
In one of the most important general works on Roman history to have appeared within the last decade¹ a separate section is devoted to 'Die römische Geschichte in der Forschung' (p. 499ff.). The years 264 B.C. to 133 B.C. which witnessed Rome's rise to worldpower² are referred to as the 'imperialistic phase' of Roman history (p. 539ff.). In stating the problem of how Rome's expansion should be characterised – as a deliberate extension of an ever-widening sphere of domination or as due to a pragmatic policy motivated by reasons of real or alleged security – A. Heuss also remarks: 'Eine genau auf dieses Thema bezogene Darstellung ist nicht vorhanden. Der darüber hinausgreifende Überblick von Tenney Frank (*Roman Imperialism*, New York, 1914) ist nicht recht befriedigend' (p. 539).

Within a somewhat limited framework, established by the author himself, E. Badian, one of the most versatile ancient historians of our time, has since filled the lacuna.³ In a series of lectures delivered at the University of South Africa in 1965 he undertook to give an interpretation of Rome's role in Mediterranean politics from the second century onwards down to Caesar, analysing the motives and the various aspects of Rome's policy and tracing changes in Roman attitudes engendered by what is commonly termed 'the Roman Revolution'.⁴ Under the title of *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic* the lectures were first published in the Communications of the University of South Africa (B 26:1967). A second edition, in a slightly revised form,⁵ was to follow soon (Oxford, 1968), but – as the author himself

2. On the concept of orbis Romanus which in the late republic, at least, the Romans themselves regarded as being coterminous with orbis terrarum (auct. ad Her. 4,9,13) see J. Vogt, 'Orbis Romanus Ein Beitrag zum Sprachgebrauch und zur Vorstellungswelt des römischen Imperialismus', in: *Vom Reichsgedanken der Römer*, Leipzig, 1942, 170ff. (=*Orbis*, Freiburg/Br., 1960,151ff.).
4. The anything but unequivocal concept of 'revolution' and its relevance to the years of crisis of the respublica have been discussed by A. Heuss, 'Der Untergang der römischen Republik und das Problem der Revolution', *HZ* 182 (1956)ff.; *Römische Geschichte* 549ff., and others. See also C. Mejer, *Res publica amissa*, Wiesbaden, 1966,149: 'Nicht eine Revolution fand statt, sondern eine Unzahl von Störungen'.
5. A revision of the text has been effected mainly in ch. 4 ('New Interests and New Attitudes'). By elaborating upon several of the statements as originally made (compare, e.g., p. 41 and p. 44, p. 41 and p. 45, p. 43 and p. 47, p. 47 and p. 53 in the first and second editions, respectively) the author certainly has obviated some questions or objections which would otherwise have been raised.
remarks (p. vii) – no changes were made that would alter the basic nature of
the book or remove it appreciably from the series of lectures as actually
delivered. Hence, a minimum of modern documentation (p.v. vii), hence,
also, a maximum incorporation of what ‘preliminary’ research the author
had undertaken previously, mainly in his *Foreign Clientelae* (264–70 B.C.)

‘Imperialism in some sense is as old as the human race, or at least as its
social organization’ (E. Badian, op. cit. p.I.). It should be noted, however,
that the word itself, conveying a variety of meanings, is of relatively recent
coingage and that it is only since the last years of the 19th century that the
term ‘imperialism’ has come to denote primarily ‘an urge on the part of one
people to extend its political rule over others’.6 The author clearly uses the
word ‘imperialism’ in this sense throughout (cf. p.I.), but he differentiates
between the various manifestations of such an extension of power, viz., be­
tween ‘annexationist’ and ‘hegemonial’ imperialism (p. 4)7 and, as a third
variant, imperialism in its economic aspects (p. 60.70.79).8

It has long been realised that during most of the second century B.C. the
governing oligarchy at Rome apparently pursued a clear policy of avoidance
of annexation.9 From this it could be argued that Rome was not initially
imperialistic and that her expansion was due mainly to the desire to secure
peace and order by preventing the rise of any strong rival power which might
constitute a potential threat.10

The author offers a more complex interpretation (p. 1–15). While stressing
that Rome’s policy of non-annexation was, in effect, her traditional policy
(p. 2f.), he shows that Roman imperialism of a ‘hegemonial’ kind can,
nevertheless, still be said to have existed in the East,11 while a policy of open

7. In drawing this distinction he refers to M. Rostorffe, *SEHnw*, Oxford, 1941
170, who stresses that ‘the desire for political hegemony . . . cannot but be regarded as a
form of imperialism’.
8. In discussing his reasons for leaving Greek theory and its abstract justifications for
Roman imperialism out of consideration the author (p. 931) cites an article by W. Capelle
on ‘Griechische Ethik und römischer Imperialismus’, *Klio* 25(1932)86ff. It may be men­
tioned in passing that in this same article the legitimate question is raised whether the
term ‘imperialism’, a relatively modern catchword, rather than a clearly defined ‘scientific’
term, may justifiably be applied to the political expansion of ancient powers.
9. See, e.g., E. Badian, op. cit. 2; T. Frank, *R.I.* 139–242. For remarks on the relation
between constitutional form and annexationist policy see T. Frank, *R.I.* 119 (with reference
to Pol. 11,13) and M. Hammond, op. cit. 107.
10. See, e.g., T. Frank, op. cit. 47, and references given by A. Heuss, op. cit. 539f.; H.
11. The view that Rome’s policy was fundamentally non-aggressive has been criticized
from a ‘Hellenistic’ point of view by scholars such as H. Bengtson, *Griechische Geschichte*,
München, 1967,111. Conceivably the notion that Rome pursued an, in essence, ‘hegemo­
nial’ policy in the East may bridge the gap between the opposing views.
aggression was being pursued on the barbarian fringe of the Empire (p. 4.7.11). The apparent contradiction in policy may be explained by the fact that Rome, after the First Macedonian War, seems to have adopted the Greek tradition of what was permitted towards barbarians and what towards Hellenes (p. 11);¹² that both her hegemonial policy and her bellicose annexationism can be traced back to a single basic attitude, viz., ‘the failure to admit the independent existence of other powers and their right to run their own affairs without intervention from outside’ (p. 5.12); that both aspects of Roman imperialism can be related to the nature and conventions of Roman aristocratic society and, especially, to the traditional concepts of clientela (i.e. patronage and the plethora of relationships which this embraced) and of virtus (i.e. public merit acquired through military success and the holding of office) (p. 12ff.). In her general policy, again, that of avoiding major aggressive wars and administrative commitments (p. 3f. 8.9.11.13.23), Rome seems to have been motivated by considerations of expediency (the utile) and, to a lesser extent, of morality (the honestum) (p.I).¹³ It became clear at a very early stage that large increases of territory could not easily be administered within the existing city-state constitution (p. 7); secondly, that the overpowering prestige to be gained through great overseas commands might prove a danger to the egalitarian working of oligarchic government (p. 8f.); finally, that direct administration, the consequence of annexation, gave rise to the problem of magistrates’ malpractices in the provinces. That this was a matter of genuine concern to the senate is indicated by the institution of a quaestio repetundarum precisely in 149 B.C., when it became obvious that two experiments in non-annexation had failed (p.8ff.).

It has frequently been claimed that economic interests played an important role in shaping Rome’s foreign policy even during the second century B.C.,¹⁴ though J. Hasebroek¹⁵ took a strong stand against the assumption that ancient imperialism was economic in the modern sense, either of ‘trade following the flag’¹⁶ or of ‘trade preceding the flag’,¹⁷ and Tenney Frank ‘who knew Roman economic history better than almost anyone else has ever known it’ (p.70) was decidedly opposed to an economic interpretation of Rome’s political activities in the time under discussion.¹⁸ In a lecture devoted to ‘The “Economic Motive”’ (p. 16–28) the author exposes ‘the whole myth of economic motives in Rome’s foreign policy at this time’

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¹². For further observations on this point see M. Hammond, op. cit. 137⁴⁸.
¹³. For interesting remarks on the corresponding Greek concepts of τὸ ξυμφέρον and τὸ δίκαιον see M. Hammond, op. cit. 109ff. with notes 35,39,40.
¹⁴. See, e.g., the references given by T. Frank, R.I. 277; E. Badian, op. cit. 96¹.
¹⁵. Der imperialistische Gedanke im Altertum, Stuttgart, 1926, 8f.10.15.24f.
¹⁷. For this expression see E. Badian, op. cit. 70.
¹⁸. See R.I. 277ff.
(p. 20), showing that 'the profits, when they came, were welcome and taken as a matter of course. But they were not a motive for political and military action; they were not actively sought' (p. 20). Since a questionable interpretation of 'a well-known passage beloved of economic historians' (p. 19), Cic. rep. 3,6 – from this 'a prohibition of vine and olive culture in the Western provinces' as early as 154 B.C. or, possibly, 125 B.C. has been inferred19 – is to be found even in two recent publications,20 it must be pointed out that on the argumentation of Badian (as of Tenney Frank21) the passage constitutes but an ancient anachronism to be adduced as evidence on Cicero's own day (p. 18f.68).

Any discussion of Rome's foreign policy after the Gracchi must take account of two new elements in politics: the plebs and the equites.22 The author's analysis of the decades before the so-called Social War (p. 21ff.) tends to substantiate Tenney Frank's view:23 'that a complete indifference to expansionism, at times verging upon a positive aversion, existed at Rome. The senate was, of course, the centre of anti-imperialistic sentiment. But apparently neither the populace nor the commercial class did anything to promote expansion; the former caring little for opportunities to colonize lands in different countries, the latter being still too small and disorganized to exert any appreciable influence in politics.' That this holds true even in the much-disputed issue of the Jugurthine War, seems to have been proved beyond doubt in the independent investigations of the author (p. 25ff), of P. Brunt,24 and of C. Meier.25

'New Interests and Attitudes', 'The New Imperialists: the Myth', 'The New Imperialists: the Facts' – the very headings of the last three lectures nicely summarise the theses developed for the period following 133 B.C.

In 133 B.C. Ti. Gracchus had asserted the people's right to profit by empire (p. 31.44f. 49.76f.) by using Attalus' bequest for his plans (p. 21f. 44f.). The province of Asia was not formally annexed until revolt and das order had made this inevitable (p. 23), but it was Asia, basically, that transformed the nature both of the Roman empire and of Roman attitudes to it (p. 48). The system of tribute collection introduced by C. Gracchus

22. For remarks on the 'proleptic' use of the term equites and ordo equester during the period down to Sulla see E. Badian, op. cit. vii ff. 9941.1069. On "The Definition of "Eques Romanus" in the Late Republic and Early Empire" see now also T. P. Wiseman, Historia 19(1970)67ff.
23. R.I. 273f.
24. op. cit. 129ff.
25. See, e.g., 79f. 82.83ff.
aimed primarily at establishing the people's right to the benefits of empire (p. 36.44f.48f.76.69); its breakdown could not have been foreseen in 123 B.C. but resulted, above all, in the predominance of the publicani within a class whose political power had been established (or realised) by C. Gracchus himself (p. 50.60.9943). 'Henceforth, if they but thought about it, and if certain opportunities presented themselves, both the Plebs and the most powerful section among the Equites (as we may call the new class) could hope for benefits from increasing exploitation and from further enlargement of the empire. This, for our present enquiry, is perhaps the chief effect of the Gracchi' (p. 50f.).

That these influences took a long time in making themselves felt may be attributed to Roman conservatism on the one hand (p. 44.51) and to the fact that the number of equites Romani was as yet small and their capital probably too limited for any major expansion of investment, even had the chances offered (p. 40.60). Capital on a large scale became available only after the ordo equester had been radically inflated and transformed as a result of the enfranchisement of the Italici (p. 60ff.), and it is only after the Social War that imperialism in its economic aspects, i.e., in the sense of exploitation by the ruling power developed (p. 69).

The next question raised is 'whether and to what extent this affected imperialism in the other main sense – that of actual expansion' (p. 69). To most scholars it would seem obvious 'that it was pressure from the Equites, after the Social War, that transformed the nature of Roman imperialism and made it consciously expansionist' (p. 70) and that it was Pompey, especially, who was the representative (and the agent) of this 'equestrian imperialism', as one may be tempted to call it. The author disputes this view in no uncertain terms: the equites did not promote (or instigate) a policy of expansionism except in the sense of 'the thorough exploitation of the empire within its existing boundaries, and of territories beyond those boundaries, which we may justly describe as itself a form of imperialism' (p. 70).

Who then were the new expansionists? In isolated, if significant instances – Tiberius Gracchus' use of the Attalid inheritance (p. 21f.44f.), Saturninus' programme for overseas settlements (p. 51f.), the belated organisation of Cyrene to provide money for grain distribution (p. 22.30.35f.), the annexation of Cyprus at another time of shortage of grain and money (p. 76f.87) – the power of the plebs seems to have made itself felt but, and this is important to note, the impetus can ultimately be traced back to single members of


27. On the important question of the Hellenistic 'Herrschertestamente' see some remarks by E. Badian, op. cit. 21.9719.31.1004, as well as W. Schmittbenner, Saeculum 19 (1968)9.
the oligarchy pursuing, by and large, their own purposes. In the last resort both the expansionism of the late republic and the disintegration of the _res publica_ proper can be attributed to a single factor: 'the innate vice of the oligarchy—its inability to control its members' (p. 54, cf. 79.85ff.). As early as 89 B.C. an individual Roman senator—M. Aquillius, cos. 101 B.C.—precipitated the first war against Mithridates by acting on his own initiative and in the pursuit of his private interests (p. 56ff.), an alarming sign of things to come (p. 59.80). Sulla, again, though setting his face against expansionism (p. 31.33f.), demonstrated 'that immense wealth and personal power were within the reach of any man who could obtain a large command and, winning the loyalty of his men, was prepared to use it with sufficient lack of scruple' (p. 79f.). Pompey learned his lesson from Sulla (p. 80f. 10919) and, in his turn, set an example to both Crassus and Caesar (p. 88f.), but—and this the author takes care to argue—they were but the representatives of a class which had now taken the lead in imperialism in both its principal senses: in exploitation and in aggression, viz., of the senators themselves (p. 79ff.).

In describing the temper of Rome's policy since the seventies (p. 80ff.) the author uses terms which are strongly reminiscent of Mithridates' and Calgacus' famous (if unhistoric) invectives. As such they are somewhat extravagant: 'isolated brigand' (p. 77: P. Clodius), 'highway robbery' (p. 88), 'greatest brigand of them all' (p. 89: Caesar), 'robber barons' (p. 91) and, finally, 'no administration in history has ever devoted itself so wholeheartedly to fleecing its subjects for the private benefit of its ruling class as Rome of the last age of the Republic' (p. 87).

In adaptation of a saying of Montaigne: this is a book to be read and to be studied. A review can hardly do justice to the wealth of observations it contains nor to the stimulating challenge it offers. However, a few comments may be made, both on points of detail as on the general theses presented.

In his remarks upon the fetial law (p. 11.931) the author posits that 'in the second century, though it is possible that the ritual was still performed... none of our sources pays the slightest attention to it, and as far as its motive power in policy is concerned, we must clearly follow them and ignore it' (p. 11f.). This statement should be modified to this extent that, while the observance of the fetial law certainly did not constitute a motive power in Roman politics, it was yet highly efficacious in justifying Rome's foreign policy. None other than Polybius (36,2(1b)) noted with approval the attention which Rome paid to basing her wars on justifiable pretexts, whatever the fundamental cause, and the idea of the _bellum iustum_ (the

28. M. Hammond, op. cit. 13122, elaborates on the question of popular support and political profit as it is also raised by the author, op. cit. 45.47.
30. See, e.g., A. Heuss, op. cit. 544.
righteous and thus, in essence, defensive war) seems to have been very closely linked with the concepts of Rome's imperial obligations as expressed both by Cicero and Vergil. Significantly enough at least the principle of fetial law (and of the 'Rechtsfiktion' which it entailed) was still being observed at the very end of the republic and into imperial times. In the controversial issue of the bellum Actiacum the fetial ritual was invoked to vindicate what was clearly a bellum civile as a defensive bellum externum, and Augustus' claim nulli genti per iniuriam bello inlato (RGDA c. 26,3) finds an echo in Suetonius' statement (Aug. 21,2): nec uli genti sine iustis et necessaribus causis bellum intulit.

The author rightly emphasizes that the 'Weltanschauung' of her leading class will have affected Rome's foreign relations (p. 16) and that certain aspects of Rome's policy must be traced back to the concept of clientela (p. 14f.) In view of this the significance (or relevance) of Cicero's claim that Rome's rule be a patrocinium orbis terrae verius quam imperium (off. 2,27) should have been considered in some detail, in spite of some 'programmatic' remarks (p. 93). Was this but a philosophical maxim, conveniently to be disregarded in matters of everyday politics, or can ideas such as these be adduced in explaining the efforts of Q. Mucius Scaevola, P. Rutilius Rufus and L. Licinius Lucullus - to mention but a few prominent examples - towards developing an 'imperialism of government'? It has been claimed that P. Scipio Nasica's stand in the famous debate on Carthage can also be considered within this context. The real importance of the debate as of the events leading up to the deliberate destruction of Carthage (and of other powers which posed or were deemed to pose a threat to Rome) seems to be, however, that it clearly revealed the extent to which the methods of Rome's policy had changed since the Second Punic War. The author comments upon these changes of method manifesting themselves in

31. On this see M. Hammond, op. cit. 119.121.152.156.141.
32. For references see Samter, RE 6,2264.
33. See Suet. Aug. 9; Tac. ann. 1,3; hist. 1,1.
34. Dio 50,4,5, cf. A. Heuss, op. cit. 228.
35. I fail to follow the author's reasoning (p. 93) in claiming, as he seems to do, that the idea of a iustum bellum (or that RGDA c.26,3?) was 'in fact...strangely (one might say) limited to Italy' (italicized by the author).
36. For further references see J. Vogt, op. cit. 156.
40. See W. Hoffmann, op. cit. 309ff.; A. Heuss, op. cit. 110f. 115f.
Rome's relation to the Aegean states after the war against Antiochus (p. 2) and, especially, after 167 B.C. (p. 4), but fails to discuss Roman policy in the West under the same aspect. Can one justifiably posit a 'crisis of Roman imperialism' on the basis of the changes to be observed generally? And what light can incidents such as the dispute of Roman *publicani* and a *tribunus plebis* with the censors of the year 169 B.C. possibly throw on this question? This may well be worth considering for 'the constant interaction of the internal temper and customs of social life and the external environment of a society is an important and obvious field of study to the historian trying to evaluate both. Yet these aspects are often studied in isolation and thus individually distorted' (p. 16).

The author forcefully argues his case that it was the governing class which, by and large, decided Rome's foreign policy right up to the end (*inter alia*, p. 44.79). He takes an equally strong stand against 'the imperialism (in Tenney Frank's sense) of the Equites' which he regards as 'another example of compelling modern analogies' being applied out of context (p. 76). How then to account for the seeming contradiction in statements such as 'following events almost to the end of the Republic, we have seen that, even at times of great internal tensions, the Senate and its representatives could and did continue, on the whole, to pursue the traditional policy' (p. 40) and 'it is the senators themselves who now take the lead in imperialism in both its principal senses' (p. 79)? The solution obviously is – and this the author fails to stress sufficiently – that the 'post-Sullan – much more than the immediate pre-Sullan Senate – is linked with the equestrian order through its lower representatives, sharing interests and interrelationships, and this was soon to appear clearly in politics: not only in the provincial interests of senators, which now take on increasing importance and more clearly defined shape ..., but in the accord of 70 over the law-courts' (p. 62).

Since Sulla's adoption of three hundred leading *equites* the political power of the *ordo equester* became merged with that of the senatorial class, 

41. Thus A. Heuss, op. cit. 111.545.
42. On this see, e.g., H. Schaefer, op. cit. 343; H. Bengtson, Römische Geschichte 134; E. Badian, op. cit. 977; P. Brunt, op. cit. 140; C. Meier, op. cit. 68.
43. Some of the concepts of C. Meier, such as the lack of political responsibility among the 'Grossbourgeoisie der Ritter' (p. 93.89) and the 'guilty conscience' of senators evidenced in foreign relations (p. 160f.) may ultimately also appear to be due to a similar application of modern analogies. On the dangers posed by such an approach see P. Brunt, op. cit. 136; E. Badian, op. cit. 17.20.76.
44. It must be tacitly assumed that the *lex Claudia* fell into abeyance at a relatively early stage though no effort was ever made to repeal it (E. Badian, op. cit. 41). How else to account for the major provincial interests of senators (on these see p. 41f. 73.84f.) which became manifest long before the *lex Gabinia* (which prohibited loans to foreigners) as well as the *lex Julia repetundarum* (which incorporated provisions of the *lex Claudia*) made it clear that the law of 218 B.C. was no longer being enforced?
45. On this see H. Schaefer, op. cit. 351; C. Meier, op cit. 84f.256f.
transformed as this had already been during the previous decade. In view of this effective integration of the *equites* it is perhaps rather a question of accent whether one attributes Rome's expansionism since the seventies to the vested interests of 'the senators' or to those of 'the *equites*'. But also on this premise one cannot but subscribe to the author's conclusion that 'the study of the Roman Republic ... is basically the study, not of its economic development, or of its masses, or even of great individuals: it is chiefly the study of its ruling class' (p. 92).

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*ADDENDUM.* J. Carcopino's work (n. 3) has been re-edited under the title *Les Étapes de l'imperialisme romain*, Paris 1961.


46. On this see C. Meier, op. cit. 243,257,265.
47. For remarks on the 'indirect' political influence of the *equites* at this time see also H. Schaefer, op. cit. 35ff.
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