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Riot Control Continuity Between the Roman Republic and the Early Roman Empire

This article deals with the similarities in riot control between the Roman Republic and the early Roman Empire. It considers the different ways of maintaining order that can be found in the sources for both periods. Specifically, it focuses on the levels of intervention (armed and unarmed) identifiable in each period and how they escalated. Another point is the attempt to maintain order by non-violent means, specifically through authority (official and imperial). An important point is the question of what role the permanent policing force played in maintaining order in the city of Rome (since the rule of Augustus), especially in the context of the transition between the Republic and the Principate. The article also notes the characteristics associated with the maintenance of order during both periods, as well as the circumstances under which the authorities decided to intervene and the methods they used. Finally, the article compares both periods and concludes what changed. It begins with general observations describing the levels of intervention, then moves on to specific examples.

Keywords: riot control, Roman Republic, Roman Empire, Augustus, policing forces

Events at the turn of the century during the reign of the emperor Augustus (27 BC – 14 AD) marked a period of notable changes in the maintenance of order in the city of Rome, where military or paramilitary corps were established to provide various levels of protection. These new units known as *cohortes praetoriae*, *cohortes urbanae* or *cohortes vig-*

iliae prevented the outbreak of riots, intervened against those that had already started and protected the emperor and his family.¹

Does the presence of the military corps also mean a clear divide between the Republic and the Empire in terms of maintaining order? Does it mean that with Augustus a thick line was drawn under the existing republican procedures? Or, did they continue, albeit with new tools that made it more convenient and efficient to perform some familiar procedures?

There is little mention of the suppression of riots in Rome during the Republic. It is not clear from the surviving accounts of such events whether there were established responses to disorder, or the responses were more or less improvised. Both are possible. There are certain repeating patterns in the accounts of the Republic according to which the suppression of riots unfolded. We could divide these levels as follows: The first level could be classified as the option of not reacting at all to emerging disturbances. There may have been different reasons for this. For example, the authorities may not have been aware of the problems at all, especially if they took place in more remote parts of the city. Alternatively, the authorities were aware of the disturbances but did not show any interest in suppressing them. The impulse to resolve the conflict could have been a complaint by respected and influential residents of the city, or the fact that the riots had intensified and, according to the authorities, had begun to threaten not only a narrow, non-preferred group of residents, but the city, or the authorities and the republic itself. In such a situation the second level, which was still very mild, comes into play. An official was dispatched to the scene of the disturbance. At first it was usually a minor official, such as an aedile or a quaestor. Assuming this first attempt failed, the lower officials were replaced by

¹ TERRY-HARTIGAN (1982: 296; 300); RICCI (2011: 486); BUSH (2007: 315–341); CAMPBELL (1984: 110–116); AFRICA (1971: 8–9); FAVRO (1992: 79–82).

higher ones, as a praetor or a consul. Only at this point, if the situation was not resolved by the presence of the magistrates, would brute force come into play. This, like the magistrates, could be divided into two levels. In the first case less forceful units were used. These were probably a combination of state slaves and slaves and clients of the higher officials, who, if the disturbance had gone this far, would probably have been the ones to carry out the intervention. At this stage of conflict resolution, the army was not yet involved. The army would only come into play when this first armed force failed.² This could, of course, have happened if there was an already organised and armed group on the other side, but it was an extreme and serious intervention that could potentially have counterproductive consequences.

I have proposed five levels of policing that will make it easier to describe some of the events below. These, in turn, lead to the conclusion that the Roman authorities were responding to a particular situation. Their intervention would have depended on how the disturbances were developing, which would mean that they had to assess the situation first and only then decide which of the mentioned levels to choose. Especially in the case of the fourth and fifth levels, i.e. armed intervention, this would pose a problem, primarily one of effectiveness. However, such a conclusion cannot be affirmed with certainty, even though it may be apparent from some of the examples.

Assuming that they were really responding to a specific problem, an armed force would be assembled when the plunderers had already formed. Intervention would therefore be slow. By the time the policing force had armed and organized, the other side could have carried out a strike or become even more organized to resist the repressive forces. In the case of the army the situation was made more difficult by the sacred

² ECHOLS (1958: 378); NIPPEL (1984: 25); NIPPEL (1995: 78); LINTOTT (1968: 91).

border around the city, the *Pomerium*.³ Moreover, in the Republican period, apart from the period of crisis in the first century BC, the troops were not near Rome. This would have meant a further delay between the identification of the situation and adequate intervention. Thus, the impracticality may have been not only in time but also in adequacy. So, there is also the question of whether this was an improvised response to the unfolding situation, where they made decisions, one might say intuitively, as they thought right and adequate for the problem at hand, or whether they had somehow established procedures that they practiced.

The historian Livy offers us one complicated example from 460 BC.⁴ In a passage he describes a situation where Rome is at war with the Volscians and Aequi and is troubled by social problems. De facto, as soon as the war was over the strife in the city over the settlement of rights between patricians and plebeians began. As this conflict begins to escalate and the sides already seem to be coming to a resolution, new (old) conflict with the Aequi and the Volscians appears, and at that point the domestic disputes must go aside. But neither the tribunes of the people nor the people were happy with their real problems being pushed aside, which is why it was common for the tribunes of the people to sabotage military recruitment. To such a mood another problem is added when the exiles and slaves numbering about 2500 organized by the leadership of Appius Herdonius of Sabine occupy the Capitoline fortress. There is danger from outside and at the same time the heart of the city is occupied. The people have begun to activate, to shout the alarm, and to call to arms. However, the reaction of the consuls was not swift. They were uncertain. They were unable to decide which option was worse for them and from which any greater danger might arise, whether to arm the people and take the Capitol, or not to arm the people and risk

³ NIPPEL (1984: 20); ALDRETE (2013: 426).

⁴ Liv. 3, 15.

disaster from this side. They did not want to arm a people who had rebellious tendencies right in the middle of the city. Their decision was also delayed by the fact that they were not entirely sure what the threat actually was. They needed to find out exactly who the enemy was, what kind of people they were, and roughly how many of them there were. As one of the measures, guards were stationed at appropriate places around the city, eventually the consuls also agreed to arm them, but only partially. The arming was meant to be done to such an extent that the defences would be sufficient for all eventualities.

It is important to mention that Livy's reconstruction of Early Rome is complicated, because it's a distant history with few sources. Besides this fact Livy used history as an argument for contemporary problems and for established topics.⁵ In this case the problem was not only the indecision of the authorities, but also the indecision of the people, because they were unwilling to submit to authority, even though they faced a double danger. Only a religious appeal, specifically the loyalty to place and *pietas*,⁶ could force them to act. To me, the way Livy describes the process of solving the problem is more important than how accurate the description of the event is. He probably depicts a method that he knows and may have thought had been used before. Livy describes the phenomenon outlined above of levelled modes of riot control where authorities responded to a particular problem. The consuls needed to assess the whole situation, determine the form of the danger, and from this derive an appropriate response. In this case, their decision was paralyzed by distrust of the people. In terms of arming, they resorted to a half-hearted solution where the people were armed only to the extent that the consuls deemed sufficient to deal with the incoming threat while not becoming a threat themselves.

⁵ More about Livy's history in MILES (1995); NEEL (2015).

⁶ MILES (1995: 127).

The example of the Bacchanalia in 186 BC⁷ illustrates these graduated methods much more obviously. The cause of the intervention were the followers of foreign cults who gathered in the forum and other places. We do not know what exactly the reason for the intervention itself was. So, we do not even know if the first level of ignoring the problem applies to this example. All we know is that minor magistrates were sent in. Presumably they were successful, because we have no mention of the involvement of senior magistrates nor of the presence of the armed forces. Another example is from the Second Punic War (218–201 BC)⁸ where, as in the previous case, followers of foreign cults were involved. This time we can conclude that the authorities ignored the situation at first because they only started to act when prominent citizens complained about the activities of these people. The procedure was tabular. First the lower magistrates were sent in, and this time they failed. The praetor was sent next and at this point the description of the situation ends. Apparently, he was successful as no further problems or involvement of the repressive forces is mentioned.

There is one more aspect of the relationship between the Republic and the Empire that needs to be mentioned, which is already evident in the suggestion of the various levels. The opposition between authority and brute force.⁹ According to the levels that I have proposed, based on the examples from the sources it is logically evident that authority should take priority and that intervention by force, i.e. by means of the „police“ forces was only the second option. This may have to do not only with the reason that intervention by authority is, at first sight, easier, but also with the fact that there was a certain fear and wariness in Rome of such a way of maintaining, or re-establishing order. On the

⁷ Liv. 39, 14, 9–10.

⁸ Liv. 25, 1, 7–11.

⁹ Also NIPPEL (1984: 24).

one hand, there was the fear of a military coup, that the person in charge of conflict resolution would take advantage of this armed force and try to seize power for himself alone and such intervention in the republic reflected a serious disruption of the norms of republican governance, as I mentioned above. Next, the fear of a too harsh reaction played a role. Even though military intervention had to take place, there was a tendency to ensure that it was not unnecessarily too bloody.¹⁰

One indication of such a tendency might be the events that show us the separation of the various punishments. For example, in the above-mentioned Bacchanalia of 186 BC¹¹ we have the death penalty and imprisonment distinguished from each other. Livy gives a similar example for the Second Punic War, in which he distinguishes four different forms of punishment according to severity.¹² Another indication is the separation not only of punishments according to severity, but also of the participants in the riot itself. It is in the mentioned Bacchanalia of 186 BC that we can observe this situation, when the *curule ediles* were given the task of capturing all the priests of a foreign cult.¹³ We have a similar case in 43 BC, when Rome was gripped by widespread unrest after Caesar's death. One of the instigators was a man called Amatius, who claimed to be a relative of Caesar, which made it easier for him to gain sympathisers and organise riots. M. Antony tried to solve the problem by capturing Amatius and having him executed without trial.¹⁴ This attempt was unsuccessful. Although he attempted to contain the riots in a more moderate way, separating the initiator from the whole group in the hope that without this impulse the rest would disperse on their own, the form of immediate execution without trial proved too vi-

¹⁰ More in KELLY (2007: 150–176).

¹¹ Liv. 39, 18, 3–4.

¹² Execution; imprisonment; imprisonment in Latin settlements; slavery; Liv. 26, 16, 6.

¹³ Liv. 39, 14, 9–10.

¹⁴ App. *BCiv.* 3, 2–3.

olent and counterproductive. Ultimately, the whole situation had to be resolved by the army under P. Cornelius Dolabella anyway.¹⁵

In general, the events following Caesar's death¹⁶ offer a broad variety of attempts to re-establish order and calm the situation. There are also attempts to suppress the turmoil through their presence¹⁷ i.e., authority. Another attempt was to bribe at least some of the angry mob.¹⁸ And the above-mentioned method through military intervention also occurred repeatedly.¹⁹

An interesting example from the Republic is the situation in Rome after the Battle of Pharsalus in 48 BC. Riots broke out in the city, caused by Dollabella, who populistically proposed laws concerning debts. As a result, a larger organised group fortified the Forum. M. Antonius tried to resolve the situation with the help of the army. However, this attempt was unsuccessful. It was only after Caesar's arrival that things calmed down. Caesar did not react violently. According to the sources, the riots were suppressed only by his presence, and in the end, he did not even punish anyone.²⁰ Which also gives us a clue as to which is the right way to keep order. M. Antony failed in his attempt to quell the riots by force. Caesar, on the other hand, succeeded only through his authority. This case is complicated by the fact that two groups were rioting at the same time. First, there were the previously mentioned people outraged over Dollabella's law, and then there were the soldiers, which posed a much more serious problem. According to Appian, they had gathered in the Campus Martius, and no one dared to confront them. The conflict with the soldiers was also resolved by Caesar's presence and specific prom-

¹⁵ Cic. *Att.* 14, 15, 1; *Fam.* 12, 1, 1.

¹⁶ 15. 3. 44. BC.

¹⁷ App. *BCiv.* 2, 126; 2, 147; Dio. Cass. 44, 22, 1–2.

¹⁸ App. *BCiv.* 2, 120–121.

¹⁹ App. *BCiv.* 2, 118; 125; 126; Dio. Cass. 44, 22, 2.

²⁰ Cass. Dio. 42, 33, 1–3; App. *BCiv.* 2, 92.

ises. The soldiers were upset that after the battle of Pharsalus and in connection with the campaign in Africa they had received only vague promises. These Caesar modified and made more specific. However, in describing this event Dio and Appian agree that Caesar could greatly defuse unrest just by showing up.²¹

A similarly interesting example can be found in the earlier history of the Roman Republic. Specifically, Livy²² describes a situation in 495 BC when Rome was threatened by war with the Volsci. At the same time social problems emerged, the main cause of which was debt. They became the serfs of their creditors for not paying their debts. Many of them complained about risking their lives in wars only to be in a worse state at home than in war. One impoverished veteran managed to stir up the crowd with his moving, unjust story. The riots eventually spread to other parts of the city. People complained of their injustice and refused to be conscripted into military service. The conflict got to a stage where the senators were not considered untouchable and some of them were threatened by this angry mob. In response, the consuls appeared and stood before the crowd. So, there is an example of the consuls trying to solve the problem by their presence, that is by standing in front of the crowd and talking to them. They have put their authority into it. The list of possibilities of repression continues with the proposal of C. Appius. In his opinion, the disobedient crowd should be frightened away. He expected that it would be enough to have only two rioters arrested by the lictors and the rest would disperse. An idea thus emerges which is explicitly expressed in Herodian, who attributes it to Maximinus Thrax.²³ The violent crowd is courageous until it sees that state action will be taken against it. In this case, the situation gradually es-

²¹ App. *BCiv.* 2, 92; Cass. Dio. 42, 30.

²² Liv. 2, 23.

²³ Herod. 7, 8, 6.

calates. The mob becomes comfortable with the passivity of the senators and the obvious vulnerability that occurs once the thin layer of authority is peeled away. Moreover, the suggestion of intimidation here is somewhat unsurprisingly assigned to Appius, who, along with his relatives, regularly comes across to Livy as an enemy of the people and their strict, stern oppressor. Among the proposals, intervention by the armed forces was not mentioned. Any action approaching this referred only to lictors and intimidation.

Among the authors dealing with the issue of security in Rome, the absence of a regular police force is most often mentioned, which was to be solved by Augustus' reform,²⁴ when urban cohorts, praetorian cohorts and cohorts of vigils were established. These military corps were located either in the city itself or in its vicinity, which allowed for adequate and rapid intervention even in the event of serious threats.²⁵ It is suggested that these visible and certainly serious steps marked a dramatic change in the way riots were suppressed. However, can we really say that the procedure and the way in which the riots were suppressed were different from that of the Republic? According to the sources, it seems that the republican levels of policing persisted. We have examples that show similar riots and their suppression. These examples relate to the city of Rome itself, to other cities in Italy, and to the provinces.

An interesting example is the theatre riots during Tiberius' reign.²⁶ We have three examples of this in the historian Tacitus.²⁷ He offers us an illustrative and varied demonstration of how one might intervene in such problems. The first example of a riot in the theatre is suppressed

²⁴ About reform and policing forces: AFRICA (1971: 8–9); FAVRO (1992: 79–82); CAMPBELL (1984: 110–116); SPIEDEL (1994); MOMMSEN (1879); RICCI (2011: 486); TERRY–HARTIGAN (1982: 296–300); KNAPP (2011: 36); ALDRETE (2004: 103); TATUM (2020: 400); LINTOTT (1968: 89); NIPPEL (1984: 20); ALDRETE (2013: 426).

²⁵ More about locations: BUSH (2007); REYNOLDS (1923); RICCI (2011).

²⁶ He ruled during the years 14–37 AD.

²⁷ Also, Cass. Dio. 57, 14, 9–10.

by military force.²⁸ The other two problems are solved by senatorial authority. We don't know exactly how they did it, all we know is that they didn't have to use violence to restore order.²⁹ Tacitus directly mentions that senatorial authority had to be used in one of the interventions.³⁰ The third example, moreover, offers us the first level outlined, in which there was no response to the emerging unrest until the praetors began to raise complaints about the situation.³¹ At the same time, we can observe here, in the non-violent examples, an attempt at moderate punishment through the penalization of specific offenders.³² Evidence of actors being sent into exile is found not only in Tacitus, but also in Dio Cassius³³ and Suetonius.³⁴

A complement to the theatrical riots is the example of Nero's reign (54-68 AD).³⁵ This begins with the fact that the security situation in the city of Rome had improved, leading Nero to remove the cohort that was keeping guard at the theatre. Thereafter, the violence in the theatre intensified again, so the soldiers were brought back.³⁶ However, Nero did not react immediately to the growing problems, the soldiers did not intervene at first, and the riots continued to develop without any response from the authorities. It was only under the fear that the situation might escalate into more serious and dangerous conflicts that the actors were expelled from Italy and the soldiers again kept watch during theatre performances. Tacitus describes this decision as a last resort. There was nothing to do but re-deploy the soldiers to the theatres.³⁷ We can

²⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 1, 77.

²⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 4, 14; 6, 13.

³⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 4, 14.

³¹ Tac. *Ann.* 6, 13.

³² Tac. *Ann.* 4, 14.

³³ Cass. Dio. 57, 21, 3.

³⁴ Suet. *Tib.* 37.

³⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 13, 24.

³⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 13, 25.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

thus observe a continuing caution in the use of armed force in the suppression of riots. On the contrary, the preference for resolution through authority continues.

An example from 58 AD during the reign of Nero concerns the riots in the city of Puteoli. The background to these riots is described as violent. Culprits threw stones and threatened arson. A very serious situation was presented which required intervention to prevent further fighting and violence. The Scriboni brothers were called in to do this, and the praetorians were put at their disposal for the task. According to the source, the riots were suppressed relatively peacefully. The looters became fearful of the approaching army and ceased their rioting. The Scriboni had only the main participants executed, the rest of the rioters were spared.³⁸ The year 69 AD and the riots in Campania offer a similar example. This time Lucilius Bassus was charged with suppressing them using light cavalry. Again, the situation was calmed by the mere presence of the army. In the end, many settlements were not even punished.³⁹

The riots between Nuceria and Pompeii over the gladiatorial games in 59 AD also date from the reign of Nero. Tacitus again describes the clash between the two communities as violent.⁴⁰ There was to be a terrible slaughter. The judicial investigation went from the emperor to the senate and to the consuls. Pompeii was forbidden to hold such events for ten years, illegally formed societies were disbanded, and Livineius and the other culprits were punished with banishment. If we take into account that Tacitus is describing the fight between the communities that resulted in numerous injuries and deaths, the punishment was very mild. Only one side was punished, the Pompeians (at least that is the implication) were found guilty. There were no death sentences or other

³⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 13, 48.

³⁹ Tac. *Hist.* 4, 3.

⁴⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 14, 17.

corporal punishment. The guilty parties were sent into exile, and the guilty city was banned from similar activities for ten years.

For the situation in the city of Rome, Nero's reign offers us, in addition to the theatrical riots, the example of the death of the city's prefect Pedanius Secundus, who was murdered by his slave in 61 AD.⁴¹ From this example, we might see the controversy of cruel punishment, that an excessively violent response to crime can be counterproductive. There was a murder of a city prefect, a high-ranking official. So, it is appropriate to execute the murderer, who was his own slave. At the same time, the idea of exemplary punishment was obvious, i.e. not only executing the murderer but all the other slaves who were part of the prefect's household. This was, of course, to discourage any potential future assassins from having any intention of killing their masters, especially those of prominent and important citizens. It should be noted that, according to Tacitus, this was supposed to be an old custom that had not been invented at this time.⁴² Thus, it was something well-established that had been applied for years to protect the dignity of murdered men and to control slaves through fear. However, on the part of the people, the move was considered unnecessarily cruel. Even the Senate was not united on this point, and they argued among themselves whether they should ease this severe regulation. In the end, the prevailing opinion was that all slaves should be executed. The people expressed their disapproval quite emphatically and aroused the fears of the authorities of more violent riots. Indeed, they were to surround the Senate and threaten them with stones and torches. The execution itself was complicated by the blocking of the angry crowd. The emperor reacted by rebuking the people by decree, and then guards were posted all along the road by

⁴¹ Tac. *Ann.* 14, 42.

⁴² *Ibid.*

which the prisoners were led to execution.⁴³ One of the senators, Cingonius Varro, even suggested that the freedmen of the dead man should also be punished by being sent into exile outside Italy. However, this proposal was rejected by the emperor, saying that there was no need to make the old practice worse by cruelty.⁴⁴

So, this example does not tell the story that the people's empathy for the convicts was able to make the authorities moderate their decision, rather it depicts the dislike and reaction that such a harsh sentence can provoke in the people. No fight, no massacre is mentioned in connection with this event. The soldiers were apparently acting purely as a precautionary force; in case any clash should occur. Of course, the presence of the military corps can be seen as a depiction of oppression, especially in a situation where they were guarding an execution that the people considered unjust. So, in that case we can see both, the soldiers deployed as the threat of military force and as manifestation of the emperor's authority.⁴⁵ However, at the same time we can see the moderate side of the riot police. The soldiers were present as, apparently successful, deterrents. They committed no massacre, or at least no such thing is mentioned by Tacitus. So, the military presence here did not necessarily mean more violence. When the people start threatening, i.e., throwing stones, arson attacks, and blocking the way to the execution ground, the emperor did not send soldiers to attack them and push them away. He admonished the disobedient people by decree and sent soldiers to ensure the execution took place. Moreover, he did not allow this law to be further tightened. This paragraph could hardly be seen as a pure representation of cruelty and despotism. It is decided based on an old, well-established law.

⁴³ Tac. *Ann.* 14, 45.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ This is similar to the role that the lictors had. However, the difference is that the urban soldiers, in addition to representing the imperial authority, had a much greater power to suppress riots.

Moreover, there had been a debate in the Senate about whether it should be modified, because this procedure was simply cruel and innocent people would die because of it. Even though in the end the majority decided not to change it, it was not tightened up, and the outraged crowd was not suppressed with violence, but with decree and prevention.

Among the provinces we can mention the rebel legions during the reign of Tiberius. The situation was again calmed by the presence of an authoritative person, namely the legate Blaesus.⁴⁶ Another example of rebellious soldiers during Tiberius' reign was the Pannonian legions.⁴⁷ This time Tiberius sent his son Drusus the Younger and the praetorian prefect Sejanus. Again, they tried to resolve the situation through authority. Drusus came before the legionaries and read Tiberius' letter.⁴⁸ Drusus and Sejanus did not have a specific order; their decision was to be guided by the circumstances that arose and by the course of events. Finally, they only punished the main participants.⁴⁹ It is necessary to mention that this example is different, because it's not a case of civilian disorder but the rebellion of the soldiers. I just wanted to use this example to show the *modus operandi* is still the same. A similar example is offered by Hadrian's reign (117-138 AD), when the emperor managed to calm the riots in Alexandria by letter.⁵⁰

Another piece of information that fits into Hadrian's dignity is the gladiatorial games, during which the audience began to loudly demand something. However, the emperor did not oblige and instructed the announcer to silence the crowd. All the announcer had to do was raise his hand for the people to quiet down.⁵¹ This is similar to the case when

⁴⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 1, 19–21.

⁴⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 1, 24.

⁴⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 1, 25.

⁴⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 1, 30.

⁵⁰ Cass. Dio. 69, 8, 1.

⁵¹ Cass. Dio. 69, 6.

Hadrian managed to calm the riots in Alexandria with a letter. In the final analysis it is not so important here whether it actually happened. What is important is this idea of an ideal emperor, who is moderate and can rule an empire primarily by his authority, by his dignity rather than by force. This is also reflected in the maintenance of order. Such an emperor did not need to suppress a mob with violence. A simple gesture, an argument, or perhaps a simple presence is all he needed. Both the calming of the situation, whether at the gladiatorial games or in Alexandria, were achieved through authority. In Alexandria it was through a letter and during the gladiatorial games through a herald. Moreover, he did not have to pronounce any threat, he only had to raise his hand. This is a very flattering portrayal of imperial dignity, and it is no coincidence that these attributes and events are associated with Hadrian, who is traditionally portrayed as a good example of an emperor. One cannot expect with the same certainty that such riot control methods would also be attributed to, for example, Caligula, Nero or Domitian.⁵²

A similar example of a moderate emperor is Marcus Aurelius dealing with the traitors connected to Avidius Cassius' conspiracy. In this case it is an example of clemency in punishing conspirators.⁵³ Marcus Aurelius' actions again offer an almost archetypal contrast between him and the negatively rated emperors who also had to deal with conspiracies, or at least suspicions of them. While in their bad example the conspiracy resulted in a series of executions, confiscation of property, other persecutions or paranoia,⁵⁴ Marcus Aurelius was remarkably non-violent. He ought to have interceded to ensure that Cassius' followers were not executed. He did not kill, imprison or put under surveillance the senators, who were supposed to be associated with Cassius. There were

⁵² KELLY (2007: 163).

⁵³ Cass. Dio. 72, 28–30.

⁵⁴ For example, Claudius or Nero.

some executions, but not many, and they were of people who had been proven to have actually committed crimes. Cassius Dio thus offers us two ideal responses to the riots from two excellently rated emperors. These show us clearly the emphasis on avoiding excessive violence as long as possible. And once there is no other option, let it be limited to those who are demonstrably guilty.

I will again recall the way order is maintained, as offered by Herodianus in describing the reign of Maximinus Thrax. In it he states that the bravery of the people is limited to shouting, however, as soon as they see the soldiers, they begin to flee.⁵⁵ This adds to the idea that the presence of soldiers does not necessarily mean the constant suppression of unrest by force. Many times, their physical presence, or awareness of their presence, could have been enough. The expectation that a riotous crowd would calm down once it saw soldiers may have aided the idea of ideally non-violent policing. They could only create psychological pressure.

Regular police units allowed faster and easier riot control. Well-armed and trained soldiers were on hand. However, a military presence did not mean that soldiers were used at every opportunity, and when military intervention did occur, it was mentioned that it was the last possible option, and the emphasis was placed on the gentlest course possible. Augustus' reform has solved the problem with effectiveness and the norms of republican government. Nevertheless, the fear of military coup and the fear maintaining order through violence has prevailed. We can still find republican levels of policing. The authorities preferred to get the crowd to obey by their presence or by letter in the republic and in the principate. In both periods the authorities hoped that the problem would go away on its own and acted on the complaints of prominent citizens. They hoped that the policing force would intimidate the looters so that violence would not be necessary. For both the republican and

⁵⁵ Herod. 7, 8, 6.

principate periods there are regular examples where the authority was preferred to the use of repressive forces. We can connect the examples of the official and imperial authority, e.g. the cases of Caesar and Hadrian, which are very similar. There are also similarities between the city of Rome and the provinces or the rest of the Italy in suppressing the riots. Outside Rome, the emperor or the authorities tried to suppress the riots peacefully without violence and even though the military intervention occurred, there was again the tendency to ensure the punishment wasn't unnecessarily bloody and cruel.

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