar’s spies.

The time had come for Marcus’s coming-of-age ceremony and the family moved to the ancestral home of Arpinum for the purpose. It was a melancholy trip: everyone they met was in low spirits and, as a result of Caesar’s levies, men were being led off to winter quarters. On his return to Formiae, Cicero made a most unpalatable discovery. Quintus, now seventeen, had made off to Rome, claiming that he wanted to see his mother.

He had written to Caesar and perhaps even obtained an interview with him (or one of his lieutenants), in which he revealed that his uncle was disaffected and intended to leave the country. The elder Quintus was beside himself with misery. In a hierarchical society where a paterfamilias had theoretically unlimited power over his children, it was an almost unbelievable betrayal. Although Cicero was upset, he seems to have taken the affair in stride. After a few days he calmed down, deciding that the boy had acted out of greed rather than hatred. The runaway was brought back, and his uncle decided that “severity” was the best policy.

Curio called. Caesar had given him a commission to secure the corn supply in Sicily (where he was to face, and face down, Cato) before going on to the province of Africa. He hurried off on political business before returning, on the following day, for a longer conversation.

In the following weeks, Cicero referred from time to time to a mysterious, top-secret plan which he code-named “Caelius.” It is not known what he had in mind, but there has been speculation that it might have been a scheme to take over Africa and use it as a base from which to launch a new peace initiative. Caelius can hardly have been involved himself since he was with Caesar in Spain and perhaps the name was employed jokingly for what was fundamentally a madcap project. One wonders if it originated in the lengthy discussions with Curio. If Curio was complicit, it would suggest either that he was willing to detach himself from Caesar or, more deviously, that the “Caelian business” could have been a device to lure Cicero away from Greece and Pompey into a safely Caesarian zone of influence. In that case, Cicero was lucky that he did not proceed with the matter, for the militarily inexperienced Curio quickly fell afoot of King Juba of Numidia, an ally of Pompey, was routed in battle and killed with the loss of all his forces. The project, whatever it was, soon vanishes from the correspondence.

It did not call for great acumen on anyone’s part to sense Cicero’s misery and to guess at his intention to escape from Italy. During April and early May pressure was brought to bear on him from all sides, advising him not to leave the country but to stay where he was. Caesar wrote to him from Massilia making the point. It would appear, he observed, that “you have disapproved some action of mine, which is the worst blow you could deal me. I appeal to you in the name of our friendship not to do this.” On
May 1 Mark Antony sent him a warning letter whose surface cordiality concealed menace. "I cannot believe that you mean to go abroad, considering how fond you are of Dolabella and that most admirable young lady your daughter and how fond we all are of you . . . I have specially sent Calpurnius, my intimate friend, so that you may know how deeply I care for your personal safety and position." Cælius also argued strongly that he should not stir, writing that Caesar's clemency would not last. If he abandoned Italy, Cælius said, Cicero would be risking ruin for himself and his family, not to mention blighting the careers of friends such as himself and Dolabella.

Members of his family also disapproved of his apparent determination to leave the country. Young Marcus and Quintus were in tears, if we can believe Cicero, when they read Cælius's letter. The heavily pregnant Tullia (she gave birth prematurely a few weeks later to a sickly child who did not survive) begged him to await the result of the Spanish campaign before making up his mind.

Cicero appealed to Mark Antony to give him formal permission to leave the country and received a cool, brief response, in which he was advised to ask Caesar directly. He wrote to Atticus in May:

Do you think that if Spain is lost, Pompey will drop his weapons? No, his entire plan is Themisctoolean [Themisctolis was the Athenian statesman who had defeated the invading Persians by abandoning Athens and fighting at sea]. He reckons that whoever holds the sea is sure to be master. For that reason he was never interested in holding the Spanish provinces for their own sake; his main concern was always to outfight a navy. So when the time comes, he will put to sea with huge fleets and land in Italy.

What was somewhat less obvious was the nature of Cicero's likely contribution to the Republican cause once in Greece. His military advice would not be wanted. All that he could offer would be the publicity of his name. Moderate public opinion, however, would be impressed by his choice of sides.

To discourage speculation about his imminent departure, Cicero decided to spend a few days at his elegant town house in Pomepii. As soon as he arrived, though, he received an embarrassing surprise. Centurions from the three cohorts stationed there invited him to take charge of the soldiers and occupy the town. What use were three cohorts? he asked himself. Anyway, it could be a trap. Unnerved, he left the town secretly before dawn and returned home.

Quietly, the necessary travel arrangements were made and a reliable ship was found. "I hope my plan won't involve any risk," Cicero remarked, as ever nervous of physical danger and travel by sea. Bad weather caused a delay but on June 7 he was on board and writing a farewell letter to Terentia. At last, he set sail for Greece with Marcus, his dissident nephew and the inevitable lictors. At this point the correspondence with Atticus ends and is not resumed for a year, either because communications were impossible or because it was too risky to write frankly. For a time Cicero recedes into the background—a powerless, disconsolate figure almost lost among tremendous events.

Cicero arrived at Pompey's camp at the port of Dyrrachium in Greece to find that the Commander-in-Chief had retained all his organizational skills and had spent the interval while Caesar was in Spain gathering his forces. Nine legions were assembled, five of which had been brought across from Italy and the others from various parts of the Empire. (Cicero's two understrength Cilician legions were among them, now merged into a single unit.) He had also recruited archers and a 7,000-strong force of cavalry. Through his large fleet, he maintained command of the seas, although the lack of senior military talent at his disposal is illustrated by the fact that he appointed Bibulus his admiral.

To his relief, Cicero, who made a large loan to Pompey to boost his war chest, was greeted warmlyly on his arrival and an effort was made to put him at ease. At the outset, although wracked with worry and in poor health, he was hopeful of the future. He wrote to Atticus: "You ask me about the war news. You will be able to learn it from Isidorus [the letter carrier]. It looks as if what remains won't be too difficult. Do please see to what you know I have most at heart [Terentia was in financial difficulty], as you say you will do and are doing. I am eaten up with anxiety, which has made me seriously ill. When I am better, I shall join the man in charge who is full of optimism." However, with typical contrariness, Caro took Cicero aside and said that his coming to Greece was a bad mistake. He would be much more use to his country and his friends if he stayed at home and reacted to
events as they occurred. As he had agonized over his decision, this was the last thing Cicero wanted to hear and he was distinctly put out. He had expected the standard-bearer of constitutionalism to praise him. Not only had Cato not done so, but he gave the impression of having little confidence in Pompey's prospects.

After being nearly trapped by floods, Caesar brilliantly outmaneuvered his opponents in Spain and in August 49 enforced a surrender without bloodshed in a campaign that lasted only forty days. In his absence he arranged for a Prætor to have him appointed Dictator, which would empower him to hold elections. He hurried back to Italy where he confronted a mutiny among his troops, which he settled with bold inflexibility.

During this second flying visit to Rome he was elected to the second Consulship for which he had spent so many years struggling and intriguing. The onset of civil war had brought financial activity in Italy to an almost complete standstill and a debt crisis was creating serious social unease. Throughout the century revolutionaries such as Catilina had promoted a policy of total cancellation of debts and many expected that this was what Caesar would do. But he was too intelligent and responsible a politician not to realize that this cure would be far worse than the disease. He issued a well-considered decree which obliged creditors to accept land at prewar values as repayment and allowed up to a quarter of the value of a debt to be set off against previous interest payments.

It was on this issue that Cælius surprisingly broke with his new master in the following year. Prætor for 48, he tried to bounce an uncertain and edgy government into more radical measures after Caesar left Rome again for Greece in pursuit of Pompey. In January 48 he was in a cocky frame of mind when he wrote his final surviving letter to Cicero. Critical of Pompey's strategy of masterly inactivity in Greece, he promised that his own dash and drive would rescue the Republican cause. "I'll make you win in spite of yourselves. Cato and company will be smiling on me yet. You lot are fast asleep." However, he was quickly dismissed from office and driven to taking up arms. He called Cicero's old friend Milo back to Italy because he owned some gladiators he could make use of. Also, unforgivably in Roman eyes, he armed some slaves. But the revolt was easily quashed by Caesar's troops and both Cælius and Milo were killed.

Brilliant, amusing and attractive, Cælius was disabled by a refusal to take serious things seriously. He threw his life away pointlessly. By oppos-

ing Caesar this late in the game, he ignored the advice he had himself given Cicero. "To go against him now in the hour of his victory... is the acme of folly," he had said. So it was.

Caesar joined his army at Brundisium at the end of the year. He was determined to retain the initiative and had no intention of waiting for Pompey to invade Italy. Despite the fact that it was now winter, when sailing was unsafe, he decided to cross over to Greece as soon as possible, whatever the risk. On January 4, 48, he sailed unobserved to the coast of Epirus with part of his army, evading Bibulus's naval blockade. However, bad weather and Bibulus's unwillingness to be caught napping a second time meant that it was not until early April that his remaining troops under Mark Antony were able to join him. For a while Caesar had had too few forces to match Pompey and had been in serious danger, but now he went on the offensive. At the same time, in a continuing effort to retain the moral high ground, he launched another abortive peace initiative, but his opponents, filled with optimism, were having none of it.

Caesar decided to surround Pompey's camp near Dyrrachium with a fifteen-mile fortified line and besiege him. Pompey responded by building his own fortifications and then launched a major breakout. For a moment Caesar faced total defeat, but the advantage was not followed through. Caesar observed dismissively of his opponent: "He has no idea how to win a war." Short of supplies, Caesar cut his losses and marched away south to the more fertile region of Thessaly, with the enemy in pursuit.

It was typical of his tirelessness and attention to detail that, in the press of business, he remembered Cicero. In May he asked Dolabella, who was on his staff, to write a friendly letter to his father-in-law, which he duly did. After itemizing the humiliations and reverses that Pompey had suffered, he advised: "Consult your own best interests and at long last be your own friend rather than anybody else's." If there was anything Caesar could do to protect and maintain Cicero's dignitas, his honor or status, he had only to ask.

This was a well-aimed, and possibly well-informed, intervention. Cicero was not at all happy with his present circumstances. Could Cato have been right, after all? He made little secret of the fact that he now regretted having come to Greece. He could not resist making sarcastic comments and jokes about his colleagues and companions in arms and wandered
about the camp looking so glum that he became something of a figure of fun. He criticized Pompey's plans behind his back and ridiculed the faith he and his supporters placed in prophecies and oracles. Above all, he went on arguing for peace and believed he might have won Pompey over if his confidence had not been boosted by the success at Dyrrhachium.

Looking back a couple of years afterwards he summed up his opinions:

I came to regret my action, not so much because of the risk to my personal safety as of the appalling situation which confronted me on arrival. To begin with, our forces were too small and had poor morale. Second, with the exception of the Commander-in-Chief and a handful of others (I am talking about the leading figures), everyone was greedy to profit from the war itself and their conversation was so bloodthirsty that I shuddered at the prospect of victory. What's more, people of the highest rank were up to their ears in debt. In a word, nothing was right except the cause we were fighting for.

There was talk of a proscription and, shockingly, Atticus had been marked down, perhaps because of his wealth, as a candidate for liquidation.

The climax of the campaign took place on August 9 on a plain near the town of Pharsalus in central Greece. Against his better judgment, although his army was much the larger of the two (perhaps 50,000 strong as compared with Caesar's force of about 30,000), Pompey at last offered battle. His plan was to outflank and roll up Caesar's right wing with a strong troop of horses, but Caesar guessed his intentions and placed some cohorts out of sight behind his center. His wing retreated in good order, as it had been instructed to do, and Pompey's onrushing cavalry was attacked from the side and routed. It was now Caesar's turn to outflank the enemy center and the rest of the engagement was a massacre. Pompey's soldiers stood their ground and died patiently, but the non-Roman allies put up no resistance and fled, shouting, "We've lost." Caesar recorded 200 fatalities while some 15,000 of Pompey's men were killed and 23,000 captured.

When Pompey saw how the battle was going, he withdrew to his camp where he sat speechless and stunned. Nothing in his long, cloudless career had prepared him for such a disaster. He changed out of his uniform and made his escape on horseback. His camp presented a remarkable spectacle. In his history of the war, Caesar described what he found: "[There] could be seen artificial arbors, a great weight of silver plate laid out, tents spread with fresh turf, those of Lucius Lentulus and several others covered with ivy, and many other indications of extravagant indulgence and confidence in victory." Inspecting the corpses on the battlefield, he remarked bitterly of the optimates: "They insisted on it."

Cicero was not present at Pharsalus, although it was possible that Quintus was, together with the seventeen-year-old Marcus, who had been given command of a troop of horses in Pompey's army and was doubtless enjoying the break from his studies in Athens. Being in poor health (whether genuinely or expeditiously), Cicero stayed behind at Dyrrhachium with Cato, who commanded the town's garrison. Cicero was as annoyingly sarcastic as ever. When someone said optimistically that there was hope yet, for they had seven Eagles left (the legionary standards), he joked bitterly: "Excellent, if we were fighting jackdaws."

Caesar knew that if the war was to be brought to a rapid conclusion, it was of the utmost importance to capture his defeated rival; so he set off in pursuit of Pompey as he made his way eastwards, destination unknown. Meanwhile the leading survivors of Pharsalus gathered together and sailed the fleet to Corcyra, where they pondered their next move. Caesar's victory was a devastating blow to the Republicans and it looked as if the war were over. However, this was not necessarily so: Pompey's fleet still controlled the seas. The province of Africa had been in friendly hands since Curio's defeat and death. If the defeated Commander-in-Chief managed to elude Caesar, he might well be able to raise another army in Asia Minor.

Cato had not fought at Pharsalus and was unwilling to accept its verdict. The first decision to be made was who should take over from Pompey as Commander-in-Chief. Surprisingly Cato suggested that the commission be offered to Cicero as the senior Roman official present. It is hard to believe that Cato made the invitation other than for form's sake; even he would have seen something absurd in the distinctly unmilitary orator challenging the greatest general of his day.

Cicero rejected the idea out of hand and explained that he wanted to have nothing further to do with the war. His defeatist attitude enraged Pompey's eldest son, Cnaeus, who had a short and cruel temper. Apparently Cnaeus and his friends drew their swords and would have cut Cicero
down on the spot if Cato had not intervened and, with some difficulty, hustled the elderly statesman out of the camp—and, as it turned out, the war.

Most of the remaining optimates decided that their best course of action was to make their way to the province of Africa. There they gathered—Afranius and Petreius, defeated in Spain, Pompey's two sons, other flotsam of Caesar's earlier victories and Cato himself, the moral standard-bearer of resistance. Many of them had been pardoned once and could expect no mercy if they fell into Caesar's hands a second time. Labienus, Caesar's old comrade-in-arms who had defected from him after the crossing of the Rubicon, also went to Africa. Their plan was to muster their forces and prepare for an invasion of Italy, a short sail away.

Some fugitives from the catastrophe decided to end their resistance. Chief among them was Marcus Brutus, now about thirty years old. Despite the financial scandal in which he had been involved during Cicero's governorship of Cilicia a couple of years before, he was in some respects a principled and serious-minded young man who thought long and hard about which side to fight for in the civil war. He had a strong family reason for going over to Caesar, as the youthful Pompey had had his father put to death during the wars of Sulla. However, in his considered opinion Pompey was more in the right than Caesar and Brutus decided that it was his duty to put the public good above his personal interests. Not for nothing was he Cato's nephew.

After joining the Republican army in Greece, Brutus spent much of his time in camp reading books till late in the evening and writing a digest of the Greek historian Polybius. He took part in the battle at Pharsalus, but came to no harm. There was a reason for this. Caesar was very fond of him, perhaps due to his continuing affection for his former mistress and Brutus's mother, Servilia, and gave instructions to his officers that he should not be killed. If Brutus gave himself up his life should be spared, and if he resisted he should be left alone. After the rout Brutus managed to escape through a marsh to safety. He traveled by night to the town of Larissa and immediately wrote to Caesar, who was delighted to learn that he was safe and asked Brutus to join him. According to Plutarch, he had no qualms about advising Caesar, correctly as it would turn out, that Pompey would likely flee to Egypt.

Brutus's motives as a collaborator defy interpretation. Up to this point in his life his actions appear to have been governed by self-interest. It may be that his reputation for high-mindedness and probity derived from his somewhat un-Roman bookishness and his addiction to literature and philosophy rather than from his actual behavior. Possibly, he felt that he had done enough for his family enemy and was now within his rights to switch to Caesar. One way or another, Brutus quickly became a favorite and a few months later was put in charge of Italian Gaul. He was a popular and apparently incorruptible governor.

So far as Cicero was concerned, hostilities were now definitely at an end. He took himself off to Patrae, the Greek port from where he would be able to catch a boat for Brundisium. Here a final misfortune awaited him, as he confided to Atticus a week or so later. He and his brother had a serious disagreement. By following Cicero's star, Quintus had lost everything. He had sacrificed his excellent relationship with Caesar, under whose command in Gaul he had for once been his own man. There may have been financial problems, too, nagging both men. For all their lives Quintus had willingly played second fiddle to his older and more famous brother. Perhaps resentment had so long been growing below the surface—all those years of patronizing advice, of interference in his domestic affairs—that it boiled over all the more violently when the break came.

The upshot was that Quintus and his son followed after Caesar, with whom they intended to make their peace. Meanwhile, Cicero had nowhere to go but back to Italy. Worn down by his adventures and broken by the collapse of both his public and domestic worlds, he set off once again, without pause for second thoughts, to Brundisium and home.