

Cicero, Caesar, and the SCU of January 49

1. ***Pro Ligario* 7 (September 46 BCE)**

apud quem igitur hoc dico? Nempe apud eum qui, cum hoc sciret, tamen me ante quam uidit rei publicae reddidit, qui ad me ex Aegypto litteras misit ut essem idem qui fuissem, qui me, cum ipse imperator in toto imperio populi Romani unus esset, esse alterum passus est, a quo hoc ipso C. Pansa mihi hunc nuntium perferente concessos fascis laureatos tenui, quoad tenendos putavi, qui mihi tum denique salutem se putavit dare, si eam nullis spoliata ornamentis dedisset.

To whom do I say this? Certainly to him who, although he already knew it, nevertheless reinstated me in the Republic even before he had seen me; who sent me a letter from Egypt asking that I should stay the same as I had always been, who suffered me to be another imperator when he himself was the only imperator in the entire Roman world; by whom, with this same Gaius Pansa conveying the decree to me, I held the laurelled fasces as long as I thought they should be held; who thought that only then was he giving me my salvation if he had given it to me unspoiled of any of its trappings

2. ***Ad Familiares* 14.20 (to Terentia from Venusia on October 1, 47)**

in Tusculanum nos venturos putamus aut Nonis aut postridie. ibi ut sint omnia parata. plures enim fortasse nobisum erunt et, ut arbitror, diutius ibi commorabimur.

I think that we will arrive at Tusculum on the Nones or the day after. See that everything is prepared. There may be a few people with me and, I think, we will stay there for a rather long time.

3. ***Ad Familiares* 9.1.3 (to Varro from Rome at the end of 47 or the beginning of 46)**

quam ob rem, sive in Tusculano sive in Cumano, <sive ad me sive> ad te placebit, sive, quod minime velim, Romae, dum modo simul simus, perficiam profecto ut id utrique nostrum commodissimum esse videatur.

Therefore, whether in Tusculum or Cumae or wherever will be pleasing to us, or even, which I really don't want to happen, in Rome, as long as we are together, I'll make it seem like it is the most convenient for us.

4. ***Ad Atticum* 7.3.2 (from near Trebula on December 9, 50)**

quin nunc ipsum non dubitabo rem tantam abicere, si id erit rectius. utrumque vero simul agi non potest, et de triumph ambitiose et de re publica libere.

Indeed, even now I will not hesitate to toss aside such a reward [i.e. a triumph], if it will be the right course of action. Truly it can't be done to be ambitious for a triumph and to be free to act for the Republic at the same time.

5. ***Ad Atticum* 7.7.4 (from Formiae around December 19, 50)**

nec enim senatus decrevit nec populus iussit me imperium in Sicilia habere; sin hoc res publica ad Pompeium refert, qui me magis quam privatum aliquem mittit? itaque si hoc imperium mihi molestum erit, utar ea porta quam primam videro.

Neither did the Senate decree that I have command in Sicily, nor did the people order me to have it; but if the State refers the question to Pompey, he who will send me rather than some other private citizen? I say, if this imperium of mine will be bothersome, I will make use of the first gate that I see.

**6. *Ad Atticum* 9.1.3 (from Formiae on March 6, 49)**

nos autem in Formiano morabamur, quo citius audiremus, deinde Arpinum volebamus; inde iter qua maxime *anapantēton* esset ad mare superum, remotis sive omnino missis lictoribus.

I have been delaying in Formiae whereby I can hear things more quickly, then, however, I want to go to Arpinum; from there a journey to the Adriatic by whatever route will be the most deserted, with my lictors withdrawn or entirely let go.

**7. On the lictors and fasces being synonymous with, or metonymy for, Cicero's *imperium* see, for example, *Att.* 7.10.1, 7.12.4, 11.6.2; *Fam.* 2.16.2; *Lig.* 7.**

**8. Caesar, *De Bello Civili* 1.5**

decurritur ad illud extremum atque ultimum senatus consultum, quo nisi paene in ipso urbis incendio atque in desperatione omnium salutis sceleratorum audacia numquam ante descensum est: dent operam consules, praetores, tribuni plebis, quique pro consulibus sint ad urbem, ne quid res publica detrimenti capiat.

It came to a head with that harsh and final decree of the Senate, which never had been passed before except when the city was almost in flames and when the survival of all was threatened by the audacity of evil men: let the consuls, praetors, tribunes of the plebs, and those proconsuls who were near the city see to it that the Republic come to no harm.

**9. *Ad Familiares* 16.11.2 (to Tiro from outside Rome on January 12 49)**

numquam maiore in periculo civitas fuit, numquam improbi cives habuerunt paratiorem ducem.

Never has the state ever been in greater danger, never have the wicked citizens had a more capable leader!

**10. *Ad Familiares* 16.12.1 (to Tiro from Capua on January 27, 49)**

quo in discrimine versetur salus mea et bonorum omnium atque universae rei publicae ex eo scire potes quod domos nostras et patriam ipsam vel diripiendam vel inflammandam reliquimus. in eum locum res deducta est ut, nisi qui deus vel casus aliquis subvenerit, salvi esse nequeamus.

On the edge of a knife stands my safety and that of all the good men and indeed the entire State, as you can understand because we have left our homes and our fatherland either to be plundered or torched. Everything has been led to such a point that, unless some god or some other unforeseen thing comes to our help, we cannot be saved.

**11. *Ad Atticum* 7.20.2 (from Capua on February 5, 49)**

ego autem in Italia '*kai sunapothanein*', nec te id consulo; sin extra, quid ago? ad manendum hiems, lictores, improvidi et neglegentes duces, ad fugam hortatur amicitia Gnaei, causa bonorum, turpitude coniugendi cum tyranno.

I, however, am ready to die for him in Italy, and I'm not consulting you on that; but if he leaves, what do I do? Winter, my lictors, blind and indifferent leaders urge me to stay, but my friendship

with Pompey, the cause of the good men, the utter shame of being in league with a tyrant urge me to flee.

**12. *Ad Atticum* 8.2.4 (from Formiae on February 17, 49)**

significas enim aliquanto secus quam solebas, ut etiam Italia, si ille cedat, putes cedendum; quod ego nec rei publicae puto esse utile nec liberis meis, praeterea neque rectum neque honestum.

You are recommending, in a bit of a departure from your usual advice, that you think I should stay in Italy even if Pompey withdraws; but I don't think that will be useful for either the State or my children, nor do I think it would be right or respected to do that.

**13. *Ad Atticum* 9.10.4-5 (from Formiae on March 18, 49)**

'sed venio ad consultationem tuam. si Gnaeus Italia cedit, in urbem redeundum puto; quae enim finis peregrinationis?'... 'ego quidem tibi non sim auctor, si Pompeius Italiam relinquit, te quoque profugere. summo enim periculo facies nec rei publicae proderis; cui quidem posterius poteris prodesse, si maneris.'

"But I come now to your inquiry. If Pompey leaves Italy, I think that you should return to Rome; what end otherwise to your wanderings?"... "I certainly would not be the one to recommend that if Pompey leaves Italy that you should go too. You will act in a very dangerous situation nor will you be of service to the State if you do; if you should stay, however, you may be able to do some good later."

**14. *Ad Atticum* 7.17.4 (from Formiae on February 2, 49)**

rescripsi ad Trebatium...quam illud hoc tempore esset difficile; me tamen in praediis meis esse neque dilectum ullum neque negotium suscepisse. in quo quidem manebo dum spes pacis erit; sin bellum geretur, non deero officio nec dignitati mea, pueros *hupēkthemēnos* in Graeciam.

I wrote to Trebatius [about Caesar's request that I stay near Rome] to say how hard it would be for me to do that; that I am, however, staying at my own estates and have not done any levies or other business. On this course I will remain while there is still hope for peace; but if war is to break out, I will not abandon my duty nor my station, having run the boys secretly off to Greece.

**15. *Ad Atticum* 10.18.3 (from Cumae on May 19, 49)**

ipse conficior venisse tempus cum iam nec fortiter nec prudenter quicquam facere possim.

I must myself admit that the time has come when I am able to do nothing either courageously or intelligently.

**16. On Cicero not feeling safe in Brundisium see *Att.* 11.9.1, 11.14.2, 11.16.3; *Fam.* 14.19**

**17. *Ad Atticum* 11.6.2 (from Brundisium on November 27, 48)**

Brundisi iacere in omnis partis est molestum; propius accedere, ut suades, quo modo sine lictoribus quos populus dedit possum? qui mihi incolumi adimi non possunt. quos ego †non paulisper† cum bacillis in turbam conieci ad oppidum accedens, ne quis impetus militum fieret. reliquo tempore me domo tenui.

To languish in Brundisium is completely miserable; how can I come any closer to Rome, as you suggest, without the lictors which the Roman people gave to me? The lictors which are not able to be taken away from me so long as I am still a Roman citizen? When I was approaching the town, I forced them into the crowd with staves for a little while lest there be some attack made by the soldiers. I've stayed inside ever since.

All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.  
The text of the letters is from Shackleton Bailey's Cambridge editions.

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