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THE CAUSE OF THE SOCIAL WAR

E. T. SALMON

OF ALL THE MANY WARS fought by Rome few surpass in importance the Social War of 91 to 87 B.C.¹ It brought about the unification of Italy and made her Roman; it provided the Roman empire with a solid, central heartland, without which the later great expansion and remarkable longevity would scarcely have been possible; and it led to the substitution of Latin for the various local tongues of Italy and to its adoption by much of the West. If today wide areas of the globe, including much of Canada, speak Latin in one or other of its various forms, then the Social War should be regarded as primarily responsible. Manifestly this was a conflict with enduring consequences.

Yet the Social War is also a poorly documented war. The loss of the relevant books of Livy means that we have to rely for the most part on Appian, and the first book of his *Civil Wars* is a somewhat sketchy and none too well organized account. Consequently, to many of the questions that concern the war and demand a reply, only conjectural answers can be supplied; and this happens to be true even about the cause of the war. True, in broad general terms it is not difficult to account for its outbreak. For, like other great conflicts, it had its underlying reason as well as its immediate *casus belli*; and, whereas usually it is the former that is the more difficult to divine and define, for the Social War curiously enough it is the one thing about which there is substantial agreement. The refusal of the Romans to grant the Roman citizenship to their Italian allies was, to use Thucydides' famous expression, "the truest explanation." But what was the immediate *casus belli*? The uprising of the Picentes at Asculum, following hard on the heels of the murder of Livius Drusus, in the latter part of 91 B.C. is often regarded as the spark that detonated the explosion. Yet this should more properly be regarded as the beginning of the actual hostilities, and that is precisely how Livy (*Per.* 72) describes it,

¹As a complete bibliography of the Social War is manifestly impossible in a short paper, documentation has been kept to a minimum in this article. For well known facts and incidents references to ancient sources have not been supplied since it can be safely assumed that most readers will either know them or know how to find them without difficulty. Among recent works on the subject, the writer wishes to acknowledge his especial indebtedness to I. Haug's "Der römische Bundesgenossenkrieg" in *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft* 2 (1947) 100-139; 201-258, and to the brilliant studies of E. Gabba: "Le origini della guerra sociale," in *Athenaeum* n.s. 32 (1954) 41-114; 293-345; *Appiano e la storia delle guerre civili* (Florence 1956); and the important edition of Appian's *Civil Wars*, Book 1 (Florence 1958).

with the words *initium belli*. In that case, what precisely was it that caused the war to start at that particular moment?

One thing is clear. There would have been no war had it not been for the upper class in the Italian communities.² As everywhere else, a comparatively small minority of the population shaped and directed public opinion in the Italian communities, both the urbanized ones and those that were organized only on a tribal basis, and this group decided to lead their communities into war. This, however, at once suggests several queries. Why did the *principes Italicorum populorum*, as Asconius (p. 68 Cl.) calls them, choose that particular moment? Why had they not moved much earlier? And why did some of them fail to move even now? Surely Italian resentment of the Roman supremacy in Italy did not come alive and flare up only in the nineties B.C.: it must have been smouldering long before. The complacent view that Rome, so far from being the imperialist mistress of Italy, was the not unpopular organizer of a federation, dies hard, but it puts an undue strain upon one's credulity. Many of the Italians must have hated her. They had fought fiercely to escape subjugation by her in the past and they resented bitterly their lack of independence from her in the present: Rome might not, indeed did not, exact monetary tribute from them (at least not directly), but she did oblige them to serve—and die—in wars not of their own choosing; they were permitted no voice in shaping the policies that led to these wars and they were allowed no annexations of the territories that accrued from them. The average Italian must have found the situation absolutely galling. In that case, why did he tolerate it for so long? I suggest that it was because, then as now, restiveness and discontent in themselves are not enough: they have to be organized by a purposeful minority before they can express themselves in action, and the natural leaders of the Italians, the well-to-do elements amongst them, failed to give a lead and did not exploit prevailing anti-Roman sentiment.

The upper class, or bourgeoisie as we may agree to call it, had not been particularly eager in the second century B.C. to foster anti-Roman movements, since it was faring reasonably well under the Roman hegemony. The Romans ensured the political predominance of the Italian squires in their own communities,³ and just in case this was not enough (and it probably was not, since the role of political leader in a satellite community can afford at best only a very limited satisfaction), the

²T. Mommsen, *History of Rome* (Scribner's edition, New York 1900) 501, suggests that it was the farmer class who led the revolt while the moneyed aristocracy sided with Rome: the evidence, however, that the latter participated, and indeed commanded, in the war is clear.

³See E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae* (Oxford 1958) 147.

Romans also allowed the Italian bourgeoisie to share in the pecuniary profits of empire. In Italy, Italians were permitted to exploit the Roman state domain (*ager publicus*),⁴ and overseas Italians were allowed to make money as traders in the Roman empire (*provinciae*).⁵ In both spheres it could have been only the well-to-do Italians that availed themselves of such opportunities; the average Italian peasant quite obviously was too poor to do so. But the Italian upper classes did so on a very large scale.⁶ This, however, did not necessarily endear the Romans to them, although it will explain why they were not actively promoting anti-Roman activities. The Italian upper classes probably liked the Romans little more than did the Italian masses, but at least they were deriving material benefits from the Roman connection. And this mollified them. As Cicero was later to say of them: *nihil prorsus aliud curant nisi agros, nisi villulas, nisi nummulos suos* (*Ad Att.* 8.13.2). This then explains why, throughout the second century B.C., the Italians did not rebel against Roman authority: there was no one to organize and lead them. From the end of the Second Punic War until the days of the Gracchi, there were very few protests by the Italians serious enough to cause the Romans undue concern, and these few clearly came from the upper class Italians.⁷

It was Tiberius Gracchus who first galvanized the Italian bourgeoisie into action. For all his fine talk about the ethnic bonds that linked Romans and Italians, Tiberius in fact looked after the interests of Romans and of Romans only. As Cicero says: *Ti. Gracchus perseveravit in civibus, sociorum nominisque Latini iura neglexit ac foedera* (*De Re Pub.* 3.29.41). In other words he utterly disregarded Latins and Italians and their interests. In fact his agrarian law posed a direct threat to the investment which the Italian squires had in the Roman *ager publicus*, since the evidence reveals that, although the Gracchan land commissioners (the *tresviri agris iudicandis adsignandis*) could eject Italian *possessores* from the Roman state domain, Italians were not permitted to share in the Gracchan land allotments. Almost certainly many Italians

⁴This is made abundantly clear by Appian's account of the Gracchi (*B.C.* 1.7.26–27. 124), to mention no other evidence.

⁵See J. Hatzfeld, *Les trafiquants italiens dans l'orient hellénique* (Paris 1919) *passim* and especially 239–255; E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae*, 152–153.

⁶Hatzfeld's study (see preceding note) makes this very clear. One thinks, too, of Cirta in Africa which when stormed by Jugurtha was full of Italian *negotiatores* (Sallust *Jugurtha* 23; 25; Livy *Per.* 64; Diodorus 34.31). For Italian traders in Sicily, see T. Frank in *AJP* 56 (1935) 61.

⁷There are good examples in 187 and 177 B.C., when delegations from the governing bodies of Latin and some Italian communities complained of their losses of population through emigration to Rome and elsewhere: see Livy 39.3.4f.; 41.8.6f.

lost land which they had come to regard as their own, and which may actually have been their own, since in cases where any doubt existed as to title the land commissioners were bound to pronounce against a *possessor* who was non-Roman; in such cases the Italian had no redress. Rancour, strife, and recrimination inevitably ensued, and it was now for the first time that the demand of Roman citizenship for the Italian allies began to be heard,⁸ or if not the citizenship then the Roman *ius provocationis*,⁹ since this would give the Italian some protection against too arbitrary a misuse of the *imperium* by the Roman officials.

On this occasion the Italians were quickly reassured. In 129 B.C. the Roman Senate, at the urging of Scipio Aemilianus, directed the land commissioners to cease all inquiry into land held by Italians. In other words, the Italian bourgeoisie were to be allowed to go on making large profits from the *ager publicus*. Therewith their reasons for complaint disappeared. So far as we can see, their provincial operations had not been affected by the Gracchan legislation; any restiveness on their part in Gracchan times arose from their preoccupation about the *ager publicus*.

At about the same time that the *principes Italicorum populorum* were being relieved of their anxieties about the land owned by the Roman state but exploited by themselves, the Italian lower orders were being cowed into continuing submissiveness by a savage measure taken against an Italian town. In 125 B.C. the praetor Lucius Opimius, he who was later to earn notoriety as the lyncher of Gaius Gracchus, quite literally obliterated Fregellae, just as Corinth and Carthage had been obliterated about a score of years earlier. Fregellae, it is true, was strictly a Latin colony rather than an Italian town: as a matter of fact it was the Latin colony that in Hannibal's day had demonstrated loyalty above all others (Livy 27.10.3). Yet it can also be fairly described as an Italian town, for since Hannibal's day thousands of Samnites and Paelignians had migrated thither and given the town an Oscan flavour. (Its oscanized character, in fact, explains why the Romans destroyed it; this was an action that under normal circumstances they would never have taken against a Latin colony, for such communities were the bastions of their supremacy in Italy.)¹⁰ But while they wiped Fregellae off the map, the Romans seem

⁸See Appian *B.C.* 1.21.86; and cf. 1.34.152.

⁹See Lex Acilia §78 in Bruns, *Fontes Iuris Romani Antiqui*⁷ (Tübingen 1909) 72 (where, however, Latins rather than Italians are mentioned); Valerius Maximus 9.5.1; cf. Appian *B.C.* 1.21.86.

¹⁰For the immigration of speakers of Oscan into Fregellae, see Livy 41.8.8. That it was they who were the principal targets of Opimius' ruthlessness is indicated by the fact that it was one of the town's "Latins," Q. Numitorius Pullus, obviously a local aristocrat (his daughter married M. Antonius Creticus) who betrayed it to Opimius: Cic. *de Inv.* 2.34.105; *de Fin.* 5.22.62; *Philipp.* 3.6.17. For Roman dislike of "Oscans," see below, n. 23.

simultaneously to have made it clear that this act of *Schrecklichkeit* was directed only against the Italian lower orders. The upper classes in all Latin colonies were made eligible for Roman citizenship, since a policy was now adopted of automatically enfranchising anyone who became a magistrate in such communities (and only the wealthy could do so).¹¹

The tribunates of Gaius Gracchus, which followed soon after (123, 122 B.C.), may not have alarmed, even though they presumably affected, the Italian squires. The contemptuous rejection by the Romans of Gaius' proposal to extend the Roman citizenship served to emphasize the Italians' inferior status, and presumably it rankled. But, although politically slighted, the Italian *principes* were not materially injured. Gaius Gracchus did no harm to their business ventures overseas any more than Tiberius had done. On the contrary, his proposal to transfer control of the law courts from the senate to the business class may have appealed to them, since it was a measure calculated to widen the opportunities of all who sought to make their fortunes in the provinces. Only later did it become evident that Gracchus' measure had had the effect of organizing a class in the Roman state, the Equestrian Order, who would themselves also be interested in the exploitation of the provinces. In the one-twenties B.C. the Italians could hardly have foreseen that the effect of Gaius' judiciary law would be to give a sweeping advantage to their potential rivals in provincial money-making.

Nor do the activities of Gaius Gracchus appear to have deprived the Italians of their right to use the state domain. The land commission, which might conceivably have renewed the attempt to evict them, seems to have been systematically stultified soon after Gaius Gracchus' death in 121 B.C. (see Appian *B.C.* 1.27.121). Nor do the Italians appear to have been victims of discrimination as a result of subsequent agrarian laws: in fact that of Saturninus in 100 B.C. is said to have been distinctly to their advantage (Appian *B.C.* 1.29.132).¹²

Nevertheless there was no sure guarantee that legislation prejudicial to their interests would not be introduced in Rome, and certainly they could not blandly assume that their luck would hold for judiciary laws as well as for agrarian. In fact, they must have watched the continuing political struggle for control of the law courts at Rome with mounting anxiety.

¹¹For the view that *civitas per magistratum* dates from the time of the destruction of Fregellae, see G. Tibiletti, "La politica delle colonie latine e città latine nella guerra sociale," *Rendiconti dell' Istituto Lombardo* 86 (1953) 54. D. W. Bradeen has challenged the orthodox view that the magistrates of Latin communities acquired Roman citizenship in *CJ* 54 (1959) 221-228, but he has failed to win support: see L. R. Taylor, *The Voting Districts of the Roman Republic* (Rome 1960) 108, n. 20.

¹²The view of H. Last (in *CAH* 9.169, n. 4) and others that by "Italians" Appian here means "Roman citizens from the country districts" is unconvincing: Appian's text seems quite explicit: see J. Göhler, *Rom und Italien* (Breslau 1939) 80-82.

In particular they could not remain indifferent to the vicissitudes of the *quaestio de repetundis*, since the masters of that court could put pressure on provincial governors, and provincial governors in their turn could frustrate Italian activities in the provinces.¹³ And, in the third of a century between the Gracchi and the Social War, the Italians' stake in the provinces presumably had increased as the number of the latter had grown: Asia certainly, and Transalpine Gaul probably, contained many an Italian *negotiator*. At any moment these Italian *negotiatores* could be threatened and possibly ruined by the interplay of political rivalries at Rome; and the Italian bourgeoisie were forced to be largely spectators of these political faction fights at Rome which so gravely affected them. The surviving ancient information about Roman politics between the Gracchi and the Social War is seriously defective, but it does permit us to say that judiciary laws were proposed, and possibly passed, more than once, to the mounting anxiety of the Italian squires.¹⁴ The Italian bourgeoisie no more relished the idea of senatorial control of the extortion court than did the Roman *equites*. Not that that, however, meant complete harmony, a *concordia ordinum* so to speak, between them and the latter. On the contrary, the Italian *negotiatores* and the Roman *equites* were only too likely to be fierce rivals in the provinces. Ever since Gaius Gracchus' day the *equites* had become ever more heavily involved in capitalistic enterprises in the provinces. Admittedly they were mainly interested in financial and banking operations connected with taxation, whereas the *negotiatores* were chiefly involved in trading and commercial pursuits. Each party, however, had a greedy eye on the activities of the other. The Italians were eager for a share in the profitable banking transactions,¹⁵ and the *equites* were nothing loath to get into lines of endeavour which the Italians had shown to be lucrative. Before Gaius Gracchus' day the Italians possibly had been so well entrenched and established in their particular forms of provincial enterprise that individual *equites* found it almost impossible to break into their profitable lines of business. But after Gaius Gracchus' day it must have been a different story. By the nineties B.C. his judiciary law had had the effect of banding the *equites* together into a regular *ordo*; and what they had earlier found it difficult, as individuals, to achieve they could now, as an organized pressure group, fairly easily accomplish. They could now see to

¹³Appian (*B.C.* 1.35.160) stresses the great power and (significantly) the great profits that control of the law-courts brought with it.

¹⁴See G. Tibiletti, "Le leggi 'de iudiciis repetundarum' fino alla guerra sociale," *Athenaeum* n.s. 51 (1953) 5-100.

¹⁵And they seized it as soon as they obtained Roman citizenship: see Cicero *Ad Fam.* 13.11-14, 33, 43, 45, 56 etc. Cicero's friend L. Egnatius Rufus, an Italian, had banking interests in Asia.

it that the situation in the provinces was rigged in their own favour so as to put the *negotiatores* at a hopeless disadvantage: the Italians would not be permitted to encroach on equestrian banking preserves while, simultaneously, they might be obliged to watch the *equites* making inroads on their own trading activities. Lacking the Roman citizenship and being in the provinces only on sufferance, as it were, the Italians would be helpless. They would have no remedy against discrimination or against policies that had been deliberately framed to permit the *equites* not only to debar them from such a typically equestrian pursuit as tax-farming but even perhaps to break the long-established Italian near-monopoly of commerce.

In such a situation the Italians had but one hope of redress: the Roman citizenship. The Roman right of appeal, which evidently was all that many of them had wanted in Gracchan times, would not be enough for them. The citizenship and the citizenship alone would suffice. If they obtained it, they would be in a position to participate in the framing of policy and in its implementation. In the words of Appian (*B.C.* 1.34.152), they would then be partners in the empire instead of subjects. They would attain political equality, and even social equality, for many of them on acquiring Roman citizenship would at once become members of the Roman equestrian order. Thus equality of privilege would be theirs. They would even share in the control of the *quaestio de repetundis*, so long as Gaius Gracchus' arrangements for the judiciary remained in force.

But the road to citizenship and hence to participation in policy-making was not to be theirs simply for the asking. The Romans made it evident that they were not disposed to share their citizenship with their Italian allies. Faced with this rebuff the Italians became more and more restive; they entered protests at Rome and are even said to have attended and participated in the proceedings of the Roman Assemblies by masquerading as Roman citizens.¹⁶ If this assertion is to be taken as literally true, it can have reference to only a very few of them: a really large mass invasion of the *comitia* by the Italians could not have passed unnoticed by the Romans and would surely have been prevented, by force if necessary. In general, all that the Italians could do to obtain redress was to come to Rome and loudly air their grievances. The exact method that they employed for such interventions in Roman domestic affairs is not fully described in our sources, although the latter imply clearly enough that between 100 and 90 B.C. Italian agitation at Rome was both noisy and serious.

In 95 B.C. the Romans decided to stop such demonstrations. In that year they passed the most notorious, even if not the most drastic, of their

¹⁶For Italians illegally passing as Roman citizens, see Cicero *de Officiis* 3.11.47; Asconius p. 68 Cl.

alien expulsion acts, the Lex Licinia Mucia, whose sponsors were none other than the consuls of the year. But if this law drove Italians, and even Latins, from Rome, it did not stop agitation in the communities of Italy. Indeed the expulsion presumably stirred up more unrest than ever in some of the non-Roman areas of Italy. Opposition to Rome now certainly began to be organized; that is why Asconius (p. 68 Clark) is able to say that the Lex Licinia Mucia precipitated the Social War. It must have been the bourgeoisie, the class that had hitherto co-operated with Rome, who now organized the opposition to Rome.¹⁷ The Italian squires, finding their fields of enterprise threatened and noting that not only the Roman citizenship but even the right to protest in Rome was denied to them, became the anti-Roman leaders in their own communities.

This development naturally became known at Rome, and the Roman senate thereupon sent Roman officials, invested apparently with pro-magisterial *imperium*, to the areas suspected of being most disaffected: Picenum, Samnium, Lucania, Campania, and the Marsi were all visited by such officials.¹⁸ The right of the Roman senate to send these commissioners was at best doubtful; of the inflammatory effect the commissioners were bound to have the town of Asculum was soon to provide bloody testimony.

It was at this point that the younger Livius Drusus appeared upon the political stage: he became plebeian tribune on 10 December, 92 B.C. The usual view of him as the champion of the Italians and the one whose murder late in 91 B.C. caused them to resort to arms needs a certain amount of modification. The ancient sources agree in depicting Drusus, like his father before him, as a partisan of the Roman senate, and this fact could hardly have endeared him to the Italians. The exact succession of events in his tribunate is uncertain; but we do know that he pushed through a grain law, an agrarian law (which provided for virgane and/or colonial distribution of *ager publicus*), and a judiciary law (which transferred control of the extortion court, either in whole or in part, to the senate). The two latter laws, if not the former as well, thoroughly alarmed and angered the Italians: they flocked to Rome to protest, presumably in defiance of the Lex Licinia Mucia. Etruscans, Umbrians, and Marsi all descended on the city, the *ingens totius Italiae coetus* of Seneca (*de brev.*

¹⁷See Appian *B.C.* 1.38.170: he implies that the Italians waited until Drusus was murdered late in 91 and then improvised their anti-Roman organization. This is not only improbable on *a priori* grounds, but is also contradicted by the developments that actually occurred.

¹⁸Q. Servilius amongst the Picentes (Appian *B.C.* 1.38.173); L. Scipio and L. Acilius amongst the Samnites (Appian *B.C.* 1.41.182); Ser. Sulpicius Galba amongst the Lucani (Livy *Per.* 72); L. Postumius amongst the Campanians (Livy *Per.* 73); and Domitius Ahenobarbus (probably) amongst the Marsi (Diod. 37.13.1: see Haug [above note 1] 239).

vitae 6.1). Drusus thereupon promulgated his famous proposal that the Roman citizenship be extended to the Italian allies; but it was on this proposal that his whole programme foundered. His agrarian law had already alienated large sections of senatorial opinion, and his judiciary law had evoked strenuous opposition from the *equites*. His present proposal lost him the support of all classes of Roman society: *plebs*, *equites* and senate temporarily sank their differences to agree selfishly that they would not share their citizenship. Encouraged by such solidarity, the senate took the bull boldly by the horns and pronounced the whole of Drusus' programme invalid including those parts of it, such as the agrarian proposals, which had already been carried into law.

This reassured the Etruscans and the Umbrians, and they returned to their homes. But the Marsi evidently held other views; and so did other Italians. As Appian (*B.C.* 1.21.87) puts it for an earlier occasion, they were more interested in the Roman citizenship than in the Roman *ager publicus*.¹⁹ In fact, the *ager publicus*, whatever it had been in Gracchan times, had now become a secondary consideration for them. Past experience had shown that agrarian laws were a nuisance against which methods of circumvention could be devised. But a judiciary law was more difficult to counter, and this was now the Italians' principal concern. It is true that Drusus' judiciary law, no less than his agrarian one, had been pronounced null and void. But the experience of the last quarter of a century rendered it only too certain that control of the law courts was bound to be a continuing issue in Roman domestic politics. Some new Drusus was sure to come along and raise the matter anew; and when he did the Italian *principes* would need more than the right of appeal if their interests were to be protected: they needed the Roman citizenship. Therefore what the leaders of the Marsi and the rest wanted was not the invalidation of the laws that Drusus had already carried but the enactment of the law that he had failed to push through: viz. the law conferring Roman citizenship upon themselves. When, shortly afterwards, Drusus lay dead, murdered presumably by his opponents, the Marsi and those Italians who shared their views took to arms, not out of any love for "this pale reflection of the Gracchi,"²⁰ but because his death seemed to remove any chance of their obtaining the citizenship.²¹

The Etruscans and Umbrians, however, did not join the revolt: the Social War was fought by the Sabellians, those Italians whose mother tongue either was or at one time had been Oscan or one of its dialects.²²

¹⁹Appian makes this remark about the Italians in the Gracchan period.

²⁰The description of Drusus given in the rhetorical treatise *ad Herennium* (4.34.46).

²¹Indeed they probably had moved even before Drusus died: see Haug (above n. 1) 105.

²²For the Italian *populi* who rebelled against Rome, see E. T. Salmon in *TAPA* 89 (1958) 159–169.

The war obviously had nationalist overtones, and it is necessary to inquire why the national feelings of Etruscans and Umbrians were so different from those of Sabellians.²³

The explanation, I suggest, is to be sought in the fact that the relations of the various peoples with Rome, their experiences at the hands of Rome, and the extent of their investment in Rome's empire differed very markedly. Undoubtedly Etruscans and Umbrians, no less than Sabellians, were members of the Roman federation in Italy, but they may have been members on different terms. The example of the *socii navales* of southern Italy shows that the military obligations of the non-Roman areas of Italy to Rome could vary. *Divide et impera* was a Roman practice, even if not a Roman motto. Appian (*B.C.* 1.36.163) certainly distinguishes the Etruscans and Umbrians sharply from the Social War rebels (he calls the latter "Italians"), and he is careful to point out (*B.C.* 1.39.175) that the rebels were all peoples notable for their hostility to Rome in an earlier day. Appian is not exaggerating. In Italy it was the Sabellian peoples who had fought Rome with the greatest determination. During her conquest of Italy Rome had naturally encountered some resistance from both Etruscans and Umbrians, but a careful perusal of the ancient texts will reveal that there was not really a great deal of it. Some Etruscan cities quite clearly, instead of fighting, signed long-term truces with Rome, while the Umbrians are not often recorded to have fought Rome at all. The Sabellians, on the other hand, had fought fiercely and had been crushed and had had imposed upon them *foedera iniqua*, which obliged them to furnish troops if, as, and when Rome demanded them. Had similar treaties been imposed on the Etruscans and Umbrians? Evidence is lacking. Apart possibly from Volsinii (see *Zon.* 8.7), no Etruscan city, unless we regard Falerii as Etruscan (which in fact it was not), can be shown to have had any kind of permanent treaty, either equal or unequal, with Rome.²⁴ Nor is there positive evidence that Rome demanded substantial military contributions from the Etruscans, as she undoubtedly did from the Sabellians. The Etruscans, in fact, seem to have got off

²³The nationalist aspect of the war explains why Venusia sided with the Italians (it was the only Latin colony to do so) and why at the very beginning of the hostilities the Italians moved on Alba and Aesernia, with the evident hope of finding strong support among the local inhabitants (they actually captured Aesernia and succeeded in retaining it). All three Latin colonies can be reasonably suspected of being largely Oscanized: what the Romans thought of Venusia is revealed by the action of a young Roman *nobilis* who had a Venusine flogged to death on the flimsiest of pretexts (*Aul. Gell.* 10.3.2-5); Aesernia issued coins with Oscan legends; and Alba was situated in the region of the Sabellian dialects. Obviously there was little mutual sympathy between Romans and speakers of Oscan: see above, n. 10.

²⁴The evidence, or more accurately the lack of it, is set forth by J. Beloch, *Römische Geschichte* (Leipzig & Berlin 1926) 607-612.

lightly. Whenever we hear of them furnishing troops it was when the enemy (Gauls or Carthaginians) was actually in Italy; and whenever we read of them supplying material aid, the voluntary nature of their war effort seems to be stressed.²⁵ The Umbrians, too, may have been specially favoured. Many of them certainly already possessed Roman citizenship by 91 B.C., and no Umbrian town can be proved to have had a *foedus iniquum* with Rome: Camerinum did indeed have a *foedus* but we are insistently told that it was *aequissimum*.²⁶ Sherwin-White's view that it was the Sabellians who formed the mainstay of the Roman federation in Italy would thus appear to be correct.²⁷

Under the circumstances it seems probable that the hatred of the Etruscan and Umbrian masses for Rome was not of such an intensity that it was either a stimulus to, or a support for, anti-Roman action by the Etruscan and Umbrian squires. For that matter the local magnates in Etruria and Umbria also themselves probably had little reason for anti-Roman conduct. The evidence suggests that they were not deeply involved in provincial trading operations. Etruscan names do, it is true, occasionally appear in the records from the Spanish provinces: but in general the Italians in the Iberian peninsula were Oscan-speaking. Similarly in the eastern Mediterranean, in the areas whose intensive exploitation began in Gracchan times, it was the south Italians apparently who enjoyed absolute predominance.²⁸

On the other hand the Etruscan and Umbrian *principes* were very much concerned with the Roman public land. The earlier agrarian laws seem to have interfered but little with the profit they derived from it. Both Etruria and Umbria apparently escaped the unwelcome attention of the Gracchan *tresviri agris iudicandis adsignandis*, even though it was what he saw in Etruria that had first aroused Tiberius Gracchus' reforming zeal.²⁹ Nor could the agrarian proposals of Saturninus have affected the Etruscan and Umbrian bourgeoisie, since the land Saturninus proposed to distribute was outside Italy. Drusus' agrarian law was an entirely different matter: not only did it deal with Italian land, but it

²⁵See, e.g., such passages as Polyb. 2.24.5 (the Etruscans send forces "for the occasion"); Livy 28.45.15 (material supplied voluntarily to Scipio). We are not told if the 460 Perusines who helped defend Casilinum against Hannibal were volunteers or not (Livy 23.17.11; 20.3).

²⁶Cicero *pro Balbo* 20.46; Livy 28.45.20.

²⁷A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship* (Oxford 1939) 113.

²⁸For Sabellian *negotiatores* in Spain see E. Gabba in *Athenaeum* n.s. 32 (1954) 56, 303; cf. A. Piganiol, *Histoire de Rome* (Paris 1949) 121, 166. For those in the Eastern Mediterranean, see Hatzfeld (above n. 5). The Italian *negotiatores* in Africa were also mostly from southern Italy: E. Lepore in *Pompeiana* (1950) 9.

²⁹None of the surviving terminal stones set up by the Gracchan land commissioners come from Etruria or Umbria: see A. Degraasi, *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae* (Florence 1957) 1. 269–279, nos. 476–478.

must also have appeared to the Etruscans and Umbrians as an unmistakable warning that they who had been untouched by the Gracchan agrarian reform were the ones most likely to suffer under this new agrarian programme. Appian implies that it was precisely the Etruscans and Umbrians who were most incensed against Drusus' agrarian law. But as they had few overseas investments it was their only real concern, and once it had been quashed they had obtained what they wanted and were more or less content. Certainly they would have welcomed the Roman citizenship as well;³⁰ that was shown towards the end of 90 B.C. when they seized the opportunity which Rome's defeats and heavy losses in the first year of fighting in the Social War presented, and extorted the citizenship from her by threatening to join the revolt. But in 91 B.C. they had not desired it so desperately as to be prepared to take up arms in order to get it: that is why they did not enter the Social War on its outbreak.³¹

It is not hard to see why the Sabellians on the other hand should be ready to take up arms. Some of them had always hated the Romans and had disputed the primacy of Italy with them long and bitterly; this was particularly true of those of them, like the Samnites, who spoke Oscan proper.³² It is true that the speakers of the Oscan dialects, such as the Marsi, had not fought the Romans in earlier days with quite the same obstinacy; and indeed, by 91 B.C., many of them had been Latinized; but even they must have been bitterly resentful at the way that the *foedera iniqua*, whose original purpose had been to provide for the defence of peninsular Italy or to help maintain peace and order within it, were usually invoked by Rome in the second century B.C. for the purpose of obtaining troops for her imperialist ventures overseas. They were called upon to supply many more troops than Rome and furthermore their

³⁰It may be true that the Etruscan aristocrats were not particularly eager to have their serfs raised in status (see L. Piotrowicz in *Klio* 23 [1930] 334); but it seems absurd to suggest that they did not want the citizenship (E. Gabba, in *Athenaeum* n.s. 32 [1954] 49, even goes so far as to say that it was Drusus' citizenship proposal and not his agrarian law that the Etruscans so strongly opposed). There were, it is true, some communities in Italy that were not particularly eager to get the Roman citizenship: e.g., Naples and Heraclea (Cic. *pro Balbo* 8.21). But that was because they enjoyed such favourable treaties (Cic. *loc. cit.*; and cf. *pro Arch.* 4.6). Would Monaco and San Marino be very anxious today to acquire respectively French and Italian citizenship?

³¹It is significant, however, that Etruscans and Umbrians did not help Rome to suppress the revolt: they were not among "the peoples of Italy" who, according to Appian (*B.C.* 1.39.177), sided with the Romans in the Social War. Appian is probably thinking of the Latin colonies (except Venusia) (see Livy, *Per.* 72) or of a town like Pinna of the Vestini (see Diod. 37.2).

³²The anti-Roman sentiments of the Sabellians emerge only too clearly from the designs on the coins issued by them in the Social War. The Latin legends on many of the coins, however, also prove that the Marsi and others were greatly latinised.

troops were subjected to gross and flagrant discrimination when either punishments or rewards were being doled out; and also (to judge from the casualty lists) the Italians bore the brunt of the fighting. As far as the Romans were concerned, they were clearly mere cannon fodder.³³ The Sabellian masses could be only too easily stirred up against Rome. Indeed many of them were much more likely to respond to the call for full and unfettered independence from Rome than to the demand for Roman citizenship: in the words of Strabo (5.4.2, p. 241), they wanted freedom and political rights. In 91 B.C. the Sabellian gentry proceeded to exploit these anti-Roman sentiments of the rank and file for their own ends; they may even themselves have raised the cry for freedom from Rome, somewhat in the manner of Pontius Telesinus later, who at the Colline Gate in 82 B.C. rallied the Samnites with his thunderous denunciation of the Romans as *lupi, raptores Italicae libertatis*.³⁴ But what the Sabellian gentry really wanted was, not to have their communities cut all ties with Rome, but to acquire Roman citizenship for themselves in the same way that the Latin gentry had acquired Roman citizenship for themselves at the time that Fregellae was destroyed. Only by becoming Roman citizens could they exorcise forever the threat to their provincial investments implicit in the political struggle for control of the lawcourts. It is hardly any wonder that Cicero,³⁵ Livy,³⁶ and the Elder Pliny³⁷ all suggest that it was Drusus' *lex iudiciaria* that was the immediate *casus belli* of the Social War.

³³On the use of Italian troops by the Romans, see A. Afzelius, *Die römische Kriegsmacht, 200-167 B.C.* (Copenhagen 1944) 62-79. F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* (Oxford 1957) 1.200 shows that "allies" normally outnumbered Romans, sometimes by as much as two to one. In the twenty years preceding the Social War, Italians (particularly Sabellians) were called upon to supply troops for overseas wars in very large numbers: see Sallust *Jugurtha passim*; Diod. 36.8.1 (the Sicilian Slave War of 103-101 B.C.); *SEG.* 3.78, no. 378 (the Cilician Pirate War of 102-101 B.C.); cf. E. Gabba in *Athenaeum* n.s. 27 (1949) 200 and 29 (1951) 190.

³⁴Velleius Paterculus 2.27.2.

³⁵*De Off.* 2.21.75: *tantum Italicum bellum propter iudiciorum metum excitatum.*

³⁶*Per.* 71: *Drusus iudiciariam quoque pertulit. Cum deinde promissa sociis civitas praestari non posset, irati Italici defectionem agitare coeperunt.*

³⁷In *N.H.* 33.6.20 he says that the Social War arose out of the mutual hatred of Caepio and Drusus: it was precisely over Drusus' proposed *lex iudiciaria* that the two men quarrelled most bitterly.