NOTES • KORT BYDRAES

METELLMUS NUMIDICUS AND THE ELECTIONS FOR 100 B.C.

Appian (B.C.1.4.28) says that L. Appuleius Saturninus campaigned for a second tribunate in 101 B.C. in order to avenge himself on Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus (cos.109). Numidicus as censor in 102 had unwisely attempted to debar Saturninus and his political ally C. Servilius Glaucia from the senate (App. B.C.1.4.28; Cic. pro Sest.47.101). That this threat was never carried out was apparently due to the intervention of the other censor, C. Caecilius Metellus Caprarius (cos.113), who refused to support his cousin; so much for familial unity. While Numidicus, a politician much praised by later writers, especially Cicero (for instance, Brut.35.135; pro Balb. 5.11; Sall. Jug.43.1), emerges rather soiled from this episode of senatorial intrigue, his colleague Caprarius, supposedly a buffoon, is revealed as a man of considerable insight and acumen, for he, at least, must have recognised the dangers of attacking two very popular but determined individuals such as Saturninus and Glaucia (Cic. de orat. 2.66.267; Lucilius 233–234 [Warmington] = 210–211 [Marx], 'Cecilius pretor ne rusticus fiat'). It seems likely, therefore, that Saturninus and Glaucia embarked on a strategy intended to win for the former a second term as tribune, and for the latter a praetorship in reaction to the attack made upon them by Numidicus.1

Plutarch, although not in disagreement with the incident as narrated by Appian, describes a much more complicated sequence of events in the run-up to the elections for 100. He relates (Plutarch Marius 28.4–6. Hereafter Mar.) that an alliance comprising Saturninus, Glaucia and C. Marius intended working for the expulsion from Rome of their common enemy Numidicus. The responsibility for this 'triumvirate' lay not, however, with Saturninus, but with Marius who according to Plutarch was an enemy of certain politicians among whom Numidicus was the most prominent. Marius had originally been a client of Numidicus' family and had obtained his first major public position through, if not the latter's personal influence, then certainly through the influence of other Caecilii Metelli (Mar. 4.1). Numidicus' elder brother, L. Caecilius Metellus Dalmaticus (cos.119), seems the most likely patron of Marius at this time, and it is significant that the latter gained his tribunate in 119, in the same year as the former's consulship.2 Marius' presence on the staff of Numidicus during the war against Jugurtha ten years later indicates that he was still a client of the family which had helped him win public office. His own uninspiring performance in political life up to that date also shows that he was regarded as possessing little potential, or as having no great career prospects (cf. Sall. Jug.63.5, a gross falsification of the actual facts).
It was only in 108, during the elections for 107, that Marius contrived to break his relations with the Caecilii Metelli to his own advantage, and that he finally achieved the consulate through the use of some particularly skilful and unscrupulous intrigue and propaganda (Cic. de Off.2.20.79. For a full account of Marius' pre-election activities see Sall. Jug.64.5–65.5).

Thus, successful election in 107, followed by the hasty removal of Numidicus from the command in Africa, and the appointment of Marius in his place, caused relations between these two politicians to be soured beyond repair (Mar.8.3–5, 10.1–2). However, although Plutarch suggests that because of his integrity Numidicus was intended as a victim of a jealous and spiteful Marius, it does appear likely that Appian's more straightforward account is in this instance more realistic. While an alliance between politicians hostile to Numidicus no doubt existed, it was probably prompted more by Saturninus and Glaucia's recent tussle with the censor than by a longstanding enmity harboured by Marius. Marius may have hated Numidicus, but it was the latter who had some justification for revenge, not the other way around as Plutarch states. With the elections for 100 close at hand, Marius recently returned from his triumph against the Cimbri-Teutones was by now too experienced a politician not to recognise that all potential allies were worth cultivating if he were to obtain the prize of an unprecedented fifth consecutive consulship. Saturninus and Glaucia were first and foremost useful friends, and their rivalry with Numidicus as far as Marius' career was concerned was of secondary importance.

Marius was duly elected for 100. But according to the memoirs of P. Rutilius Rufus (cos.105), which are quoted by Plutarch (Mar.28.5), this election was only secured through the whole-scale distribution of bribes, and by implication not through any great popularity of the candidate himself. The text of Plutarch at this point deserves to be quoted in full:

\[\text{ο} \delta \text{ 'Ρούτιλιος ἱστορεῖ, τὰ μὲν ἄλλα φιλαλήθης ἀνήρ καὶ χρηστός, ἢδ' ὁ δὲ τὰς Μαρίας προσκεκρουκάς, καὶ τῆς ἐκτῆς ἐτυχέν ὑπατείας ἀργύρων εἰς τὰς φυλάκες καταβαλλόν πολλὰ καὶ πριάμενος τὸ Μέτελλον ἐκκρούσαι τῆς ἀρχῆς, Οὐαλλέριον δὲ Φλάκκον ὑπηρέτην μᾶλλον ἢ συνάρχοντα τῆς ὑπατείας λαβέτεν.}\]

The passage is interesting because it is an example, and possibly a rare one, of a writer, who had no profound understanding of political life, referring to the work of a politician who had had a very successful and admirable career, even if it was abruptly ended by exile. In this case it is also to one who was a direct contemporary of Marius (they were probably born within a year of each other), and to one who was also well acquainted with the events of 101 and 100. Nevertheless, the way in which Plutarch introduces the evidence implies that he either had doubts about its veracity or was unable to corroborate the information. Both the epitome of Livy and Velleius Paterculus (Per.69; Vell.2.12.6) support the contention that massive bribery had been required to facilitate the election of Marius in 101, but neither these nor any other literary source mention that Numidicus aspired to a second consulship. Plutarch says that he had no reason to
disbelieve Rutilius Rufus, although he qualifies his acceptance of the material by pointing out that the latter was certainly no friend of Marius. However, if this account is correct, then it indicates that Numidicus sought office probably to upset the plans of Marius and his allies Saturninus and Glaucia.

With regard to Numidicus' candidacy there are undoubted problems, not least among them the fact that in 101 it was in contravention of the terms of the *Lex Villia Annalis*. Numidicus would not have become eligible for a second consulship until 100 for 99 since he had been consul in 109. But because Marius had broken this rule during the same period, its provision may perhaps have also been waived in the case of Numidicus. A consulship for Numidicus in 100 would have been very useful even if Marius had won the other place, because it would have made it much more difficult for him and his allies, the tribune Saturninus and the praetor Glaucia, to pass legislation when and how they wished. With a politician in a position of great influence opposed to them their aspirations could well have been foiled. Furthermore, Numidicus cannot have been so blind as not to have realised that he was, like Q. Servilius Caepio (cos.106) in 104, intended as a spectacular political victim, but if he was lucky enough to hold public office, he would have been immune to all attacks. Thus, a second consulship could have been a very bold plan for defence through a daring offensive not only ensuring his own safety, but destroying at the same time the plans of his opponents.

Unfortunately without any substantiation of the evidence produced by Plutarch it may be just as well to acknowledge that he may have misread his source and that Rutilius Rufus really had another Metellus in mind. The problem of finding another Caecilius Metellus is not easy at all, although there were at this time two families (of the cos.143 and cos.142), both of which with several members. The only known Metellus of about the correct age is Q. Caecilius Metellus Nepos (cos.98), but he is not known to have suffered a repulsa in a consul election, though of course this is possible. However, Cicero (*pro Mur*.17.36) mentions notable examples of repulsae among famous politicians of that period and Metellus Nepos is not among that collection (M. Aemilius Scaurus, cos.115, repulsa 116; Q. Lutatius Catulus, cos.102, repulsae 107, 106, 105; L. Marcius Philippus, cos.91, repulsa 93). Moreover, it would be difficult to make Metellus Nepos a consul candidate in 101 simply because his father Baliaricus had been consul only in 123, just twenty years after his father Macedonicus had held the consulship. The generations in this case are very short and to assign Nepos a birthdate in 144 rather than in 141, while of course not impossible, would make the consul of 123 a very young father (Baliaricus was presumably born about 166, Macedonicus about 187). Besides, with the cognomen 'Nepos' it would be natural to assume that the consul of 98 was the eldest grandson of Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus. No other Metellus is attested who could fill this spot, which indeed supports the argument for a Numidicus candidacy in 101.

Cicero who ought to have known the truth of the matter is silent and so vital evidence from that quarter is lost. Moreover, Plutarch who is notoriously unreliable when it comes to the transmission of names, may merely be guilty of an
error concerning this election. However, I believe that this is not the case, since Plutarch does not quote from an anonymous source, but freely acknowledges his material and even questions it. P. Rutilius Rufus may have had reasons for saying that Marius did not deserve to be elected in 101 and claiming that he had indulged in corrupt practices, but he presumably had no reason whatsoever to deceive his reader deliberately by saying that Numidicus stood for a consulship when he actually had not done so. Rufus was, after all, a friend of Numidicus and had served with him in Africa between 109 and 107 (Sall. Jug.50.1, 86.5; Plut. Mar.10.1). Furthermore, there can be no argument against Rufus not knowing the situation in 100 since Cicero states quite categorically that he was in Rome in 100 (pro Rab. perd.7.21).

Thus, it seems that Plutarch was unduly cautious in his approach to the information he received from Rutilius Rufus. It is indeed fortunate that he was, since by naming his source he allows some sensible explanation for what is apparently a rather curious little episode in 101. However, its significance, had it succeeded, should not be underrated. Metellus Numidicus can be adjudged to have stood as a candidate for the consulship in 101 contravening the law, but merely following the precedent established by C. Marius. Had he won the election, the plans of his opponents would have been gravely upset, and it may be that the events of 100 would have taken a very different turn. Unluckily for Numidicus Marius' ambition was so fired that he used bribery and corruption to a degree which ensured that Numidicus was defeated and that in his place L. Valerius Flaccus, another politician favourable to Marius, was elected. As a consequence the course of events which lead ultimately to his exile were set in motion. Had Numidicus been successful, then his dispute with Saturninus and Glauce, which had, in Appian's opinion, motivated them to seek office, would have been handsomely won and the ambition and jealousy of Marius would have been suitably curtailed. Unfortunately, this was not to be, but the drama which characterised 100 B.C. and made this year so infamous can be seen to have been prepared during the elections in 101.

NOTES

1. For Metellus Numidicus see RE Caecilius No.97; for Metellus Caprarius see RE Caecilius No. 84; for Saturninus see RE Appuleius No.29; for Glauce see RE Servilius No.65. For the censorship in 102 see Broughton, T.R.S. Magistrates of the Roman Republic, New York 1952–53, 1. 567.
2. For Marius' tribunate see Plut. Mar. 4.1–4; Carney, T.F. Biography of Marius, PACA Suppl. 1, 1961, p.20; Badian, E. 'Marius and the Nobles', DUI 25 (1963–64) 144–5; Broughton, op. cit., 1.526; RE Suppl. 6, 1370–1.

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