

## Pompey's Letter to the Senate

Source: Sallust *Histories* 2.82 [2.98M]. Translated by John Carew Rolfe. *Sallust: With an English Translation by J. C. Rolfe*. Loeb classical library, 116. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1965.

*Pompey wrote the following letter to the Senate in 75 requesting reinforcements in the fight against Sertorius, who was holding out successfully in Spain. Pompey was at the time a mere knight, given proconsular imperium by the senate to assist Metellus Pius against Sertorius two years before. This commission was primarily a device to get Pompey's illegal private army, which he refused to disband, out of Italy.*

"If I had been warring against you, against my country, and against my fathers' gods, when I endured such hardship and dangers as those amid which from my early youth the armies under my command have routed the most criminal of your enemies and insured your safety; even then, Fathers of the Senate, you could have done no more against me in my absence than you are now doing. For after having exposed me, in spite of my youth, to a most cruel war, you have, so far as in you lay, destroyed me and a faithful army by starvation, the most wretched of all deaths.

"Was it with such expectations that the Roman people sent its sons to war? Are these the rewards for wounds and for so often shedding our blood for our country? Wearied with writing letters and sending envoys, I have exhausted my personal resources and even my expectations, and in the meantime for three years you have barely given me the means of meeting a year's expenses.

"By the immortal gods! do you think that I can play the part of a treasury or maintain an army without food or pay?

"I admit that I entered upon this war with more zeal than discretion; for within forty days of the time when I received from you the empty title of commander I had raised and equipped an army and driven the enemy, who were already at the throat of Italy, from the Alps into Spain; and over those mountains I had opened for you another and more convenient route than Hannibal had taken.

"I recovered Gaul, the Pyrenees, Lacetania, and the Indigetes; with raw soldiers and far inferior numbers I

withstood the first onslaught of triumphant Sertorius; and I spent the winter in camp amid the most savage of foes, not in the towns or in adding to my own popularity.

"Why need I enumerate our battles or our winter campaigns, the towns which we destroyed or captured? Actions speak louder than words. The taking of the enemy's camp at Sucro, the battle at the river Turia, and the destruction of C. Herennius, leader of the enemy, together with his army and the city of Valentia, are well enough known to you. In return for these, grateful fathers, you give me want and hunger. Thus the condition of my army and of that of the enemy is the same; for neither is paid and either can march victorious into Italy.

"Of this situation I warn you and I beg you to give it your attention; do not force me to provide for my necessities on my own responsibility.

"Hither Spain, so far as it is not in the possession of the enemy, either we or Sertorius have devastated to the point of ruin, except for the coast towns, so that it is actually an expense and a burden to us. Gaul last year supplied the army of Metellus with pay and provisions, but can now scarcely keep itself alive because of a failure of the crops; I myself have exhausted not only my means, but even my credit.

"You are our only resource; unless you come to our rescue, against my will, but not without warning from me, our army will pass over into Italy, bringing with it all the war in Spain."

This letter was read in the senate at the beginning of the following year. But the consuls distributed the provinces which had been decreed by the senate, Cotta taking Hither Gaul and Octavius taking Cilicia. Then the next consuls, L. Lucullus and M. Cotta,<sup>1</sup> who were greatly agitated by Pompeius' letters and messages, both because of the interests of the state and because they feared that, if he led his army into Italy, they would have neither glory nor position, used every means to provide him with money and reinforcements. And they were aided especially by the nobles, the greater number of whom were already giving expression to their confidence and adapting their conduct to their words.

<sup>1</sup> For 74 BCE.