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DENNIS G. GLEW

## Between the Wars: Mithridates Eupator and Rome, 85-73 B.C.\*

Early in 78 B.C. ambassadors from Mithridates Eupator of Pontus arrived in Rome on a mission of considerable importance to their king. They were, first, to announce to the Romans that Mithridates had complied with an order given him in 79 to evacuate portions of Cappadocia which he had held for several years; then, they were to request ratification of the Peace of Dardanus, the accord which had ended his first war with Rome some six years earlier but which the Romans had never officially approved. Doubtless the envoys expected that favorable action on that agreement would swiftly follow their announcement, for during their visit to Rome the preceding year no less a personage than L. Sulla, the former dictator, had connected ratification

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\* The following works will be cited here by author's name or otherwise as noted: E. BADIEN, Sulla's Cilician Command, *Athenaeum* 37, 1959, 279 ff., rpt. in: *Studies in Greek and Roman History*, New York 1964, 157 ff.; WM. BENNETT, The Death of Sertorius and the Coin, *Historia* 10, 1961, 459-72; H. BERNHARDT, *Chronologie der Mithridatischen Kriege und Aufklärung einiger Teile derselben*, diss. Marburg 1896; N. CRINITI, M. Aimilius Q. f. M. n. Lepidus «ut ignis in stipula», *MIL* 30, 1968/9, 319-460; F. GEYER, *RE* 15 (1932) 2163-2205, s.v. Mithridates VI Eupator Dionysos (12); W. IHNE, *Römische Geschichte* V, Leipzig 1879, and VI, Leipzig 1886; M. JANKE, *Historische Untersuchungen zu Memnon von Herakleia*, diss. Würzburg 1963; T. LIEBMANN-FRANKFORT, *La frontière orientale dans la politique extérieure de la République romaine: depuis le traité d'Apamée jusqu'à la fin des conquêtes asiatiques de Pompée (189/8-63)*, *Mem. Acad. royale de Belgique, Cl. des Lettres*, 59, Brussels 1969; D. MAGIE, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, 2 vols., Princeton 1950; TH. MOMMSEN, *The History of Rome* (Engl. trans., DICKSON) IV, New York 1898; H. A. ORMEROD, The Campaigns of Servilius Isauricus against the Pirates, *JRS* 12, 1922, 35-56; TH. REINACH, Mithridates Eupator, König von Pontos (Germ. trans., A. GOETZ), Leipzig 1895; B. SCARDIGLI, Sertorio: Problemi cronologici, *Athenaeum* 49, 1971, 229-70; A. N. SHERWIN-WHITE, Rome, Pamphylia and Cilicia, 133-70 B.C., *JRS* 66, 1976, 1-14; B. SIMONETTA, Notes on the Coinage of the Cappadocian Kings, *NC*, 7th Series, 1, 1961, 9-50; B. TWYMAN, The Metelli, Pompeius and Prosopography, in *ANRW* I, Berlin & New York 1972, 816-74; E. WILL, *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique (320-30 av. J.-C.)* II, Nancy 1967. Throughout this paper I cite Appian's *Mithridatica* in the Teubner edition of VIERECK and ROOS (corrected by E. GABBA) (Leipzig 1962), Sallust's *Historiae* (speeches and epistles) in the Teubner edition of KURFESS (Leipzig 1968), and Memnon in JACOBY's edition in his *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*, 3rd part, B, No. 434 (Leiden 1950). I would like to thank T. JAMES LUCE and C. ROBERT PHILLIPS for reading earlier versions of this paper and for suggesting valuable improvements in them. Errors and inadequacies that may remain in the final version are due to my obstinacy, not to their oversight.

of the Peace to withdrawal from Cappadocia. The response to their petition for an audience with the Senate must, then, have come as a shock: they were told by the consuls that the Senate had no time to receive them. There was, thus, to be no action on Mithridates' request; despite his action in Cappadocia his legal status was to remain ambiguous and dangerous. The ambassadors returned to Sinope empty-handed.

In his biography of the Pontic king TH. REINACH represents these events as a turning-point in the history of Roman-Pontic relations after Dardanus: «From this moment on Mithridates lived in the conviction that Rome wished war and intended merely to reserve for herself the selection of its occasion. On his side, then, he armed accordingly. These armaments alarmed the Romans, and, in the belief that Mithridates intended a renewed attack on Asia, they strengthened their garrisons and gave thought to further security measures. Neither of the two parties wished to bring about a rupture and each believed that this was the other's intention; since both feared being surprised unprepared, the armament increased daily. From this mutual suspicion, from the precautionary measures that constantly mounted and from the tension which continually grew, war had inevitably to result. As is often wont to be the case, it sprang from a mutual misunderstanding and finally was touched off for reasons of austerity.»<sup>1</sup> The last comment, that war «finally was touched off for reasons of austerity», has, to my knowledge, no support in the sources, but the balance of REINACH's judgment seems right: misapprehension and distrust do, indeed, lie at the root of the developments which precipitated the Third Mithridatic War, and in the generation of those feelings the events of 78 played a major role. There is, then, no reason to quarrel with REINACH's general account of the origins of the war. One would like, however, to see more clearly than he sought to do how the stage was set, so to speak, for the crisis of 78, and how the fear and suspicion which it helped to engender influenced the subsequent actions of Mithridates and the Romans. To do that will be the purpose of this paper. It is an attempt to understand as fully as possible how the two sides were caught up in courses of action from which, in REINACH's phrase, «war had inevitably to result».

## I

In the speech which he delivered in 66 on behalf of the Manilian Law Cicero proclaimed to the Roman People that the Third Mithridatic War, then in its last, critical phase, was the responsibility exclusively of their enemy, who had worked at preparing it ever since his defeat by Sulla and their settlement at Dardanus in the fall of 85: *Mithridates autem omne reliquum tempus non ad oblivionem veteris belli sed ad comparationem novi contulit* (leg. Man. 4, 9). This was hardly a new opinion. In the

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<sup>1</sup> REINACH 301. Similar analysis: MOMMSEN 321 ff.

preceding decade M. Cotta had declared that the conflict with the Pontic ruler had not been concluded at Dardanus but instead only checked; as early as 83 L. Murena had asserted virtually the same thing.<sup>2</sup> Mithridates, then, had never abandoned his ambition of building a great empire in Asia at Rome's expense, or so, at least, Romans at the time professed to believe. But were they correct? To assess the king's intentions, first, in the period before Murena's «war» radically altered the situation in the east, one should examine his actions, especially in the neighboring kingdom of Cappadocia.

Two pieces of evidence from Appian, one well known, the other rather less noticed, are important here. (1) At Mith. 64, 267 the historian reports that Mithridates «did not yet secure Ariobarzanes possession of all Cappadocia, but there are parts of it which even then he controlled».<sup>3</sup> The date is early 83, before Murena's first raid on Pontus that year. Now, in his meeting late in 86 with the king's general, Archelaus, Sulla had offered peace if Mithridates «withdraws his garrisons from all fortresses except those under his power before this breach of the peace [i. e., the current war] ... and is content to be ruler of his inherited dominion alone» (Mith. 55, 222f.).<sup>4</sup> Evidently the king never fully complied with this requirement; otherwise, the words «did not yet secure Ariobarzanes possession of all Cappadocia» are misleading. (2) Earlier in his narrative, on the other hand, Appian states that at Dardanus Mithridates «was filled with fear and accepted the terms negotiated by Archelaus and ... returned to his inherited kingdom alone» (Mith. 58, 240).<sup>5</sup> The language of this passage, clearly reminiscent of the language employed by Sulla in addressing Archelaus, indicates that the king in fact met his obligations to remove his garrisons and to abandon his hold on his neighbors' lands, Ariobarzanes' among them.

Remarkably, this apparent contradiction in Appian's account has never drawn comment from scholars interested in the Mithridatic period. Sometimes Mith. 58, 240 has simply been ignored (or so, at least, it would seem); at other times the full force of Mith. 64, 267, with its clear implication that the king chose to violate one of the most important terms of the Peace of Dardanus, has been glossed over.<sup>6</sup> Neither procedure is satisfactory. What needs doing, rather, is, first, to determine which piece of information is more likely to be correct and, second, to explain how Appian went astray in the other one.

<sup>2</sup> Plut. Luc. 5, 1; App. Mith. 64, 268.

<sup>3</sup> Οὐ γάρ πο οὐδ' Ἀριοβαρζάνη πᾶσαν ἐβεβαίον Καππαδοκίαν, ἀλλ' ἔστιν αὐτῆς, ἃ καὶ τότε κατεῖχεν. The first clause may also be translated, «he did not yet recognize Ariobarzanes as king of all Cappadocia»: see Plut. Sulla 22, 5 and Sert. 23, 3; also, Memnon, fr. 25.2.

<sup>4</sup> Ἐξαγάγη ... τὰς φρουρὰς ἐκ πάντων φρουρίων χωρὶς ὧν ἐκράτει πρὸ τῆσδε τῆς παρασπονδήσεως ... καὶ στέργη μόνης ἀρχῶν τῆς πατρῴας δυναστείας. See also Plut. Sulla, loc. cit.; Liv. Per. 83; Memnon, loc. cit.; Flor. 1, 40, 12; Gran. Licin. p. 26f. FLEMISCH; Eutrop. 5, 7, 2; Vell. 2, 23, 6. Memnon's version is remarkably close to Plutarch's: JANKE 75 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Ὁ βασιλεὺς ... ἐδεδοίκει καὶ ἐς τὰς δι' Ἀρχελαίου γενομένης συνθήμας ἐνεδίδου ... ἐς τὸν Πόντον ἐπὶ τὴν πατρῴαν ἀρχὴν ἐπανήει μόνην.

<sup>6</sup> See, e. g., REINACH 297; MAGIE I 243; GEYER 2178.

What is known of the course of the war with Murena will be of some help in the first task. The Roman's initial attack on Pontus in 83, which took him to Comana in the kingdom's heartland, apparently encountered no resistance at all. None, at least, is mentioned or suggested by Appian or Memnon, the major sources for these affairs; their accounts, rather, give the clear impression that Mithridates did nothing at first except to protest the legate's actions.<sup>7</sup> After this raid Murena retired for the winter to Cappadocia, where he planted a number of garrisons and also a city to which he gave his name.<sup>8</sup> That he felt confident of their security is demonstrated by the fact that in the next spring, following a second incursion into Pontus, he did not return there but withdrew instead to Phrygia and Galatia, where, it seems, the third and final raid was begun.<sup>9</sup> Also, after this last operation Mithridates was compelled to attack these garrisons directly.<sup>10</sup> Cappadocia, then, had been firmly in Murena's control, and it would appear that he gained control of it without having to overcome opposition from Pontic troops. Moreover, it does not seem very likely that an army of occupation had been withdrawn from the land just before the Romans arrived, for, again, Murena was able to march to Comana without encountering large-scale resistance and when he later launched the attack directed against Sinope, Mithridates' forces were not completely ready to respond, this despite the considerable warning they had had.<sup>11</sup> Thus, if the Pontic king had, in fact, continued to control portions of Ariobarzanes' land after Dardanus, his power there had not depended upon the presence of a Pontic army of any size.

But there is another possibility, that Cappadocian territory was held for Mithridates by supporters of his within the land's nobility, aided, perhaps, by small contingents of troops from Pontus that scattered at Murena's approach. Gordius, the leader of the old pro-Pontic faction there, was alive and active in Pontus in the years after Dardanus; indeed, it was he who led the vanguard of Mithridates' men against Murena when the Romans set out for Sinope.<sup>12</sup> Also, there is no reason to think that Ariobarzanes' restoration to his throne had been accompanied by a great blood-letting among his enemies within the kingdom. Rather, one would expect that his «reconciliation» to Mithridates had been meant to induce a similar end to hostilities among the nobility.<sup>13</sup> There would, then, have been powerful men in Cappadocia who may

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<sup>7</sup> One hears only that Murena «killed some cavalymen»: Mith. 64, 269. There is nothing in Memnon, fr. 26, 1. That the king offered no resistance was also the opinion of REINACH 298, and of MAGIE loc. cit.

<sup>8</sup> App. Mith. 64, 270; Memnon, loc. cit. (with the comments of JANKE 79).

<sup>9</sup> App. Mith. 65, 272 and 274. Memnon, fr. 26, 3, says that the goal of the last attack was Sinope itself.

<sup>10</sup> App. Mith. 66, 276.

<sup>11</sup> Murena was intercepted by Gordius but the final attack on him was not launched until Mithridates arrived with the bulk of the Pontic army: App. Mith. 65, 274.

<sup>12</sup> The sources for Gordius' career are assembled by SWOBODA, RE 7 (1912) 1592f., s.v. Gordios (5).

<sup>13</sup> Ariobarzanes' «reconciliation»: Plut. Sulla 24, 3.

well have continued to favor the cause of Mithridates. It is quite conceivable, therefore, that in parts of the kingdom the allegiance paid Ariobarzanes was at best nominal – a fact that would have made it very easy, one should add, for people ill-disposed to the Pontic ruler to argue that he had maintained a presence there after Dardanus even if, in fact, he had done nothing of the sort.

A small detail in Appian's account suggests, however, that Mithridates did not attempt to exploit any potential for profit that may have existed in Cappadocia. Murena, it is said, began his invasions of Pontus only after Archelaus, who had fled to him because he was suspected of treachery, «provoked and persuaded him» to do so (Mith. 64, 268).<sup>14</sup> The fugitive's arguments, it seems, were that the fleet then being prepared by Mithridates ostensibly for an attack on the Bosporean kingdom was in fact intended for use against the Romans, and that the king remained in possession of Cappadocian territory. Now, Murena was a man looking for a triumph: so Appian says (Mith. 64, 265), and his judgment is borne out by what is known of the Roman's previous exploits.<sup>15</sup> Archelaus brought him, then, precisely what he had been hoping for, an opportunity to defend what he could represent as the vital interests of the Roman People. But why had he not heard of this opportunity sooner? Work on the Pontic fleet may have started only recently,<sup>16</sup> but the situation in Cappadocia cannot have escaped detection for any time at all. Ariobarzanes, moreover, was one who never hesitated to approach the Romans for help, and an appeal from him is not something that Murena is likely to have ignored. His apparent failure to make such an appeal does not compel one to conclude that Archelaus' charges were false, but it does, at least, suggest that they may have been.

The same conclusion is suggested by another curious detail about the Cappadocian king, that in all the information about the Second Mithridatic War – information that is sufficient to give a fairly clear outline of the military operations – there is no hint that Ariobarzanes did anything to help Murena. Nothing is said of Cappadocian levies or of participation by Cappadocian officers.<sup>17</sup> The impression, on the contrary, is that Murena fought on his own. He must, of course, have had Ariobarzanes' permission to enter his kingdom, but that would have been easy to extract. Again, it cannot be deduced from this that the Cappadocian opposed Murena's actions, much less that he had no complaint against Mithridates, but one will not now dismiss either possibility automatically.

The issue can perhaps be settled by approaching it from another direction. Full though it may at first appear to be, Appian's account of the Second Mithridatic War

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<sup>14</sup> For the other sources consult WILCKEN, RE 2 (1895) 450, s. v. Archelaos (12).

<sup>15</sup> Murena's earlier campaigns are reviewed by MAGIE I 240 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Preparations for the Crimean expedition: App. Mith. 64, 267; Cic. leg. Man. 4, 9; Memnon, fr. 26, 4. For a summary of the king's previous activities there see V.F. GAJDUKEVIČ, *Das Bosporanische Reich*, 2nd ed., Berlin-Amsterdam 1971, 312 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Cappadocians had served in the operations that immediately preceded the outbreak of the First Mithridatic War: App. Mith. 17, 59.

in fact suffers from the same compression and also from the same carelessness detected elsewhere in his work. Witness, for instance, the fact that one hears nothing of the garrisons established by Murena in Cappadocia following his first raid until they are attacked by Mithridates after the third (Mith. 66, 276). Similarly, it is stated that Murena «found trifling occasions for war» against Pontus (Mith. 64, 265)<sup>18</sup> but these are not explicitly identified. The reader must deduce for himself that they were the construction of the Pontic fleet and the situation in Cappadocia. Clearly, in producing his story of the war Appian digested or compressed the evidence of his source quickly and none too carefully. Now, the comment that Murena «found trifling occasions for war» against Mithridates is not likely to be an editorial observation of Appian's, for when he records the Roman's reasons, the historian gives no indication at all that he sees them as having been trivial. The comment probably comes then, from Appian's source. In the source's account, that is, the threat to Rome allegedly posed by the Pontic fleet and also the assertion that Mithridates remained in Cappadocia apparently were debunked and discredited. They were shown up as «trifling occasions for war», nothing more. Archelaus made these charges, and the ambitious Murena, eager for glory, was happy to believe them, something perhaps rendered easier, in the case of the second one, by problems Ariobarzanes may have been having with some of his nobles; but they were untrue. So, at least, the source seems to have believed. Appian, with the carelessness found elsewhere in his story, simply fails to make this entirely clear.<sup>19</sup>

When the different pieces of this argument are put together, they make an interesting point about Mithridates' initial intentions regarding the Peace of Dardanus. Appian's source, it has just been concluded, considered the charges brought against the king by Murena to have been unfounded. Mithridates had not, in particular, retained control, either directly or indirectly, of any part of Cappadocia. The review of the historical evidence, though it yielded no firm conclusion, pointed in this same direction. On balance, therefore, it seems likely that Appian's statement at Mith. 58, 240 – that after Dardanus Mithridates «returned to his inherited kingdom alone» – is correct. Following the settlement with Sulla, that is, he completely withdrew his troops from Cappadocia as well as from Bithynia and Paphlagonia, and any troubles that Ariobarzanes may subsequently have had there were not due to his intrigues or to the support, however restricted, of his army. Murena may have thought otherwise, or perhaps he recognized the truth but preferred to ignore it. Appian's source, however, knew better, and if Appian himself had been more careful later in his narrative there would never have been reason to doubt it. The king of Pontus complied fully with the terms of the Peace of Dardanus. In 83-2 he was the innocent victim of Roman aggression.

<sup>18</sup> Μουρήνας ... πολέμων ἀφορμὰς ἤρρασχέλει δι' ἐπιθυμίαν θριάμβου.

<sup>19</sup> One of Murena's charges, that regarding the Pontic fleet, has commonly been dismissed as unfounded: see, e. g., REINACH 297; MAGIE I 243.

## II

Mithridates' innocence is essential to understanding his interpretation of Murena's costly and increasingly dangerous raids. Also important are his view of the treatment which he had received earlier from Rome and the circumstances in which he found himself at the time of the attacks.

Appian's evidence concerning the turn-coat general, Archelaus, indicates what the king thought of the Romans on the eve of his conflict with Murena. Having negotiated the terms to which Mithridates acquiesced at Dardanus, Archelaus had returned to Pontus after the Peace and remained there for a year and a half or longer. During this time the king came to believe that «in the settlement in Greece he had yielded to Sulla far beyond necessity» (Mith. 64, 268).<sup>20</sup> Fearing now for his life, the general fled to Roman territory. Discussions of whether or not Mithridates had good grounds for his suspicion – it is difficult to believe that he did<sup>21</sup> – have missed the most interesting point about this episode, the glimpse it gives of court politics in Pontus. Had the king, at the time of the Peace, believed Archelaus guilty of treachery, the latter would not have returned to Pontus or, having gone back, presumably would not have survived there as long as he did. Archelaus, then, was the victim of a change of mind on Mithridates' part, a change behind which one senses the influence of other members of the court and also a debate about the responsibility for Rome's victory. Originally convinced, that is, that he had received from Sulla the best terms he could expect, Mithridates came to be persuaded that through his general's treason, he had been cheated. He could have demanded more; his position had been stronger than he had realized.

The course of the Second Mithridatic War can only have confirmed the apparent accuracy of this assessment. Archelaus' departure for Murena's camp, first, must have seemed to prove that the suspicions about him had been correct, and thus that Sulla had managed to dupe the king at Dardanus. Then, without any provocation Murena attacked and plundered the great temple at Comana, killing a number of Pontic cavalymen in the process, and when an embassy was sent to him to protest his action, his reply was a piece of sophistry: he had not, he said, seen the treaty with Sulla in writing.<sup>22</sup> This was followed by a second incursion and more plundering, and subsequently the Roman, wintering in Cappadocia, established a number of forts threatening Pontus; then, in the spring of 82, he entered Phrygia and Galatia and

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<sup>20</sup> On Archelaus see above, note 14.

<sup>21</sup> I cannot share the opinion of REINACH 188 f., that Archelaus ever betrayed the king: the terms of settlement which he extracted from Sulla were very generous. On these see MOMMSEN 48 ff.

<sup>22</sup> App. Mith. 64, 269; Memnon, fr. 26, 1 (discussed by JANKE 77–9); Liv. Per. 86. Although it was standard practice to commit treaties to writing, this was not mandatory: TH. MOMMSEN, *Römisches Staatsrecht*, I<sup>3</sup> 248.



organized an attack directed at Sinope itself, the chief city of Mithridates' realm.<sup>23</sup> In the interim the king had sent ambassadors both to Sulla and to the Senate, and from the Senate had come a legate, Calidius, who publicly ordered Murena to desist from his attacks but who also was seen speaking with him privately, after which he began what was to be his final outrage; Sulla, on the other hand, made no response at all before Murena's defeat (App. Mith. 66, 279). The tally: a deceitful peace, three brutal attacks that were completely without justification, an ambassador from the Senate who accomplished nothing at all, and no word from Sulla. The pattern of Roman conduct was chillingly familiar. The fate of Prusias of Bithynia, cut down something more than a generation earlier despite the solemn objections of the Senate, may have come to Mithridates' mind.<sup>24</sup> But he certainly will not have forgotten his own experience in 88, when, again without the slightest provocation, representatives of the Senate had caused repeated invasions of Pontus.<sup>25</sup> Appian is probably right, then, when he reports that following Murena's second raid, Mithridates concluded that «the Romans clearly were making war on him» (Mith. 65, 273).<sup>26</sup>

The war which Mithridates himself now unleashed was over in short order. Murena's rag-tag army was smashed as soon as the Pontic forces could be gathered, the forts which he had founded in Cappadocia quickly taken. Cappadocia itself was then overrun, and, in the process, the hope awakened in many people in Asia Minor that the king would repeat what he had done in 88 (App. Mith. 65, 273–66, 277). Such was clearly not his intention, however. There is no evidence of operations by Pontic troops anywhere outside Cappadocia, the source of his recent troubles. Moreover, when an envoy from Sulla at last arrived on the scene, Mithridates showed himself willing to negotiate.<sup>27</sup> Sulla intended that the king should be reconciled to his neighbor, Ariobarzanes of Cappadocia. This entailed giving his four-year-old daughter to Ariobarzanes' son in marriage and presumably was meant to restore the old *status quo*. It was not entirely acceptable to Mithridates. To be sure, the marriage was arranged and a great festival celebrated, but at Dardanus the king had agreed to remove all garrisons from foreign lands and to «be content to be ruler of his inherited dominion alone» (Mith. 55, 223), undertakings he was not now prepared to honor a second time. Instead, Appian reports that on the pretext of his daughter's marriage he «claimed to have title to as much of Cappadocia as he had, and other parts, too ...» (Mith. 66, 280), and in 79 Ariobarzanes sent an embassy to Rome to claim that «he had not

<sup>23</sup> App. Mith. 64, 270–65, 273; Memnon, fr. 26, 3.

<sup>24</sup> The Prusias episode, a famous one, is reviewed in all of the standard discussions of the period: see, recently, E. V. HANSEN, *The Attalids of Pergamon*<sup>2</sup>, Ithaca-London, 1971, 136 ff.

<sup>25</sup> Regarding the outbreak of the First Mithridatic War: App. Mith. 11, 35 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Greeks hostile to Rome had long maintained this very thing, making it that much the easier for Mithridates to accept the conclusions which events seemed to be forcing on him. (Sources, discussion and bibliography in B. FORTE, *Rome and the Romans as the Greeks Saw Them*, Papers and Monographs of the Amer. Acad. in Rome 24, Rome 1972, 37 ff.).

<sup>27</sup> App. Mith. 66, 279 f. Concerning the marriage see REINACH 299 f.

received back Cappadocia, but that Mithridates was still depriving him of the greater part of it» (Mith. 67, 283). It would be excessive to see here the virtual annexation of much of that land, much less its direct rule from Pontus. The recruiting grounds on the northern shore of the Euxine were closed to the king<sup>28</sup> and the Crimean campaign, a large operation, was still in the future. Mithridates probably would not have been able, therefore, to detail a large army of occupation to Cappadocia. In any case, there was no real need to do so. For, even before Murena's appearance an important part of the Cappadocian nobility had been inclined to identify its interests with Mithridates', and unless Murena had been vastly more politic in dealing with the king's suspected fifth column than he was with the king himself, by the time of the Roman's defeat they will have been lost irretrievably to Rome. It was probably local noblemen, then, who bore most of the responsibility for enforcing Mithridates' decision regarding Cappadocia, something they could do by expelling Ariobarzanes' garrisons from strategic fortresses throughout the country and replacing them with their own troops. But even if most of the Pontic troops and officers were then withdrawn from the land, the spirit, if not the letter, of the Peace of Dardanus had been violated.

In assessing Mithridates' reasons for taking these actions one must not lose sight of his situation at the time. Since he believed that he had been cheated at Dardanus and that Murena's raids had constituted a war on Pontus the king doubtless felt that he was entirely justified in keeping a grip on Cappadocia.<sup>29</sup> But there was a further matter that ought also to have influenced his decision. During the campaign in the Crimea which Murena's raids had forced the king to postpone, most of the Pontic army would be far from home and Pontus itself, consequently, much weaker than it now was. The prospect of leaving his land virtually defenseless apparently had not caused Mithridates great alarm previously; otherwise presumably he would not have made plans for the expedition in the first place. But Murena's actions, the failure of the Romans to prevent them and his own change of mind about what had transpired at Dardanus could well have led him now to have serious misgivings about the project. With a small, unsatisfactory force and despite sure knowledge of the opposition's armaments Murena had not hesitated to attack Pontus. Nothing, quite simply,

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<sup>28</sup> Mithridates' allies in the first war with Rome had included Scythians, Taurians, Bastarnae, Thracians, Sarmatians «and all those dwelling about the Don and the Danube and also Lake Azov» (App. Mith. 15, 53; see also Memnon, fr. 22, 3 and Just. 38, 3, 6f.). Concerning the king's recruitment in the north G. T. GRIFFITH comments: «it was these immense reserves of manpower that enabled him to be a danger to the Roman power in the east ...» (*The Mercenaries of the Hellenistic World*, Cambridge 1935; rpt. Chicago 1975, 189f.). See also CHR. DANOFF, *RE Suppl.* 9 (1962) 1155 s. v. Pontus Euxeinos.

<sup>29</sup> LIEBMANN-FRANKFORT, 186 f., 196 and 200 ff., considers imperialism the only explanation of Mithridates' action – indeed, of all his actions in the years after Dardanus. If one attempts, however, to put oneself in the king's position at the time, it becomes apparent that other factors in addition to ambition will have influenced him.

had been allowed to stand in his way, and the government at Rome seemed to have taken no action to stop him. The lesson which Mithridates and his advisors had to draw from this was that the Romans could be not only unscrupulous but also irrational. It would have been, then, the pinnacle of folly to ship the Pontic army to the north while leaving the way clear for someone else to follow in Murena's footsteps. Prudence dictated that either Cappadocia be closed to another invading force or the plans for the Crimean campaign abandoned. Defensive considerations, then, played a role in the king's decision not to comply fully with the terms of his agreement with Sulla.

### III

Circumstances will also have influenced the Romans' reaction to the developments in the east. Murena could not have chosen a more inopportune time to provoke a major international crisis. During the spring and summer of 82, the date of the latter's defeat and of the Pontic attack on Cappadocia,<sup>30</sup> Sulla and his enemies were occupied fully with the civil war in Italy, then in its first stage. Sulla's victory there was not complete till his success in the battle of the Colline Gate at the beginning of November, and outside Italy the last of the resistance to him was not broken before early spring, 81.<sup>31</sup> Even this, however, did not permit the Dictator to solve all his problems immediately. Money remained in short supply into the summer at least, perhaps beyond.<sup>32</sup> Had Mithridates chosen to push beyond Cappadocia, there would have been little but local resistance to stop him.

The king's attack, moreover, seems to have been completely unanticipated by Sulla. Since he «did not deem it proper that Mithridates, an ally, should have war made upon him» (App. Mith. 66,279), Sulla sent an ambassador, A. Gabinius, to restrain Murena and to reconcile Mithridates and Ariobarzanes to one another. Appian reports Gabinius' mission after he has mentioned Murena's defeat and the Pontic army's entry into Cappadocia, leading some scholars to conclude that Gabinius was despatched from Rome in response to the news of these developments.<sup>33</sup> But Sulla, it is said, acted because Mithridates was an ally, the very reason given earlier by the Senate's emissary, Calidius, when he enjoined Murena against further attacks and also, no doubt, the basis of the king's complaints against Murena.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, why would Sulla have told Gabinius to order Murena «not to make war on Mithridates» if Murena, who was

<sup>30</sup> BERNHARDT, 17.

<sup>31</sup> Porta Collina (1 November): Vell. 2, 27, 1. Pompey's operations in Sicily and Africa: E. BADIAN, *The Date of Pompey's First Triumph*, *Hermes* 89, 1955, 112–14.

<sup>32</sup> The second proscription list, posted in December, 82, had a time limit of 1 June 81: Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 44, 128 (Discussion: CRINITI 346).

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., GEYER 2179, and MAGIE I 245.

<sup>34</sup> Compare App. Mith. 66, 279 (Gabinius' mission) with Mith. 65, 272 (Calidius' mission) and Mith. 64, 269 (Murena's justification of his raids; cf. Memnon, fr. 26, 1).

beaten in a single engagement, was already running for safety, his army shattered?<sup>35</sup> Gabinius, rather, was the bearer of Sulla's reply to the appeal for protection that Mithridates had made previously, just as Calidius was the Senate's. Only Gabinius arrived on the scene later than Calidius – too late, indeed, to rescue the situation. The most that he could do was to patch together a new settlement in Cappadocia on terms that he apparently found quite unsatisfactory.<sup>36</sup>

From actions which he took subsequently one can gauge Sulla's reaction to the alarming news brought back from the east by Gabinius. First, in either 81 or 80 Cilicia, the most direct means of access to Cappadocia from the Mediterranean, became a regular provincial assignment.<sup>37</sup> Suppression of piracy was no doubt an important reason for this step, but its timing makes it likely that the Romans also saw this as a means of propping up Ariobarzanes' tottering government.<sup>38</sup> More revealing still is Sulla's decision in 81 to permit Murena to celebrate a triumph *de Mithridate*.<sup>39</sup> *Prima facie* as bizarre an episode as one will encounter anywhere in the annals of Roman military history, the triumph has inevitably received varying interpretations. IHNE suggested that Murena bought the honor from Sulla with booty taken in the east.<sup>40</sup> Appian indicates, however, that the Roman barely escaped the battle with Mithridates and Gordios with his life, and, in any case, what need had the Dictator to bargain with the likes of him?<sup>41</sup> BADIAN has argued that the honor was intended to undercut the triumph celebrated by Pompey at about the same time, but this credits more importance to Pompey than he deserves at this date.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Murena's defeat: App. Mith. 65, 274–5; Memnon, fr. 26, 3–4. Since Cappadocia had been Murena's base, it was natural for Sulla to be anxious about Mithridates' relations with Ariobarzanes.

<sup>36</sup> Gabinius refused to share in Mithridates' munificence on the occasion of his daughter's marriage to Ariobarzanes' son (App. Mith. 66, 280), a sign, one would expect, of displeasure over the settlement capped by the marriage. REINACH 299 f., asserts that Mithridates' new position in Cappadocia went «entirely unnoticed» by the Romans. This implausible opinion has been corrected by LIEBMANN-FRANKFORT, who properly observes (p. 201) that the Romans had no choice but to live with the new situation.

<sup>37</sup> SHERWIN-WHITE 10 f.

<sup>38</sup> SHERWIN-WHITE 11. Similar conclusions: WILL 408 f. and 411; also, LIEBMANN-FRANKFORT 208 ff.

<sup>39</sup> For the sources see MÜNZER, RE 13 (1926) 444–6, s. v. Licinius (Murena) (122). For the date of the triumph I follow T. R. S. BROUGHTON, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, II, New York 1952, 77.

<sup>40</sup> IHNE V 439, note 2.

<sup>41</sup> At the beginning of 81 Q. Lucretius Ofella attempted to extort a major concession from Sulla, with disastrous results to himself: MÜNZER, RE 13 (1927) 1687, s. v. Lucretius (Ofella) (25). (For discussion of the incident consult J. CARCOPINO, *Sylla ou la monarchie manquée*<sup>2</sup>, Paris 1942, 129 ff.) I find it impossible to credit PARETI's explanation of Murena's triumph, that it was meant to compensate him for being ordered back to Italy: *Storia di Roma e del mondo romano*, III, Turin 1953, 630.

<sup>42</sup> E. BADIAN, *The Date of Pompey's First Triumph*, *Hermes* 89, 1955, 118; cf. R. E. SMITH, *Pompey's Conduct in 80 and 77 B. C.*, *Phoenix* 14, 1960, 8 and note 44; also, TWYMAN, 818 ff.

Another, possibly more satisfactory explanation of Sulla's decision is suggested by the remarkable fact that in the speech which he delivered a number of years later on behalf of Murena's son (and in other orations, too) Cicero could praise the elder Murena's exploits in the east in the most glowing terms imaginable.<sup>43</sup> Obviously the orator's audience had a very different opinion of what Murena had done than did Appian's source. For them his war with Mithridates was not a *privatum latrocinium*, as Appian shows it to have been, but a *bellum iustum*. They were wrong in this, of course, but their error, one should note, was a very easy one to make. The Roman's two major sources of information about what had happened in the east were Murena and Gabinius. Murena will certainly have argued that his raids on Pontus had been meant to forestall an invasion such as had, in fact, just occurred.<sup>44</sup> Gabinius will have been able to relay Mithridates' version of the same events, but how credible will that have seemed under the new circumstances? Cappadocia had become a satellite of Pontus despite the Peace of Dardanus. Also, Mithridates had acted in a way that could not have failed to remind Romans of the outbreak of the First Mithridatic War. Then the king's attack had been preceded by a number of Pontic embassies whose purpose, it may have seemed in retrospect, had been duplicitous; so, too, on this occasion.<sup>45</sup> Now nothing could be done because of the civil war raging in Italy; then the Romans had been unable to respond as swiftly or effectively as they would otherwise have done because of the Social War. It was only natural for them, then, to regard the Second Mithridatic War as a continuation of the First<sup>46</sup> and to consider it a *bellum iustum*. And it was only natural, too, for Sulla to seek to win some credit for his new regime from that fact. Hence a triumph that historians, better informed and politically disinterested, would later show to have been completely undeserved.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See, especially, Mur. 7, 15 (*cum amplissime atque honestissime ex praetura Murena triumphasset*); also 5, 12 and 15, 32; leg. Man. 3, 8; acad. 2, 1, 2. MÜNZER comments concerning the language that «Cicero drückt sich ... so lobend wie möglich aus» (RE 13 [1926] 445, s.v. Licinius [Murena] [122]). MAGIE (I 245) misses the significance of Cicero's praise.

<sup>44</sup> Concerning the king's military preparations at the time of Murena's raids Appian states that «the size of his armament quickly provoked the opinion that it was being assembled not for use against the people of the Bosphorus but against the Romans» (Mith. 64, 267); also, that Archelaus persuaded Murena «to attack Mithridates first» (Mith. 64, 268). Cicero passes the same judgment on the king's fleet (leg. Man. 4, 9). The Romans believed a «preemptive» attack to be justified under such circumstances: P. A. BRUNT, *Laus Imperii*, in: *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, edd. P. D. A. GARNSEY and C. R. WHITTAKER, Cambridge 1978, 176–7.

<sup>45</sup> The earlier Pontic embassies: App. Mith. 12, 38ff. and 14, 47ff. Also, Eutrop. 5, 5, 1; Oros. 6, 2, 1; Dio, fr. 99, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Cic. leg. Man. 4, 9; Plut. Luc. 5, 1; id., Sert. 23, 1; App. Mith. 112, 542; Flor. 1, 40, 12–14.

<sup>47</sup> A rather similar case occurred in 187, when the Senate granted the honor of a triumph to Cn. Manlius Vulso for the operations which he had undertaken in Asia during the preceding years. (Like Murena's, it should be noted, these operations ended in a major defeat: Liv. 38, 40–41.) Although ten legates had been on the scene and some testified that Manlius' campaigns had constituted a *privatum latrocinium*, not a *bellum iustum*, in the end the Senate,

## IV

Against this background of mounting suspicion and fear we may consider the crisis from which, in REINACH's opinion, the Third Mithridatic War originated. Its course is fairly clear (App. Mith. 67, 282–5). In 79 ambassadors from Pontus appeared in Rome seeking ratification of the Peace of Dardanus. An embassy sent by Ariobarzanes also made an appearance at the same time, to complain about Mithridates' control of much of the latter's kingdom. The Romans' response to their appeals was delivered by Sulla himself. The Pontic ruler was first to «set free» Cappadocia; then, in return for this, his request concerning the Peace would be granted.<sup>48</sup> Sulla, thus, offered a deal: confirmation of the Peace in return for restoration of full control over Cappadocia to Ariobarzanes. Now, Mithridates promptly carried out his part of this proposal, but the Romans did not follow suit. Reaching Rome after the former dictator's death – the date must fall between the beginning of March and the end of May, 78<sup>49</sup> – a second embassy from Pontus was denied an audience with the Senate because, according to the consuls, there was «no free time».<sup>50</sup> The king's reaction to this rebuff meant the virtual breakdown of Roman-Pontic relations. He persuaded his son-in-law, Tigranes, the king of Armenia, to overrun Cappadocia. After this dramatic gesture one hears nothing of further attempts to come to terms with the Romans, while on the Roman side the sources indicate that powerful men began to fear that war was coming.

Developments in the east since Murena's defeat help to explain this startling series of events. The Pontic expedition to the Crimea, delayed by Murena's raids, seems to have been undertaken in 81; it was brought to a successful conclusion that same year or early in the next, and was followed by an attack on Colchis which ended the independence that region had been permitted to enjoy for a brief time.<sup>51</sup> Thus Mithridates' empire as it had existed before the first war with Rome was again fact. His

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confronted with contradictory evidence and not insensitive to political considerations, chose to give Manlius the benefit of the doubt. The debate: Liv. 38, 44, 9–50, 3.

<sup>48</sup> Characteristically, Appian does not state explicitly that Mithridates was promised peace if he evacuated Cappadocia; the reader must deduce that fact for himself. It does seem a safe deduction, however, for when the king, after withdrawing from his neighbor's territory, sent a second embassy to Italy, he did so «for the ratification of the treaty» (Mith. 67, 283).

<sup>49</sup> Appian is explicit in stating that the ambassadors were turned away by «the consuls» (οὐκ ἐπαγόντων ὡς ἐν ἀσχολίᾳ τῶν προβούλων ἐπὶ τὸ κοινόν, Mith. 67, 284). This can only mean that Lepidus had not yet left Rome, as he had done by May 22 of that year, the date of the *SC de Asclepiade*: CRINITI 410 f. Sulla had died early in March: CRINITI 402 and notes 247, 248.

<sup>50</sup> App. Mith. 67, 284.

<sup>51</sup> BERNHARDT 17. Appian (Mith. 64, 266) mentions the seizure of Colchis and the execution of the king's son, its ruler, before he mentions Murena's first raid, which occurred in 83; it has been common, therefore, to place the attack on Colchis before the Second Mithridatic War (see, e.g., REINACH 296 f.; GEYER 2178). However, a good case has been made by G. A. LORDKIPANIDZE for believing that Colchis was not taken till 80, when the rebellion in the Bosporus had been ended and Mithridates no longer needed to mollify the Colchians, upon whom he depended for his fleet: On the History of Ancient Colchis (in Russ.), Tbilisi 1970, 23 f.

luck, however, was about to turn. Another expedition was presently launched, Appian says, against «the Achaeans who dwell beyond the Colchians» (Mith. 67,282), evidently with the purpose of establishing a land link between Colchis and the Crimea and thus of bringing the last independent section of the northern shore of the Black Sea under the king's control.<sup>52</sup> It failed utterly: he «lost two-thirds of his army in battle and to the cold and in ambushes ...» (App. loc. cit.). The reference to cold weather suggests a date in the late summer or autumn of 80.<sup>53</sup>

That there may have been a connection between the destruction of Mithridates' forces in the north in 80 and his first attempt, a number of months later, to secure ratification of the Peace of Dardanus, has not received the consideration it merits in other discussions of these matters.<sup>54</sup> First, the date of the northern set-back is important: late summer or fall, 80. Slightly earlier that year at Rome P. Servilius Vatia had been elected consul for 79 (assuming, that is, that the elections were held at the normal time), and, unless the *lex Sempronia* on consular provinces was abrogated while Sulla himself held the consulship, prior to Servilius' election Cilicia had been declared a province for one of Sulla's successors.<sup>55</sup> At the time, then, of the collapse of the northern expedition or shortly thereafter Mithridates probably will have known that a consular army, under the leadership of a distinguished general and trusted associate of Sulla, would soon be operating in the region that was the natural staging-area for an invasion of Cappadocia.<sup>56</sup> To be sure, the professed purpose of Servilius'

<sup>52</sup> REINACH 300.

<sup>53</sup> BERNHARDT 17, note 6, dates the failure of the expedition to late summer, 80; REINACH loc. cit. seems to have preferred a date later in the year, a choice which Appian's reference to «frost» (or «icy cold») may support.

<sup>54</sup> BERNHARDT 17, after noting the failure of the northern expedition, comments that the king initiated the negotiations in order «to prevent developments similar to Murena's invasion»; he does not, however, seek to explain why he should have felt alarm at this time in particular. REINACH 300 states that his appeal was motivated by «the need and the wish for peace», but offers no explanation of this need. GEYER 2179 (followed by MAGIE I 321) observes that «the importance of a written copy» of the Peace had been demonstrated at the time of Murena's raids, but does not attempt to understand why, in that case, Mithridates permitted some two years to pass before approaching the Senate.

<sup>55</sup> I am persuaded by the arguments of B. TWYMAN in favor of locating the consular elections for 79 in 80, at the normal time of year, i. e., in July or August: The Date of Sulla's Abdication and the Chronology of the First Book of Appian's Civil Wars, Athenaeum 54, 1976, 77ff., and 271ff. However, dating the elections to the end of 80 or the beginning of 79, as some have done, would only strengthen the case made below for thinking that fear of Servilius induced Mithridates to approach the Senate: on this chronology Servilius' election, instead of preceding the northern disaster, will have followed it by several months, and the king will have had to worry that the new consul had been chosen specifically in order to take advantage of the new situation which his defeat had created. (The later date: references in TWYMAN, op. cit., 77, note 4, and 78, note 5.)

<sup>56</sup> Servilius and Sulla: E. BADIEN, Notes on Provincial Governors from the Social War down to Sulla's Victory, PACA 1, 1958, 1-18, rpt. in: Studies in Greek and Roman History, New York 1964, 71ff., esp. 82-4; TWYMAN 832-4.

mission is likely to have been suppression of piracy; however, with Pontus suddenly weakened so seriously, might Servilius not have been given a new task? In 96, it should be remembered, Sulla himself had been abruptly reassigned from Cilicia to Cappadocia, and Murena, too, may have entered Cappadocia from there.<sup>57</sup> The Pontic army now stood at a third its former strength and must also have been in serious disarray, while the Roman forces were to have a commander of ability who had the full backing of the government in Italy. The possibility that under these circumstances the Romans might move to recoup their earlier losses – that Servilius might prove to be another Murena, only far worse – must inevitably have been a source of great concern to Mithridates and his advisors.

Pontus' vulnerability and the forthcoming expedition of Servilius constitute the origins of the crisis of 78. They illuminate, first, Mithridates' decision to seek confirmation of the Peace of Dardanus, a strange step, it might seem, after his earlier actions in Cappadocia and certainly a humiliating one, but one which the military situation now forced upon him. They also explain the sudden boldness of Ariobarzanes, who, after spending some two years as a mere figurehead in his own land, at length bestirred himself to approach the Romans for aid. The reason is that they now had means of bringing pressure to bear on his neighbor. Finally, they make sense of Mithridates' decision, taken at the cost of abandoning his supporters among the Cappadocian nobility and doubtless over their intense opposition, to give in to Sulla's demand. He would not have done so, one assumes, except from grave anxiety over his own kingdom's security.

Let us now reconsider the events of the crucial year, 78, in the light of these conclusions. At the outset of the year Mithridates must have regarded his position as precarious in the extreme. Cappadocia was again in the hands of his enemies, his relationship with Rome had not yet been formalized through ratification of the Peace of Dardanus, and, most serious of all, Servilius, who had left Italy immediately after his consulship, was now in Asia and making preparations for a large campaign.<sup>58</sup> Much, therefore, will have seemed to depend upon the success of the second embassy to Rome. There was, however, to be no success. Indeed, if Appian's account can be trusted to be reasonably complete here, it would appear that the Pontic ambassadors were simply brushed aside, with no request that they return at an appointed time when the Senate would debate their appeal and with no assurance that Sulla's promise would eventually be honored. Of course, if it is the case that the embassy arrived shortly after the former dictator's death, when Rome was torn by serious civil disorders,<sup>59</sup> the substance of the consuls' response may make sense. A meeting of the

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<sup>57</sup> On Murena's previous exploits see *MAGIE* I 240ff. Sulla in Cappadocia: *BADIAN*, Sulla's Cilician Command, 160ff. I am not convinced by *SHERWIN-WHITE*'s arguments against *Badian*'s conclusions: Ariobarzanes, Mithridates, and Sulla, *CQ* 27, 1977, 173–83.

<sup>58</sup> Servilius left Italy before Sulla's death and evidently spent the remainder of 78 preparing for the forthcoming operations: *ORMEROD* 38. His army comprised two legions: *MAGIE* I 323 f.

<sup>59</sup> Concerning the situation in Rome at the time of Sulla's funeral see *CRINITI* 402ff.



Centuriate Assembly would not, under such circumstances, have been possible. Its style, however, was inexcusable, assuming again that Appian conveys it accurately. Given the importance of the matter to Mithridates and given also his view of Roman conduct in the past, of which the Romans cannot have been entirely ignorant, inaction now was a kind of action. The king could only interpret it as a sign that Roman treachery, as he saw it, had not died with Sulla, that the Senate meant to exploit his current weakness. It was not in the Romans' interest to give him this impression, for it would either alarm him unnecessarily or, in the event that it were true, forewarn him of their intentions. The answer given the Pontic ambassadors was a stupid blunder, then, no matter what one makes of Roman plans in the east.

Like many another false step taken by politicians insensitive to the requirements of diplomacy, the Roman response in 78 was to have regrettable consequences for both of the concerned parties. Mithridates' reaction to it was foreordained. His worst fears about the Romans – fears which went back to before Murena's first incursion – appeared now to have received complete confirmation. The king had no choice, then, but to seek some means of protecting himself against the possibility of an attack from Cappadocia. This perhaps could not be done in the old way, through agents within the Cappadocian nobility, for many of these may have been alienated by his earlier treatment of them or broken by Murena and Ariobarzanes. Also, the Pontic army probably would not yet have been ready to support them by invading the land, whose strongpoints were now held by Ariobarzanes' men. Tigranes, then, was the only solution. He apparently had no argument with the Romans, nor is it likely that concern about Servilius' expedition, which would bring the Romans close to the portion of Cilicia held by the Armenian since 83, motivated him to act.<sup>60</sup> He would later overlook far more provocative situations than that. But settlers were needed for his new capital, and these Cappadocia could provide. In 78 or early 77, therefore, Tigranes overran Ariobarzanes' kingdom. Three hundred thousand persons (it is said) were marched off to Tigranocerta.<sup>61</sup>

The Romans, Appian states, were not deceived by the Pontic king's stratagem; they recognized, rather, that the final responsibility for this latest set-back to their plans for Cappadocia was his, not Tigranes' (Mith. 67, 284f.). This is probably true, for early in 77 the senior consular Philippus is reported by Sallust to have said that «beside our provinces Mithridates seeks a day for war» (hist. 1, 77, 8).<sup>62</sup> The first

<sup>60</sup> Tigranes' activities since Dardanus are reviewed by MAGIE I 295 f.

<sup>61</sup> App. Mith. 67, 285. REINACH 308 locates the Armenian invasion in 77; BERNHARDT 18, note 3 demurs, insisting that the most one can say is that it occurred *after* 78. However, there is nothing in Appian that would rule out the latter half of 78, and if the reading below of Sall. hist. 1, 77, 8 is correct, that may be where it belongs, for it will have happened before Philippus' speech in the Senate, which was delivered early in 77 (CRINITI 431 and note 318). (Tigranocerta and its location: LEHMANN-HAUPT, RE 6 A [1936] 981 ff., s. v. Tigranokerta.)

<sup>62</sup> «*Praeterea Etruria atque omnes reliquiae belli adrectae, Hispaniae armis sollicitae, Mithridates in latere vectigalium nostrorum, quibus adhuc sustentamur, diem bello circumspicit ...*»

phrase is important here: *in latere vectigalium*. It could not have been used, of course, during the brief period when Ariobarzanes was in full control of his kingdom, for at that time Mithridates, his power at its nadir, was no threat to the Romans and no land that in any sense might have been called his bordered on their provinces. But after the Armenian invasion of Cappadocia, which brought hostile (or at least potentially hostile) forces near to the borders of Asia and Cilicia, the phrase makes sense – provided, of course, one assumes that from the start the Romans blamed Mithridates for the invasion.

The king's intentions in turning to Tigranes are not likely, however, to have been as dangerous to Roman interests as Philippus at first perceived them to be. The Armenian attack clearly was much more than a raid, and it may be significant, therefore, that no drachmas coined by Ariobarzanes in 78 or 77 have yet come to light.<sup>63</sup> By 76 at the latest, however, the hapless Cappadocian was again on his throne. Now, he apparently got there without armed support from Servilius,<sup>64</sup> and once there he seems to have been in full control of his kingdom.<sup>65</sup> After the invader's withdrawal, that is, Mithridates made no attempt to reestablish the authority he had enjoyed in Cappadocia after Murena's defeat, a fact which suggests that in instigating the invasion in the first place he had had no motive beyond the one proposed above, the protection of Pontus.

In time, moreover, the Romans came to recognize this, or so, at least, the evidence of Sallust suggests. In the speech which he is supposed to have delivered in the middle of 75,<sup>66</sup> a veritable catalogue of the troubles then besetting the Republic, the consul C. Aurelius Cotta takes note of Rome's concern about the king of Pontus but says only that «armies are being supported in Asia and Cilicia on account of Mithridates' excessive resources» (Sall. hist. 2, 47, 7). For Philippus war had been imminent; for Cotta, it is no more than a possibility for which one must be prepared. The alarm expressed in 77 had, then, given way at Rome by the middle of 75 to a more moderate assessment of the situation in the east, or so it would seem. Of course, when Tigranes had entered Cappadocia in 78 the Pontic king's intentions were not yet known; by 75, however, Ariobarzanes was again in control of his kingdom, and the old order there – one of which the Senate completely approved – restored. Philippus' fears, it ought now to have been clear, had been premature.

<sup>63</sup> SIMONEITTA 19.

<sup>64</sup> Servilius' campaigns in the period 77–75 are reconstructed by ORMEROD 40 ff.

<sup>65</sup> Schol. Gronov. p. 316 (STANGL): «*Misit ergo populus R. ad regnum illud [sc. Bithyniam] tenendum Ariobarzanen.*» The date is late 74, after Nicomedes' death. BENNETT 462 describes Ariobarzanes here as Bithynia's caretaker. He could not have attempted to play this role, one would imagine, if he were only a figurehead in his own kingdom.

<sup>66</sup> The date («about in the middle of 75»): G. PERL, *Die Rede Cottas in Sallusts Historien*, *Philologus* 109, 1965, 75.

## V

The defense of his kingdom was probably also the king's chief concern in the negotiations which he conducted with the Senate's archenemy, Sertorius, in the early 70's. To be sure, when one looks at the terms to which the two parties eventually agreed it may appear that Mithridates' only goal was to prepare the way for another conquest of the lands in Asia Minor of which he had, he believed, been deceitfully deprived by Sulla at Dardanus.<sup>67</sup> But that is unlikely to be the entire explanation of his decision to approach Sertorius or even his main reason for it. We know from Appian and Cicero that the notion of an alliance was not originally Mithridates'; it first occurred, rather, to two Fimbrian officers, L. Magius and L. Fannius, who were then living in the city of Myndus in Asia.<sup>68</sup> The date, apparently, is 79,<sup>69</sup> the year when, in order to reach an accommodation with the Sullan government, the king was prepared even to abandon his position in Cappadocia. This coincidence is significant. Certainly Mithridates wanted at that time to recover what he regarded as lost territories, or so one would assume, but as his action in Cappadocia makes clear, his main concern then was Pontus' security and, in particular, the possibility that the Senate might seek to take advantage of the dangerous situation caused by the calamitous end of the northern expedition. Under these circumstances the king's reason for adopting the Fimbrian officers' suggestion will not have been the dream of reconquering Asia Minor but rather the hope that by supporting Sertorius he could keep the Romans away from the east.

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<sup>67</sup> In return for the promise of gold and ships Sertorius agreed to recognize Mithridates as the rightful ruler of Bithynia, Cappadocia, Galatia and Paphlagonia, and also sent officers and men to Pontus to reorganize the army there along Roman lines and to serve as its leaders. Initially the king had argued that Asia, too, should be his, but eventually he had to withdraw his demand in the face of Sertorius' opposition. Sources: App. Mith. 68, 288 f.; Plut. Sert. 23, 1 ff.; id., Luc. 8, 5. On the date of the alliance see below, p. 129 ff.

<sup>68</sup> App. Mith. 68, 287; Cic. Verr. 1, 87: *ipse (sc. Verres) myoparonem pulcherrimum de decem Milesiorum navibus electum, L. Magio et L. Fannio, qui Myndi habitabant, vendidit. Hi sunt homines quos nuper senatus in hostium numero habendos censuit; hoc illi navigio ad omnes populi Romani hostes, usque ab Dianio ad Sinopen navigaverunt.*

<sup>69</sup> The date (and bibliography concerning it): SCARDIGLI 253 and note 100. P.O. SPANN (Quintus Sertorius: Citizen, Soldier, Exile, diss. Texas 1976, 103) has redated the first mission to Sertorius to 76, arguing against 79, first, because Mithridates was still negotiating with the Senate in that year and Sertorius «little more than a bandit with political pretentions» at the time; second, because Sertorius did not yet have control of a port which could have received the king's envoys; and, finally, because Appian speaks of only one mission to Sertorius. These arguments do not seem convincing, either individually or collectively; moreover, what can Fannius and Magius have had in mind when they purchased the *myoparo* except the kind of journey they undertook to Spain? The *myoparo* was «merely an extraordinarily swift yet seaworthy open galley» (L. Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World*, Princeton 1971, 132). It was the pirate's ship *par excellence* and also was used, to a limited extent, in regular fleets. Its design made it unsuitable for use as a freighter, and I have found no evidence that it was owned as a pleasure craft.

Evidently nothing came of this initiative, for by the time of Cotta's oration in the middle of 75 the Romans seem to have revised their estimate of the threat posed by Mithridates; but Sertorius was not forgotten. When war broke out at last in the east in early spring, 73, he and the king were in alliance. To understand how this came about and, indeed, how Mithridates' relations with the Romans completely collapsed after the middle of 75, one must consider developments which occurred in 74.

First, the activities of M. Marius, a Sertorian officer sent to Pontus in accordance with the terms of the agreement with the king.<sup>70</sup> When war commenced in early 73 some of Mithridates' land forces were under the Roman's command. Moreover, Marius and a number of other officers and men with him had undertaken since their arrival from Spain to reorganize the Pontic army from the ground up, on the Roman model. Arms and armor of the Roman style were procured; the entire army was trained and deployed in accordance with Roman practice. This was a large project (and, it should be added, one that probably would not long have escaped the Romans' notice), but it seems to have been completed before fighting began. Marius and his associates must have set to work, then, some time in 74 at the latest. Probably they did not start earlier than that year, however, for in the letter which he sent to the Senate from Spain at the very end of 75, Pompey gives no indication that he knows anything of an alliance between Sertorius and Mithridates, this despite the fact that a reference to it would have strengthened his request for swift, substantial aid. In 74, then, Marius went to work in Pontus. Mithridates, it appears, now foresaw war.

So, too, did the Romans. During the latter half of 74 Lucullus mounted a lobbying campaign to be relieved of the governorship of Gallia Cisalpina and invested with that of Cilicia.<sup>71</sup> His reason: he was convinced that there would soon be war with Pontus and that, as governor of Cilicia, he could expect a Mithridatic command (Plut. Luc. 5, 1 ff.). Other senators evidently shared his conviction, for when he left for the east

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<sup>70</sup> His biography: MÜNZER, RE 14 (1930) 1818 f., s. v. Marius (23). Activities in Pontus: Plut. Sert. 24, 2 ff.; id., Luc. 8, 5. IHNE (VI, 31, note 2) says that for the king the Romans from Spain were «of very questionable value»: «Truppen hatte er genug, und Führer derselben ebenfalls.» For a better assessment see MAGIE I 323.

<sup>71</sup> Lucullus' lobbying: J. VAN OOTEGHEM, Lucius Licinius Lucullus, Brussels 1959, 53–5. The time of year has been fixed by G. PERL, Das Kompositionsprinzip der Historiae des Sallust (zu hist. 2, 42), in: Actes de la XII<sup>e</sup> Conférence Internationale d'Études Classiques Eirene (Cluj-Napoca 2–7 Octobre 1972), Bucarest-Amsterdam 1975, 323 f. Inasmuch as M. Antonius' naval expedition against the pirates, which put to sea in the spring of 74, has been linked to the commands of Lucullus and Cotta, it might be argued that these, too, were foreseen at that earlier time, and thus that Lucullus began his political maneuvering at the start of the year. (In favor of connecting the various commands: A. PASSERINI, La preparazione della guerra contro Creta nel 70 a. C., Athenaeum 14, 1936, 51; MAGIE I 292; A. M. WARD, Caesar and the Pirates II: The E[]usive M. Iunius Iuncus and the Year 75/4, AJAH 2, 1977, 33.) But the authorization for Antonius' expedition, whose first operations were in the waters between Italy and Spain, must have been given in 75, before the Romans knew of an understanding between Mithridates and Sertorius; hence its objective was precisely what the sources indicate, the pirates, and not the king of Pontus. It does not, then, foreshadow the commands of Lucullus and Cotta.

Lucullus took with him a new legion. The Romans, then, had again changed their assessment of the situation in the east, reverting from Cotta's view to Philippus'.

How is one to account for this sudden, dramatic heightening of the tension between Rome and Pontus? Something of major importance either had happened in the east or appeared imminent, for otherwise Lucullus' ambition and the Senate's willingness to assign him a new legion are inexplicable. This is not likely to have been the death of Nicomedes of Bithynia and the revelation that he had left his kingdom to Rome, events one might fairly have expected to provoke Mithridates to action. The arguments of W. BENNETT and, more recently, of G. PERL make it virtually certain that the Bithynian died late in 74, probably several months after Lucullus began his lobbying at Rome.<sup>72</sup> It is possible, of course, that the latter and his colleagues in the Senate were reacting to the discovery of M. Marius' presence in Pontus, which they may well have taken to portend another invasion of Roman Asia. But one must then ask why Mithridates now anticipated war with Rome when, some two years earlier, he had chosen not to make an issue of Ariobarzanes' return.

The situation in Bithynia may provide the answer. Nicomedes, it is now recognized, died no earlier than October of 74 and fighting commenced at the beginning of the following spring, that is, in March, 73.<sup>73</sup> In the interim the king's will was made public; the Senate accepted his bequest and disallowed any claim that his son might choose to make;<sup>74</sup> M. Iuncus, the governor of Asia, entered Bithynia, presumably to take charge of its administration;<sup>75</sup> Ariobarzanes came into the land, perhaps to lend his army's support to Iuncus in the event of an insurrection; and M. Cotta and his fleet took up a position at Chalcedon in Bithynian territory.<sup>76</sup> Considering the diffi-

<sup>72</sup> The king's death occurred no earlier than October, 74: WM. BENNETT, *The Death of Sertorius and the Coin* (above, preliminary note); G. PERL, *Zur Chronologie der Königreiche Bithynien, Pontos und Bosphorus*, in: *Studien zur Geschichte und Philosophie des Altertums*, ed. J. HARMATTA, Amsterdam 1968, 299–330 = *The Eras of the Bithynian, Pontic and Bosporan Kingdoms* (in Russ.), VDI 198, 1969, 39–69. (SCARDIGLI 255 denies BENNETT's conclusion, which has since been reinforced by PERL, but makes no attempt to refute his arguments; A. M. WARD [see preceding note] takes no notice of PERL's work and seeks to overturn BENNETT by pointing to Antonius' expedition, which he interprets [mistakenly, in my opinion] as a sign that in early 74 the Romans were already preparing for war with Pontus.) Lucullus probably anticipated war with Mithridates before Nicomedes' death, for otherwise there will have been very little time for him to win the governorship of Cilicia, collect a legion and transport it to Asia and then make sufficient preparations to be able to take to the field at the beginning of the following spring.

<sup>73</sup> Mithridates tested his fleet, offered sacrifice to Zeus Stratios and then invaded Bithynia «at the beginning of spring»: App. Mith. 70, 295.

<sup>74</sup> Nicomedes' bequest: Liv. Per. 93; Vell. 2, 4, 1; 39, 2; Eutrop. 6, 6, 1; Cic. leg. agr. 2, 15, 40; Amp. 34, 3; App. Mith. 7, 23 and 71, 299; id., b. c. 1, 111, 517. Apparently a claim was made for the late king's son (Sall. hist. 2, 71 [MAURENBRECHER]); it is not likely, however, that it was pressed very hard (BENNETT 462).

<sup>75</sup> Vell. 2, 42, 3.

<sup>76</sup> Schol. Gronov. p. 316 (STANGL); Memnon, fr. 27, 4; Plut. Luc. 8, 2; App. Mith. 71, 299; Cic. Mur. 33.

culty of travel and communications at this time of year, the efficiency and dispatch with which the Romans and their ally, Ariobarzanes, acted in attempting to take control of the new possession are noteworthy. They moved so quickly and deliberately, in fact, that one has to wonder whether they had not been expecting Nicomedes to die. There is, regrettably, no evidence at all about the king's death, but the supposition that he was in failing health for some time clarifies the actions of both Mithridates and the Romans in 74.<sup>77</sup> The Bithynian ruler was a hopeless weakling, the puppet of Rome.<sup>78</sup> Also, his only male heir was a boy whose legitimacy apparently was open to question.<sup>79</sup> Now, this situation would not have been cause for great alarm in Pontus but for the fact that in 75, the year before Mithridates began his preparations for war, the Senate had commenced organizing the territory of Cyrene into a province.<sup>80</sup> This was an abrupt departure from past practice, and Mithridates, already deeply distrustful of Roman intentions in the east, will have had to question whether the Senate was not now resolved on an aggressively expansionist policy there. Were this the case Bithynia would, in the event of its king's demise, inevitably be the next target; and once Bithynia was in Roman hands, the security of Pontus would be hopelessly compromised.<sup>81</sup> If Nicomedes was in failing health for a number of months, then, Mithridates will have had excellent reason to reopen his discussions with Sertorius, whose own situation would now have made him more receptive to the suggestion of an alliance than he had been in 79, and then to ready himself for war. And the Romans, too, may have felt that they should make preparations. War, which had seemed imminent in 77 and then appeared to have been averted by 75, will in this case now have become virtually inevitable.

### *Conclusion*

Fear and mutual suspicion, REINACH said, were the ultimate causes of the Third Mithridatic War, a conclusion which a close reading of the sources appears to confirm. In Mithridates' case it is particularly clear. It is true, of course, that even before Murena's first attack in 83, the king had decided that he had been cheated in the settlement with Sulla; also, there is no reason to think that he ever abandoned his hope of building a great empire at the expense of his neighbors in Asia Minor, the Romans among them. But circumstances shape a statesman's actions as much as,

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<sup>77</sup> SCARDIGLI 256 speaks of «l'improvvisa morte di Nicomede» but offers no explanation of her judgment.

<sup>78</sup> Nicomedes' position (and Bithynia's) after the Peace of Dardanus is reviewed by G. VITUCI, *Il regno di Bitinia*, Rome 1953, 117f.

<sup>79</sup> See above, note 74.

<sup>80</sup> G. PERL, *Die römischen Provinzbeamten in Cyrenae und Creta zur Zeit der Republik*, *Klio* 52, 1970, 321ff.

<sup>81</sup> REINACH 315: «The annexation of Bithynia was for Mithridates equivalent to a declaration of war.»

perhaps more than, his dreams. And if one looks at Mithridates' circumstances at all the important junctures after the Peace of Dardanus, it becomes apparent that defensive considerations must always have influenced his actions and sometimes probably were paramount in his mind. In 81, for example, when he refused, in effect, to abide by one of the most important terms of his agreement with Sulla, he had compelling grounds for concern about Pontus' security; this was all the more the case in 79, when the king first approached Sertorius, and in 78, when he instigated Tigranes to overrun Cappadocia; even in 74, when he began to prepare for war, alarm over the Romans' intentions appears to have been his chief motive for acting. The actions which so worried the Romans, that is, were taken from fear of them, primarily.<sup>82</sup>

Mithridates' fear of the Romans, however, seems to have been largely unfounded. It is impossible to believe, first, that Murena's raids, the most provocative actions by the Roman side during this period, could ever have been approved in advance by Sulla. Murena's triumph, moreover, and also the organization of the province of Cilicia are to be understood as reactions to Mithridates' attack on Cappadocia, not as the consequences of a new, more aggressive policy jeopardizing the interests of Pontus. Similarly, since Servilius' expedition must have been foreseen before Pontus became vulnerable to military pressure, one must doubt that its original purpose had been to threaten the kingdom. It is noteworthy, also, that even after Tigranes' withdrawal from Cappadocia and Ariobarzanes' restoration to his throne, the Romans apparently did nothing to exploit the situation and, indeed, seem to have moderated their assessment of Mithridates' intentions. Finally, although the sources do not indicate which side began the military escalation in 74, it may well be that the Romans played their part in it at first not so much because they wanted Bithynia as because they feared Mithridates.<sup>83</sup> But down to that time, in any case, it appears certain that the Roman government's policy toward Pontus had been to preserve the arrangements agreed to at Dardanus.<sup>84</sup> War came, then, not because one side or the other wanted it, but rather because each believed this of the other.

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<sup>82</sup> This is substantially the view which Sallust has Mithridates express in his letter to Arsaces of Parthia: «... *quom mihi ob ipsorum [sc. Romanorum] interna mala dilata proelia magis quam pacem datam intelligerem ... rursus ... bellum coepi*» (hist. 4, 69, 13).

<sup>83</sup> Sallust's statement (hist. 2, 71 [MAURENBRECHER]) that «many men came flying from Bithynia» to indict Nicomedes' son as illegitimate suggests that the Romans had not settled the succession question before the king's death and thus that they may not have known in advance of his intention to name them his heirs. In this case their preparations, which apparently began while Nicomedes was still alive (above, note 72), may have been started in reaction to Marius' activities.

<sup>84</sup> It is worth adding, however, that the Romans were very heavy-handed in their treatment of Mithridates. In addition to sending his envoys packing in 78, the Senate seems to have done nothing about regularizing relations with Pontus after Ariobarzanes returned to his kingdom several years later. Its inaction here was almost certainly deliberate, for the same nasty game of cat and mouse was being played with the government of Egypt during these years. (The efforts of Ptolemy XII Auletes to secure Roman recognition are summarized by WILL 437 ff.) Mithridates bitterly resented this: App. Mith. 70, 297.