

scripta 13.6: Caesar's victory in Spain

In February 49 BC, Pompey had decided to leave Rome in order to build an army in the east. Caesar chose not to pursue him, but instead to go to Spain to confront the Republican armies there, led by Marcus Petreius and Lucius Afranius. The initial skirmishes between the two sides were inconclusive and, instead of fighting a decisive battle, each manoeuvred around the terrain, trying to prevent the other from accessing food and water.

Due to the close proximity of the armies, there began to be a certain degree of fraternisation between both sides. Caesar's men would visit the Pompeian camp to drink and socialise with their fellow Romans and vice versa. When Petreius and Afranius learnt of this intermingling, they stamped it out, demanding that any soldier of Caesar's in their camp should be brought forward and executed. Caesar, on the other hand, ordered that the Republican soldiers in his camp should be returned unharmed.

Eventually, the Republican forces were severely deprived of supplies, and Afranius was forced to request an audience with Caesar, who granted it on the condition that it was in front of the soldiers. In public, Afranius admitted that they were defeated; he begged Caesar not to punish them for remaining loyal to Pompey and he asked for mercy.

This text is an adapted extract from Caesar's bruising reply to Afranius. In it he says that the only people at fault are leaders like Pompey, Petreius and Afranius, whose actions have caused Roman deaths. Caesar, on the other hand, deliberately chose not to fight even when the conditions suited him. Caesar demands that Afranius and Petreius disband their legions. He says that there is no need for so many troops to pacify a province like Spain; the Pompeian legions were there solely to oppose him.

All of us have acted as we should: I have acted correctly because I am someone who does not want to fight even when the conditions are good and the ground and the time are in my favour; this is because I wanted everything to be as unspoilt as possible for peace. My army has acted correctly because they are men who, even though they received injuries and their own men were killed, spared those soldiers who came under their control. The soldiers of Pompey's army have also acted correctly, because they are men who wanted peace. So it is that the sections of every rank have placed themselves at my mercy. It is only the leaders who have shrunk from peace and who have caused men to die most cruelly.

I have not - even though the other side is now obviously the weaker - asked for those things which would make me personally richer, but I do want those armies, which Pompey has maintained now for many years against me, to be disbanded. It was for no other reason that six legions were sent to Spain and a seventh conscripted there, and the fleets made ready and commanders sent in support. None of these things was for the sake of pacifying Spain, none of them was done for the benefit of a province which, because of its long-lasting peace, had no need for any reinforcements. All these things were prepared against me; Pompey established these commands with his eyes on me. Pompey wanted to hold sway over affairs in the city and - without leaving Rome - to get hold of the two provinces which were best resourced for war.

Even so, I have put up with all these things patiently and I will continue to do so; I do not want now to take your army from you and keep it, but I also do not want you to keep hold of an army against me. As I



have already said, you must now leave the province and disband your army. If you do this, I won't harm anyone. This is my only - and final - condition for peace.

- 1) At the start of this extract Caesar says that he and his army have acted correctly; what does he mean by this? Explain his reasons in your own words.
- 2) How does Caesar criticise Pompey in this extract?
- 3) At the end of the extract, what terms does Caesar offer for peace in Spain?
- 4) Caesar was able to inspire great loyalty from his troops: what picture does this text create of Caesar as a military leader?