

STOIC OPPOSITION FROM NERO TO DOMITIAN

by

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Except where specific acknowledgement is made to quoted sources, the following work is the result of my own research, carried out under the supervision of Dr.B.Rawson and Dr.E.Burge, Department of Classics, S.G.S., Australian National University.

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INTRODUCTION

It has been argued that the so-called "Stoic opposition" to the Roman principate which characterized the period 54-96 A.D. was based on a doctrinal objection, derived from Stoic tenets, to the principle of hereditary succession to monarchy. Others have seen the opposition as the work of a group of Republicans who refused to recognize the legitimacy of any sole ruler.¹ I reject both views. I suggest instead that the "opposition" of a small group of senatorial Stoics to the emperors of the mid- and late first century A.D. had its origin in traditional Roman and senatorial values, that the "opposition", such as it was, was exercised in a constitutional fashion and that its aims were vague and conservative.

My principal conclusions concerning the aims and methods of the "opposition group" are:

1. The "opposition" never took the form of conspiracy, that is, Stoics as a group never attempted the forcible expulsion of any emperor, good or bad.
2. Nor did they ever put forward an alternative candidate for the principate by peaceable means.
3. "Opposition" comprised:
 - a. relatively independent expressions of opinion in the senate, or
 - b. retirement from public life, or
 - c. failure to seek higher office, or
 - d. subtle literary attacks on the current princeps.

1. M. Rostovtzeff, Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire, argues for the philosophic basis of the "opposition". D. R. Dudley, A History of Cynicism, considers that its aims were Republican. See chapter 1, section #2, for a summary of the major views in the controversy.

4. Even these forms of "opposition" were
 - a. idiosyncratic and intermittent, and
 - b. not always directed against the princeps or his programmes.

5. The senatorial "opposition" was always centred in ad hoc issues, although the issues themselves often carried implications for the future.

The opposition group never essayed fundamental, constitutional reform. There is no evidence of an attempt to restore the Republican mode of government by any means, peaceful or forcible.

6. If any consistent principle was discernible in the public stands taken by some members of the group, it was the preservation of the status quo. This was a very general idea. The long-term aims of the group were probably never articulated, let alone synthesized into a coherent programme.

7. The methods employed were conservative and constitutional, though mildly unconventional by this time (54-96 A.D.).

8. The group qua group exerted no pressure to pursue any uniform course of action.

Individual conscience reigned supreme as the guide to:

- a. the occasion for protest, and
- b. the means of expressing it.

My findings concerning the theoretical basis of the "Stoic opposition" are that:

1. In Stoic writings, from Hellenistic to imperial times, tyrants and their characteristics are occasionally mentioned, but there is no suggestion that the good Stoic ought to take any particular action in the face of their outrages.

Moreover, the issue of the fundamental legitimacy of the bad ruler's position is never raised as such.

2. Stoics in similar positions vis à vis Roman emperors behaved quite differently, while retaining the approval of their like-minded colleagues. This in itself argues against the existence of a theoretical objection to the principate which they could be supposed to share.

3. The only evidence for a doctrinal basis of opposition (to a Roman emperor) consists of two passages in Dio, which can be interpreted in such a way that they need have no reference to hereditary succession, in spite of the argument of M. Rostovtzeff. The passages in any case describe the behaviour of only one Stoic.

4. The stance of the members of the "Stoic opposition" can reasonably be explained without recourse to Stoic theory, in terms of allegiance to the traditional values of their social class.

5. Stoics often took up similar postures on non-political issues.

The composite evidence suggests that they obeyed personal moral promptings rather than that they followed any consistent, political line of reasoning furnished by their philosophy (or even derived from it).

6. In particular, the suggestion that it was hereditary succession (to the principate) to which Stoics objected is unsupported, and quite at odds with the ad hoc nature of the "opposition" which the group offered successive emperors.

7. Not only were the techniques of "opposition" not uniform among Stoics (2), but even those methods of senatorial often associated with them - particularly with the first identifiable member of the "opposition", Thrasea Paetus - were not uniquely Stoic.

These methods had on the contrary been employed by independent individuals - who shared no common ideology - from the time of Augustus, on issues similar to those which provoked Stoic protest.

Again, this suggests a common origin in traditional senatorial values, rather than a philosophic scheme affecting only Stoics.

8. It remains true that the "Stoic opposition" acted in some sense as a group and was treated as such by more than one emperor.

This does require explanation.

9. The members of the group had in common certain conservative political and moral ideals. These were not unique to Stoics, but in their case the ideals were strengthened by their fellowship and, later, the common bond of suffering.

They supported each other in their struggle, gaining from philosophy the courage to take any action their (individual and differing) consciences suggested and to endure the consequences.

It is herein argued that such evidence as exists is not truly consistent with the views of the major scholars on the subject. My hypothesis, that the values of the "Stoic group" were derived essentially from the society rather than the philosophy of its members, accords well with the known facts concerning their behaviour throughout the period studied. Other suggestions leave many questions unanswered.

The problem of nomenclature has proved a difficult one in this thesis. To speak of "Stoic opposition" is to beg the question, since it is part of the task of this work to assess whether the people studied actually offered opposition and if so, to what; whether they were Stoic, and whether this, if demonstrated, necessarily rendered their acts Stoic.

The use of quotation marks ("opposition", "Stoic opposition") has been resorted to as an imperfect compromise. Often the expression "Stoic group" and variants such as "Stoic coterie" or "Thrasea Paetus' clique" are employed on the same understanding. The usage is not intended to be evasive. I recognize the necessity of establishing the suitability of any of the terms used, and fulfil this requirement in the work.

Another problem which arose was the need to refer in the text to people whose acts formed an important part of a later section or chapter. It seemed undesirable always to reveal the plot, as it were, in footnotes, although footnotes are still employed on the first appearance of a character, and contain appropriate information concerning careers or connexions etc. There is in addition a prosopographical index at the end of the work which contains information concerning the people who figure most in it. It is hoped that this will prove of assistance to the reader.

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AE</u>	<u>L'Année Epigraphique</u>
<u>AJP</u>	<u>American Journal of Philology</u>
<u>CAH</u>	<u>Cambridge Ancient History</u> S.A.Cook <u>et al.</u> Cambridge (1936-1969)
Dio	Dio Cassius <u>Roman History</u>
Dio <u>Or.</u>	Dio Chrysostomus <u>Orationes</u>
D.L.	Diogenes Laertius <u>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</u>
<u>Epict.Disc.</u>	Epictetus' <u>Discourses</u> (Arrian)
<u>Fast.Pot.</u>	<u>Fasti Potentiae</u> in <u>AE</u> 1949, n.23
Fronto <u>Ep</u>	Fronto <u>Letters</u>
<u>JRS</u>	<u>Journal of Roman Studies</u>
<u>Juv.Sat.</u>	Juvenal <u>Satires</u>
Marcus <u>ad seips.</u>	Marcus Aurelius <u>Meditations/ad seipsum</u>
<u>Philostr.Ap.Ty.</u>	Philostratus <u>The Life of Apollonius of Tyana</u>
<u>PIR</u> ²	<u>Prosopographia Imperii Romani</u> ed.Gruen 2nd ed. Berlin (1943). 1st ed. Berlin 1897-8
<u>Plin.Ep.</u>	Pliny the Younger <u>Epistles</u>
<u>Plin.Pan.</u>	Pliny the Younger <u>Panegyricus</u>
<u>RE</u>	<u>Paulys Realencyclopädie der Classischen Alterum-</u> <u>swissenschaft</u> Stuttgart (1907-1958)
<u>Schol.ad Juv.Sat.</u>	Scholiast on Juvenal <u>Satires</u>
<u>SEHRE</u>	M.Rostovtzeff <u>A Social and Economic History of</u> <u>the Roman Empire</u> Oxford (1926-1957)
SHA	Scriptores <u>Historiae Augustae</u>
<u>Sen.Ep.Mor.</u>	Seneca <u>Epistulae Morales</u>
<u>Sen.de Clem.</u>	Seneca <u>de Clementia</u>
Sherwin-White	<u>Plin./HSC</u> A.N.Sherwin-White <u>The Letters of</u> <u>Pliny A Historical and Social Commentary</u> Oxford (1966)
<u>Suet.Dom.,Vesp.</u>	Suetonius <u>de Vita Caesarum Domitian, Vespasian..</u>
<u>SVF</u>	<u>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</u> ed. J.Von Arnim Stuttgart (1903-1964)
<u>Tac.Ag.</u>	Tacitus <u>Agricola</u>
<u>Tac.Ann.</u>	Tacitus <u>Annals</u>
<u>Tac.H.</u>	Tacitus <u>Histories</u>

from 54 until 96 A.D., thereby spanning the reigns of Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus and Domitian. Nerva's accession to the throne marked the end of "opposition" by this group.

Conspiracy to subvert by force a political regime is immediately recognizable as opposition to that regime. Peaceful deviation from political convention is not universally regarded as opposition, let alone as opposition of an illegal and dangerous type. Many aspects of "Stoic opposition" in the first century - such as lively senatorial debate, publication of biographies with a political emphasis, pointed refusal to attend the senate, or censure of public morality - would in the Republic have been accepted as legitimate political and social comment. Under successive imperial governments, these practices were at best regarded with suspicion and at worst punished with exile or execution.

Yet some of these techniques of "opposition" were exercised early in the principate by people who had no connexion with Stoicism or with the people who later formed the "Stoic opposition". Peaceful protest in the senate² and even withdrawal from public life³ were exercised by individuals on occasion without arousing a violent response from the emperors concerned. The "Stoic opposition" differed

2. cf. the remarks of Asinius Gallus to Tiberius A.D.14, mocking his pretence of reluctance to ascend the throne (Tac.Ann.I.12); Cn.Calpurnius Piso pointedly prevented Tiberius from breaching senatorial convention in a case de maiestate minuta Tac.Ann.I.74

3. e.g. Lucius Piso in A.D.16 announced his intention of retiring to the country in protest against the judicial system of the time (Tac. Ann.II.34). He did not carry out his plan, but his intention reveals it as a possible mode of social comment.

from these isolated acts in that it emanated from a recognizable group. It can be shown that most of the people who made up the group espoused the Stoic philosophy⁴ and that this was an important link between them. Although disrupted by the exiles and executions of its members on occasion, the group survived the reigns of several unsympathetic emperors while still operating intermittently as a protest group.

The "Stoic group" as a whole was apparently dissatisfied with many features of Roman society of its time. Occasionally some member or members of the group would be moved publicly to express this dissatisfaction, usually in the course of senatorial debate. The first public indications of the group's existence were the subtle signs of independence shown in the senate under Nero by the consular Thrasea Paetus⁵, the leader of the group in its early years. Many issues provoked the public displays of the group's members, some of the issues being moral⁶, while others were political. Even the latter did not always concern the emperor. Some of the political stands taken represent conscious challenges to imperial authority⁷, but there

5. See the prosopographical index and chapter II for further details of his career and "opposition" activities.

6. e.g. Thrasea Paetus' stand on gladiatorial games at Syracuse Tac. Ann. XIII.49; the refusal of members of the "Stoic group" to participate in public dramatic performances at Rome Tac. Ann. XVI.21, Epict. Disc. I.2.ii-xiv.

7. e.g. Thrasea Paetus' insistence on the diminution of a sentence which he knew Nero to favour Tac. Ann. XIV.48-9; the refusal of Thrasea's son-in-law, Helvidius Priscus, to accord Vespasian the customary titles of his office Suet. Vesp. 15.

4. evidence is cited in situ, whenever a new member of the group is introduced into the text e.g. Rubellius Plautus, chapter 2#2.

were others - as vehemently upheld - which were free of any such implications.⁸

Under the monarchic system established at Rome, however, any public complaint could be seen as an aspersion on the princeps. Even after the Stoic group ceased to act as "opposition" in any sense, Pliny considered it brave of its erstwhile member, Iunius Mauricus⁹, to criticize the fact that Greek-style games were held at Rome. Pliny was impressed that Iunius Mauricus offered the criticism in the presence of the emperor Trajan.¹⁰ Apparently even this general comment on declining Roman morality could constitute a slur on the emperor himself.

If there was a consistent theme in the public demonstrations of the Stoic groups 54-96 A.D., it was the dislike of change, particularly if this were detrimental to the condition of the senatorial class. The traditional dignity and powers of this class were impaired - in the eyes of the "Stoic group" - by public dramatic performances of its members as much as by the senate's unquestioning acceptance of any legal measures known to be favoured by the princeps. Objections to either phenomenon were protests against senator and emperor alike, and to an extent incensed both.¹¹ Those Stoic protesters who were put on trial were usually convicted by the senate, at least officially.

8. e.g., the abolition of provincial grates to retiring governors : a measure initiated by Thrasea Paetus and finally sponsored in the senate by Nero himself, Tac. Ann. XV.20-22 and the attempt made in A.D. 69-70 to punish those who had procured the execution of some Stoics in A.D.66, Tac. Ann. 23sqg., Tac. H. IV.10,40sqg.

9. see prosopographical index.

10. Pl. Ep. IV.22. Iunius Mauricus was a member of Trajan's consilium, and offered his opinion from a position of some responsibility.

11. for examples of senatorial exasperation with Stoic obstruction, see Tac. Ann. XIII.49. Tacitus' own attitude is indicated in Tag. Ag. 42.

There is, then, some indication that opposition to the principate was not the only stimulus for Stoic outspokenness. Still, it must be kept in mind that the Stoics concerned were surely aware of the personal interpretation bound to be placed on any of their protests. It could even be argued that to an extent they held the emperor responsible even for Roman morality, so that their apparently general pronouncements were never entirely free of an element of personal criticism.

Punishment, when it occurred, was meted out with the blessing, if not on the initiative, of the princeps. Nero, Vitellius, Vespasian and Domitian showed irritation and distress at what they considered to be their hounding by the group. Some permitted themselves to impose harsher reprisals than others. The group - or some of its members - survived them all, thereby demonstrating that it did not constitute a serious threat to the principate. No longer persecuted, the surviving members were assimilated into the conventional political structure from the time of Nerva's accession in A.D.96.

The judgment of what was acceptable political comment underwent a change in the first century. Throughout much of this time members of the Stoic group stubbornly attempted to adhere to an ideal of free speech which had become anachronistic. From the beginning of the principate, the treason law (lex de maiestate minuta) came to be applied to offences involving the dignity of the princeps, as well as to those concerning the physical safety of the state.¹²

 12. Under Augustus-, for example, different people were charged under this law for attempting Augustus' murder (Dio LIV.3 or for committing adultery with a member of the princeps' family. (Tac.Ann.III.24).

The extent to which the former aspect of the law was developed depended on the individual princeps. If he wished, he could allow the law to be invoked to suppress personal criticism of himself. Such repressiveness, however, was noted by the senatorial class. Even though cases de maiestate minuta came increasingly to be tried by the senate, the responsibility was considered to be that of the emperor. The sources show unanimous interest in the use and abuse of the law, which came to an extent to represent the relationship between emperor and senate. An emperor who allowed indiscriminate application of the law was judged harshly by posterity, and those who pointedly prevented its use were praised.¹³ This suggests that the senatorial class felt itself to be most heavily penalized by the extended application of the law.¹⁴

The use to which the law was put was indicative of the fact that the position of princeps had become increasingly one of majestic and unassailable stature. The Stoic group offended against this concept, insisted at times on an almost Republican attitude to the princeps as if he were but the most outstanding magistrate. The offence of the group was punished as a crime. Opposition, even that offered without seditious intent, is almost by definition treasonable within a truly autocratic system.

13. See, e.g., Tac. Ann. I.72, XIV.48; Dio/Zon. LXIII.3.iv^c, Dio/Xiph. LXV.9; SHA Had.18

14. cf. P.Garnsey, Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire p.33 "...among crimes which might be committed by men of any status, maiestas was apparently unique in that it was punished exclusively (or nearly exclusively) by the Senate." For more detailed information concerning the lex Iulia de maiestate minuta, see Justinian, Institutiones 43.iv or the discussions of T.Mommsen, Römisches Strafrecht, Book IV, Section I and R.A.Bauman, The Crimen Maiestatis in the Roman Republic and Augustan Principate.

The group was punished, then, as if it represented a threat to the security of the princeps and by implication of the imperial system of government, although it will be shown that it did not confine itself to criticism of the rulers, and that in practice its members chiefly served the cause of the empire.

The Controversy

It is true, therefore, that the "Stoic opposition" was opposition of a kind to the principate, although this requires qualification. It has been termed "Stoic" because of the demonstrable connexion of its members with the Stoic philosophy.¹⁵ Some scholars have been led from this to examine the hypothesis that members of the group had some philosophical ground for objection to the principate.

The principal contributors to the discussion are Boissier, Rostovtzeff, Dudley and Toynbee.¹⁶ Boissier's thesis is, in essence, that the Stoics who offended Nero objected to the emperor's immorality rather than to his political position, that their opposition was "plutôt morale que politique". He argues that Nero resented bitterly this slight to his morals and artistry, and had the group punished for this reason alone. Boissier does not discuss the Stoic group after the death of Nero. His work is confined to the period of Julio-Claudian rule.

15. See n.4.

16- G.Boissier, L'Opposition Sous Les Césars, Paris 1885 pp.99-10
M.Rostovtzeff, The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire, U.K.1957 (first edition 1926) pp.113-7
D.R.Dudley, A History of Cynicism, U.K.1937, pp.128-141
J.M.C.Toynbee, "Dictators and Philosophers in the First Century A.D.", Greece and Rome, LXXVII (1944) pp.43-58.

Rostovtzeff, on the contrary, asserts that the "Stoic opposition" was based on "theoretical philosophic reasoning".¹⁷ He does not think the Stoic dissidents were Republicans, but holds that they opposed the principle of hereditary succession to the monarchy, and advocated instead the adoption of the best man as emperor. He argues that this was the only political belief which the Stoics and Cynics would have held in common.

Dudley suggests that Thrasea's "passive resistance"¹⁸ posed a real threat to Nero because of its power to inspire others to violent action, and because it was a source of political embarrassment to the emperor. He is impressed by Rostovtzeff's idea concerning the objection to hereditary succession to the rule, but insists that Priscus at least was a Republican in the literal sense. He thinks that the group represented a serious danger to the imperial scheme.

Toynbee distinguishes between the opposition under Nero and that offered Vespasian. The leader of the former (Thrasea Paetus) was, in her view, punished for forthright criticism of Nero's "personal character and conduct"¹⁹. She says that Helvidius Priscus - the leader of the group under Vespasian ceased to be a Stoic at some time between 66-69 and became a Cynic. His opposition was consequently more virulent. Ms. Toynbee asserts that Cynics were positively anti-monarchic, and were in general anarchic as well.

17. SBHRE, p.114

18. A History of Cynicism, p.131.

19. Dictators etc. p.131

Each scholar has something valuable to bring to the debate. It is noteworthy, however, that Toynbee is the only one who makes a concentrated study of the subject. The earlier scholars discuss the question incidentally, as a minor issue to be dealt with before they proceed with the larger purpose of their total works.²⁰ The "Stoic opposition" functioned from the time of Nero to that of Domitian, yet only Dudley studies it throughout the period 54-96.²¹ All the scholars make certain assumptions about Stoic (and Cynic) theory. It is important to examine systematically the remaining writings on the subject to find out what Hellenistic and Imperial Stoics said about the proper attitude to kings and related subjects. This has particular significance for the examination of Rostovtzeff's contention that Stoics and Cynics alike were opposed to the hereditary nature of the Roman principate.

3. Stoicism and Kingship: Hellenistic Stoics

Stoicism had its roots in Cynicism, and the two philosophies always remained similar. The first Cynics were Antisthenes (c. 446-366 B.C.), an Athenian, and his pupil Diogenes of Sinope (404-323 B.C.). Diogenes' former pupil Crates was for a time the teacher of Zeno of Citium (333-261 B.C.), who founded the Stoic philosophy. Unlike his Cynic models, Zeno wrote many treatises.²²

20. A glance at n.16 reveals that Boissier devoted five pages to the subject, Rostovtzeff five, Dudley thirteen and even Toynbee only fifteen. Even allowing for differences in page size, it is apparent that the subject has not been dealt with intensively.

21. Boissier deals only with the Julio-Claudian period, while Rostovtzeff and Toynbee virtually suspend their studies after 73/5 A.D.

22. See D.L.VII.4 for a list of his works.

Both Cynics and Stoics stressed the importance of ethics and concentrated on this aspect of philosophy. Both held that virtue was an internal and self-sufficient quality unaffected by "externals" such as poverty, natural disaster or the opinion of others. Such "externals" were therefore regarded as "indifferent", but Stoics introduced the notion that within the genus of "indifferent" things it was possible to distinguish between the "preferable" and the "non-preferable". Thus wealth was preferable to poverty, liberty to slavery and so forth.²³ Cynics clung to the earlier classification.

Partly as a result of this, there arose practical differences between the two schools. Many Cynic philosophers eschewed any regular livelihood, insisting on surviving with the bare essentials of food and clothing. Such men wandered homeless about the world, addressing people in public places on the subject of their philosophy. Stoics tended to employ a different mode of living. While rejecting excessive ostentation, many Stoics enjoyed the life usual for members of the class into which they had been born. In some cases, this included political activity. Indeed, Stoic theorists advocated participation in political life for the philosopher.²⁴ The doctrine of the imperturbability of the wise man no more precluded Stoics from public life than the notion of heavenly salvation precludes Christians today from practical projects of social reform.

23. D.L.VII.105

24. D.L.VII.121; SVF III, §697, §611

The theme of kingship was often treated by Stoic writers, particularly in the Hellenistic era, when the Greek-speaking world was largely ruled by kings²⁵, but little of this literature survives. It is possible only to examine the extant fragments and to attempt to reconstruct Stoic thinking about the behaviour expected of a king towards his subjects, and the subjects' obligations to him.

Chrysippus²⁶ posited the ideal situation as that in which the true philosopher was king. Failing this, the philosopher should live in harmony with a king and join in his rule as far as possible.²⁷ The practice of Hellenistic Stoics accorded with this. Distinguished Stoic teachers were commonly invited to the courts of kings. Zeno himself was asked by Antigonus to live at his court. Zeno politely refused the invitation on the ground of his own bodily infirmity, sending in his place two younger followers.²⁸ Sphaerus, a pupil first of Zeno and then of Cleanthes, lived for a time at the court of Ptolemy Philopater at Alexandria.²⁹ There is no indication that such invitations would have been refused if the king issuing them had been unworthy.

Chrysippus, to be sure, ridiculed the notion of earning a living at a royal court. It was, however, the earning rather than the source which he deplored. He objected equally to the idea of taking money from one's friends. All methods of earning a livelihood, said Chrysippus, are bad, for they carry with them some obligation and the possibility of interference.³⁰

25. Persaeus Citieus, a pupil of Zeno, wrote on kingship (SVF I. §435/D.L.VII.36), as did Cleanthes (SVF I. §481/D.L.VII.174), Sphaerus (SVF I. §620/D.L.VII.177) and others.

26. (280-207 B.C.) A disciple of Cleanthes, who had studied under Zeno, founder of Stoicism, for nineteen years. Chrysippus succeeded Cleanthes as head of the Stoa in 232 B.C.

27. Plutarchus de Stoic. repugn. cp.20 p.1043 b.c. (=SVF III. §691

... κὰν αὐτὸς βασιλεύειν μὴ δύναται, συμβιώσεται βασιλεῦ καὶ στρατεύσεται μετὰ βασιλέως,...

28. D.L.VII. viii. Even if the text of the letters is spurious, there is no reason to doubt the truth of the story itself.

29. D.L.VII 6,7.

30. D.L.VII. 188

This represents the extreme view of the purist. For many Stoic teachers, prepared to earn a regular living, it was apparently quite acceptable to live under the protection of a king, as Chrysippus' own remarks recognize.³¹

This de facto sanction which Stoics bestowed on kings and, by implication, on their position, is interesting. A Hellenistic kingship was almost by definition dynastic. Acceptance of such kings to some extent entailed acceptance of the principle of hereditary succession by which they had gained such power and by which they expected to pass it on.

There must have been some bad kings before the first century A.D. There must have been princes manifestly unfitted to succeed their fathers. Yet if Stoics of the Hellenistic era reflected on this and drew from it any practical political tenets, they are not preserved and have left no mark on subsequent Stoic thinkers.

When kings and kingship are discussed in surviving Stoic writings, it is usually in the metaphorical sense: only the wise man is a true king³², for only the wise man can govern his own emotions. The words "king" and "kingly" (βασιλευς, βασιλικός) are always used favourably.³³ Tyrants are not discussed to any significant extent by the early Stoics.³⁴ Rostovtzeff represents

31. See n.27

32. See SVF III. §617-23; see n.37 for a partial quotation

33. βασιλευς: see nn.32,37.

βασιλικός: the use of expressions such as ἡ βασιλικὴ ἀρετὴ is defined (Andronicus περὶ πάθων p.20,21 Schuchardt = SVF III §267) as ἐμπειρία τοῦ ἀρχειν πλήθους ἀνωπευθύνως.

Again, it is one of the virtues defined by Philo (de ebrietate, 88, vol.II, p.186,21 Wendl.= SVF III §301):

... ἡ μὲν περὶ ἀνθρώπων ἐπιστάσιαν βασιλική, ἡ δὲ περὶ προστάξεις καὶ ἀπαγορεύσεις νομοθετική.

34. There is, for example, no entry in the index of SVF under τύραννος. The index is otherwise reliable, and this accords with what one would expect from the general tone of Stoic political writings.

the juxtaposition of tyrant to king as being characteristic of both Cynicism and Stoicism, but the notion that monarchy could be the best form of government, and tyranny the worst, elaborated by Plato³⁵, has an even earlier history³⁶, and is the province of no particular philosophical school.

It is true that Stoics stressed that kingship was a skill, and insisted that a true king should have it, but no conclusions are drawn concerning the position of a king who lacks the skill. There is no suggestion that his lack gives his subjects the right - leg alone the obligation - to resist his rule. The ideas concerning kingship are paralleled by those concerning wealth. Only the wise man, say the Stoics, can truly be said to be wealthy. Yet this sentiment would not be taken to justify the feeling that a boorish millionaire ought to be deprived of his worldly riches by those who judge him unfit to keep them.³⁷

4. Stoicism and Kingship: Stoics in the First and Second Centuries A.D.

If the earlier Stoics accepted kingship as part

If the earlier Stoics accepted kingship as part of their world, the Stoics of the early Roman empire exalted it. Life in accordance with nature was a

35. Polit. 302 d-e. Also Rep. 7-8

36. See Herodotus III.82. Xenophon also refers to the idea Mem. IV.6.xii

37. e.g. Τρίτον ὅτι κατὰ τὴν τῶν Στωϊκῶν μεγαλοβρῆμοσύνην ὁ ἀρχικὸς, τοῦτέστιν ὁ εἰδῶς ἄρχειν, μόνος ἄρχων ἐστίν, εἰ καὶ μὴ ἔχοι τὰ ὄργανα τῆς ἀρχικῆς ἐπιστήμης· καὶ ὅτι μόνος ὁ σοφὸς πλοῦσις, τοῦτέστιν ὁ εἰδῶς χρῆσασθαι παρόντι τῷ πλούτῳ εἰ καὶ μὴ πάρεστιν.

fundamental value of Stoicism³⁸. The Roman Stoic Seneca, tutor and adviser to the emperor Nero, looked to the world of nature to find an analogy for kingship:

natura enim commenta est regem, quod
et ex aliis animalibus licet cognoscere
et ex apibus.³⁹

Dio of Prusa, sent into exile under Domitian and exalted under Trajan, compared the position of the earthly king with that of the heavenly monarch, Zeus.⁴⁰ Marcus Aurelius, himself both Stoic and emperor, saw the office of king as one most appropriate to a philosopher⁴¹, and reflecting ideally the physical character of the universe.⁴² Marcus had been taught to look for understanding to the example of Stoics martyred by his predecessors. Almost in the same breath, he speaks of learning to see monarchy as a form of government in which above all the freedom of the subjects is prized.⁴³ It seems as if this was an idea propagated by those Stoic martyrs of the first century.⁴⁴

Against this it could be argued that all the above Stoics had some benefit to gain from favouring monarchy and viewing it as the best and most natural form of government. Yet Musonius Rufus and his pupil Epictetus - both of whom suffered for their philosophy

38. D.L.VII.87

39. Sen.de Clem. I.19

40. Or.I.45, III.51 - 85

41. Marcus ad seips. XI.7

42. " " " . XI.18. Marcus saw himself as born to protect others. He compared himself with natural protectors in the animal world, and even saw himself as part of the total natural plan of the universe, in which the stronger always shield the weaker.

43. ad seips.I.14

44. Few of these men - Thrasea Paetus, Helvidius Priscus I, Arulenus Rusticus - left written works. Perhaps their sayings were recorded by teachers such as Epictetus (e.g. see Disc.I. l. xxvi-xxvii, I.2.xii-xiv, xix-xxiv).

during the Flavian period - present a similar picture of kingship. Musonius Rufus urges that a king is of all people the one with most to gain from the study of philosophy. Like Dio of Prusa, Musonius likens the position of a king to that of Zeus⁴⁵. The true king, he says, is the one who rules well rather than the one who rules over a large number of people.⁴⁶ In short, Musonius presents a picture of the ideal king but does not suggest that a king who lacked these qualities would forfeit his temporal right to rule. One would never guess from the banality of his sentiments the moral struggle which he must have undergone in his own life in assessing the right way to behave towards rulers of whom he disapproved.⁴⁷

Epictetus,⁴⁸ who had first attended the lectures of Musonius Rufus while himself a slave of Nero's freedman Epaphroditus, left Rome when philosophers were expelled from that city by Vespasian and established a famous school at Nicopolis in Epirus. He was connected through Musonius Rufus with the group which constituted the "Stoic opposition", and some of its members figure in moral anecdotes in his lectures,⁴⁹ which were preserved from a student's notes.⁵⁰ Even Epictetus acknowledges the power of the absolute ruler to enforce his will on his subjects.⁵¹ Epictetus is contemptuous of this purely worldly power⁵², but he never questions its legitimacy on the ground of its holder's immorality or on any other ground.

45. Frag. VIII p.65, ll.12-25 of Cora Lutz' article "Musonius Rufus 'The Roman Socrates'" , Yale Classical Studies 10 (1947)

46. p.67, ll.20 sqq. of the same work

47. See chapters 2 and 3 for his political activities.

48. see prosopographical index.

49. see n.44

50. Arrian's Discourses of Epictetus, possibly in eight volumes originally. Four are extant.

51. e.g. Epict. Disc. I. 29.ix-x.

52. " " I. 19.ii sqq

The issue of hereditary succession to the monarchy is not raised by any Stoics, so far as we know. In his second discourse on kingship, Dio of Prusa uses the young Alexander as an example of a prince. Dio assumes Alexander's right to rule by virtue of his birth. Alexander's questions and character reveal his fitness to rule, but there is no hint from Dio that this privilege should have been contingent on his virtue.

Most convincingly, the Stoic emperor Marcus saw it as self-evident that his son should succeed him. There is no suggestion that any of the philosophers of the time objected to his assumption. Marcus, as mentioned, revered the Stoics who had suffered under former emperors and was familiar, through his tutor and adviser Iunius Rusticus, with the teachings of Epictetus,⁵³ yet shows no sign in his own written work of having heard that a ruler ought to be succeeded by the "best man" rather than by his natural heir.

5. The Nature of Stoic Ethics

It is interesting that the writings of all Stoics, whether they be academics or men of affairs, have the same tone. Their moral discourses show a concern for life in accordance with nature,⁵⁴ and with the attributes of the wise man⁵⁵, but always in lofty and rather vague terms. There are many ways of saying that the wise man is impervious to external misfortune or good⁵⁶, but there is no indication of how best the wise man should behave towards beggars - a situation with which the thinking Stoic must have been confronted almost daily.

53. Marcus ad seips. I.7.iii

54. SVF III. §64, §499, §759, §760

55. SVF I. §216, II. § 132, III. § 654.

56. e.g. SVF III. §446, §448.

Bad rulers are not condoned by Stoic theory, but neither are they regarded as deserving to be overthrown. There is no practical prescription for behaviour in this or any other given situation. The world was not drawn up as Stoics would wish it, but they did not therefore conclude that unjust judges should be deposed, the dissolute rich stripped of their wealth or unpromising children deprived of their patrimony.

It will be shown that not even those Roman Stoics who were seen as "opposition" acted uniformly. While some spoke out, others stood back, yet all were considered by their fellow-Stoics to be good men. There was no rigid path for the good Stoic to follow, but once a Stoic chose his path, his philosophy gave him the courage to follow it to the end.

Rostovtzeff's contention that Roman Stoics felt bound by their philosophy to oppose the handing on of power by inheritance alone is unsupported by Stoic theory. The reasoning he advances is not inconsistent with anything in Stoic thinking, but this is poor evidence if it stands in isolation.

The "Stoic opposition" group was made up of moral people who thought seriously about issues which others took for granted. Rigidi et tristes⁵⁷, they disapproved of many things such as Greek athletic competitions and lavish dinner parties - both views as much a product of traditional Roman prejudice as of philosophy. One did not need to be a Stoic to disapprove of matricide, but only one senator - who was a Stoic - had the courage to protest against Nero's perpetration of this crime.⁵⁸

57. See, e.g., Tac. Ann. XIV.16, XVI.22 for their characteristic

58. Tac. Ann. XIV.12. See chapter 2 for Thræsea Paetus' other acts of "opposition".

Never did the Stoic group at Rome attempt to overthrow a ruler, although some of its members defied emperors to exert power in a sphere which was not properly that of a temporal ruler (that is, over the mind as distinct from the body), but accepted that an emperor had the right, if he wished, to punish their acts.⁵⁹

Stoicism per se did not lead people to oppose the principate - as witness those such as Seneca or Dio of Prusa who did not. Similarly, even those identified as "opposition" were not led by their common philosophy to embark on identical courses of action. The place of individual conscience must have been respected within Stoic ranks. One was apparently not expected to share the fate of one's friends. Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus stood out from the groups of their day and had the support and respect of their fellow-Stoics, who none the less felt justified in not following their example. Stoicism provided a strong bond between them all, but it did not provide its adherents with a stock answer for any situation. It is the contention of this work that the basis of the opposition, such as it was, offered by the members of the "Stoic group" lay not in formal Stoic theory so much as in the traditional values - ethical and political - of the Roman senatorial class, and that Stoicism provided a common link for them in adversity, the strength to suffer the consequences of any action to which their consciences impelled them and the certainty of the morality of the course which each one of them chose to take.

59. See Epictetus' persistent assertion that temporal power does not extend to power over ideas and conscience Disc.I.2.xii. xxii, I.19.vii-ix, I. 29. x-xii. In some of these passages, Epictetus uses the examples of members of the Stoic group such as Helvidius Priscus and Paconius Agrippinus.

In short, Rostovtzeff's view cannot be upheld. He is the only scholar who sees the "Stoic opposition" as emanating directly from a single principle of Stoic thought. The other scholars cited, however, also assume that it had at least a systematic basis. The suggestion of Boissier, that the Stoic group was repelled by Nero's immorality, could be at least partially true. It is possible that his excesses moved the people studied to form a protest group. It will, however, be shown that some political aspects of Nero's rule also offended these people. It has moreover been pointed out that Boissier's thesis leaves unexplained the continued activity of the group after Nero's death in 69 A.D. Boissier's argument is therefore accepted only as offering a partial explanation of the immediate impetus for the rise of the group, and even in this there is disagreement, for Boissier attributes this moral repugnance entirely to the Stoic fastidiousness of the group, whereas I see it as an exaggerated form of traditional Roman/senatorial morality which weighed more heavily on the people studied because of their commitment to philosophy. This represents a subtle but significant distinction.

It will be argued in subsequent chapters that the nature of the "opposition" offered by the group is in itself an indication that its motivation was not theoretical and that it sought no specific end. Neither Cynicism nor Republicanism provides an adequate explanation for the behaviour of Helvidius Priscus I in the years 69 - 73 A.D., when he was foremost of the members of the group in opposition. It will, instead, be shown

that he continued in a sense the task begun by Thræsea Paetus, who was the first figure to bring to public notice the existence of the Stoic group. To establish this point - and thereby to refute the views of Dudley and Toynbee - it is important to examine in detail the character of the "Stoic opposition" under the loose leadership of these two men. This is done in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER II

NERO'S RULE: THE EMERGENCE OF THE "STOIC OPPOSITION"

1. The Declining Reputation of Stoicism Under Nero

The "Stoic opposition" first came into being during the rule of Nero (54-68 A.D.). The "opposition" emanated from a number of people who came together to form a group. The nucleus of this group consisted of a number of Roman senators, some women of the senatorial class and certain professional philosophers who were not necessarily all Romans. These people first came to public notice as a group in A.D.66, when their leader Thrasea Paetus was condemned to death for treason. He had been the only member of the group to put himself forward persistently during the period 54-66 A.D. as a "voice of conscience" for Nero and the senate, but several other members of the group were tried with him on related charges. The ruling regime thus recognized the existenee of a group of people allegedly involved in practices inimical to the smooth running of the process of government. Although it will be shown that the assumption of the group's dangerous nature was ill-founded, it is accepted that these people formed an identifiable clique and it is held that it is possible to demonstrate that the bond common to all members of this group was adherence to Stoic philosophy, which had until 66 A.D. been regarded by most Romans as a respectable if dreary interest for a nobleman to pursue seriously.

Tutored as a prince and advised as an emperor by the Stoic L. Annaeus Seneca, Nero is himself an index of the acceptability of Stoicism to imperial circles prior to his reign.¹ Yet it was Nero who initiated the policy of viewing Stoics as dissidents to be harried by the government - a policy which was continued by the Flavian emperors. The process by which Stoics fell from imperial regard to suspicion was gradual and sporadic and related to trends which emerged in Nero's own personality and policies during his rule. It was not a product only of the work of the new "Stoic group", but partly of unrelated circumstances.

2. The Death of Rubellius Plautus

The fact that Seneca gradually lost his sway over Nero could account in part for the loss of reputation which Stoicism suffered. Seneca and the praetorian prefect Afranius Burrus had exercised considerable influence on Nero early in his reign, but this deteriorated. In A.D. 62, after the death of Afranius Burrus, Seneca left the court to lead a quiet life. Relations between Seneca and Nero were strained, although there was no public breach. The advocate of Stoicism no longer had the imperial ear. It may be coincidence that it was at this juncture that Nero had Rubellius Plautus and Cornelius Sulla Felix killed. Tacitus lays the blame for their deaths to Burrus' successor, Ofonius Tigellinus, whose evil influence, he says, urged Nero on.²

1. Seneca later said, de Clem. II. 5. ii, that when he was appointed tutor to Nero in 49 A.D. (Tac. Ann. XII. 8; Dio/Exc. Val. LXI. 32. iii), there were those who considered Stoicism to be unsuited to the education of princes:

scio male audire apud imperitos sectam Stoicorum
tamquam duram nimis et minime principibus regibusque
bonum daturam consilium; obicitur illi, quod sapientem
negat misereri, negat ignoscere.

That is, the objection was based on the proverbial austerity of Stoicism. There is no suggestion that Stoics were deemed subversive, but rather pitiless towards human frailty. cf. Suet. Nero 52. This would not impair the general acceptability of the philosophy in the sense in which it was later affected.

2. Tac. Ann. XIV. 57

Rubellius Plautus was a distinguished Roman and a Stoic. He was in a sense one of the first people to suffer from the quirks of the emperor's personality. Nero was a nervous ruler, quick to suspect people of designs on the throne and quick to strike them down. His own mother, Agrippina, was the prime object of his suspicions in A.D.55. He therefore gave ready credence to an accusation that she planned to marry Rubellius Plautus and overthrow her son. Agrippina succeeded in refuting the charge, and Plautus was left in peace for the time being, but not forgotten.³ In Nero's terms, Plautus' very existence posed a potential threat. Like Nero, he was directly descended from Drusus⁴ (son of Livia, and brother of Tiberius). He was also extremely wealthy - an attribute which enhanced his ill-fated prominence. Nor was the emperor alone in viewing him as a candidate for the purple. He was cultivated by all manner of malcontents,⁵ and when a comet appeared in A.D.60 (signifying to the popular imagination a change in government) he was commonly spoken of as the new emperor. Plautus was then instructed by Nero to retire to his estates in Asia.⁶ He complied, but Nero none the less had him killed two years later (A.D.62).

Plautus' case is paralleled by that of Cornelius Sulla Faustus Felix.⁷ Son-in-law of Claudius and descended from the dictator Sulla⁸, he, too, was a fitting object for Nero's suspicion. He withdrew to Gallia Narbonensis some time between A.D.56-62⁹, in an attempt to avert the emperor's jealousy. Retirement afforded him as little safety as it did Plautus. Sulla's death preceded that of Plautus - for the simple reason that his

3. Tac.Ann. XIII.18,20-22

4. Nero was the great grandson of Drusus, Plautus his great great grandson. Though both therefore stood in the same relation to Drusus' mother Livia Augusta, Tacitus is incorrect in suggest - that they stood in the same relation to Augustus himself (Tac. Ann.XIII.19). Nero traced his own descent, through his maternal grandmother Agrippina I, in a direct line from Augustus. Plautus on the other hand was the great great great nephew of Augustus (he was descended from Octavia, Augustus' sister).

5. Tac.Ann.XIV.22 ..fovebantque multi quibus nova et ancipitia praecolere avida et pærumque fallax ambitio est.

6. Tac.Ann.XIV.22

7. cos.A.D.52 (Tac.Ann.XII.52)

8. Tac.Ann.XIII.23: he was married to Claudia Antonia, daughter of Claudius the emperor and Aelia Paetina

Tac.Ann.XIV.57

assassin's journey was shorter - but the killings were ordered simultaneously by Nero. Both men were denounced posthumously in the senate, after Nero had sent a document to that body informing it that the violent personalities of these men constituted a threat to the safety of emperor and state - a vague accusation which was probably not taken seriously by the senate. Notwithstanding this, it duly voted thanksgiving for the exposure of this danger, and deprived both men of their senatorial rank. The senate had not been told that the men were already dead when this measure was passed.¹⁰

Both men, then, were brought down by the distinction of their birth. There is no reason to suppose that they gave Nero true cause to fear them. Tacitus represents their deaths as entirely undeserved. It happened that Plautus was a Stoic. Tacitus has Tigellinus mention the fact¹¹ and it accords with the notion of Plautus' old-fashioned austerity¹² and his composed acceptance of an undeserved fate.¹³ He took with him to Asia two philosophers, one of them the Stoic Musonius Rufus, and during his sojourn in the province he consorted with the pro-consul Barea Soranus, who was also a Stoic. Both these men later played a part in the history of the "Stoic opposition"¹⁴. It is possible that all three - Barea Soranus, Rubellius Plautus and Musonius Rufus - were already members of an identifiable clique at this time (59-62 A.D.), and that this clique formed the basis of the "Stoic opposition", headed by Thræsea

10. Tac.Ann.XIV.57-59

11. Tac.Ann.XIV.58

12. Tac.Ann.SIV.22 ipse placita maiorum colebat, habitu severo, casta et secreta domo.. and

Tac.Ann.XIV.57 ... veterum Romanorum imitamenta praeferre

13. Tac.Ann.XIV.59 Forewarned by his father-in-law of Nero's order, Plautus nevertheless followed his normal daily routine, and was struck down while exercising. Tacitus offers several alternative explanations for this imperturbability, among them the possibility that Plautus' doctores sapientiae had urged it:

constantiam opperiendae mortis pro incerta et trepida vita suasisse

14. Tac.Ann.XIV.59

Paetus. It is unlikely that the group was deemed seditious or even troublesome at the time of Plautus' death in A.D.62. Plautus' association with Stoicism and with Thrasea's Stoic group may have discredited the philosophy somewhat in Nero's eyes, and caused informers to look with greater interest upon the group, but Plautus' ancestry and popularity were in themselves sufficient to earn Nero's hatred. The proof of this lies in the fate of the non-Stoic Sulla Felix. His execution shows that the two were seen in the same light by the suspicious emperor. Tacitus' account assumes that the two were innocent of any desire to supplant Nero and that the charges brought posthumously against them were so patently false as to be ridiculous.¹⁵

When Tacitus has Tigellinus characterize the Stoic group as

secta ... quae turbidos et negotiorum
adpetentis faciat,¹⁶

he is probably influenced by his own knowledge of the reputation of Stoicism in Flavian, and especially Domitianic, times. It is apparent from Plautus' history that his philosophy enabled him to endure his fate rather than to precipitate it by rash political action.

15. Tac.Ann.XIV.59: *gravioribus iam ludibriis quam malis.* It is noteworthy that Plautus is never held up by later Stoics as an example of defiant courage, but merely as an unwitting victim (contrast the later glorification of the "Stoic martyrs" such as Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus I - see chapter 4). It seems reasonable to assume that Plautus had not offered an identifiably "Stoic opposition" to Nero, and that he was brought down by his pedigree, and not his philosophy.

16. Tac.Ann.XIV.57

3. The Fall of Seneca and the Conspiracy of Piso

Many people became progressively disillusioned with Nero's reign as it continued. His offences ranged from whimsical murders to offences against aristocratic taste. By 65 A.D. he had by traditional standards cast aside all moderation. He appeared in public as lyre-player and charioteer, and allowed the senatorial class to be terrorized by informers and abuses of the laws de maiestate minuta. It was this climate which produced the "conspiracy of Piso", a widely-based plot¹⁷ to assassinate Nero and replace him with the well-born C. Calpurnius Piso in 65 A.D.¹⁸ The plot was uncovered. One of the leading figures proved to be the poet M. Annaeus Lucanus, nephew of Seneca and himself perhaps a Stoic.¹⁹ He was ordered to kill himself. Seneca was also condemned for participation in the plot - although probably unjustly - and also committed suicide.

The equestrian Musonius Rufus (the Stoic philosopher who had gone with Rubellius Plautus to Asia and had presumably returned to Rome between 62-65) was accused of complicity in the plot and exiled.²⁰

17. Tacitus marvels that a plot involving so many people from so many different backgrounds could have remained a secret for as long as it did. Tac. Ann. XV. 54

18. Tac. Ann. XV. 48-74 has an account of the whole conspiracy

19. Lucan's Pharsalia shows evidence of Stoic traits (see the characterization of Cato, and the digressions on the natural world I. 412, V. 540; the attitude to civil war VII. 51 is similar to that displayed by Musonius Rufus in 69 A.D. Tac. H. III. 81). Lucan surely received a Stoic education from Seneca's dependant L. Annaeus Cornutus (Suet. Vit. Persi).

20. death of Seneca: Tac. Ann. XV. 60-61; death of Lucan Tac. Ann. XV. 7
exile of Musonius Rufus Tac. Ann. XV. 71.

There is no suggestion that either Seneca or Lucan was directly associated with the Stoic group with which Rubellius Plautus and Musonius Rufus were apparently connected. There were, too, many people who were not Stoics amongst those punished in the wake of the conspiracy, but the two/three Stoics were distinguished figures, and their convictions no doubt helped to throw Stoicism into disrepute. It has been argued²¹ that Nero's attitude to the senatorial class was notably more repressive from the time of the conspiracy of Piso. Both senators and Stoics, then, were suspect in the last years of Nero's reign. Senatorial Stoics, members of both groups, were unlikely to arouse favourable emotions in the emperor's breast after 65 A.D.

4. Thrasea Paetus, Leader of the Stoic Group 54-66 A.D.

It is not, therefore, surprising that in 66 A.D. Thrasea Paetus, leader of the Stoic group, was tried for treason and executed. Others of the group were tried at the same time. Some shared his fate, others were given lesser penalties,²² yet it was Thrasea himself who had embodied the "Stoic opposition" throughout Nero's reign. He had impressed his friends with his example, but he had been distinctive in his efforts to make public many attitudes which other senators scarcely dared entertain in private.

21. particularly by B.Henderson, The Life and Principate of the Emperor Nero pp.288 sqg.

22. see section #5 of this chapter for details of the trials

Thrasea Paetus chose at times to display his independence in the senate. He first appears in Tacitus' narrative in the years 58 and 59, but in both cases reference is made to his earlier conduct and the reputation it had already won him. In 58 a measure was passed in the senate allowing the magistrates who gave gladiatorial games in Syracuse to accommodate audiences in excess of the usual statutory limit. Thrasea had opposed the motion. His enemies sneered at the triviality of the issue. Was this his only objection to the imperial system? They mentioned, too, that he had refrained from being so outspoken on more serious issues.²³ One gathers, then, that Thrasea spoke openly only when lesser questions were being debated.

In A.D.59, however, an occasion for weightier comment arose, for Nero had his mother murdered. He informed the senate of her death, representing her as a rebel who had tried to have him assassinated and, her plot uncovered, had killed herself in despair. Schooled in dissimulation, the senators offered the emperor formal congratulations on his "escape" from danger. In telling us of Thrasea's reaction to this, Tacitus contrasts it with his usual behaviour when moved to show his dissatisfaction in the House:

Thrasea Paetus silentio vel brevi adsensu
prios adulationes transmitters solitus ..²⁴

We are told, then, that Thrasea disapproved of the hypocrisy which had become second nature for so many senators and that he made known his disapproval on other occasions prior to A.D.59 not by direct comment, but by

23. quod si summa dissimulatione transmitterentur, quanto magis inanibus abstinendum? Tac. Ann. xiii.49

24. Tac. Ann. XIV.12

refraining from the usual adulatory formulae - a subtle form of protest which could be recognized as such only by those familiar with the convention which he thus breached. On the announcement of Agrippina's death, however, Thrasea walked out of the senate house. This was a stronger comment than those he had made in the past. Even so, he did not openly denounce Nero's act or its reception. His protest, though extreme in its context, was still oblique.

Dio relates the same incident, but with the remark that Thrasea's exit from the senate was of a piece with his usual behaviour.²⁵ Yet Dio's remark is a general one which he then illustrates with various independent sayings attributed to Thrasea. It is still reasonable to accept Tacitus' observation that this was Thrasea's most pronounced gesture to date. He had given intermittent and indirect indications of his independence for some time, presumably since Nero's accession in 54,²⁶ but this was the first occasion on which his protest had been so obvious.

We learn of no immediate repercussions from this incident, and Thrasea appears once more in the senate in A.D.62, with no hint of a long absence in the meantime. In that year, the praetor Antistius Sosianus was tried and convicted by the senate for breaching the law de maiestate minuta. This was the first occasion on which the law was applied during Nero's rule.²⁷ Sosianus had composed and recited insulting verses about Nero, and for such a serious crime the death penalty was proposed. He was not highly regarded. He had en-

25. Dio/Xiph.LXII.15.iii

26. See Tac.Ann.XIII.49 and above. He was spoken of in A.D.58-9 as a man known for this behaviour. His detractors assumed its basis to be an objection to Nero. Whether true or not, the assumption is likely to have been based on the coincidence of Thrasea's "opposition" with the period of Nero's rule.

27. tum primum evocata ea lex Tac.Ann.XIV.48

couraged unruly mob behaviour as tribune, and his immorality gained him an unpopularity which outlasted Nero's reign.²⁸ Yet Thrasea chose to champion his cause, and argued strongly for the lesser penalty of *relegatio in insulam*.²⁹

Thrasea argued persuasively and the senate agreed to his proposal. It was couched in terms of the most exaggerated respect for Nero.³⁰ Nero's insincere reply to the senate following the announcement of their decision stressed that that body had the right to decide each issue as it wished. The emperor's true attitude, however, showed through. He emphasized the enormity of Sosianus' offence and hinted at his own distress that the senate should think so lightly of it.³¹ Thrasea had won, but the whole incident had been played as a game. There had been no direct confrontation. Each had shown the greatest apparent regard for the other, while knowing exactly what the episode signified - a victory for senatorial independence.

In the same year (62) a wealthy Cretan was tried and convicted in the senate because of the disrespect he had shown that body. He had boasted that proconsuls who governed Cret could expect votes of thanks (*grates*) from the local senate only if he approved them personally. On this occasion, Thrasea rose and urged that such votes be prohibited altogether. The speech he made smacks more of Roman chauvinism than of any Stoic regard for the equality of man.³²

28. See Tac.Ann.XIII.21 for the charges made against him as tribune. He was finally exiled as a result of this trial. In 69, Galba recalled most such exiles (Dio/Xiph.LXII.26.ii; Dio/Zon. LXIII.3.iv^c) but not Antistius Sosianus. His return was mooted under Vespasian A.D.70, but Mucianus, *in loco principis*, decided against it principally on the ground of the man's unpopularity (*pravitare morum multis exitiosus* . Tac.H.IV.44)

29. Tac.Ann.XIV.48

30. *multo cum honore Caesaris et acerrime increpito Antistio, non quidquid nocens reus pati mereretur, id egregio sub principe.*
Tac.Ann.XIV.48

31. Tac.Ann.XIV.49

32. Tac.Ann. XV.20

The speech was well received, but the proposal could not be made law without referral to the emperor. Nero subsequently sponsored the bill (mox auctore principe) and was apparently genuinely in favour of it.³³ The two men, then, were prepared to cooperate on an issue of senatorial (and even Roman) dignity. Thrasea did not raise his voice only to criticize the government. He displayed the same vigour throughout this episode as in those in which he was pitted against the emperor.

Dio tells us that in 63 'one Thrasea' said that a senator should be subject to no penalty harsher than exile. Dio's language indicates that this 'opinion' was expressed in the senate.³⁴ If it was in fact Thrasea Paetus who made the suggestion,³⁵ it throws further light on his championing of the unworthy Antistius Sosianus. It would have been the execution of a senator - and the concomitant loss of dignity for the senatorial order - which he deplored, as well as distaste for the revival of the law de maiestate minuta. The two issues were not unrelated. The senatorial sources reflect the general concern of their class about the use of the treason laws, which tended to be directed towards senatorials.³⁶

If it is Thrasea Paetus who figures in the Dio passage, this was his last attested appearance in the senate. Apart from this incident, we have only Cossutianus Capito's more general remark (made in 66) concerning Thrasea's consistent outspokenness in the senate until about this time.³⁷ This indicates that

33. Tac. Ann. XV.22

34. Dio/Pet. Pat. LXII.15.ia. The epitomator uses the words γνώμην ἀπεφώνησεν, designed surely to convey the expression of a senatorial sententia.

35. which is unlikely, since Dio refers to him as a noted personality elsewhere (LXII.15.ii, LXII.20.iv etc.)

36. See chapter 1, section #1, especially nn.12-14

37. Tac. Ann. XVI.22 adsidium olim et indefessum, qui vulgaribus quoque patrum consultis semet fautorem aut adversarium ostenderet, triennio non introisse curiam

This was one of the accusations levelled against Thrasea Paetus in connexion with his trial for treason.

at some stage in 63, Thrasea ceased altogether to attend meetings of the senate ³⁸ another instance of indirect or even negative protest.

Thrasea's conspicuous behaviour was not confined to the curia. Nero's reign was characterized by a certain frivolity, which was reflected in court life and in the emperor's patronage of the musical and dramatic arts. This extended to his encouragement of public performances featuring members of the senatorial and equestrian classes and, ultimately, himself - an outrage to any conservative Roman, and particularly to a senator with a strong sense of the dignity of his order. Most senators none the less applauded on such occasions, presumably to curry imperial favour. Indeed, the sources tell us that it was dangerous to neglect to do so or even, in some instances, to refuse to participate in such performances.³⁹ Thrasea alone refrained from applauding Nero at his first such appearance in 59 at the Juvenalia, games in the Greek style instituted by Nero himself to celebrate the first occasion on which he had shaved his beard. Dio (Xiphilinus) furnishes the additional information that Thrasea never stooped to oblige Nero in this way.⁴⁰ It was later (A.D.66) brought up against Thrasea that he had lacked respect for Nero's artistry.⁴¹

Suetonius tells us bluntly that it was his disapproving expression which eventually won Thrasea his death - an exaggeration which reflects some truth.⁴²

38. see also Dio/Xiph. LXII.26

39. see a) Tac.Ann.XVI.5, Suet.Nero 23, Vesp.4, Dio/Xiph.LXII.20.iv on the necessity of listening attentively to the emperor's own performances and applauding them, and

b) Tac.Ann.XIV.20,XIV.14 sqq., Dio/Xiph.LXII.17.iii,19, Epict.Disc.I.2.xii sqq. on performances - some enforced - of nobles.

40. Dio/Xiph.LXII.20.iv

41. Tac.Ann.XVI.22,Dio/Xiph. LXII.26.iii.

42. Suet.Nero 37

Tacitus has Thrasea's enemies urge on Nero the danger of his example, not as a political opponent of the emperor so much as a critic of imperial "high life".⁴³

Thus Thrasea had virtually from the beginning of Nero's reign shown his independence in a variety of ways. This had not necessarily brought him into conflict with the emperor, but on occasion his independence had been displayed as a form of protest against some aspect of Nero's rule. Yet Thrasea's career had reached its distinguished peak⁴⁴ in the years following Nero's accession, and Thrasea conscientiously attended meetings of the senate, taking an active part in debates of every kind until his withdrawal from public life in about 63.

That Thrasea gained the consulship and quindecimvirate may indicate that he was at least not out of favour with Nero c.56 A.D. Just as, conversely, it shows that he did not dissociate himself immediately from the Neronian regime. By 58/9, however, Thrasea had established among his contemporaries a reputation for obstructive argument in the senate which they - and, presumably, Nero - interpreted as anti-imperial.⁴⁵ Thrasea's pointed exit from the senate in 59 earned him the emperor's hatred, as did his obvious disgust with performances at the Juvenalia.⁴⁶ His successful

43. Tac. Ann. XVI.22

44. cos. 56, and quindecimvir soon after (Tac. Ann. XVI.16,22)
PIR² 1187, vol. 2

45. Tac. Ann. XIII.49 . See the words of Thrasea's obtrectatores A.D.59: "cur enim, si rem publicam egere libertate senatoria crederet"... and "...cetera per omnis imperii partis perinde egregia quam si non Nero sed Thrasea regimen eorum teneret?"

The assumptions later incorporate in Cossutianus Capito's denunciation A.D.66 reflect the same attitude (Tac. Ann. XVI.22
46. Dio/Xiph. LXII.20.iv, Tac. Ann. XVI.21 (of Nero's attitude to Thrasea and to Barea Soranus):

olim utrisque infensus et accedentibus causis in Thraseam, quod senatu egressus est cum de Agrippina referretur, ut memoravi, quodque Iuvenalium ludicro parum spectabilem operam praebuerat;"

attempt in 63 to mitigate the sentence of the senator Antistius Sossianus also offended Nero⁴⁷, who demonstrated his attitude when senators flocked later in the year to Antium to congratulate the emperor on the birth of his daughter there, and Thrasea alone was expressly forbidden to attend.⁴⁸

Soon afterwards, Nero told Seneca that he and Thrasea were reconciled.⁴⁹ Seneca's influence on Nero was slight at this stage, but there is an intimation that it had been exercised in this case, presumably because Thrasea Paetus and Seneca had in common their allegiance to Stoic philosophy. The reconciliation cannot have been profound. It was at about this time (63) that Thrasea ceased altogether to attend senate meetings. In A.D.65 he was absent from the funeral of the empress Poppaea and the senate meeting at which she was subsequently deified.⁵⁰

5. The Stoic Group on Trial A.D.66

Nero was not a patient man by nature, and his position freed him of many of the usual social requirements for self-control. He was unused to criticism or argument, and Thrasea had exhausted the meagre resources of his forbearance by 66 A.D., the year in which Thrasea was tried and condemned to death by the senate whose privileges he had championed. It is not so surprising that the other senators failed to appreciate his concern, since many of his acts constituted criticism of their own subservience - not to mention the fact that Thrasea's conscientious determination to participate in the most trivial debates must have made senate meetings very tedious until his more welcome gesture of protest in 63, when he ceased to embarrass his colleagues and chose instead to avoid their meetings.

47. Tac.Ann.XIV.49 Nero's letter to the senate makes plain his fury at the decision reached on Thrasea's initiative (..his atque talibus recitatis et offensione manifesta,...)

48. Tac.Ann.XV.23

49. " " " "

50. " " XVI.21,22

Tacitus represents the idea of a trial as emanating from Cossutianus Capito, who had a grudge against Thrasea,⁵¹ and having the support of the emperor's amicus, Eprius Marcellus.⁵² Tacitus' account of Cossutianus Capito's attack on Thrasea is rhetorical, but contains concrete charges which were later incorporated in the formal trial. These were, substantially,

1. his failure, as a consular senator, to attend meetings of the senate for three years A.D.63-66
2. his related failure, as a priest, to attend state religious ceremonies
3. more specifically, his absence from the annual ceremony at which the senate swore its allegiance to the emperor (failure to attend was tantamount to treason and sacrilege at a stroke
4. lack of respect for the imperial family: failure to sacrifice to Nero's welfare and his divine voice (caelestis vox); failure to attend the deification of the emperor's dead wife (absence from the annual oath fell into this category as well, since the oath encompassed the current emperor and the deified emperors of the past)

In sum, the argument ran, Thrasea had behaved in a way unbecoming a loyal citizen, senator and priest.⁵³ The conscious opposition implicit in this neglect is recog-

51. Cossutianus Capito had been governor of Cilicia after his consulship. On his return to Rome in 56 A.D., he had been prosecuted by the Cilicians de rebus repetundis. Thrasea had appeared for the Cilicians, and secured Capito's conviction (Tac. Ann. XIII.33, XVI.21). He lost his senatorial rank as a result but had by A.D.62 been restored to the senate on the recommendation of Nero's adviser and praetorian prefect, Ofonius Tigellinus (see Crook, Consilium Principis, 240)

52. T. Clodius Eprius Marcellus was an amicus of both Nero and Vespasian (Tac. Dial. 8, H. IV. 7-8). He was consul for the second time in A.D. 74, and soon after was appointed by Vespasian to set the affairs of Asia in order. He was finally executed in 79 for his alleged part in a conspiracy against Vespasian. See Crook, Consilium Principis, 139 and PIR² E84.

53. Tac. Ann. XVI.28. The prosecutors said "requireretur se in senatu consularem, in votis sacerdotem, in iure iurando civem,."

nized by Thrasea's accusers, who can thereby establish their case for his treasonable character. He has, they say, created an opposition party within the state and party politics (partes) must by definition be seditious within an autocratic commonwealth:

secessionem id et partis et, si idem multi
audeant, bellum esse.⁵⁴

Dio's account gives a more concise version of the same charges.⁵⁵ Both authors mention that Thrasea scorned Nero's dramatic performances and those of other senators, although he had himself appeared in a dramatic production at his native Patavium. This was the only accusation which amounted to simple (that is, not political) offence to the emperor. All others were reducible to the fundamental charge of failure of civic duty. Even failure to sacrifice to the emperor's health and voice was in some sense a responsibility to the state. Neglect of this convention was a 'public' insult to the emperor as an institution, analogous to Thrasea's absence from the senate on the occasion of Poppaea's deification.

Cossutianus Capito raised the possibility of political repercussions from Thrasea's behaviour, but was forced to admit that thus far his influence had been exercised only in the moral sphere. Thrasea, he said, was the head of an identifiable group which imitated his censorious manner and sober garb, in itself a criticism of Nero.⁵⁶ Capito concedes that its members have not yet shown signs of following Thrasea's political example, but with magnificent rhetorical ex-

54. Tac. Ann. XVI.22

55. Dio/Xiph. LXI.26.iii

56. Tac. Ann. XVI.22: et habet sectatores vel potius satellites, qui nondum contumaciam sententiarum, sed habitum vultumque eius sectantur, rigidi et tristes, quo tibi lasciviam exprobrent.

travagance he conjures up the image of a new conflict reminiscent of that in the late Republic, with the state riven in two factions.

The concept was ludicrous. The 'party' of which Capito spoke did in fact exist. It consisted of several men of equestrian or senatorial rank, many of them in the junior stages of active political careers, who clustered about Thrasea, some women attached to certain of these men by marriage or kinship and some philosophers. Their common link was their espousal of the Stoic philosophy (ista secta). They were not the only distinguished Romans to disapprove of Nero's immorality and autocratic manner, but they were the only ones who made their feelings obvious. If not yet speaking up in the senate or dramatically withdrawing from that body like Thrasea Paetus, they none the less singled themselves out by their dress and demeanour.

That they were a definable group is indicated, first, by Capito's words;⁵⁷ second, by the fact that they were charged and tried in the senate at the same time and, third, by the determined attempt in A.D.69-70 of the surviving members of the group to avenge the ones who had been killed.⁵⁸ The group's members took their friendship seriously, and observed the ties of loyalty to each other to a great degree. Such

57. Tac. Ann. XVI.22 (quoted in part in n.56)

There are factual elements in Capito's denunciation - the clothing of the people involved, and his admission of their actual (as against their potential) political innocence. These make it unwise summarily to dismiss his assumption that there was a group of which Thrasea was the dux et auctor, especially since the assumption is never challenged in the sources. The following chapters, describing Thrasea's consultations with his intimates, serve to strengthen the allegations.

58. See chapter 3

ties were significant in Roman society, especially senatorial society, in which one's standing in legal trials, the senate and court life were dependent to an extent on one's connexions. The links within the Stoic group were sometimes cemented by marriage. The most famous example of this is the marriage between Fannia, daughter of Thrasea Paetus, and Helvidius Priscus, who had shown early signs of his distinctive qualities.⁵⁹ As time went on and the group suffered repeated persecutions, the bonds which had originally united them were made the stronger by common hardship, and the confidence - which they shared - that they endured their tribulations for the sake of what was right. Increasingly seeking out each other's company and in some cases shunning the diversions popular with the more frivolous members of their class,⁶⁰ the members of the group formed in effect a small society of their own. This made it a simple matter for the imperial regime to distinguish them when Thrasea's behaviour attracted its notice.

It was true, then, that there was a recognizable group with Thrasea at its centre. It was probably true that the members of the group supported the stands which Thrasea had taken on certain issues. Perhaps it was even true that there was a danger that some would imitate Thrasea's fearless behaviour. To suggest, however, that the group could possibly constitute a revolutionary party was extreme. Even Thrasea had continued his political career for some time during Nero's rule, and his most radical move had been to ignore senate meetings. This could be damaging to Nero's prestige. It did not threaten his personal safety or his position on the throne.

59. and was therefore chosen as Thrasea's son-in-law in spite of the fact that he had just begun his senatorial career Tac.H.IV. 5-6.

60. as is suggested by the characterization of them as dull and inflexible Tac. Ann. XVI. 22

Nevertheless, a number of people were tried in the senate at this time (66 A.D.) on a charge de maiestate minuta. Those accused were principally Thrasea himself - who did not appear to defend himself against the charges already recounted - and the consular Barea Soranus, who was charged together with his daughter Servilia. Soranus had been a friend of the Stoic Rubellius Plautus - dangerous in itself - and had held a proconsulship in Asia some time after 53 A.D. He was accused of cultivating popularity in the province with a view to gathering support for a revolt. These things had long been said against him (vetera haec). His service in Asia might not have coincided with Plautus' exile in the region (although I maintain that it did so), but the fact that they had been friends and that Soranus built up a personal following in a region in which Plautus had so much influence counted against him.

His daughter Servilia was the widow of Annius Pollio, who had been exiled as a result of his part in the Pisonian conspiracy of the previous year (65 A.D.).⁶¹ She was charged with having consulted astrologers concerning her father's future and that of the emperor. This constituted treason.

Soranus, like Rubellius Plautus, kept a philosopher permanently in his retinue. The Stoic P.Egnatius Celer

61. Tac.Ann. XVI.30

62. P.Egnatius Celer PIR² p.19. See also the prosopographical index. He was a Stoic philosopher from Berytus (Dio LXII.26); a client of Soranus (Tac.Ann.XVI.32, H.IV.10,40 sqq; schol.ad Iuv.Sat.III.116-118). He was rewarded for his part in Soranus' conviction (Dio LXII.26.ii; Tac.Ann.XVI.32). He was later charged with perjury under Vespasian (Tac.H.IV.10,40 sqq). He was tried and convicted by the senate.

Tacitus tells us that by A.D.70 Soranus' memory was revered, while Egnatius Celer was regarded by senators with disdain as a hypocrite and perjurer (Tac.H.IV.40). His treachery became almost proverbial - witness Juvenal's attitude.

of Berytus, had been with him during his proconsulship in Asia and is termed his "friend" and "teacher".⁶³ Such an attachment with a professional philosopher at Soranus' stage in life bespeaks a serious interest in the particular philosophy. That Soranus was a Stoic can be taken as reasonably certain. His friendship with Rubellius Plautus and Plautus' former teacher, Musonius Rufus, bears this out, as does his connexion with the whole Stoic group as it was constituted at this time. Perhaps the strongest piece of evidence for Barea Soranus' membership of the group is the fact that he was identified by the ruling regime as a member of ista secta - to the extent that he was tried with other members of the group, and that the group itself accepted this identification in later avenging his memory.⁶⁴

Servilia, Thrasea Paetus and Barea Soranus were duly convicted and condemned to death. The other three charged at the same time - Curtius Montanus, Paconius Agrippinus and Helvidius Priscus - were also convicted but received lesser penalties. At least two of these men, together with others not charged at this time, were to form the nucleus of the new Stoic group under the next regime, retaining ties of loyalty to each other and to those who had perished, and acting to some extent in concert, using the senate as a forum for their views.

63. Tac. Ann. XVI.32 cliens hic Sorani et tunc emptus ad opprimendum amicum ..

Tac. H. IV. proditor corruptorque amicitiae cuius se magistrum ferebat.

Schol. ad Iuv. III.116-8 cliens Bareae Sorani et amicus, ... magister Sorani ..

64. see chapter 3.

Curtius Montanus⁶⁵ was accused with the others, his detestanda carmina being held up as examples of his dangerous tendencies. He is grouped by the prosecutors Cossutianus Capito and Eprius Marcellus with the other young followers of Thrasea Paetus. The assumption is that these were the young men who followed Thrasea's philosophy and imitated his disapproving ways.

Paconius Agrippinus⁶⁶ was also one of the group. Tacitus holds that it was merely his father's execution under Tiberius which caused him to be singled out for punishment, but this is unlikely. There must have been many people with similar family histories by this time, and Tiberius' memory had no sentimental claim on Nero. Paconius Agrippinus is cited - together with Helvidius Priscus and Thrasea Paetus - by the philosopher Epictetus as an example of moral philosophic (that is, Stoic) thinking,⁶⁷ so legitimately, from the imperial standpoint, earned his place in the group trial.

Helvidius Priscus⁶⁸ was the son-in-law of Thrasea Paetus. He had devoted himself to the study of philosophy from an early stage, and had been chosen by Thrasea to be his son-in-law for his exceptional moral qualities.⁶⁹ Helvidius Priscus was emphatically a member of the Stoic group, and virtually "inherited" its leadership after his father-in-law's death. The charges against him were vague. He was accused of sharing Thrasea's furores. The fierce independence he later displayed justified the charge in retrospect, but there is no indication that he had engaged in any specific activity to warrant the accusation prior to the trial, either in senatorial debate or in any marked avoidance of senate meetings or public festivals.

65. see prosopographical index

66. " " "

67. Epict. Disc. I. 2. xii

68. see prosopographical index

69. Tac. H. IV. 5-6

The influential Eprius Marcellus employed all the devices of his vigorous rhetorical style in attacking the six people charged with treason. This trial is an interesting show-piece of the manifold acts and attitudes which could now be encompassed in charges de maiestate minuta.⁷⁰ Barea Soranus alone was accused of a concrete attempt to foster physical revolution. His daughter Servilia was suspect because she had consulted astrologers concerning her father's future. Thrasea was arraigned because he had neglected his senatorial "duties", because he had indirectly criticized Ner's personal morality, and because his actions attracted notice and encouraged his young followers.

Of the three younger men, only Curtius Montanus had a specific charge brought against him. He had written critical verses - presumably about Nero and/or the senate. Otherwise, Helvidius Priscus and Paconius Agrippinus were condemned virtually by association with Thrasea, or for their (postulated) attitudes. All were convicted. Thrasea, Soranus and Servilia were condemned to death. Paconius Agrippinus and Helvidius Priscus were expelled from Italy, while in deference to his father's reputation Curtius Montanus was allowed to remain in Rome, but forbidden to take part in public life. The accusers had suggested that Thrasea's young supporters might imitate his extreme political "action" - that is, withdrawal from political activity. Curtius Montanus was now condemned to this course as a punishment.

70. Tacitus does not state that the charges were de maiestate minuta. This is consistent with his practice elsewhere. Sentences of death or exile were not commonly passed on senators other than in cases de repetundis or de maiestate minuta. These were also the cases most commonly tried in the senate. In the Dio (Xiph.) epitome LXII.26, the cases are sandwiched between those of people executed for complicity in the Pisonian conspiracy and the extreme charges de maiestate minuta under Nero. Suetonius also groups Thrasea's case with these extreme examples.

Dio tells us (Dio/Zon. LXIII.3.iv^C) that Galba restored those exiled on treason charges under Nero. Helvidius Priscus and Curtius Montanus were restored at that time (see chapter 3 for their political involvement).

No more is heard of the group as such for the remainder of Nero's rule. It had been undermined by the sentences passed in 66. Presumably this was the object which Nero and the prosecutors had hoped to achieve. Yet the trials had not been comprehensive, for there were some people not included in them who were probably members of the Stoic group and were later, in many cases, to suffer the same fate as Thrasea Paetus.

Q. Iunius Arulenus Rusticus⁷¹ was plebeian tribune in 66 and offered to interpose his veto to quash the senatorial judgment against Thrasea. Thrasea dismissed the suggestion, arguing that his own career had run its course, while Rusticus' career was just beginning. Such an act would only endanger him, while failing to save Thrasea himself. Rusticus' attendance at the consilium proximorum⁷² which Thrasea consulted prior to his trial argues for his inclusion in the group of Thrasea's sectatores vel potius satellites,⁷³ who made up the Stoic group. His membership in it is confirmed by his later condemnation under Domitian with other admirers of Thrasea Paetus - which was in turn linked with the expulsion of philosophers from Rome.⁷⁴ Rusticus' adherence to Stoicism is attested by the sneer of an enemy.⁷⁵

71. see prosopographical index.

72. Tac. Ann. XVI. 25 tum Thrasea inter proximos consultavit, ..
26 aderat consilio Rusticus Arulenus

73. Tac. Ann. XVI. 22

74. Tag. Ag. 2, Suet. Dom. 10.iii: Rusticus had written a biography of Thrasea Paetus, calling him "sanctus"

Dio/Xiph. LXVII.13 adds that he was charged with being a philosopher.

75. Pl. Ep. I.5 Aquilius Regulus, an enemy of the Stoic group, published a speech in quo Rusticum insectatur atque etiam 'Stoicorum simiam' adpellat.

Arulenus Rusticus had, however, escaped punishment in 66. Despite his horror at Thrasea's sentence he continued his political career, and attained the praetorship in A.D.69 under Galba and Vitellius.⁷⁶ His brother Iunius Mauricus is not mentioned in the account of the trials, although he had become a member of the senate by 69 and joined with other surviving members of the group to avenge the memory of those executed under Nero⁷⁷. He was exiled under Domitian at a time when members of the later Stoic group were persecuted, and his name is linked by Tacitus with those of others who were almost certainly part of the Flavian "Stoic opposition".⁷⁸

There were also women attached to the group. It is not self-evident that the wife of a Stoic and/or political dissident should herself be a Stoic or even sympathize with her husband's view. There are, however, the instances of Arria the Younger and Fannia, wives of Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus respectively, who supported their husbands to the end and carried on their work after their deaths. They were as capable of courage as their menfolk and showed the same strength of moral purpose.⁷⁹ Arria's own mother had been an exceptional woman⁸⁰ and she must have been brought up in a special tradition, which she then passed on to her own daughter Fannia.

76. Tac.H.III.80

77. Tac.H.IV. 40

78. See Tac.Ag.45, where he is linked with Rusticus and others. Similarly in Pl.Ep. III.xi

79. See especially Tac.Ann.XVI.34, Pl.Ep. VII.19

80. The legendary tale of her calm courage and loyalty is told by Pliny Ep.III.16

It is possible that there were others attached to the group, if only peripherally. The Cynic philosopher Demetrius was present with Thrasea Paetus at the time of his trial.⁸¹ P. Egnatius Celer, the Stoic philosopher from Berytus, was intimately connected with Barea Soranus. The poet Persius, educated like Lucan by the Stoic teacher Annaeus Cornutus, became a familiar of Thrasea Paetus and accompanied him on his trips abroad.⁸² He must have participated in the group's non-political activities, such as philosophical discussion, and shared with them a disgust with the morals of Nero's time. It is possible that there were other people associated with the group by ties of patronage and discipleship or simple friendship. The sources concentrate on the male senatorial members of the group - as did the government - but in reality it probably had a non-political existence wider than this would suggest.

The Stoic group had formed during Nero's rule and was probably a loose association of people held together by a common dislike of Nero's personal, political and artistic behaviour and by a common attraction to Stoicism. At a time of extravagance they marked themselves out from their fellows by their sobriety. This may have been or become linked with their philosophical interests.

There is no reason to suppose that their political ideas were drawn from their philosophy, which was sympathetic to monarchy as a form of government. It is unlikely that the group was Republican, in the strict sense of opposing the principate altogether. Thrasea

81. Tac. Ann. XVI. 33

82. Suet. Vita Persii

Paetus and Barea Soranus had attained high office under the principate - the highest offices being held during Nero's own rule. Thrasea Paetus expected his younger follower Arulenus Rusticus to continue his senatorial career. Musonius Rufus entered the senate soon after his return from exile in 69, while Helvidius Priscus was elected almost immediately to the praetorship for the following year (70).

It is difficult to reconstruct the character of the group. It was not a political party, yet there were certain values, held in common by its members, which could result at times in coordinated political action. This had not happened by 66 A.D., as the emptiness of the charges brought against members of the group demonstrates. Thrasea Paetus and Curtius Montanus were the only defendants of the trials of 66 to be accused of specific acts of "opposition" with any factual basis.

Philosophy must have provided a bond for the members of the group, but the fundamental assumptions of their morality - such as the importance of senatorial dignity, the dislike of Greek games, the avoidance of participation in public dramatic performances - came from their Roman upbringing, and were merely strengthened by philosophic rationalization. This is reflected in the variety of issues which inspired Thrasea's outspokenness in the senate. Some of the issues were compatible with Stoic thinking, but most reflected the attitude of a conservative Roman senator, rather than a philosopher.

Thrasea was the leader in some sense of the Stoic group,⁸³ and he became its hero after his death.⁸⁴

After Nero's assassination in 68, the exiled members of the group returned to Rome to resume their political

83. His detractors assume this Tac.Ann.XVI.22. It is confirmed by the attitude displayed by other members of the group Ann. XVI.25-5 and the fact that his behaviour had been more striking than that of the others.

84. Witness Helvidius Priscus' determined attempt in 69/70 to destroy Thrasea's prosecutors (chapter 3, #2, Tac.H.IV.6 - 8, 43) and the biography which Arulenus Rusticus composed under Domitian Suet.Dom.10, Tac.Ag.2, Dio/Xiph.LXVII.13.ii

careers and avenge their dead comrades. They took up the practice established by Thrasea of qualified protest in the senate. Throughout the year 69 and in the more stable period which followed the members of the group drew attention to themselves by their attitudes and behaviour. Nero's reign had heralded the formation of a recognizable "Stoic opposition", but his death and replacement by a more temperate emperor did not cause the group to disband or to lapse into silence.

.....

CHAPTER 3

HELVIDIUS PRISCUS AND OTHERS: STOIC
ACTIVITY AND OPPOSITION A.D. 69-81

1. The Stoic Group Under the New Regime

In June, 68, Nero was declared a public enemy and condemned to death by the senate. He anticipated his execution with less steadfastness than many of his own victims had displayed.¹ He was succeeded by Galba, who had gained his position essentially by force but enjoyed the favour of the senate.² His rule was brief, but he had time to recall a number of people exiled under Nero for treason.³ This included members of the Stoic group. These people immediately established themselves in the Roman political context, showing an energy which proved them undaunted by their experiences at Nero's hands.

By the end of 69 Galba, Vitellius and Vespasian had all enjoyed imperial status. Vespasian alone survived the year. For a time he ruled in absentia from Syria and Egypt, while his elder son Titus directed operations against the rebels in nearby Judaea. His commanders, Antonius Primus⁴ and Licinius Mucianus⁵,

 1. Suet.Nero 49, Dio/Xiph.LXIII.29.ii

2. Galba was very much a "senator's emperor". Dio/Zon.LXIII.29.vi, Suet.Galba 11. See also Suet.Galba 23, Tac.H.IV.40 for honours voted him by the senate after his death.

3. Dio/Zon.LXIII.3.iv^c

4. M.Antonius Primus. He was an amicus of Vespasian Tac.H.IV.80, PIR², A866. He and Mucianus were the chief commanders of the Flavian army. After the victory, there was a power struggle between them, which was won by Mucianus.

5. C.Licinius Mucianus PIR¹ L147, RE Licinius 116a (Kappelmacher): governor of Syria by 68 A.D. He eventually joined forces with Vespasian. After the Flavian victory he was voted diverse honours by the senate of 69 Tac.H.IV.2,4. He was cos.II suff.72. He continued to be one of Vespasian's amici until his own death c. 75-78.

had won the civil war for his party in Italy. Mucianus now proceeded to take in hand the task of peaceful government on his behalf at Rome, in conjunction with Vespasian's younger son, Domitian.⁶

The new regime seems to have been acceptable in essence to the senatorial class. The sources are unanimous in their praise of Vespasian, criticizing him only for incidental qualities such as his miserliness.⁷ He is represented as a just, dignified and capable ruler, with a proper regard for the senatorial order, the antithesis of the portrait of Nero. Vespasian executed few senators during his reign, and the laws de maiestate minuta fell once more into disuse.⁸ Conspiracies were dealt with as they occurred⁹, but Vespasian was not prey to unreasonable anxiety on this count. Prominence was no longer intrinsically suspect.¹⁰ Even criticism of the emperor was tolerated to a degree unknown under the previous ruler.¹¹

The Stoic group demonstrated its resilience during the turbulent period 68-70. Its exiled members were restored in 68¹² and lost no time in immersing themselves in political life, regardless of the change of rulers. They soon demonstrated their determination to

6. Tac.H.IV.3, Dio/Xiph.LXV.2. Mucianus had the right to add the emperor's name to official documents and to affix the imperial seal to any which required it, without first consulting Vespasian.

7. For his closeness with money see Dio/Xiph.LXV.14, and Suet.Vesp.16 sola est, in qua merito culpetur, pecuniae cupiditas.

The overwhelmingly favourable portrait of Vespasian can be seen in any of the major sources: Tac.H., especially book IV, Suet. Vesp, Dio LXV, and even Philostratus, Ap.Ty.passim.

8. Dio/Xiph.LXV.9

9. Suet.Vesp.25 tells us that there were many.

10. The only case of a prominent man's being killed for no crime save his distinction is that of Calpurnius Galerianus Piso Tac.H. IV.11. It was not typical, however, and occurred during the period of Mucianus' control at Rome. Contrast this with Vespasian's tolerance of Mettius Pompusianus, who was reputed to be destined for imperial elevation and was honoured by Vespasian Suet.Vesp.14.

11. Suet.Vesp.13 amicorum libertatem, causidicorum figuras, ac philosophorum contumaciam lenissime tulit.

Also Dio/Xiph.LXV.11.i

12. see n.3

uphold their moral standards, if necessary, by means of joint political action. Thrasea Paetus' son-in-law Helvidius Priscus, who was already praetor designate by the time of Vitellius' rule (about February to August 69)¹³, soon emerged as the new leader of the group and as more outspoken than Thrasea himself had ever been.

The other members of the group were not as audacious as Priscus, but by their actions in the senate 69-70 they demonstrated their willingness to act as a group and to risk the enmity of some of their fellow-senators in doing so. Both their involvement with their political careers and their attempts to achieve their ends through the senate testify to their de facto acceptance of the imperial system and their belief that justice could be achieved within its framework. They behaved like zealous reformers who had no fundamental objections to the political system within which they had agreed to work.

The people who made up the Stoic group during the Flavian rule (69-96) were chiefly the same ones who had followed Thrasea Paetus under Nero.¹⁴ Iunius Arulenus Rusticus, who had been plebeian tribune in 66 when Thrasea Paetus was condemned by the senate,¹⁵ was a praetor by 69.¹⁶ His brother, Iunius Mauricus, was a senator by January 70.¹⁷ Nothing is known of his career prior to this. He may have been a senator for some time, or acquired this status recently.

13. Tac. H. II. 91

14. See chapter 2, #5

15. Tac. Ann. XVI. 26, and chapter 2, #5

16. Tac. H. III. 80

17. Tac. H. IV. 40

Paconius Agrippinus, who had been tried in 66 at the same time as Thrasea and sentenced to exile - as discussed in the previous chapter - probably returned to Rome under Galba, but nothing is heard of him. His co-defendant Curtius Montanus, barred from political life since 66, was once more free to participate in the senate's activities, and his uncompromising tones were to be heard in the curia in January, 70.¹⁸ Musonius Rufus, the Stoic philosopher who had been exiled in 65 after the exposure of the conspiracy of Piso had returned to Rome and apparently entered the senate by the end of 69.¹⁹

The members of the Stoic group were thus able to muster some support within the senate by the end of 69. The standing of the group must have been high by virtue of the high offices held by at least some of its members. It is interesting that Helvidius Priscus must have been elected to the praetorship soon after his return from exile.²⁰ He must have been regarded favourably by some senators to have achieved this after an absence from Rome's political life. It would, therefore, have been in a spirit of confidence that he proposed under Galba to prosecute Eprius Marcellus, whose eloquent participation in the prosecution of Thrasea Paetus in 66 has already been noted. In the face of the divisions which his suggestion caused in the senate and Galba's concomitant dismay, Helvidius Priscus temporarily abandoned the project,²¹ but he had shown that his spirit had not been crushed by his exile.

18. Tac.H.IV.40,42

19. In 69 Musonius Rufus served as an ambassador from the Vitellian senate to the Flavian armies. He was then still an equestrian (Tac.H. III.81), but his part in a senatorial trial later in the same year (see #2 of this chapter) makes it all but certain that he had in the meantime been elected to an office which gained him admission to the senate Tac.H.IV.10,40

20. He had returned under Galba in 68 and was praetor designate by the first half of 69 (Vitellius' rule) Tac.H. II.91.

21. Tac.H.IV.6

During Vitellius' rule, Helvidius Priscus chose to confront the emperor in a way which even Thrasea Paetus might have hesitated to attempt. During a senate meeting which Vitellius attended²² and at which he had expressed an opinion on some unknown subject, Helvidius Priscus rose to disagree with the imperial view. Inclined at first to punish Priscus' presumption, Vitellius eventually contented himself with saying that it was a matter of no great moment that two senators should be at variance.²³ He was thus forced to admit the constitutional principle that as emperor he was merely primus inter pares within the senate, and that his position entailed no autocratic privileges within that body.

In this, Helvidius Priscus showed himself truly Thrasea Paetus' successor. He had championed the ideal of senatorial independence, and he had fought the battle with the proper degree of obliqueness. Vitellius' assertion *nihil novi accidisse ... quod duo senatores in re publica dissentirent*, was as insincere as Nero's statement in 62 that the senate was free to decide as it wished in the case of Antistius Sosianus, who had insulted the emperor, but was saved by Thrasea Paetus' eloquence from execution.²⁴ Both emperors had been compelled to pay lip service in public to the constitutional principle which Thrasea and Helvidius Priscus held equally dear - the senate's right to free debate.

22. Vitellius made a point of attending senate meetings (Tac.H.II.91), presumably to ingratiate himself with the senators.

23. The incident is recounted by Dio (Exc.Val.LXIV.7.ii) and Tacitus (H.II.91).

24. Tac.Ann.XIV.49. See discussion chapter 1, #4.

Priscus gave a similar display of independence early in Vespasian's reign. In 69, when each member of the senate rose to congratulate the new emperor on his accession, vying with each other in flattery, Priscus offered his felicitations with marked restraint. This could equally be taken as a deliberate insult to Vespasian or as a tribute to his reason.²⁵

Helvidius Priscus continued to be unusually outspoken throughout the early years of Vespasian's reign. He was often alone in his forthrightness. He also chose on occasion to act together with other members of the Stoic group - both courses were apparently acceptable to the others. Under Nero, most members of the group had been identified by their behaviour outside the senate.²⁶ In Vespasian's Rome, however, there were no extravagant dinner parties at court or public displays of senatorial and equestrian degradation at the arena or the theatre, at which a conscientious Stoic could demonstrate his conspicuous disdain. The senate became the chief public vehicle through which the Stoic group might express itself.

25. Tacitus seems to take it as meaning the latter

(sc. Helvidius Priscus) ... prompsit sententiam ut honorificam in bonum principem, * * falsa aberant, et studiis senatus attollebatur (O.U.P. text, ed.C.D.Fisher), but there is a difficulty with the text.

It is interesting to compare the sentiments Pliny expresses Ep.VI.27. In speaking of his own experience as consul designate, he claims that he felt himself to be free of the necessity of praising Trajan excessively because (unlike Domitian, the implication runs) Trajan did not expect such insincerity. Pliny says that his own compliments were therefore freely offered, and therefore more valuable, than exaggerated ones might have been

26. One recalls the words of Thrasea Paetus' accuser, Cossutianus Capito, in 66 A.D., that Thrasea's followers did not imitate his "outspokenness" in the senate, "sed habitum vultumque eius sectantur, rigidi et tristes, quo tibi lasciviam exprobrebant" Tac.Ann.XVI.22. In Tac.Ann.XIV.16 we are told that it amused Nero to invite to his banquets teachers of philosophy, "nec deerant qui ore vultuque tristi inter oblectamenta regia spectari cuperent." These may not have been connected with the Stoic group, but the point is made that philosophers generally were distinguished on festive occasions by their sober mien.

2. Stoic Reprisals A.D. 69-70

In 69-70 the members of the group were united by the common desire to punish the delatores and accusatores who had profited under Nero from the ruin of nobles and, in particular, of Stoics such as Thrasea Paetus and Barea Soranus. Several members of the Stoic group - Helvidius Priscus, Musonius Rufus, Curtius Montanus and Iunius Mauricus are mentioned by name - mounted a campaign in the senate on related fronts to achieve the downfall of their enemies.

Helvidius Priscus launched the campaign in a fairly mild way by proposing that the envoys to be sent to offer official congratulations to Vespasian (who was then in Egypt A.D.69) on his accession should be elected by the senate rather than appointed by lot, in the usual fashion.²⁷ His proposal was directed specifically against Eprius Marcellus, whose activities as a prosecutor under Nero had earned the dislike of many senators. Helvidius Priscus was bent on revenge for the part Eprius Marcellus had played in securing Thrasea Paetus' conviction in 66.²⁸ Marcellus was a distinguished consular. If he were excluded by vote from this official party, it would be a public rebuff. Priscus hoped for such a result, in order both to humiliate Eprius Marcellus and to gauge senatorial opinion concerning the prosecutors. Eprius Marcellus understood and opposed the suggestion. The two men engaged in personal debate. The discussion became heated and inimical. In the end, the senate rejected Priscus' proposal and determined to choose the envoys by lot.

 27. Tac. H. IV. 6-8

28. Tac. Ann. XVI. 33: Eprius Marcellus gained some part of Thrasea Paetus' confiscated estate after the trial in 66. Helvidius Priscus had already raised the subject of prosecuting Marcellus under Galba in 68-9 (see p.57).

Priscus' subsequent action was not related to the attack on the accusatores, but to the retention of senatorial power. It therefore falls more readily into the category of "opposition" of the type which Thrasea had offered Nero. The praetores aerarii - officials selected by the senate to supervise the treasury - had become alarmed at the diminution of public funds. They had therefore proposed that a limit be placed on public expenditure. The consul instantly stated that such a matter must be referred to the new emperor. Helvidius Priscus objected, claiming that such a decision fell into the senate's province. The consuls were then asked their "opinions", in accordance with senatorial procedure. At this juncture, the tribune Vulcaci^{us} Tertullinus intervened with his veto, "ne quid super tanta re principe absente statueretur".²⁹

As Ms. A.C.Edvi-Illes has pointed out³⁰, the incident reveals that "at an early stage the senate had become accustomed to following the emperor's lead on any important financial question." It was characteristic that both Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus should oppose such a trend, even when it was accepted by so many of their colleagues. Notwithstanding, a board of senators appointed by lot was set up in the following year, 70. It was an ad hoc body, and one of its specified functions was to limit senatorial expenditure. This represents a minor victory for Helvidius in his struggle to

29. Tac.H.IV.9

30. in her unpublished doctoral thesis, The Fiscus and the Imperial Administration of Public Finance from Augustus to Trajan, Australian National University, 1972

keep such powers within the senate. The decision, however, was made only after Domitian and Mucianus had arrived in Rome,³¹ and could speak for Vespasian. The initiative was not the senate's.

Priscus had also proposed that the temple of Capitoline Jove should be restored at public expense, with the assistance of the emperor. The suggestion was ignored.³² The question was a delicate one. Earlier in the year, when Vitellius was still in power, the Flavian party had taken refuge in the temple. In the ensuing siege a fire had been started and burned down the sacred building. It is moot whether the fire was started by the Vitellians or the Flavians, but Tacitus says that in his day the crebrior fama had it that it was the Flavians. The Flavian commander Quintus Atticus had publicly accepted responsibility for the deed.³³ Helvidius Priscus doubtless intended his suggestion to be seen in the same light as his other economic proposal - a staunch defence of the remaining rights, as he saw them, of the senate. None the less, the proposal could have been taken by Vespasian as a consciously offensive reference to Flavian impiety. This was the second time that Priscus had expressed himself in an equivocal way³⁴ since Vespasian had become emperor. If Priscus' behaviour were to be reported to the emperor (who was still in the East), it could well make an unfavourable impression on him, according to the bias of the person or persons who reported it.

31. Tac.H.IV.40 . See pp.54-5. Domitian was Vespasian's younger son. He enjoyed the title of Caesar (H.IV.2), the praetorship and the consular imperium (IV.3), but the real power rested with Mucianus (n.5 of this chapter).

32. Tac.H.IV.40

33. albeit under duress Tac.H.III.71-5

34. cf. his reserved/?unenthusiastic congratulations to Vespasian earlier Tac.H.IV. (see p.59 and note).

It was the philosopher Musonius Rufus who spoke next. He proposed that a prosecution be launched in the senate against P. Egnatius Celer who, as we have seen,³⁵ had in 66 A.D. testified against Thræsea Paetus' fellow-defendant and member of the Stoic group, Barea Soranus. In giving false testimony concerning the alleged treason of Barea Soranus, Egnatius Celer had betrayed the ties which had bound him to Soranus, who was at the same time his patron, disciple and friend.³⁶ To compound the disgrace, this man dared profess himself a Stoic philosopher, an outrage to the philosopher Musonius Rufus, who had also, apparently, been a friend of Barea Soranus.³⁷

Under Nero, Egnatius Celer had been rewarded for his treachery,³⁸ but times had changed. After his official acknowledgement as emperor, Vespasian had sent letters from Egypt to Rome in which he exonerated all those, alive or dead, who had been convicted of treason under Nero.³⁹ Soranus was included in their number. His vindication implied Egnatius Celer's perjury. The senate was sympathetic to the resultant charge brought by Musonius Rufus. A client who testified against his patron was an object of distaste to any senator. A trial was scheduled for the next meeting of the senate.

35. chapter 2, #5

36. see chapter 2, n.63

37. Musonius Rufus had accompanied the Stoic Rubellius Plautus to Asia c. A.D. 59-62 (see chapter 2, #2). During that period, Barea Soranus had gone to the province as proconsul and he and Rubellius Plautus had associated with each other. Barea Soranus' entourage included Egnatius Celer at the time. The association with Rubellius Plautus counted against Barea Soranus at his trial in 66 A.D. (see chapter 2, #5). Both Rubellius Plautus and Barea Soranus were almost certainly members of Thræsea Paetus' Stoic group.

38. Tac. Ann. XVI.32, Dio/Xiph. 26.ii, schol. ad. Iuv. Sat. I.33

39. Dio/Xiph. LXV.9

It is reasonable to assume that Musonius Rufus' proposal was part of a general plan formulated by the members of the Stoic group. Egnatius Celer's condemnation was sought partly for its own sake, it is true, but it was not only to appease Barea Soranus' shade. Other senators recognized that it was related to Helvidius Priscus' earlier attacks on Eprius Marcellus:

nec tam Musonius aut Publius quam Priscus
et Marcellus ceterique, motis ad ultionem
animis, expectabantur.⁴⁰

That is, it was seen as a test case. If Egnatius Celer were condemned by the senate, this would leave open the way for a series of attacks on Neronian prosecutors, notably Eprius Marcellus.

Before the scheduled meeting of the senate at which Egnatius Celer was to be tried, Vespasian's minister - Mucianus -, and son - Domitian - entered Rome. Mucianus immediately appropriated the trappings of imperial power, and its substance, while eschewing the title.⁴¹ The senate met early in January, 70. Musonius Rufus proceeded with the prosecution of Egnatius Celer, and secured his conviction. This raised the hopes of those senators seeking vengeance:

signo ultionis in accusatores dato.⁴²

Accordingly, the senator Iunius Mauricus, a member of the Stoic group, asked Domitian to give the senate access to imperial secret records from earlier reigns,

40. For Priscus' earlier attacks on Eprius Marcellus, see pp.57,60

41. Tac.H.IV.11 nec deerat ipse, ..., apparatu incessu excubiis vim principis amplecti, nomen remittere. See also nn.6,35 of this chapter

42. Tac.H.IV.40

to facilitate the prosecution of people who had conducted unjust trials in recent years. Domitian gave the stock reply of the parliamentary stand-in throughout the ages - he could not decide such an important matter himself; it was necessary to refer it to the princeps. No more is heard of the request. If only the Stoic group had reflected, the discreet way in which the request was ignored should have indicated that the new regime would not necessarily favour a full-scale revival of old enmities.

It was then decided that all magistrates should be required to swear on oath that they had not contributed to or profited from the ruin of any fellow-citizen. The people who proposed this measure are referred to by Tacitus simply as primores.⁴⁴ It is tempting to assume that they were part of the Stoic group: every other person mentioned in these chapters concerning the ultio in accusatores is connected with the group. In any case, the fact that the proposal was accepted by the senate indicates that the idea of punishing Neronian prosecutors appealed to many senators outside the group. The object of the exercise was to embarrass some of the prosecutors who now held office, for some of them, known to have been professional informers, were thus obliged to perjure themselves in public. Three such men incurred the wrath of the house for doing so, and senators made no secret of their attitude to these perjurers.⁴⁵

43. Tac.H.IV.40

44. Tac.H.IV.41

45. " " " " .

Feelings were running high by this time, and the Stoic group, realizing this, became more ambitious. Curtius Montanus - one of the senators convicted with Thrasea Paetus in 66 A.D. for treason - vigorously attacked M. Aquilius Regulus,⁴⁶ a prosecutor who had gained his fortune under Nero by prosecuting distinguished people. Regulus' younger brother defended him. Curtius Montanus' attack was received favourably, and this caused Helvidius Priscus to hope that even that most influential of prosecutors, Eprius Marcellus might be vulnerable. Helvidius Priscus therefore embarked on a speech in ostensibly general terms. It soon became evident that it was in reality a specific attack on Eprius Marcellus. Passions were aroused within the senate ("ardentibus patrum animis"). Becoming aware of this, Eprius Marcellus answered Priscus not with a coherent defence but with a personal jibe. He then left the senate, followed by some of his supporters. The debate raged after he had gone:

consumptus per discordiam dies.⁴⁷

Domitian opened the next session of the senate with a speech concerning the desirability of laying aside animosities from a former age. Mucianus then spoke. His words were mild but his tone authoritative:

eos qui coeptam, deinde omissam actionem
repeterent, monuit sermone molli et tamquam rogaret.⁴⁸

The admonition had its desired effect, and the prosecutions were dropped. There is no hint that Helvidius Priscus, Curtius Montanus or any others of their circle demurred openly at this. Domitian and Mucianus represented the authority of the emperor Vespasian, and the members of the Stoic group deferred in the end to this authority.

46. Tac. H. IV. 40, 42

47. Tac. H. IV. 43

48. Tac. H. IV. 44

By their actions during the period 69-70, the members of the group had revealed more than loyalty to "martyred" colleagues. While some of their targets - Egnatius Celer and Eprius Marcellus - were personal enemies who had brought down members of the Stoic group itself, Helvidius Priscus and his circle had attacked other Neronian prosecutors⁴⁹ on principle. All such people had benefited under Nero from bringing down senators, often on ill-founded charges. This type of behaviour was anathema to people with a strong sense of loyalty to the senatorial order. In moving to punish the prosecutors, the Stoic group hoped to redress the wrongs done a whole class.

Helvidius Priscus' proposals concerning the financial responsibility of the senate reflected another aspect of the same preoccupation with senatorial privilege. Thrasea Paetus had imagined that the senate could carry out in practice the important constitutional role which it still had in theory. Apparently Priscus and his colleagues in 69/70 still cherished the same illusion. Their behaviour in this year did not constitute opposition to the emperors who ruled, but it was an affirmation of faith in the creed that important things could still be done by senators in the senate - that justice could be meted out and financial affairs settled, without recourse to any other authority. This had not proved to be the case, but it is doubtful whether the Stoic group recognized this. Even if the members of the group did acknowledge the failure, they might have blamed it on the degeneracy of the post-Neronian senate or the harshness of the new regime rather than the fact that the senate as a body was no longer capable of dealing with significant issues,

49. e.g. Regulus (see above) and Vibius Crispus. Tac. H. VI 242

but expected some direction from above. Perhaps even senators who had not themselves been implicated in the Stoic group's programme of vengeance were none the less relieved by the imperial admonition to let bygones be bygones, for the whole episode had been disturbing and inconclusive. Such considerations would have counted little for Helvidius Priscus and his supporters. In all innocence, they had embarked on a dangerous course, for if their actions in 69/70 had not been directed against imperial authority as such, any continued attempt to establish the political efficacy of the senate could seem to a ruler to represent anything from deliberate impertinence to out and out treason.

3. The Stoic Group and Other Senators A.D.70 - 81

The retributive campaign had uncovered - or created - divisions within the senate. The campaign had been aborted. This is not to say that the animosities it had brought to the surface were as easily dispelled.

Aquilius Regulus, for example, unharmed by Curtius Montanus' attempt to bring him down, was free to participate in public life as a senator after the incident - although he did not achieve his greatest prominence until the time of Domitian's rule (81-96), when prosecution of distinguished men became once more a profitable pursuit. Regulus was in later years to reveal his hatred of the Stoic group. This hatred must have been engendered or fostered by the attacks which Curtius Montanus had made on him. For the rest of Vespasian's reign, the group had in Regulus a senator with reason to bear it a grudge and with the eloquence to express his antipathy effectively if the opportunity presented itself.

50. Pl.Ep. I.5. See chapter 4, #5.

Eprius Marcellus, bête noire of the Stoic group, had been one of Nero's amici, and was to become one of Vespasian's.⁵¹ He was appointed by Vespasian himself in 70/71 to rectify the administration of Asia - a responsible position. He held his second consulship in 74. This distinguished career ended abruptly in 79, when he and Aulus Caecina were accused of plotting against Vespasian. Alienus was struck down summarily in the imperial palace. Eprius Marcellus anticipated execution by suicide.⁵²

Other known prosecutors went unpunished after the unsuccessful campaign of reprisal A.D.69-70. That Eprius Marcellus positively flourished in the year's following Vespasian's accession bore special significance for the members of the Stoic group. The antagonism between Eprius Marcellus and Helvidius Priscus had been displayed in the senatorial confrontations described above. In the years 70 - 73/5 Helvidius Priscus became increasingly odious to Vespasian. It may be no coincidence that in these years Eprius Marcellus occupied a position of great influence and prestige, and certainly had the ear of the emperor. Other prosecutors threatened by the attempted reprisals had a vested interest in opposing any further activity the Stoic circle might undertake within the senate during Vespasian's reign.

For the time, Mucianus served in loco Vespasiani. He had acted in the emperor's best interests in bringing to a halt the violent dissension which threatened to rend the senate asunder. His action was in itself neutral. There is no reason to suppose that it was designed simply to protect the prosecutors. A new government,

51. Tac.H.IV.7, Dialogus 8

52. Suet.Tit.VI.2, Dio/Xiph.LXV.16.iii

formed at the culmination of a period of upheaval, could not allow the stability of existing institutions to be undermined. Galba before him and Nerva after him took the same action when faced with such a prospect.⁵³ Moreover, Mucianus attempted to placate those bent on justice by renewing the sentences passed on two unpopular men during Nero's reign. The gesture was made in good faith,

ne sperni senatus iudicium et cunctis
sub Nerone admissis data inpunitas videretur,⁵⁴

but failed to make the desired impression on Helvidius Priscus and his followers.

The members of the Stoic group had never been distinguished by their reasoned acceptance of political realities. Once they had decided on what they deemed the right course of action, they were unlikely to be diverted from it by half-measures occasioned by political necessity, however well-meant. In this instance, they had set out to destroy the professional accusatores. It was not enough to be given the dispensable Egnatius Celer and two friendless convicts as a token sacrifice to the cause of justice.⁵⁵ From their point of view, it made nonsense of any notion of senatorial initiative and independence. Mucianus, who had hoped to appease them, had by their standards shown evidence of his corrupt nature.

53. Tac.H. IV.6 (Galba); Pl.Ep. IX.13 - when Pliny, in A.D.97, tried to institute proceedings against Domitianic prosecutors, Nerva did not allow the process to be carried through.

54. Tac.H.IV.44

55. Tac.H.IV.44 nec ideo lenita erga Mucianum invidia: quippe Sosianus ac Sagitta viles, etiam si reverterentur: accusatorum ingenia et opes et exercita malis artibus potentia timebantur. See also Tac.H.IV.10 for a similar dismissal of Egnatius Celer. Thus the only villains from Nero's reign who suffered were ones of no political consequence. The Stoic group had hoped for a reassurance that the abuses encouraged under Nero were gone forever. The fact that powerful people who had been as guilty of wrongdoing as the three mentioned above were allowed to continue their political careers unscathed must have been a bitter disappointment for the Stoic group.

Perhaps their disappointment was bitter because they had dared entertain unrealistically high expectations of Vespasian's reign. Helvidius Priscus claimed that Vespasian had been a friend of Thrasea Paetus and Barea Soranus. He might even have expected imperial support for his attempt to avenge their shades.⁵⁶ Instead, he saw Eprius Marcellus, Thrasea's prosecutor, emerge unsullied from the episode. He was soon to witness Eprius Marcellus' elevation to the circle of imperial advisers.⁵⁷ Not all the accusatores were singled out for such eminence, but all were free to participate in Roman public life. Many, already senators, were able to join in debates and to initiate measures in the senate. It must have been galling for the Stoic group to find that bad men could prosper under a good emperor.

Therefore, the decision of Mucianus (and possibly also of Domitian) to stay the attacks on the Neronian prosecutors was not a neutral one as far as Helvidius Priscus and his supporters were concerned. In their eyes, it amounted to imperial intervention on behalf of wrongdoers. Any illusions which the Stoic senators might have cherished of official support for their campaign should have been shaken by Mucianus' deprecation of their attempt and the senate's obedient response to his words.⁵⁸ When, some months after this, Vespasian himself arrived in Rome, the distinctions he meted out to Eprius

56. Tac.H.IV.7. Helvidius Priscus' words (spoken to Eprius Marcellus) were cautious, but he seems to have hoped for Vespasian's sympathy with those seeking reprisals:

fuisse Vespasiano amicitiam cum Thrasea, Sorano, Sentio; quorum accusatores etiam si puniri non oporteat, ostentari non debere.

57. See n. 51. J.A.Crook, "Titus and Berenice", American Journal of Philology, LXXII (1951) p.169, even suggests that Eprius Marcellus occupied Mucianus' position after his death.

58. Tac.H.IV.44. See #2 above.

Marcellus should have made it clear that Mucianus' action had been in keeping with Vespasian's own attitude. A shrewd observer at the time should have been able to predict that in the event of any conflict between Helvidius Priscus' group and its enemies, the emperor was likely to sympathize with the enemies. But the members of the group were not dispassionate, shrewd observers, and they might still have hoped that Vespasian was sympathetic to their point of view. They must have been incapable of comprehending that friendship with dead men could be cancelled out by pragmatic considerations for a realist - especially if he were a new emperor. Perhaps in spite of the evidence they continued to hope that Vespasian, onetime friend of Thrasea Paetus, would appreciate the ideals which prompted their actions.

The abortive Stoic attempt to exact reprisals constitutes the last incident set within the senate to be recounted in any detail for the period of Vespasian's reign. The chief sources for the period 70-81 (that is, until Domitian's accession) are Suetonius and Dio.⁵⁹ These authors give no indication of action carried out by the Stoic group within the senate. This can, however, be said of their treatment of the period preceding 70. Specific information concerning senatorial debates tends to be drawn from Tacitus (and later, to a lesser degree, from Pliny), because of the nature of his historiography. It is possible that the Stoic group continued after 70 to act as it had done in that year, with several members coordinating their activity, and viewing the senate as the obvious vehicle for the public demonstration of their attitudes.

59. Suet. Vesp., Tit.; Dio, epitomes book LXV

Dio and Suetonius, however, mention only Helvidius Priscus and Musonius Rufus. By 75, Musonius Rufus had been exiled, and Priscus exiled, then killed. Their fates could reflect Vespasian's increasing intolerance of the group as a whole. We are necessarily bound by the limits of the available evidence. This means in effect confining the study of the Stoic group 70-81 to Musonius Rufus and Helvidius Priscus. Notwithstanding, it is as well to keep in mind the possibility that their activities might have been only the most distinctive examples of activities carried out by the whole group.

4. Helvidius Priscus: Republican, Cynic or Conservative?

In the years 70-73/5, Helvidius Priscus' behaviour became more extreme. He clashed directly with Vespasian, who finally had him banished and then executed. Scholars vary in their interpretation of the actions and attitudes attributed to Helvidius Priscus. Some have formulated specific theories to explain them. Rostovtzeff⁶⁰ suggests that Helvidius Priscus' treatment of Vespasian showed that, as a Stoic, Priscus rejected the principle of hereditary succession to the monarchy; Dudley⁶¹ adduces it as proof of Priscus' Republicanism, and Toynbee⁶² claims that he had been converted during his exile (66-68) from Stoicism to Cynicism, and that his actions 69-73 show an evangelical espousal of anarchy - a result of the conversion.

All three base their arguments on certain passages in Dio's account of Priscus' actions. I suggest that the relevant passages ought to be interpreted differently from the way in which they have been in the past. I base

60. SEHRE (2nd ed.), Vol. I, p. 115

61. D.R. Dudley, A History of Cynicism, p. 135 sqq.

62. J. Toynbee, "Dictators and Philosophers" ..., Greece and Rome, LXXVII (1944)

my argument on a consistent picture of Helvidius Priscus which emerges from most accounts of his actions in the critical period. This entails a close study of each source and an assessment of its worth. The conclusions drawn from the assessments are crucial to one's judgment of Helvidius Priscus' own ideals and to any discussion of the rationale of the "Stoic opposition" as a whole. It will be possible in the process to examine the different theories which have been advanced concerning Priscus' motives.

Suetonius' account is brief. He attributes great patience to Vespasian:

Helvidio Prisco, qui et reversum se ex Syria solus privato nomine Vespasianum salutaverat et in praetura omnibus edictis sine honore ac mentione ulla transmiserat, non ante succensuit quam altercationibus insolentissimis paene in ordinem redactus.⁶³

This accords essentially with what we have already seen of Priscus' methods. In 69, he had refused to descend to gross flattery of Vespasian. It was more extreme to refuse the imperial form of address in speaking to the emperor, but it reveals the same mode of thinking. It had become usual to include a reference to the emperor in the edicts given out by praetors.⁶⁴ In strictly legal terms, however, a praetor was entitled to issue them in his own right. Priscus did so. Determined to avail himself of his constitutional rights in all respects, Priscus actually engaged in debate with Vespasian himself in the senate.

63. Suet. Vesp. 15

64. Suet. Tib. 32.ii

The issue involved was one which Thrasea Paetus before him had raised, when he forced Nero to admit the principle that senators were free to make independent decisions regardless of the emperor's known preferences.⁶⁵ We have seen that as emperor in 69, Vitellius had eventually been compelled to say that a disagreement between Priscus and himself in the senate was no more remarkable than a difference between any other two senators.⁶⁶ This was not necessarily Republicanism, so much as an insistence on maintaining the fiction that the princeps was really only a special magistrate with extraordinary powers and not a king whose acts and opinions were above question. Vespasian was a relatively tolerant ruler, but he had his limits. He did not subscribe to this principle. Helvidius Priscus' obstinate insistence on it earned him his exile and subsequent death. Yet according to the letter of the law Priscus had every right to argue with Vespasian in the senate. Legally, the senate was the chief legislative body of the state and all its members had the right to express an opinion in it.

In practice, however, the Roman government was a monarchy. Vespasian was prepared to respect senatorial sensibilities up to a point. He attended the senate regularly and read out his own dispatches to that body. If unable to do so, he had one of his sons perform that office. In his social life, too, he showed great courtesy to the senatorial class. Senators were regularly to be seen at his table, his morning visitors were not searched, and he greeted personally senators whom he met in the street.⁶⁷

65. Tac. Ann. XIII.49. See chapter 2, #4

66. Dio/Xiph. LXV.10.iv-vi, Tac. H. II.91. See #1 above.

67. Suet. Vesp. 13, 20; Dio/Xiph. LXV.11

By the same token, Vespasian was renowned for the good grace in which he took jokes made at his expense. Even anonymous political lampoons were answered rather than punished.⁶⁸ Yet Priscus' outspokenness earned him exile. Vespasian drew a sharp distinction between the two types of criticism. Anonymous posters or personal jokes did not impair an emperor's dignity, and tolerance of them could only enhance his popularity. Priscus' method, on the other hand, was to disagree with the "suggestions" made in the emperor's dispatches in the senate and to argue the point with Vespasian (just as he had done with Vitellius) as an equal.

For some time it had been no more than a formality that imperial dispatches to the senate were recommendations to be discussed. They were in reality fixed resolutions which required the senate's token agreement to become law (in the same sense in which treaties contracted by the Australian Federal Government require the signature of the Governor-General). Priscus was acting in accordance with a literal interpretation of his rights in law. Vespasian saw him simply as challenging the imperial authority. He refused to tolerate a situation in which he was obliged to defend his decisions to the senate in answer to direct criticism. In strictly legal terms, he could be expected to do so. Instead, he exercised his de facto power to put a stop to Priscus' harassment. It seems to have been an impasse. Vespasian could not understand why Priscus should insist on insulting him, while Priscus must have found it extraordinary that an apparently just man should object to discussing his views in public. Vespasian's notion of imperial dignity and Helvidius Priscus' conception of senatorial dignity were incompatible. Perhaps it was a clash of two similar personalities, each admirable but inflexible.

68. Dio/Xiph.LXV.11.i

Helvidius Priscus would seem, then, to have been a single-minded idealist whose behaviour, while controversial, was consistent with that of his predecessor Thrasea Paetus. This is the picture which emerges from a reading of Tacitus' Histories and of Suetonius. Yet the portrait which Dio (or his epitomators) paint is somewhat different, although the narrative is in agreement with other accounts on many factual details. In order to study this difference, it is necessary to study in detail a passage of Xiphilinus at this juncture, in spite of the fact that it refers to the year of Priscus' praetorship (A.D.70) and is therefore out of chronological sequence.

Ἐπεὶ δὲ Πρίσκος Ἐλουίδιος ὁ τοῦ Θρασέου γαμβρός, τοῖς τε στωικοῖς δόγμασιν ἐντραφεὶς καὶ τὴν τοῦ Θρασέου παρρησίαν οὐκ ἐν καιρῷ μιμούμενος, στρατηγῶν δὲ τὴν καὶ οὐκ ἔδρα καὶ προσέτι καὶ βλασφημῶν αὐτὸν οὐκ ἐπαύετο, καὶ ποτε διὰ τοῦτο οἱ δήμαρχοι συλλαβόντες αὐτὸν τοῖς ὑπηρέταις παρέδοσαν, συνεχύθη τε ὁ Οὐεσπασιανὸς καὶ δακρύσας ἐκ τοῦ βουλευτηρίου ἐξῆλθε, τοσοῦτον μόνον ὑπειπὼν ὑπειπὼν ὅτι "ἐμὲ μὲν υἱὸς διαδέξεται, ἢ οὐδεὶς ἄλλος." 69

Priscus' παρρησία, his connexion with Thrasea Paetus and his Stoicism are all linked by Dio (or the epitomator). The assertion that Priscus, although a praetor, repeatedly failed to show the emperor due deference accords with Suetonius' evidence that Priscus would not use Vespasian's proper titles or mention him in edicts. Similarly, the allegation that Priscus persisted in criticizing the emperor parallels Suetonius' reference to Priscus' altercationes insolentissimae. Dio does not state that these arguments

69.Dio/Xiph.LXV.12.i^a

took place in the senate, but the specific instance which he describes to illustrate his general point is set in the senate. Thus far, all accords with the picture of Helvidius Priscus which can be drawn from the other sources.

The example itself is noteworthy. Dio/Xiphilinus says that the tribunes actually seized Priscus and handed him over to their attendants. No details are given and the reader is left to speculate as to whether this was tantamount to arrest. If so, did this interrupt Priscus' praetorship? There is no record of such a thing. It is a possibility that Dio or the excerptor is thinking of the time when Priscus contradicted Vitellius in the senate.⁷⁰ On that occasion Vitellius called the tribunes to him but they did not seize Priscus in the end. The epitomator could have confused the two incidents when compressing the original narrative.

It still remains a possibility that such an incident did take place during Vespasian's rule. The emperor is represented as being unusually upset on this occasion. He could have taken extreme measures. It is to the same occasion that Dio/Xiphilinus attaches Vespasian's cry, " ἐμὲ μὲν ὑπὸς διαδέξεται, ἢ οὐδεὶς ἄλλος ". Rostovtzeff⁷¹ suggests that this remark might have been made in answer to objections raised by Priscus to the notion of hereditary monarchy. This passage constitutes the only evidence for such a view. Certainly the remark is difficult to understand in the context in which it is given. The whole passage

70. Tac.H.II.91; Dio/Exc.Val.LXV.7.ii

71. SEHRE, vol.I, p.116

is confused. The reader is left to wonder what Vespasian's words have to do with the incident which precedes it, or whether the passage represents a compressed account of several incidents.

Yet, though strange, the remark need not call for an esoteric explanation. The style of debate in the Roman senate can be puzzling to the modern reader. Vitellius had made a point of saying to Priscus in 69 that it had in the past been his own practice as a senator to disagree with his colleagues - even with Thrasea Paetus. He meant by this to insinuate that Thrasea had set himself up or been set up by his followers as a figure removed from normal standards, as much of an impediment as an emperor to free debate.⁷² When attacked by Priscus in the senate in January, 70, Eprius Marcellus had withdrawn from that body with the words "imus, Prisce, et relinquimus tibi senatum tuum: regna praesente Caesare."⁷³ It was the practice, apparently, to taunt the members of the Stoic opposition with the accusation that they were trying to usurp the imperial power. The insult was not intended in any literal sense - its intention was to sting and discredit.

In the same way, Vespasian's remark can be seen as a thrust at Priscus, the import of which was "I alone am emperor, and intend to retain the position in my family. Whatever you think, you cannot usurp this position". It need not have been a remark tailored to a specific discussion, but a general insult offered in the same spirit as the retorts made in similar situations cited above.

72. Tac.H.II.91

73. Tac.H. IV.43. Compare, too, the remarks attributed to Thrasea's detractors A.D. 58 (Tac.Ann.XIII.49) .

Suetonius records the statement, slightly altered, in a rather different context.⁷⁴ To him, it makes sense as a general assertion of self-confidence. Suetonius does not assign a date to it, but says that it was made after assiduae coniurationes against Vespasian, which would surely place it after 70. There is no reason to look for a special explanation for Vespasian's comment, which on its own is poor evidence for a whole theory concerning a Stoic objection to hereditary succession of which there is no other trace.

The second excerpt in Dio concerning Helvidius Priscus contains allegations about his political attitudes, and forms the basis of Toynbee's characterization of Priscus as a turbulent radical:

Ὅτι οὐκ ἤκιστα ἐνδηλον ἐγένετο ὅτι Πρίσκον τὸν Ἐλουίδιον οὐ μᾶλλον τι δι' ἑαυτὸν ἢ διὰ τοὺς φίλους αὐτοῦ οὐδ' ὕβρισην, ἐμίσησεν ὁ Οὐεσπασιανός, ἀλλ' ὅτι παραχώδης τε ἦν καὶ τῷ ὄχλῳ προσέκειτο, βασιλείας τε δεῖ κατηγόρει καὶ δημοκρατίαν ἐπῆνει, καὶ ἔπραττεν ἀκόλουθα τούτοις καὶ συνίστη τινάς. ὥσπερ που φιλοσόφιας ἔργον ὄν τὸ τε τοὺς κρατοῦντας προπηλακίζειν καὶ τὸ τὰ πλήθη ταραττεῖν τὸ τε τὰ καθεστηκότα συγχεῖν καὶ τὸ νεώτερα αὐτοῖς πράγματα ἐπεσάγειν. ἦν γὰρ τοῦ Θρασέου γαμβρὸς καὶ ζηλοῦν αὐτὸν ἐπλάττετο, πολὺ δ' αὐτοῦ ἠμάρτανε. Θρασέας μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ Νέρωνος ὧν οὐκ

74. *convenit inter omnis, tam certum eum de sua suorumque genitura semper fuisse, ut post assiduas in se coniurationes ausus sit adfirmare senatui aut filios sibi successuros aut neminem.* Suet. Vesp. 25

ἤρεσκετο αὐτῷ, καὶ οὐδὲν μέντοι οὐδ' ὡς ὑβρίστικον ἔλεγεν ἐς αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔπραττεν, πλὴν καθ' ὅσον προσκοινωνεῖν οἱ τῶν δρωμένων οὐκ ἤξιου οἷτος δὲ Οὔεσπασιανῶ ἤχθετο, καὶ οὐτ' ἰδίᾳ οὔτε ἐν τῷ κοινῷ αὐτοῦ ἀπείχετο, ἀλλ' ἐξ ὧν ἐποίησε ἐθανάτα, καὶ πράττων ἔμελλέ ποτε δίκην αὐτῶν δώσειν. 75

The first factual allegations are straightforward enough. Priscus must have criticized Vespasian and his "friends" - such as Eprius Marcellus - in senatorial debates. This, says the author, was not the reason for Vespasian's dislike of him. Rather, he earned it because he was a troublemaker with leanings to the mob, forever praising democracy and denouncing monarchy. If so, he was the only Stoic to do this. Stoic writers, especially those of the first century A.D., tended if anything to favour monarchy as the most natural form of government.⁷⁶ Thrasea Paetus' preoccupation had been with the privileges of the aristocratic senate, and Helvidius Priscus' behaviour showed the same bias. His insistence in 69 that the senate need not wait for the emperor's arrival to decide on a limit for public expenditure, and his persistent assertion of his right to free debate in the senate show a conservative concern for traditional senatorial privilege.

Priscus' philosophy, then, should have urged him to favour monarchy rather than democracy. His political activity appeared to favour aristocracy. Why should he of all people

75. Dio/Exc.Val.LXV.12.ii

76. e.g. Sen. de Clem.I.19 , Musonius Rufus frag. viii.
See chapter 1, #4 for more examples.

be accused of democratic allegiances? Perhaps these formed part of a stock picture of the political agitator of the principate. Xiphilinus' portrait of the Cynic teachers Demetrius and Hostilianus shows them as mindless critics of "monarchy",⁷⁷ and the fact that such teachers preached to people in the street lends them a "democratic" quality in some sense. The denunciation of tyrants was indeed a stock rhetorical theme which could conceivably be construed as anti-monarchic⁷⁸ and could be identified with philosophers.

The passage from the Excerpta Valesiana concerning Priscus seems to place him in a philosophical context.⁷⁹ The author does not actually say that Priscus did attack authority, stir up the multitude, overthrow the established order and foster revolution, but rather that it was "as if it were the part of philosophy" to do all those things. It is stated plainly that he gathered men together (συνέστη τινάς). Does this mean any more than that he was the focus of a group of dissidents, as Thrasea had been before him?

The descriptive elements of the passage are consistent with the known facts of Priscus' "opposition" to Vespasian. The author points out that Thrasea had never directly insulted Nero, while Helvidius Priscus constantly criticized Vespasian. This is true - there was a difference in the type of opposition offered by the two men, who both met the same fate.

77. Dio/Xiph. LXV.13.ii/iii

78. The sophist Maternus was executed c.A.D.91 under Domitian because he had delivered set speeches against tyrants. Dio/Xiph. LXVII.12.v

79. Dio/Exc.Val.LXV.13.ii ὡςπερ πρὸς φιλοσοφίας ἔργον ὄν ...

Suetonius says that Vespasian would not have had Priscus executed, save for a misunderstanding.⁸⁰ Epictetus represents the situation differently. In his lectures he recounts an anecdote concerning Priscus and Vespasian, in which Vespasian asked him not to attend senate meetings. Priscus replied that as long as he was a senator, he was obliged to attend the meetings. Vespasian answered that he might attend, but ought not to speak. To this Priscus retorted that if asked his opinion, he must give it, and he must answer honestly, according to what was right. At this, Vespasian threatened him with execution, but Priscus merely said that that was his privilege as emperor, while his own task was to behave as he must.⁸¹

The anecdote has been preserved by a somewhat indirect process. It is included in the notes taken by a student from the lectures of Epictetus, who was himself the student of Musonius Rufus, Helvidius Priscus' colleague. The source is probably reliable notwithstanding, and the tale most illuminating. Priscus felt obliged to attend the senate in the same way in which Thrasea had felt obliged to stay away from it. Yet both were regarded by later writers as upholding a certain tradition of opposition, which allowed for individual variation.

It is evident that the sources, despite differing biases, present a similar picture of Priscus as an uncompromising idealist committed to a certain course of action. Suetonius and Dio find his example repugnant,

80. Suet. Vesp. 15

81. Epict. Disc. I. 2. xix-xxiv

Tacitus and Epictetus show some sympathy for it. The one discordant note is the Dio (Exc.Val.) assertion that Priscus was virtually a democrat. This is quite inconsistent not only with narrative accounts of his actions but with the way in which he was regarded in later years by people who supported the principate while respecting the senate's traditional dignity: people such as Tacitus himself, Pliny and Marcus Aurelius.

Tacitus' description of Priscus' character is more than sympathetic:

quaestorius adhuc a Paeto Thrasea gener
delectus e moribus soceri nihil aequae ac
libertatem hausit, civis, senator, maritus,
gener, amicus, cunctis vitae officiis aequabilis,
opum contemptor, recti pervicax, constans
adversus metus.⁸²

In later years, Pliny commended Priscus' widow by comparing her with her husband and her father:

animus tantum et spiritus viget Helvidio
marito, Thrasea patre dignissimus.⁸³

In the second century, the emperor Marcus recorded his gratitude to one of his teachers for helping him to appreciate Thrasea Paetus, Helvidius Priscus, Cato, Dio Chrysostom and Brutus.⁸⁴ In short, he included Priscus as a matter of course in a gallery of Stoic saints.

It is conceivable that Dio suffered some linguistic confusion in discussing Priscus' political stand. A scholiast on Juvenal describes Priscus as behaving as if he were in a free republic from the time he returned from exile under Galba in 69 A.D.⁸⁵ It is just possible that

82. Tac.H.IV.6

83. Pl.Ep. VII.19

84. Marcus, ad seips. I.14

85. Schol.ad Iuv. Sat.V.36, in which Priscus is described "ut libera semper civitate usus".

Dio had difficulty in conveying the notion in Greek and that δημοκρατία is the only word with which he could express what a Roman meant by res publica or even libertas. Priscus' emphasis on free speech, however, was surely on free speech as a senatorial right. There is no evidence that he defended the privileges of the lower orders. The issues about which he and Thrasea raised their voices tended to be ones of senatorial dignity and prerogatives, for example,

1. the right to determine sentences on fellow-senators⁸⁶
2. the right to prevent provincials from impairing the dignity of Roman governors (i.e. senatorials)⁸⁷
3. the indignity of Romans of a certain class acting in public⁸⁸
4. the senate's initiative in fiscal policy⁸⁹
5. the senate's initiative in public building.⁹⁰

Even Suetonius' unfavourable representation of Priscus' behaviour contains no hint of democratic tendencies. To a native Greek-speaker, however, such an issue could appear in classic political terms: someone who opposes authority - especially the authority of a good emperor - could be seen as a stereotyped political troublemaker. Any description might become a conglomerate of unfavourable characteristics. Perhaps Dio labelled Priscus as a democrat in the same spirit in which congressmen of the "McCarthy Era" could call so many prominent American writers, actors and academics "Communists", even though some of them were not in any literal sense inclined to socialism or Communism so much as offending in a general way against a certain code of accepted behaviour.

86. Tac. Ann. XIV. 48-9

87. Tac. Ann. XV. 20

88. Dio/Xiph. LXII. 20 (see also Epict. Disc. I. 2. xii-xiv)

89. Tac. H. IV. 9

90. Tac. H. IV. 9

It is central to Toynbee's thesis - that Helvidius Priscus had become a Cynic by the time of Vespasian's rule - to accept at face value the suggestion that Priscus was an undisciplined rabble-rouser. He had, she says, infuriated the patient Vespasian "by his truly Cynic conduct - by reviling and insulting the imperial person, by turbulence, by stirring up the people and by preaching revolution by threatening the existing social order and by abusing monarchy."⁹¹ This is in any case a coloured and distorted representation of the Dio account, wherein the factual elements accord with the behaviour one might reasonably expect of a member of the Stoic group. The epitomator does not say that Helvidius Priscus had spoken to "the people" or that he had "abused monarchy". His actions appear to have been confined to the senate. It is, moreover, difficult to reconcile Helvidius Priscus' allegedly radical Cynicism and anarchic beliefs with his candidature for the praetorship, his filling of that office, his attendance at senate meetings and his concern with the senate's financial jurisdiction.

Dudley's conviction⁹³ that Helvidius Priscus was a Republican, cannot be repudiated as easily. By and large, Priscus' acts were compatible with Republican sympathies. Yet he did, according to Epictetus, acknowledge Vespasian's right to exert authority over him.⁹² It is at least probable that, unlike Thrasea Paetus, Priscus attended the annual ceremony at which senators swore their allegiance to the emperor. He had congratulated Vespasian on his accession to imperial power, albeit with dignified reserve: surely this would have seemed a dishonest act to an unswerving moralist who refused to recognize the position of emperor?

91. J. Toynbee, "Dictators and Philosophers.." p.55

92. see n.81

93. A History of Cynicism, esp. pp. 135-6

I suggest that Helvidius Priscus' objections were more subtle, that he accepted the principate as a political fact and even recognized the right of the princeps to a certain loyalty from his subjects. Yet, like Thrasea Paetus before him, he hoped to check the tendency of the emperor to arrogate functions which had traditionally been those of the senate. He therefore clung to the constitutional forms in an unrealistic way, risking death for the sake of privileges which had in fact already been lost.

5. Repression by a Good Emperor

There were during the first century A.D. many vagrant philosophers, chiefly Cynics, who came to Rome from Greece and the Greek East. Unlike the professional philosophers who lectured to select, paying audiences of wealthy young Romans, these wandering philosophers spoke in public to the common crowd. Dio tells us that some of these philosophers expressed political ideas unsuited to the period.⁹⁴ Vespasian finally, therefore, expelled them from Rome. Musonius Rufus was excluded from the decree.⁹⁵

The order must have been directed against professional philosophers. Members of the Stoic group espoused the Stoic philosophy but the core of the group was made up of men of the senatorial class who derived their income from more traditional sources than professional teaching. Musonius Rufus was not typical of his class - he was both a professional philosopher⁹⁶ and a senator. He was

94. Dio/Xiph. LXV.13.i

95. Dio/Xiph. LXV.13.ii

96. see the extant records of his moral discourses, which appear to be in the form of lectures, and witness Tacitus' description of him as a doctor sapientiae (Tac. Ann. XIV.59). He had been visited by disciples even in exile, Lucian de morte Peregrini. See also Fronto, Ep. ad Verum I.1.4 for a list of his outstanding pupils.

therefore excluded from the expulsion order as a concession to senatorial privilege. This makes it unlikely that the original order was directed against the Stoic group.

The order would, however, have affected any philosophers attached to the Stoic group who were not senators. Such people would have been included in its scope. The sources of the period do not record connexions of this type. If Demetrius the Cynic had stood in such a relationship to the group in Thræsea's time, his surprising defence of the unpopular fellow-philosopher Egnatius Celer (who had also been attached to the group prior to his treachery towards Barea Soranus in A.D. 66) against the attack of Musonius Rufus in A.D. 70⁹⁷ must have alienated him entirely from it - unless it reflects an estrangement which had taken place between A.D. 66-70. His exile, therefore, can hardly have distressed the group.

The order could have had no effect on the activities of the Stoic group within the senate. Helvidius Priscus' exile, on the other hand, could well have done so. He had been punished quite unequivocally for his outspokenness in the senate. None the less, Musonius Rufus somehow earned exile late in Vespasian's reign⁹⁸. There is no way in which to judge whether this was for his behaviour in the senate or for his philosophical teaching.

97. Tac.H.IV.41

98. One account has it that he was exiled later in Vespasian's reign and recalled under Titus Hieronymus, Interpretatio Chronicae Eusebii Pamphili Deperditorum Librorum Reliquiae, p. 597 sqq.

Similarly, there is no means of determining whether other members of the senatorial group continued to act together or to pursue individual policies of opposition in the senate. Musonius Rufus' exile gives rise to speculation, but no more.

Vespasian's rule demonstrated that an emperor need not be a bad emperor or a profligate to earn the censure of the Stoic group or to punish the group for displaying its censure. Nero had let twelve years pass before allowing Thrasea Paetus to be condemned to death: Vespasian tolerated his successor, Helvidius Priscus, for only three or four years.

The group was forced once more to still its voice. It could have no attendant philosophers, it had lost its leader and it had learned that it could not openly express its ideas in the senate with impunity. But the group continued to function nevertheless, preserving the old standards and the old loyalties, for even under Domitian's repressive rule several of its members remained constant and new ones were attracted. The memories of Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus were revered and their values preserved. Whether the group retained its cohesion by private meetings or displayed it by intermittent subtle speeches in the senate cannot be ascertained. But the same group which had survived Nero's attack of 66 outlived the repression of Vespasian.

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CHAPTER 4

THE STOIC GROUP UNDER DOMITIAN

1. Domitian's Rule

The Stoic group, having suffered under a good emperor, was destined once more to experience a bad one. Titus' rule (79-81) was too brief to warrant his inclusion in either category, and the sources contain no hint of his relations with the group. He was succeeded by his younger brother Domitian, whose reign (81-96) was a period of hardship for the senatorial order. He took a frankly repressive approach to political disagreement and revived the treason law.¹ Literary attacks on the emperor were punished severely,² and eminence of any kind was dangerous.³ Innumerable senators were executed during his rule on various charges.⁴ Not surprisingly, conspiracies were hatched against Domitian,⁵ one of the most serious being the revolt in 89 A.D. of L. Antonius Saturninus, legate of Upper Germany. The revolt was rapidly put down and Domitian had many conspirators put

 1. It is not stated expressly that Domitian revived the treason laws, but the inference is clear, e.g. Dio/Xiph. LXVII.ii-v is virtually a catalogue of the different aspects of the law de maiestate minuta. See also Suet. Dom. 12, where Domitian is accused of using any excuse to confiscate property:

bona vivorum ac mortuorum usquequaque quolibet et
 accusatore et crimine corripiebantur. satis erat
 obici quaecumque factum dictumve adversus maiestatem
 principis.

2. Suet. Dom. 10 Hermogenes of Tarsus was executed because of certain parts of his histories, presumably because they were critical of Domitian. The biographies of Thræsea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus were burned Suet. Dom. 10, Ag. 2, Pl. Ep. VII. 19 and see section #2 of this chapter.

3. Compare Tacitus' assumption that Agricola suffered because of Domitian's jealousy of his military prowess Ag. 6, 42. Pliny confirms this aspect of Domitian's reign Ep. VIII. 14:

suspecta virtus, inertia in pretio

4. Suet. Dom. 10, in which many deaths are recorded.

5. e.g. CIL VI p. 515, l. 61 records vows of thanksgiving offered by the Arval Brothers for the discovery of certain crimes; Dio/Xiph LXVII. 11. i-iv

to death.⁶ Some scholars⁷ feel that this conspiracy marked an important stage in Domitian's rule, and that after 89 A.D. he was notably more suspicious of the senatorial class as a whole.

Domitian's repressiveness was not apparently directed against the members of the Stoic group during the early part of this period, for the men in the group pursued senatorial careers at will. At the same time, these people displayed "opposition" to the regime in a variety of ways. It is possible that the senate continued to provide a vehicle for their "opposition", although Pliny assures us that in general the senate was silenced from fear of the emperor.⁸ There is evidence that the Stoic group diverted some of its energy into other channels. Appearances in the law courts could provide opportunities for conscientious and courageous stands analogous to those once made in the senate by Thrasea Paetus, while literature provided a means of maintaining the traditions of the group and of expressing discontent with the emperor.

There are problems attached to the precise dating of certain events during Domitian's rule, but it can be shown that the members of the group had been reasonably unhampered in their various activities until 93 A.D. In that year seven members of the group were tried for treason and convicted. Three were executed and four exiled. At the same time, Domitian banished philosophers from Rome,

6. Dio/Xiph.LXVII.11.i-iv

7. Dudley, A History of Cynicism p.138 says "This conspiracy was for Domitian what the Pisonian conspiracy was for Nero; henceforward he was suspicious of the nobility, and hag-ridden by a perpetual and well-founded dread of assassination".

M.P.Charlesworth, CAH vol.XI.p.27 also feels that "...the conspiracy of Saturninus had given him a shock from which he never recovered. From 89 his rule became more tyrannical, and he saw conspirators and rivals around him everywhere."

8. Pl.Ep.VIII.14 iidem prospeximus curiam, sed curiam trepidam et elinguem, cum dicere quod velles periculosum, quod nolles miserum esset.

thus repeating his father's action,⁹ and possibly one of his own.¹⁰ It is almost certain that the expulsion was related to the charges brought against the people in the Stoic group. The sources agree in regarding the fate of the members of the group tried in 93 A.D. as disproportionate to their actions, and as an example of Domitian's unreasonable cruelty.

2. The Trials of the Members of the Stoic Group 93 A.D.

The seven people convicted in 93 A.D. on related charges probably formed the nucleus of the Stoic group of the period 81-93. In 93 A.D., Fannia, daughter of Thrasea Paetus and widow of Helvidius Priscus, admitted to having commissioned the senator Herennius Senecio to write a biography of her dead husband. Herennius Senecio had embraced the task with enthusiasm: his eagerness to preserve the memory of Priscus and to contribute to the hagiography of the Stoic group is an indication of his interest in it. He must have made his feelings plain to Fannia for her to have asked him to undertake a task which was at least compromising, since it entailed elevating a figure who had been executed on the order of the current emperor's father. Senecio had already indicated his attitude to Domitian by refusing to seek any political office after he had achieved the quaestorship.¹¹ He probably continued to attend the senate, but his abstention

9. in c. 73 A.D., Vespasian exiled all philosophers from Rome. Dio/Xiph.LXV.13.ii; see also chapter 3, #5

10. See the discussion following (#4 of this chapter) on the question of whether Domitian expelled philosophers once or twice.

11. The fact that Herennius Senecio's political inactivity was seen as a conscious choice by his prosecutors indicates that it was not occasioned by lack of opportunity. see n.12 for the relevant text.

from office was none the less in the tradition of protest practised by Thrasea Paetus. Herennius Senecio was tried in 93 for treason. Both the biography and his political inactivity counted against him, and he was executed. Fannia, whose part in the biography had been declared at the trial, was exiled, together with her mother Arria (widow of Thrasea Paetus) although Fannia had sworn that her mother had not been concerned with the offending work. The destruction of the biography was ordered, and many copies were burned, but Fannia succeeded in salvaging one and taking it with her into exile.¹²

Iunius Arulenus Rusticus, who as plebeian tribune had in 66 offered to interpose his veto save Thrasea's life¹³ showed his continuing devotion to Thrasea's memory by composing a biography of Thrasea Paetus during the reign of Domitian. In this work, he described Thrasea as "holy" (sanctissimus). The biography and the use of this adjective formed the basis of the charge brought against Rusticus in 93. Unlike Helvidius Priscus, Thrasea Paetus had not been an opponent of the Flavian regime, so it should not have been treasonable to praise him: he must by this time have become a symbol of protest against a repressive rule. Another charge brought against Rusticus was ὅτι ἐφιλοσόφει.¹⁴ It is not apparent whether this meant simply engaging in philosophical discussions or delivering lectures. There

12. Dio/Xiph.LXVII.13.ii gives the charges against Herennius Senecio and his execution; Tac.Ag.2 gives the accusation against Senecio and the burning of the work; Pl.Ep.VII.19 gives greater detail concerning the trial and Fannia's part in the proceedings.

13. Tac.Ann.XVI.26 and chapter 1,#5

14. Dio/Xiph.LXVII.13.ii. Suet.Dom.10 attributes both biographies to Rusticus by an understandable confusion:

[sc. (Domitianus) "interemit"] "...Iunium Rusticum, quod Paeti Thraseae et Helvidi Prisci laudes edidisset appellassetque eos sanctissimos viros."

Tac.Ag.2 "... cum Aruleno Rustico Paetus Thrasea, Herennio Senecioni Priscus Helvidius laudati essent,..." assigns the works to the true authors. His evidence is confirmed by that of Pliny, Ep.VII.19. Both Pliny and Tacitus were members of the senate at the time of the trials.

is no evidence that Rusticus was more than an amateur philosopher, although his adherence to Stoicism is attested. After his execution, his detractor, the prosecutor Regulus who had been attacked by Curtius Montanus as part of the programme of reprisal attempted by the Stoic group in A.D.69-70,¹⁵ spoke of him as "Stoicorum simia".¹⁶ To an overly sensitive emperor, a theoretical discussion on the characteristics of tyrants might seem subversive.¹⁷ In any case, Rusticus' philosophy could have been raised in a general way at his trial to discredit him, and need not have constituted a formal charge.¹⁸

Helvidius Priscus II was the son of the Helvidius Priscus executed by Vespasian and the step-son of Fannia. In 93, he followed in his father's footsteps, for he, too, was executed for treason. He had written a play in which, it was alleged, he satirized Domitian's marital complications by means of allegorical characters.¹⁹ Domitian was not a ruler to tolerate such liberties. Suetonius is the only author who mentions the charge, but Tacitus refers to Helvidius Priscus' fate, grouping it with those of Rusticus and Herennius Senecio. The grouping is made by Pliny also.²⁰ His relationship to other members of the group and his apparent willingness to compromise himself for the sake of ridiculing Domitian argue for his inclusion in the Stoic group of 81-93. There is no specific evidence concerning his philosophical allegiance, save by association, but it is highly probable that his step-mother Fannia, whose loyalty was almost heroic,²¹ would have supervised his initiation into the philosophy of her dead husband and her father.

15. Tac.H.IV.42. See chapter 3,#2

16. Pl.Ep. I.5

17. The sophist Maternus was executed on such a charge Dio/Xiph. LXVII.13.v

18. Compare the accusations made against Thræsea Paetus in 66, Tac. Ann.XVI.22, and even the use which Cicero made of Piso's Epicureanism throughout the in Pisonem. In both cases, the references were used to prejudice the opinions of the jurors.

19. Suet.Dom. 10

20. Tac.Ag.45,Pl.Ep.III.11

21. See Pl.Ep.VII.19. She twice (voluntarily) followed her husband into exile (66 and 69 A.D.), as well as commissioning and preserving his biography.

Iunius Mauricus, brother of Iunius Arulenus Rusticus, was also included in the trials of 93 A.D. No charge is recorded, but he was exiled. Since he was the only male defendant to suffer this lesser punishment it is fair to conclude that the charges against him cannot have been as concrete as those brought against the other three men - each of whom had committed at least one specific act likely to offend the emperor. It is even possible that Iunius Mauricus was condemned merely for his association with the group, and mere membership of it was deemed suspect.²² His relationship to Arulenus Rusticus suggests this membership, as does his punishment in 93 A.D. - evidently his judges took it as proven.²³ After his brother's death, Mauricus assumed responsibility for his orphaned children, one of whom was probably the Stoic Iunius Rusticus who was later the friend and adviser of the emperor Marcus.²⁴ If this is the case, it suggests that Mauricus reared his nephew (and perhaps even his niece?) in the Stoic philosophy, thus maintaining a family tradition.

A woman, Gratilla, was also exiled as a result of the trials of 93. Her offence is not recorded, but it is almost certain that she committed one. Wives were not usually implicated in the charges brought against their husbands or male relatives. Thus it is conceivable that Iunius Mauricus suffered exile merely because of his association

22. who were probably fellow-senators. The argument later in this section discusses the nature of the trial.

23. Compare the vagueness of the charges brought against some members of the Neronian Stoic group in 66 A.D. Tac.Ann.XVI.29. They, too, suffered lesser penalties than their friends Thræsea Paetus and Servilia, who were adjudged guilty of specific crimes Tac.Ann.XVI.33.

24. Iunius Rusticus had two sons and a daughter. They became Mauricus' responsibility after Rusticus' death in 93 (Pl.Ep.I.14, and II.18 discussed below). To Judge from Ep.II.18 in which Pliny advises Mauricus on suitable teachers of Latin rhetoric, the boys were in their early teens at that time (98). The Q.Iunius Rusticus who became Marcus' friend held the consulship for the first time in 133 (CIL III p.1979.VI.858), which is consistent.

and sympathy with his brother and others in the group, but it is highly unlikely that Gratilla suffered the same fate for anything less than active involvement in the affairs of the group. Anteia, wife of Helvidius Priscus II, suffered no such fate.²⁵ The women of the group, as far as we know, were always connected by their marriages to the men who formed its hear.²⁶ It is possible that Gratilla was the wife of Iunius Arulenus Rusticus. Their names are linked in a letter of Pliny's describing events 93-96. He says that certain friends of his were afraid to proceed with an inheritance case, despite the justice of their claims.²⁷ Their fears might not have been justified, but they must have felt that their association with the exiled Gratilla and the dead Rusticus was compromising. The fact that the woman's name is mentioned suggests that she was recognized as a dissident in her own right: that she had, in short, more in common with the distinctive Arria and Fannia than with Anteia, who dissociated herself from her husband's misfortunes.²⁸

It would seem that all seven of these people - Herennius Senecio, Helvidius Priscus II, Iunius Arulenus Rusticus, Iunius Mauricus, Arria, Fannia and Gratilla - were tried and convicted for treason. This is the only charge of sufficient scope to encompass the varied counts recorded.²⁹ In the cases of Arria, Gratilla and Iunius Mauricus, no

25. Pl. Ep. IX.13

26. Arria was married to Thræsea Paetus, and her daughter Fannia to Helvidius Priscus. It is moot whether Servilia (see chapter 1, #5) was involved because of her father, Barea Soranus, or whether her husband might also have been connected with the group.

27. ne ex centumvirali iudicio capitis rei exirent. et erant in illis, quibus obici et Gratillae amicitia et Rustici posset. Pl. Ep. V.1

28. to the extent, in fact, that she had re-married by 97 (see Pl. Ep. IX.13). One wonders how this struck her unflinching (step) mother-in-law, Fannia, who had been reared with tales of her own grandmother (the Elder Arria), who had deemed it a disgrace to survive a condemned husband (Pl. Ep. III.16), and whose inspiring suicide had become legendary by the second century (*ibid.* and Ep. VI.24). Arria the Younger and Fannia had themselves shown courage throughout their husbands' ordeals. Perhaps, though, they were able to look with compassion upon a weaker woman - their Olympian forgiveness might even have been more formidable than open disapproval.

29. see n.1

specific charges are recorded, but in the four remaining instances guilt is all but certain. The sources deplore the injustice of treating their actions as treasonable but do not deny that they were committed. That these actions had been consciously intended as opposition is clear - the group was not innocent in any sense. Herennius Senecio's determination to check his own political career must have been intended as a deliberate comment on Domitian. The written works cited in the charge were intended to be critical of Domitian's regime. The aim of Helvidius Priscus II's farce is self-evident. Herennius Senecio's biography of Helvidius Priscus I was also consciously offensive to the Flavian regime: if Priscus I had been a her, Vespasian must have been a tyrant. A life of Thrasea Paetus, who was executed under a different rule, does not sound so consciously provocative, but Rusticus must have been aware of the way in which it would be viewed by others, and offered up his hero as an example of a martyr for the cause of senatorial liberty. The reference to Rusticus' philosophy is the most puzzling part of the episode. Why should he have been the only member of the group to have been charged with this? Still, Thrasea was no more of a philosopher than Barea Soranus, and it was Thrasea whose philosophy was held against him. The charge against Rusticus (if it was an additional charge) might have been equally arbitrary.

It is unlikely in the extreme that any members of the group were teaching or discussing subversive ideas derived from philosophic principles,³⁰ although it is possible that the emperor put this construction on their philosophical exchanges. In all other respects, however, the charges brought against the members of the group in 93 indicate that they were consciously practising a type of opposition

30. See chapter 1

to Domitian's rule. Not all chose the same means of protest - Herennius Senecio was the only one who chose any form of political inactivity, and Helvidius Priscus II was the only one to ridicule Domitian's private life - but individual variation had always been accepted within the Stoic group. It remains true that these individuals offered their "opposition" in some sense as a unit. Their actions were recognized as group actions both by the regime which punished them and by the authors who recorded them/

Many people were killed under Domitian's rule. In most cases, the sources assign no date to their deaths.³¹ The fates of the members of the Stoic group, however, are always mentioned together, although there is a discrepancy in the number of people included in each account. Pliny gives all seven in a single parenthesis³². Tacitus first mentions only Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio, then names them again, this time in company with Helvidius Priscus II and Iunius Mauricus.³³ Dio names only those who were executed³⁴, while Suetonius mentions only Arulenus Rusticus and Helvidius Priscus.³⁵ The sources thus reveal that they recognize the links between the people charged and even between the charges themselves. The number of people mentioned in any account varies according to the author's thematic arrangement³⁶, but the grouping remains constant.

31. e.g. see Suet.Dom.10 for a list of the more notorious capital convictions. Those of Arulenus Rusticus and Helvidius Priscus II are included in the list. Dio/Xiph. LXVII.i-v assembles some of the eccentric executions. Neither list is drawn up on a chronological basis.

32. Pl.Ep.III.11 ..septem amicis meis aut occisis aut relegatis, occisis Senecione Rustico Helvidio, relegatis Maurico Gratilla Arri Fannia ..

33. Tac.Ag.2. See n.14 for a partial quotation

34. Dio/Xiph.13.ii

35. Suet.Dom.10.

36. This is best illustrated by Tacitus' Agricola: in chapter 2, Tacitus wishes to stress the senate's loss of liberty. He uses the burning of the works of Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio as a symbol of this. In chapter 45, he depicts the horrors at which the senate was compelled to connive during Domitian's last years, and therefore mentions all the men of the Stoic group who were tried and punished.

It is even possible that the seven people charged were tried at a single series of senatorial settings. Charges of treason, especially if the subjects were senatorials, were regularly heard by the senate in the first century A.D.³⁷ The exile of Arria and Fannia was the result of the trial of Herennius Senecio, at which Fannia had appeared merely as a witness. The paucity of evidence relating to all the charges, and the discrepancies in this evidence, could be an indication that only three people (i.e. those later executed) were formally prosecuted, but others were implicated in their trials for less obvious reasons. In the trials of 66, sentence had been passed on six people altogether at a single sitting of the senate. Those formally charged and prosecuted were condemned to death, while the other three suffered lesser penalties.³⁸ It is possible that the trials of 93 followed the same pattern. Alternatively, there was a series of trials which the sources knew to have been linked.

Members of the Stoic group had always shown themselves to be capable of accepting the consequences of their actions. If they believed Domitian to be tyrannical - and if they did not, half their acts were pointless³⁹ - the people tried in 93 could hardly have been surprised to find themselves the victims of repression. Their actions had been carried out in a spirit of criticism and criticism of monarchs, especially of harsh ones, tends to be regarded

37. See P.Garnsey, Social Status etc. ..P.19

38. Tac.Ann.XVI.33

39. At the very least, Herennius Senecio's refusal to seek higher office and Helvidius Priscus II's farce must have represented objections to Domitian himself.

as treason. The history of the group to date must have taught them this elementary lesson. Yet if the group itself was not shocked by its treatment at the hands of the law, others were. Suetonius recounts the executions of Rusticus and Helvidius Priscus II as two of many under Domitian, but the other sources assign greater significance to the treatment of the group. For Pliny, this significance would have arisen in any case from his friendship - whether it really flourished before or after 93 - with so many of the group,⁴⁰ but this was not the case with Tacitus and Dio. To illustrate the abolition of freedom of thought and the Domitianic attack on the senatorial class by means of the Stoic group alone is to attach great significance to it.⁴¹ Similarly, Dio uses the fates of Rusticus, Senecio and Priscus as the supreme example of Domitian's turpitude, in contrast to some commendable acts just recounted, and to the surprising release of a confessed conspirator discussed immediately afterwards.⁴² Dio also records a dream which visited Domitian just before his death. In the dream Rusticus - out of all the people executed under Domitian - menaced him with a sword.⁴³

It is unlikely that the group's actions would so have impressed later chroniclers if they had not been so harshly punished. Affronted by different aspects of Domitian's reign, many members of the group had shown their feelings by means of individual but related forms of protest, aware of the risks they were taking. Once more, members of the group had been elevated by a misguided ruler from the status of tiresome and obstructive moralists to that of martyrs.

40. Iunius Mauricus, Arria and Fannia seem to have been his particular friends. See, e.g., *Ep.*I.5,I.14 (Mauricus),VII.19 (Arria, Fannia), but he refers to all seven of the convicts of 93 as his *amici*.

41. *Tac. Ag.*2,45. See nn.14,33 of this chapter for quotations

42. *Dio/Xiph.*LXVII.13.ii

43. cf.*Pl. Ep.* IX.13 for the same omen.

3. The Life of the Stoic Group Before the Trials: 81-93

It is impossible from the sources to assign dates to the actions for which members of the Stoic group were punished in 93. The offending literary works could have been written years earlier or newly completed when the seven were arraigned. It is therefore possible that the group continued its protests throughout Domitian's rule before being called to account for them.⁴⁴

There is certainly some evidence that members of the group were free to pursue their careers from the beginning of Domitian's reign (81) until 93 and that the male members of the group were reasonably active in public life. Even Helvidius Priscus II, the son of a man executed by Vespasian, was of consular status by the time of his trial⁴⁵. He must have held other offices to be eligible for the consulship, and to achieve it he must have had the support of powerful friends. He is most unlikely to have gained the office if Domitian definitely opposed his candidature.

Pliny later said that friendship with Priscus was difficult because of the sheltered life Priscus was obliged to lead.⁴⁶ This image is spoiled by Priscus' apparent freedom and willingness to seek political office, and by his recklessness in composing a farce about the imperial family. Even if the farce was only circulated secretly, the danger of exposure was obvious. It was not the work of a man who valued prudence above all.

Iunius Arulenus Rusticus attained the consulship in A.D.92, not long before his trial.⁴⁷ Pliny claims to have looked to him for some guidance in public life,⁴⁸ and at

46. Pl.Ep.IX.13 fuerat alioqui mihi cum Helvidio amicitia, quanta potuerat esse cum eo, qui metu temporum nomen ingens paresque virtutes secessu tegebat.

47. I accept Syme's identification (Tacitus, 83 n) of the "Q.Arulenus Rust(icus)" of the Potentia Fasti for 92

48. Pl.Ep.I.14

his request agreed to participate as an advocate in an apparently controversial case at the centumviral court, ranged against Regulus, who had good reason to dislike the members of the Stoic group.⁴⁹ Rusticus' philosophical activities - whatever their precise nature - must have occupied him throughout the period of Domitian's reign.

The career of Iunius Arulenus' brother Iunius Mauricus is more mysterious. He was already a senator in A.D.69, when he had joined in the group's attempt to avenge Neronian misdeeds.⁵⁰ Pliny praised his wisdom and Martial his aequitas.⁵¹ In view of his Stoic connexions, it is not too far-fetched to attribute these qualities to his philosophy. It may have been these virtues which commended him to Nerva and Trajan in later years.⁵² In view of his own later eminence, his brother's consulship and the deference shown him by the ex-praetor Pliny, it is possible that Mauricus also held the consulship, but there is no evidence on this point. His association with the more innocent of the Stoic group's activities - in which I would include philosophical discussion - can be deduced from his conviction with its other members, but the true nature of his involvement cannot be gauged.

Herennius Senecio's quaestorship admitted him to the senate. His subsequent lack of ambition with regard to political office need not have been accompanied by similar reservations about attendance at the senate. It is possible that he and the other members of the "opposition group" were as assiduous in their attendance at the senate and as voluble in its discussions - even if these were con-

49. Pl.Ep.I.5. The centumviral court dealt with inheritance claims. Regulus attempted to trap Pliny during this case into incriminating himself politically. Thus even non-political court cases could have political overtones. See ch.3,#3 for Regulus' attitude to the group.

50. Tac.H.IV.40

51. Pl.Ep.I.14, and I.5: vir est gravis prudens, multis experimentis eruditus, et qui futura possit ex praeteritis providere. Martial 5.28.5

52. Pl.Ep.IV.22

centrated on trivial topics⁵³ - as Thrasea Paetus had been until 63 A.D., and as Helvidius Priscus must have been until his exile.⁵⁴ His admiration for Helvidius Priscus I might even have led him to imitate his outspokenness. Whether or not this was the case, it is unlikely that Herennius Senecio's actions were hampered by imperial sanctions or by his own prudence. The charge that he did not seek higher office assumes his ability to have sought it if he had wished, while his behaviour in other spheres indicates his willingness to expose himself to danger for the sake of a moral commitment.

This tendency - so typical of the martyrs of the Stoic group - was displayed not only in his part in writing Priscus' biography, but also in his willingness to champion just causes in adverse circumstances. For example, in 83⁵⁵ he undertook to represent one Valerius Licinianus who was suspected by Domitian of having violated the vestal virgin Cornelia. Licinianus was eventually persuaded by his friends to plead guilty to the charge. His confession earned him the relatively mild punishment of exile,⁵⁶ and freed Senecio of the need to defend him.⁵⁷

53. as Pliny (Pan.54,66) and Tacitus (Ag.3) would have us believe.

54. Epict.Disc.I.2.xiv-xxiv.

55. There is some doubt about the date. Apparently there were two trials. At the first, Cornelia was tried with other vestals, and she alone acquitted. She was later tried again and convicted. The second trial is variously placed at 91/2 (Jerome), 89 (Chronicon Paschale) and 90 (M.P.Charlesworth, CAH XI.37). See Philostratus Ap.Ty.VII.6, Suet.Dom.8, Dio/Xiph.LXVII.i.iii², Dio/Exc.Val.LXVII.4 for general information about the trial information about the trial of the vestals, and Sherwin White, Pl/HSC ad loc.Pl.Ep.IV.11 for a discussion of the date of Cornelia's trial.

56. The other offenders were beaten to death with rods.

57. Herennius Senecio came to Domitian with the words "ex advocato nuntius actus sum; Licinianus recessit." Pl.Ep.IV.11

Yet Senecio had been prepared to defend him - had, in short, agreed to risk offending Domitian by championing a man whom the rather moralistic emperor⁵⁸ considered to be guilty of an act of the most flagrant impropriety.⁵⁹ In accepting the task - whether as an obligation imposed by friendship, or from a belief in Licianus' innocence - Senecio was declaring his willingness to observe a moral commitment, no matter what the possible harm to himself. As it happened, his part in it was not offensive to Domitian, save for his association with a confessed sinner.

In 92, the senate selected Pliny and Herennius Senecio to assist the people of Hispania Baetica in their prosecution of their former governor Baebius Massa on a charge de rebus repetundis. Baebius Massa was convicted and his property confiscated. He then appealed to the consuls for its restitution. Herennius Senecio learned of his appeal and asked Pliny to aid him in opposing it. Pliny said that it was no longer their affair, since they had discharged their legal obligation in prosecuting Baebius Massa. Herennius Senecio, however, pleaded that he himself was under a moral obligation to continue to protect the interests of the people of Hispania Baetica, since he had served his quaestorship there and had ties with the people of the province. Persuaded, Pliny accompanied him to the consuls' court. Infuriated at this unexpected opposition, Baebius Massa turned on Herennius Senecio and accused him of acting more like a personal enemy than a prosecutor, and threatened to charge Senecio with impietas. Pliny hastened to urge his own agreement with Senecio's cause, thus deflecting some of Baebius Massa's antipathy for the time being.⁶⁰ The precise outcome of this episode

58. e.g. Suet.Dom.8

59. Nor was Domitian alone in this belief. Licinianus was still in exile when Pliny wrote Ep.IV.11. Nerva had not seen fit to recall him.

60. Pl.Ep.IV.33

is not recorded. Apparently no charge of impietas was instituted, but it seems likely that Baebius Massa regained his property. He was, it would seem, a powerful man held in contempt by certain senatorials. In the Histories, Tacitus spoke of him (in A.D.70) as "iam tunc optimo cuique exitiosus et inter causas malorum quae mox tulimus saepe rediturus."⁶¹ In commending the fortunate timing of Agricola's death in early 93, Tacitus recalls "et Massa Baebius iam tum reus erat"⁶², suggesting that Baebius Massa's prosecution had raised hopes that his power was at an end, and that these hopes were subsequently dashed. It would appear that Herennius Senecio's sense of moral obligation had won him a powerful enemy.

We know that there were women in the Domitianic Stoic group because three of them were convicted with the men in 93. Apart from the facts relating to Fannia's conviction, however, we know nothing of the part these women played in the group's activities. Similarly, it is likely that the group continued to associate regularly with Stoic philosophers but evidence is lacking on this point.

The Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus had joined with others in the group in A.D.69-70 to avenge the wrongs done its dead heroes of 66, and later been exiled by Vespasian for some cause presumably related to the group's activities.⁶³ He had therefore demonstrated his willingness to work with the group. Yet his part in the group during Domitian's reign is not clear. He was in Syria in 81-83, when Pliny was military tribune in that province.⁶⁴ Was Musonius still in exile? One account has it that he had returned in 79 under Titus.⁶⁵ Perhaps the more exacting Domitian insisted on enforcing his father's order, for Vespasian's edicts should have remained in force during Domitian's reign.

61. Tac.H.IV.50

62. Tac.Ag.45

63. see chapter 3, n.98

64. Pl.Ep.III.11

65. see n.64 above.

Musonius' daughter married the philosopher Artemidorus, known to us only through Pliny, who met him, too, in Syria in 81-3. Between this date and 93, Artemidorus had made his way to Rome, where he fell into some kind of danger which Pliny associated both with Domitian's renewed expulsion of philosophers and with the fates of the members of the Stoic group.⁶⁶ Artemidorus took refuge in the suburbs of Rome, where he was visited and assisted by Pliny. Artemidorus' connexion by marriage with a group which placed particular importance on such connexions and Pliny's account of his situation in 93 strongly suggest his association with the Domitianic Stoic group. Pliny thought highly of him as a philosopher⁶⁷. Possibly it was he who provided the stimulus for philosophic discourse with his Roman friends.⁶⁸

There may have been other people associated with the group under Domitian, but no further evidence can be gleaned on this point. It is, however, clear that at least some of the members of the group were sufficiently well connected to gain high office. They were neither shunned by their peers nor positively impeded by their emperor. The men of the group, unhampered by any stigma attached to its past history, pursued the political and litigious activities of Roman men of affairs. More than this, they chose on occasion to place prudence after morality in their choice of actions. Some of their activities were of the type to win them powerful enemies, while others amounted to conscious and dangerous opposition to an inclement emperor. In 92, before the blow fell, the group must have appeared to be secure but surprisingly contemptuous of caution.

66. Pl.Ep.III.11

67. nam ex omnibus, qui nunc se philosophos vocant, vix unum aut alterum invenies tanta sinceritate, tanta veritate. Pl.Ep. III.11

68. Artemidorus' impecuniousness, his apparently Syrian origins and his profession suggest a foreign origin.

4. The Expulsion of Philosophers Under Domitian and the Stoic Group

It is known that philosophers were expelled from Rome during Domitian's rule, as they had been during Vespasian's, but there is disagreement on whether Domitian expelled them once or twice. The issue does not really affect this discussion, and will therefore be discussed more briefly than its complexity would merit in other contexts.

Aulus Gellius⁶⁹ gives no date for the one expulsion which he records. Eusebius is the only source which states explicitly that there were two expulsions. Both the Latin and the Armenian versions place these at 88-90 and 93-95 A.D.⁷⁰

Dudley⁷¹ suggests that the first expulsion took place in 89, at the time of the conspiracy of Saturninus, that is, when Domitian allegedly became more suspicious in general.⁷² There is no way of authenticating or disproving such a suggestion. The only supporting evidence for the theory of two separate expulsions is the word αὐθις in Dio's account of the expulsion of A.D.93.⁷³ This is poor evidence. The word could as well refer to the expulsion under Vespasian in c.74. If Domitian reiterated a measure passed by Vespasian, it would be reasonable to link the acts of father and son with the word αὐθις. Certainly it is not forceful enough to provide support for the account of Eusebius, which could not be regarded as quite trustworthy if uncorroborated.

71. A History of Cynicism pp.137-8

72. see n.7 of this chapter

73. Dio/Xiph. LXVII.13.iii. See overleaf n.76 for the full quotation and its connexion with the trials of members of the Stoic group.

It has even been suggested⁷⁴ that Pliny's letter concerning his own visit to Artemidorus⁷⁵ refers to two separate occasions: the first, "cum essent philosophi ab urbe summoti", and the second, on which Pliny's friends in the Stoic group were exiled or executed. If so, Pliny has chosen a strangely obscure way in which to express it. Anybody reading the letter in isolation would take it that Pliny was describing a single incident. It seems more reasonable to suspect Eusebius' accuracy than Pliny's prose style.

The question must remain an open one, since the evidence is inconclusive on both sides. Even those, however, who argue for two expulsions under Domitian agree that the second of these coincided with the persecution of the Stoic group in 93. Thus the point of greatest interest to this study - namely, the connexion between the expulsion of philosophers and the activities of the Stoic group - is unaffected by the controversy concerning the number of expulsions.

It is impossible to determine the precise relation between the expulsion and the prosecutions, but that there was some relation is certain. Dio says that in addition to the other charges, Arulenus Rusticus was accused of "philosophizing" or "being a philosopher", that many others also perished as a result of this accusation of philosophy, and that the remaining philosophers were then expelled a second time⁷⁶: a confusing conglomeration of facts.

74. by R.H.Harte (JRS xxv.51 ff.)

75. Pl.Ep.III.11

76. Dio/Xiph.LXVII.13.

ii) τὸν γὰρ δὴ Ροῦστικὸν τὸν Ἀρουλήνον ἀπέκτεινεν ὅτι ἐφιλοσόφει καὶ . . .

iii) ἄλλοι τε ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ταύτης τῆς κατὰ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν αἰτίας συχνοὶ διώλοντο καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ πάντες ἐξηλάθησαν αὐθις ἐκ τῆς Ῥώμης.

Suetonius also links the expulsion of philosophers specifically with the charges against Rusticus, but without any explanation of the connexion between philosophy and Rusticus himself.⁷⁷ Suetonius follows this information with the case of Helvidius Priscus II, which he does not appear to connect in the same way with the expulsion of philosophers.

Tacitus and Pliny mention the two incidents in the same passages without stating the connexion explicitly. In the opening chapters of the Agricola, Tacitus describes the character of Domitian's rule. He records the execution of Iunius Rusticus and Herennius Senecio and the fact that their offending works were burned by official order. He then speaks of the expulsion of philosophers, presenting it as another aspect of Domitian's repression.⁷⁸ In one of his letters,⁷⁹ Pliny explains that during his own praetorship⁸⁰ he had visited the philosopher Artemidorus and lent him money at the time of the expulsion of philosophers from the city. Pliny boasts of his own courage in doing this, "septem amicis aut occisis aut relegatis". The friends, whom he then names, are the seven people convicted in A.D.93 on the charges discussed above - those whom I take to have constituted the nucleus of the Stoic group under Domitian. Apparently Pliny also associated the prosecutions and the expulsion. If, as seems likely, Artemidorus was connected with the group, he was endangered on two counts.

77. Suet.Dom. 10 Iunium Rusticum (sc. interemit), quod..(see n. 14 for the concrete charge)...: cuius criminis occasione philosophos omnis urbe Italiaeque summovit.

78. Ag.2 scilicet illo igne vocem populi Romani et libertatem senatus et conscientiam generis humani aboleri arbitrabantur, expulsis insuper sapientiae professoribus.

79. Pl.Ep.III:11

80. Pliny's praetorship, unfortunately, is of no assistance in dating the incident. Rather, the date of the praetorship is usually held to be dependent on whether philosophers were expelled from Rome once or twice under Domitian. See, e.g., Sherwin-White, Plin./HSC, Appendix IV (also JRS 1957) for a summary of the differing views in the controversy.

What, then, was the connexion between the expulsion of philosophers and the trial of Stoic senators and women of the senatorial class? It is unlikely that all the sources could be mistaken in stating or hinting at such a link. The details are confused. Suetonius says that the philosophers were banished from Rome and Italy.⁸¹ Pliny, on the other hand, says only that they were banished from Rome⁸² - Artemidorus' presence in the suburbs of the city would otherwise be a flagrant breach of the law unlikely to be sanctioned by the staid Pliny at any time, least of all during his praetorship.

A more important detail for the purposes of this study is whether it was only professional philosophers who were expelled, as had been the case under Vespasian. The word philosophus, employed by Suetonius and Pliny alike, would indicate that this was so - an impression confirmed by Tacitus' testimony: "expulsis insuper sapientiae professoribus".⁸³ None of these three mentions executions in relation to the philosophers, and one would conclude from their evidence alone that the order was a mere repetition of Vespasian's earlier edict. But Dio's account introduces a new element, for in recording the charge of "philosophy" which was mentioned at Rusticus' trial, he speaks of "many others" who were executed on the same charge. It is hard to imagine who these others might have been. The expulsion order was a general one which included all philosophers. Artemidorus, for example, had not been singled out for special mention,⁸⁴ let alone for execution. The only known case which could fit Dio's evidence is that of the sophist Maternus, executed for delivering set speeches in which he inveighed against tyrants.⁸⁵ Apart from this case, it is impossible to guess

81. Suet.Dom.10.iv ...philosophos omnis urbe Italiaque summovit.

82. Pl.Ep.III.11 ...cum essent philosophi ab urbe summoti..

83. Tac.Ag.2

84. contrast this with Vespasian's edict in c. 73. In it, the philosophers Musonius Rufus, Hostilianus and Demetrius were mentioned by name Dio/Xiph.LXV.13.ii

85. see n.17 of this chapter

to whom Dio refers in his account, for Pliny and Tacitus, both interested witnesses at the time, refrain from giving any hints on the subject. Dio's evidence need not be rejected out of hand, but it is too vague to provide the basis for further suppositions.

Thus the timing of the expulsion and the way in which the sources connect it with the fates of the "Stoic seven" prosecuted in 93 make a connexion likely. The effect of the expulsion would have been to rid Rome of professional philosophers attached to noble houses, thereby breaking a long-standing Roman tradition but re-affirming the viewpoint of the emperor's father. If Domitian suspected that the members of the "Stoic group" had derived inspiration from tame philosophers for their disruptive practices, he would have had good reason to repeat his father's decree at the very time of the senatorial trials of 93. From the imperial point of view, both the prosecutions and the expulsion were legally justified.

The matter raises the question - which is, in the last analysis, unanswerable - of the form which the group's interest in philosophy took. As far as we know, Musonius Rufus was the only Roman member of the group throughout its history to combine political activity and professional philosophy.⁸⁶ Other members of the group discoursed with philosophers, while themselves having the status of keen amateurs who were still students. References are found to such exchanges between Thrasea Paetus and the Cynic Demetrius,⁸⁷ or between Thrasea Paetus and Musonius Rufus.⁸⁸ Barea Soranus, despite his years,⁸⁹ was termed a "student" of Egnatius Celer.

86. see n.96, chapter 3.

87. Tac. Ann. XVI.34

88. Epict. Disc. I.1.26

89. though of consular rank, he was described by Juvenal (Sat. III. 116-7) as the amicus discipulusque of Egnatius of Celer.

The anecdotes preserved through Epictetus show the thoughtfulness of different members of the group⁹⁰. Pliny treasured some of the sayings of Thræsea Paetus which he himself had by hearsay.⁹¹ Yet all of this provides a poor basis for reconstructing the way in which these people thought and the place philosophy filled in their lives. Seneca's letters give an idea of the subject and tone of discussions of first century Roman Stoics, but even he was relatively professional⁹². The later writings of the emperor Marcus Aurelius provide the only extensive record of the thoughts of an amateur Stoic.

For whatever reason, the emperor and those who tried the Stoic group in 93 deemed that philosophy played too great a part in the lives of some of its adherents, for it counted at least against Rusticus at his trial. It may not have constituted a formal charge, but it was at least worth mentioning in the interests of discrediting the defendant - just as it was worth Regulus' mentioning after Rusticus' death: proving that Stoicism could be a weakness even out of court. If Tacitus saw the expulsion of philosophers as the banishment of culture and morality from Rome,⁹³ there may well have been others who at heart retained a Roman contempt for the long-haired foreigners who were its most striking exponents⁹⁴ and for the suspect (and undeniably tiresome) fellow-Romans who took the philosophers too seriously.⁹⁵

90. See Epict. Disc. I. 2. xii-xxiv for stories concerning Paconius Agrippinus and Helvidius Priscus I.

91. e.g. Pl. Ep. VI. 29, VIII. 22

92. in that he was Nero's tutor and held to be an authority.

93. Tac. Ag. 2. After recounting the burning of the biographies of Thræsea and Helvidius Priscus I, and the expulsion of philosophers Tacitus comments: *atque omni bona arte in exilium acta, ne quid usquam honestum occurreret.*

94. In lauding the philosopher Euphrates, Pliny reveals Roman expectations by his reassurances: *nullus horror in cultu, nulla tristitia, multum severitatis; revaris occursum, non reformides.* Ep. I. 10. In particular, the vagrant Cynics, so opposed to hot baths, must have made a strong impression on the shaved and much-washed Romans.

95. Ironically, within a page of criticizing Domitian for banishing the philosophers, Tacitus commends Agricola's mother for checking her son's interest in philosophy. Ag. 4. Cf. Suetonius, Nero 52, where Nero's mother performs the same service for her son.

5. Domitian and the Stoic Group

The question remains as to why Domitian should have wished to eradicate the Stoic group. He had been on the throne for twelve years by 93 A.D. During those twelve years the members of the group had apparently been free to pursue the careers usual for people of their class. And yet all those executed - Herennius Senecio, Arulenus Rusticus, and Helvidius Priscus II - had been guilty of positive acts of opposition to the ruling regime. Works had been written with the intention of glorifying opponents of past emperors and of ridiculing the reigning one. Herennius Senecio's refusal to seek higher political office was a public declaration of his opinion of Domitian's rule.

The group had given offence to Domitian in a fairly obvious way, then. The question which then arises is not why Domitian wished to have them punished for treason, but why this time should have been chosen for it - why, in short, he had waited so long. One answer could be that he tolerated the group at first because he realized its innocuousness, but became more suspicious of all forms of protest after the revolt of Saturninus in 89.⁹⁶ This cannot, however, be the whole reason. Iunius Rusticus was permitted to hold the consulship in 92 and Herennius was initially successful in his prosecution of Baebius Massa in the same year.

Perhaps it needs to be stated that the trials were not entirely Domitian's work. He might well have approved of them, but there were many prominent senatorials who had good reason to hate the defendants of 93 A.D. M. Aquilius Regulus still nursed resentment at the attack which had been made on him in the senate A.D. 70 by Curtius Montanus, of the Stoic group. Regulus and Mettius Carus - the pro-

96. see n.7 of this chapter

secutor of Herennius Senecio - rejoiced in the purge of 93.⁹⁷ Others who had provided targets for the group in 69/70 may have become powerful in the meantime. Those who had joined in crushing the defendants of 93 were still influential even after Domitian's death. This was demonstrated when Pliny attempted to avenge his friends in 97, under Nerva. Pliny's colleagues had advised him against this course, arguing that his accusations would be odious to people of moment. As it was, Pliny attacked Publicius Certus rather than Regulus - whom he had so longed to bring down⁹⁸ - and even this more prudent attack was a failure. Nerva had no taste for continuing recriminations which would upset the equilibrium of the senate.⁹⁹

It is likely that Domitian had by 93 taken note of the Stoic senators and disliked what he knew of them. They expressed only too clearly their opinion of his rule. They had made many enemies in the course of their careers and had inherited others as a result of their own and their predecessors' actions. It remained for some of these people to urge upon Domitian the desirability of crushing the Stoic group entirely.

It is probable that this occurred after the celebrated case¹⁰⁰ (and its sequel) in which Pliny and Herennius Senecio secured the conviction of Baebius Massa for extortion. Pliny somehow emerged from the episode unscathed, but one gains the impression that Baebius Massa entertained a strong and vengeful hatred of Herennius Senecio as a result of it. Baebius Massa evidently recouped his position after this setback and probably enjoyed a position of some power.¹⁰¹ It could be that he initiated a move to destroy the members of the Stoic group, who constituted an opposition to corruption

97. Pl.Ep.I.5

98. " " " "

99. Pl.Ep.IX.13. Cf. Tac.H.IV.44

100. Tacitus deemed the episode worthy of inclusion in his historical works: Pl.Ep.VII.33. He alluded to it Ag. 45.

101. Tac.Ag.45

in all its forms, whether in the person of the princeps, or of a fellow-senator. If Baebius had wished it, he could have mustered considerable support from others who disliked the self-righteous Stoic senators: enough, certainly, to influence a senatorial vote. If he or Regulus or any of the group's enemies had then approached the emperor and gained his assent to the process, the result of the projected trials would have been a foregone conclusion. From early in the principate, it had been the case that if it were known that the emperor wished the vote to go in a certain way, it would do so. Under a ruler of a repressive turn, this would certainly be the case.

6. Summary

The rule of Domitian was not conducive to senatorial liberty, particularly to independent debate. If the group chose to express its independence within the senate, there is no evidence of it. The members of the group nevertheless pursued active political careers. The one person who did not do so, made his choice as a gesture of protest against the nature of Domitian's rule. There is evidence that the Stoic senators showed no reserve in engaging in legal cases, particularly those in which a moral principle was at stake. Several members of the group engaged in literary works which they must have known would seem to the emperor to be of a treasonable nature.

The attack on the group was probably occasioned by a court case concerning Baebius Massa, who then turned on the members of the group. He was able to muster support from other powerful senators antagonized by the Stoics and to persuade the emperor to give his support to their accusations and to reinforce their effect by banishing from Rome all professional philosophers. This would have the effect of discrediting the philosophy to which the members of the group had been known to be attached.

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CHAPTER 5

AFTER DOMITIAN: AN EPILOGUE

It has been noted in passing¹ that the emperor Nerva, who succeeded Domitian in 96, showed little enthusiasm for the attempt which Pliny made in 97 to take revenge on the senators responsible for the prosecution of the Stoic group four years earlier. It is evident that Nerva was thinking of the importance of political stability² rather than indicating any antipathy to the Stoic group. Iunius Mauricus, a member of the group who returned to Rome in 97 together with others who had been exiled under Domitian,³ was invited to dine at the emperor's table - a mark of imperial favour.⁴ We know of this because Mauricus chose just such an occasion to display that disregard for anything save the promptings of conscience which had characterized the Stoic group in the past and earned it so much hardship. Mauricus disturbed the mood of a speculative dinner conversation by acidly drawing attention to the fact that Fabricius Veiento - who had been adviser to Nero and Domitian⁵ - was also present as a guest of the emperor. That Mauricus suffered no consequences for his tactlessness was indicative of changing imperial attitudes. Such a remark was still considered daring,⁶ but no longer treasonable.

1. chapter 4, #5. See Pl.Ep.IX.13

2. Dio/Xiph.LXVIII.1.iii

3. Dio/Xiph.LXVIII.1.ii. In Pl.Ep.I.5, written soon after Domitian's assassination, Pliny speaks of awaiting Mauricus' return.

4. Pl.Ep.IV.22

5. A.Didius Fabricius Veiento was exiled in A.D.62 for having taken money from people who wished him to use his influence with Nero to gain them favours Tac.Ann.XIV.50. He later returned under the Flavians and became an adviser to Domitian. Pliny (Ep.IV.22) and Juvenal (Sat.III.185,IV.113-29) hint that he was an informer, no specific statement is made. He opposed Pliny's retributive attempt in the senate in 97 (above,Pl.Ep.IX.13), and may have been a personal enemy of Mauricus. W.C.McDermott,"Fabricius Veiento", AJP XCI.2 (1970) pp.129-48 argues that Veiento had in fact reformed after Nero's reign. Sherwin White (Pliny/HSC)p.300 takes the same view.

6. by the cautious Pliny, at any rate. Pl.Ep.IV.22

The ruler soon changed, but this aspect of the rule did not. Trajan, adopted by Nerva in 97,⁷ succeeded him in 98. We are told that Trajan was a benevolent emperor who respected the rights of the senatorial class⁸ - including the right to free speech.⁹ Predictably enough, once given this licence, they had little wish to speak save to thank the emperor who had granted them this privilege.¹⁰

Under Trajan's rule, Mauricus' position was assured. He became a member of Trajan's consilium.¹¹ After so many years in "opposition", the depleted Stoic group now had a member close to the seat of power. Not that this silenced Mauricus. He once expressed to the emperor's face the opinion that it would thing if games were eliminated from Rome entirely - another gesture which Pliny found courageously frank. It is interesting that both these examples of his outspokenness before emperors show him as voicing attitudes which had been expressed before by members of the "Stoic opposition" in public.¹² Yet the fact that he sat on Trajan's consilium lent his words a different emphasis altogether. Any such remarks could be accepted as the legitimate expression of the opinion of a well-meaning adviser to the emperor, emanating from one whose loyalty was amply demonstrated. It was

7. Dio/Xiph.LXVIII.3.iv

8. Dio/Xiph.LXVIII.7.iii,Pl.Pan.23

9. Pl.Pan.54. See also Tac.Ag.3 in which Tacitus says that Nerva had succeeded in reconciling the principate and libertas - a concept usually associated with senatorial independence of debate - and that Trajan continued the process.

10. Pl.Pan.42 The whole of the Panegyric and parts of Tacitus' Agricola show that flattery was the order of the day still. Perhaps the difference was that senators spontaneously bestowed on Trajan the praise they had felt compelled to offer Domitian. On this, see Pl.Ep.VI.27 (cited chapter 3, n.25).

11. Pl.Ep.IV.22

12. cf. Thræsea's attitude to the Syracusan gladiatorial games in 58 Tac. Ann.XIII.48 and to Nero's games, the Iuvenalia, in 59 See also the general accusation Tac. Ann.XVI.22. This opposition to frivolity and lack of dignity remained a serious issue for the members of the Stoic "opposition". They were in truth rigidi et tristes!

Mauricus' opinion of Veiento reflects the same attitude displayed in the attempt 69/70 - in which Mauricus had participated - to bring down the Neronian delatores. Tac.H.IV.7-8,10,40 sqq. and chapter 3 #2. Even if Veiento was not an informer, it is apparent that Pliny, Mauricus and Juvenal assigned him to the same genus.

not the sentiments of the "Stoic opposition" which had changed, then, but the imperial attitude to them. Trajan was the first emperor who had the good sense to use the qualities which had always been evidenced by members of the "Stoic opposition".

It is difficult to discern why Trajan was able to see what had been hidden from previous rulers. He was unusually self-confident and felt no need to protect himself from unreasonable fears¹³ - but Vespasian had been equally confident.¹⁴ Perhaps his friendship with the Stoic philosopher Dio of Prusa contributed to his acceptance of Roman Stoics - but the same principle had not applied with Nero, who had for a time worked closely with the Stoic Seneca. Perhaps several such factors contributed in part to Trajan's attitude.

It might well have been the case that Trajan was bent on convincing his subjects that his rule would be very different from that of Domitian,¹⁵ whose memory remained with the senatorial class in particular. The sources suggest that the Stoic group and its persecution in 93 had become a symbol of Domitianic repression.¹⁶ To accept the group - or one of its few survivors - so wholeheartedly would be an obvious way for Trajan to show the senate that the past was dead and old fears might be laid aside.

13. e.g. Dio/Xiph. LXVIII.6.iv

14. Suet. Vesp. 25

15. Unlike his predecessors, Trajan permitted criticism of former emperors. Pl. Pan. 54

16. See chapter 4, #2 (especially p.100) for the way in which the sufferings of the group were presented. Contrast in particular Suetonius' and Dio's attitude to the victims of 93 with their treatment of Helvidius Priscus I's opposition to Vespasian, an emperor they both favoured.

Once established, this policy of tolerance was accepted by successive emperors and no more is heard of the Stoic group in relation to the government. If the group continued to exist, it made no mark on history. It is possible that there was still a group, but that it was no longer of interest to historians once it had become reconciled with the established order. By the time of the emperor Marcus (161-180), its heroes had been acknowledged as symbols of virtue.¹⁷ Marcus himself was taught and advised by a Iunius Rusticus, a member of the senatorial class and a Stoic,¹⁸ who was probably the son or grandson of the Iunius Arulenus Rusticus (brother of Iunius Mauricus) executed for his part in the activities of the Stoic group under Domitian. Marcus' adviser, Rusticus seems to have been as undaunted as Mauricus had been in offering his opinion to the emperor without considering how welcome it might be.¹⁹ His candour was repaid with honours. Times had changed indeed. Marcus was influenced by Iunius Rusticus to devote himself seriously to the study of philosophy²⁰ and the Roman world actually had a Stoic emperor. From having been seen as a threat to good government, Stoics were at last encouraged in the second century to put their distinctive energies and conscientiousness to the service of the principate.

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 17. Marcus ad seips. I.14. See chapter 3 #4 for the tradition concerning Helvidius Priscus I and Tac. Ann. for Thrasea Paetus' stature.

18. SHA Ant. 3, Dio LXXI.35 and see chapter 4 n.24. Iunius Rusticus was consul in 133 (CIL III.p.1978.VI.858) and 162 (Fasti cos.) He was also praefectus urbi c. 165-8 Acta Martyr. RE. vol.X.1 Iunius 146, PIR² II.p.243

19. Marcus speaks of the anger he sometimes felt with Rusticus ad seips. I.17

20. Marcus ad seips. I.7

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the two features which emerge most strikingly from a study of the "Stoic opposition" are its conservatism and its mildness. At their most radical and explicit, its spokesmen advocated the maintenance of the status quo or the checking of a new trend.¹ This conservatism was reflected in the group's methods, all of which were legal. Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus I chose to disregard convention but always observed the letter of the law. The political innocence of the Stoic group was shown by its faith in such moribund instruments as senatorial debate and by its lack of secrecy. Quixotic and irritating rather than revolutionary and dangerous, the "Stoic opposition" gained most of its significance from the unwarranted harshness of the attempts to suppress it.

Uniformity and solidarity were apparently not prized by the Stoic group. Some members showed greater audacity than others. Thrasea walked from the senate alone when Agrippina's death was announced, and Helvidius Priscus I was the only member of the group to persist in contradicting Vespasian in the senate. Neither man expected his colleagues to act with him. Each member of the group was supposed to follow the dictates of his conscience and was respected for doing so.

1. e.g. Thrasea Paetus' objection to the use of the law de maiestate minuta under Nero A.D.62 Tac.Ann.XIV.48,49

Even the occasion for protest by these men was haphazard by normal standards. Many death sentences were passed on senators during Nero's reign without objection from Thrasea Paetus, yet he was moved to voluble fury by provincial presumption.² The outspoken Helvidius Priscus I himself apparently accepted the check imposed by Mucianus in A.D.70 on senatorial reprisals against the Neronian prosecutors.³ Thus even opposition offered in the senate tended to consist of discussion of ad hoc issues and not of the underlying principles which they represented.

This idiosyncratic and erratic mode of "opposition" gives little support for any view that it was inspired by a fixed ethical imperative or directed towards a pre-determined end. Conspirators bent on achieving assassination can always agree to act together to achieve their short-term, dramatic goal. The bonds which held together the members of the Stoic group carried no such obligation to unity. Their respect for individuality and the lack of secrecy in their methods bear witness to the vagueness of their own conception of opposition. If, for example, they had really hoped to restore the Republic or to prevent the succession of Titus and Domitian, one would expect them to agree on some plan of action to gain these specific ends.

Instead, they served the existing political order. All male Romans known to be members of the Stoic group held political office and sat in the senate. Thrasea Paetus, Iunius Rusticus, Helvidius Priscus II and possibly Iunius Mauricus attained the consulship. If withdrawal from political life was intended and taken as crit-

2. Tac.Ann.XV.20-22. Cf. the criticisms levelled at Thrasea by other senators in A.D.58 Tac.Ann.XIII.49

3. Tac.H.IV.44

icism of the ruling emperor, the corollary must be true: participation in political life represented acceptance at some level of the legitimacy of the rule of the current princeps. Conscientious in all spheres, members of the Stoic group probably took their civic duties more seriously than other members of their class.⁴

There is almost no evidence for the view that it was hereditary succession to which Roman Stoics objected. The passages from Dio⁵ on which any such hypothesis must be based can be explained otherwise.⁶ Stoic theory provided no fixed ideal of behaviour for those confronted with a bad king - and the practice of the Stoic group's members reflects the same lack of rigidity. Stoics such as Seneca and, later, Iunius Mauricus and Iunius Rusticus satisfied their consciences by advising monarchs⁷, rather than opposing them. This was quite in accordance with Stoic teachings.⁸

If the Stoic group was Republican, it consisted of poor Republicans indeed, for its members held office under monarchs, annually swore oaths of loyalty to them and issued edicts in their names. When Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus neglected their duties in these respects, it was remarked upon.⁹ It cannot, therefore, have been

4. e.g. both Thrasea Paetus and Herennius Senecio undertook the task of prosecuting influential people on charges de rebus repetundis Tac. Ann. XVI.21, Pl. Ep. VII.33. Witness also Thrasea's fussy insistence on debating the most minor questions in the senate Tac. Ann. XVI.22 until his withdrawal from public life, and Helvidius Priscus I's feeling that as a senator he was obliged to attend the senate and to speak in it Epict. Disc. I.2.xix-xxiv.

5. Dio/Xiph. LXV.12.i, Dio/Exc. Val. 12.ii

6. See chapter 3, #4

7. Seneca served Nero (e.g. Dio/Xiph. LXI.3-10, Tac. Ann. XIII, XIV passim, Suet. Nero 7,35,52); Mauricus advised Nerva and Trajan (Pl. Ep. IV.22) and Iunius Rusticus aided the emperor Marcus (Marcus ad seips. I.7, I.17.vi).

8. e.g. Chrysippus (cited by Plutarchus, de Stoic. repugn. Cp.20 p.1043 bc. = SVF III. §691) said that the wise man, if unable to rule himself, should live with a king and assist him to rule. See chapter 1, #3

9. Tac. Ann. XVI.22 on Thrasea Paetus' failure to take this oath; Suet. Vesp. 15 on Helvidius Priscus I's omission of Vespasian's name and titles from the edicts which Priscus issued as praetor in A.D.70.

the usual practice of members of the group to fail to serve and to honour the current ruler. Certainly no attempt was made to depose or replace any princeps. The most eccentric of the group were punctilious in their observation of the constitution. They showed no sign of wishing radically to alter it.

It has already been said that Stoicism provided no formula for right behaviour in specific situations. One was not told, for example, that it was improper for the wise man to perform on the stage, but the serious Stoic knew that once he made up his mind on a moral issue, his philosophy impelled him to observe the practical consequences of his judgment, so that if he decided against acting on the stage, he must abide by this.

There were many aspects of Roman society which the Stoic group deplored: the decline of morality, extravagance, hypocrisy, the elevation of freedmen by emperors, the accumulation of imperial power and the concomitant loss of senatorial importance. The Stoic group was not alone in its feelings on these subjects. Many members of the senatorial class shared their feelings- they had them because they were Romans and senators who took pride in the traditional achievements and virtues of their class and citizenship. The people of the Stoic group held the feelings for the same reason. They differed from the others in having the courage to display them and to accept the consequences of this with fortitude. This was the gift of their philosophy.

Stoicism, then, provided them with the certainty of the rightness of their chosen course and with the courage to run it. It was moreover the link which the members of the group had in common. As their association continued, it was cemented by friendship, marriage and common suffering.

With the death of Domitian, the remaining members of the Stoic group ceased to act as opposition in any sense. Iunius Mauricus, returned from exile under Nerva, became a member of Trajan's consilium. He continued to express his opinions with distinctive independence, but his remarks no longer constituted opposition. Similarly, his nephew Iunius Rusticus acted as adviser to Marcus. One gathers that he, too, was uninhibited in stating his views, but this was not seen as opposition.

The attitudes of the Stoic group had not changed, but the way in which its members were regarded by the imperial regime had altered. What had under more repressive or misguided rulers been treated as opposition was now regarded as eccentric independence. The rulers of the second century lost nothing by this. The opposition offered by the group had never represented a threat to the imperial system. Punishment had defined it as seditious, tolerance demonstrated it to be over-zealous moral vigilance. With the reign of Marcus 161-180, Stoicism became thoroughly respectable. It had run full cycle since its loss of reputation a century before under Nero, and the concept of a "Stoic opposition" was an historic curiosity.

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PROSOPOGRAPHICAL INDEX

P.AFRANIUS Burrus prefect of the praetorian guard from 51 under Claudius (Tac.Ann.XII.42). He and Annaeus Seneca cooperated in guiding the young emperor Nero in the early years of his reign c.54-60 Tac.Ann.XII.2-6, Dio LXI.3.iii. Their influence gradually waned, however, until Burrus' death in 62, when Seneca left the palace Tac.Ann.XIV.52

L.ANNAEUS Seneca a prominent orator and Stoic of the first century. Seneca came of an equestrian family, Tac.Ann. XIV.53, but had been admitted to the senate by the time of Gaius' rule Dio 59.xix.7. He was exiled in 41 for having committed adultery with Julia Livilla, a member of the imperial family Dio LX.8.v, LXI.10.i. In 49 he was recalled at the instigation of Nero's mother Agrippina, who had recently married the emperor Claudius. Seneca became Nero's tutor and was awarded a praetorship Tac.Ann.XII.8. He held the consulship in 56. During the early years of Nero's rule, Seneca and the praetorian prefect Afranius Burrus exerted considerable influence over the young emperor, but by 62, when Burrus died, this influence had declined and Seneca took the opportunity to acknowledge his loss of power by leaving the palace to lead a more retired life. Tac.Ann. XIV.52-56, XV.45, Sen.de Tranq.An.IV.i, Ep.68. In 65, Seneca was accused of complicity in the conspiracy of Piso (see chapter 2, #3) and compelled to commit suicide.

ANTEIA wife of Helvidius Priscus II, a member of the Stoic group under Domitian. He was executed after the trials of 93 in which seven members of the group were convicted of treason. Between 93 and 97, Anteia married again. In 97, under Nerva Pliny attempted to avenge Priscus' memory and recoup some of his confiscated property for his daughter Pl.Ep.IX.13. Anteia could be a connexion of the consular P.Anteius Rufus who was executed under Nero A.D. 66 Tac.Ann.14

M.AQUILIUS Regulus a skilled forensic orator. Regulus gained his fortune and the quaestorship (which gained him admission to the senate) under Nero, chiefly as a result of several successful prosecutions. He was attacked in the senate in 69 by Curtius Montanus, a member of the Stoic group, as part of the group's plan to punish Neronian de-latores, but the case was dropped. Tac.H.IV.42-4. He subsequently became powerful under the Flavians (Pl.Ep.I.5) and retained this power even under Nerva (see chapter 4, #5). Pliny consistently criticizes him in the Epistulae,

perhaps because Regulus disliked the Stoic group, with some of whom Pliny was very friendly. It seems that Regulus ceased to prosecute people regularly for profit under Domitian, although Pliny speaks of him as if he were still a delator. After the downfall of the Stoic group in 93 under Domitian, Regulus and a friend of his invited people to hear them recite speeches in which they vilified the dead Stoics. Regulus' hatred of the group had presumably originated with Curtius Montanus' attack on him in 69.

ARRIA II daughter of Caecina Paetus and Arria I. She married Thrasea Paetus, leader of the Stoic group under Nero, and bore him a daughter, Fannia. When Thrasea was compelled to commit suicide in 66 after his trial for treason, Arria wished to join him, but Thrasea persuaded her that their daughter needed her too much. Tac. Ann. XVI.34. Suspected under Domitian of complicity in the "opposition" activities of the Stoic group, Arria was exiled in 93 A.D., together with Fannia, Gratilla and Iunius Mauricus Pl. Ep. III.11. Arria was a close friend of Pliny Pl. Ep. IX.13.iii. She remained a member of the Stoic group in her own right after the death of her husband.

ARTEMIDORUS a professional Stoic philosopher, and probably a Syrian. He was a disciple of the Stoic Musonius Rufus, who chose him as a son-in-law. Pliny went to Syria as military tribune in A.D. 81-2 and there met Artemidorus and Musonius Rufus. He admired both and became intimate with Artemidorus, who was more of an age with Pliny himself. Artemidorus later came to Rome and was endangered somehow at the time of the trial of the Stoic group and the expulsion of philosophers in 93 A.D. Pliny was praetor at the time. He lent Artemidorus some assistance in his plight Pl. Ep. III.11

BAREA Soranus consul A.D. 53 Tac. Ann. XII.53, and later proconsul of Asia. His stay in Asia overlapped with that of the Stoic Rubellius Plautus, who lived there 59-62. Plautus was executed there in 62 on an apparently false charge of treason, and Barea subsequently came under suspicion because of his friendship with Plautus and because he had prevented Nero's freedman from taking art treasures at will from the province. He was eventually brought to trial formally in 66, together with his own daughter Servilia and Thrasea Paetus, the leader of the Stoic group under Nero - to which

Barea Soranus, too, was probably attached. The Stoic philosopher Egnatius Celer of Berytos, formerly the friend, client and teacher of Barea Soranus - gave evidence against Barea at the trial. All three defendants were convicted and sentenced to death. Three other members of the group implicated on lesser charges were given milder sentences. The Stoic Musonius Rufus, whom Barea Soranus had known in Asia with Rubellius Plautus, attempted to avenge Soranus' memory in A.D.69 Tac.Ann. XVI.23 sqq., Dio LXII.26.i,iii

P.CLODIUS Thrasea Paetus leader of the Stoic group under Nero. Thrasea Paetus held the consulship in 56 and subsequently became quindecemvir. He was married to Arria II by 42 Pl.Ep.III.16. Thrasea Paetus and Arria had a daughter, Fannia, whom they gave in marriage to the young Stoic senator, Helvidius Priscus I, who was still a quaestor at the time. From early in Nero's reign, Thrasea Paetus had distinguished himself by shows of independence in the senate, by which (Tac.Ann.XIII.49, XIV.48-9) he displayed his disapproval of Nero and various aspects of his reign. He was the centre of a group of people - all of them, like Thrasea, devotees of Stoic philosophy and all disgusted with Nero's ways - which constituted a mild "opposition" to Nero's rule. In 63 Thrasea ceased to attend the senate or to perform his religious duties. As a result, he was finally tried in 66 for treason and convicted. He committed suicide Tac.Ann.XVI.23 sqq. Others of the group were condemned at the same time, while three (his son-in-law Helvidius Priscus, Curtius Montanus and Paconius Agrippinus) were convicted but given lesser penalties. The Stoic group was temporarily weakened by this attack, but the remaining members continued its activities in Flavian times.

COSSUTIANUS Capito the son-in-law of Nero's praetorian prefect Ofonius Tigellinus. He was active as an advocate under Claudius Tac.AnnXI.6. He was governor of Cilicia c.54-5. On his return to Rome in 56 he was prosecuted for extortion by the Cilicians who secured the assistance of Thrasea Paetus for the trial. Cossutianus Capito was convicted and deprived of his senatorial standing (Tac.Ann.XII.33,XVI.21), but this was restored to him in 62 at the request of Ofonius Tigellinus Tac.Ann.XIV.48. In A.D.66 Cossutianus seized his opportunity to avenge himself on his erstwhile prosecutor Thrasea Paetus. He brought charges of treason against Thrasea and secured his conviction. Thrasea was sentenced to death and Capito received part of his confiscated fortune. Tac.AnnXVI.23 sqq.

CURTIUS Montanus a member of the Stoic group under Nero and Vespasian. He was convicted in 66 with other members of Thrasea Paetus' Stoic group. He had composed poetry which must have been critical of Nero's rule Tac.Ann.XVI.28-9. He was therefore barred from political life Tac.Ann.XVI.33, but participated in senate meetings after Nero's death. In the senate 69/70 he championed the memory of Piso Galerianus (who had been adopted by the emperor Galba in 68) Tac.H.IV.40 and attacked the prosecutor Regulus as part of the programme of reprisals attempted by the Stoic group at this time. There is no record of his activity within the group after A.D.70.

DEMETRIUS a Cynic philosopher well-known in the mid-first century A.D. He was in Rome at the time of the trials of the Stoic group in 66 under Nero. He discoursed with Thrasea Paetus on the nature of the soul while the senate deliberated on Thrasea's fate. Tac.H.XVI.34. In 69 he defended the treacherous Stoic philosopher Egnatius Celer against the attack launched on Celer Tac.H.IV.40. In c.73, when Vespasian banished all philosophers from Rome (Dio/Xiph. LXVI.13.i-iii, Suet.Vesp.13) he mentioned Demetrius by name, specifying that he should be exiled to an island. When Demetrius defied the order, however, Vespasian did not insist on its enforcement. It is extremely unlikely that he had anything to do with the Stoic group at Rome after he had defended Celer in 70. Dio's allegation that Demetrius was preaching dangerous political ideas at Rome cannot have any connexion with the activities of the Stoic group at the time.

P. EGNATIUS Celer a Stoic philosopher from Berytus. He was the client, friend and teacher of the Roman Stoic Barea Soranus (e.g. schol. ad Iuv. VI.552). When Barea Soranus went to Asia as governor c.57-9, he was accompanied by Egnatius Celer. Both men were probably connected with the Stoic group at Rome. In 66 Barea Soranus was tried for treason. Allegations were made concerning his activities in Asia. Egnatius Celer was bribed to appear as a witness against Soranus and was instrumental in securing his conviction and subsequent death Tac.Ann.XVI.32 After Nero's death in 68, exiled members of the Stoic group returned to Rome, many of them entering or re-entering the senate. The Roman Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus prosecuted Egnatius Celer for perjury in 69 (after Nero's death) as part of the plan of the Stoic group to avenge the wrongs done it under Nero. Egnatius Celer's action in 66 had shocked many senators and he was easily convicted, despite the fact that he was defended by the renowned Cynic philosopher Demetrius Tac. H.IV.40

EPICTETUS a Stoic philosopher. He had been a slave of Nero's freedman Epaphroditus. He had been permitted by Epaphroditus to attend the lectures of Musonius Rufus and after he had gained his freedom he taught philosophy himself at Rome. He relates several anecdotes concerning members of the Stoic group e.g. Disc.I.1,2 in the version which survives of his lectures (Arrian's Discourses of Epictetus, which seem to have been made up from lecture notes). He was expelled from Rome with other philosophers under Domitian. He went to Nicopolis, where he conducted a school of philosophy Aul.Gell.15,11,4.5, Lucian Peregr.18. He was late in favour with Hadrian S.H.A Had.16.10.

T.EPRIUS Marcellus cos.60, he was one of Nero's amici, and was renowned for his eloquence. In 66 he assisted in the prosecution of Thrasea Paetus and other members of the Stoic group Tac. Ann.XVI.22 and profited from their conviction Tac. Ann.XVI.33. After the death of Nero, the surviving members of the Stoic group returned to Rome bent on revenge. Thrasea Paetus' son-in-law Helvidius Priscus made clear his intention of bringing Eprius Marcellus down Tac.H.IV.6, but his plan was thwarted by the imperial spokesmen Tac. H.IV.44. When Vespasian himself returned to Rome he elevated Marcellus - doubtless to the chagrin of the Stoic group. He was sent to Asia to reorganize its administration, held a second consulship A.D.74, and was one of Vespasian's amici. In A.D.79, he and his colleague Caecina Alienus were suddenly accused by Titus of treason. Under sentence of death, Marcellus committed suicide Dio LXV.16.

FANNIA daughter of Arria II and Thrasea Paetus, who was the leader of the Stoic group under Nero. She married Helvidius Priscus I c. 60. In 66 Thrasea Paetus, Helvidius Priscus I and other members of the Stoic group were convicted of treason. Thrasea and two others were sentenced to death. Thrasea committed suicide. Priscus' sentence was exile. Fannia voluntarily accompanied him into exile, and returned with him on Nero's death in 68, only to follow him once more into exile c.73 during Vespasian's rule. Priscus was executed soon afterwards. Fannia, reared in a family tradition of courage (see chapter 4 n.28) and Stoicism, played some part in the activities of the Stoic group. She commissioned Herennius Senecio to write a biography of Helvidius Priscus I Pl.Ep.VII.19. In 93 she and Senecio were tried with other members of the group and convicted of treason. Senecio was executed, and Fannia was exiled, together with her mother Arria, who was innocent of any part in the biography. All copies of the work were to have been burned as a result of the trial, but Fannia succeeded in salvaging a copy and taking it with her into exile. Both Arria and Fannia were friendly with Pliny, who claimed that his friendship had sustained them in exile. Pl.Ep.VII.19, chapter 4#2

GRATILLA apparently a member of the Flavian Stoic group, Gratilla was exiled in 93 together with other members of the group who were convicted of treason. Pl.Ep.III.11. She may have been the wife of Iunius Arulenus Rusticus, who was an active member of the group from the time of Domitian. Their names are linked Pl.Ep.V.1.

HELVIDIUS Priscus I a member of the Stoic group under Nero and Vespasian. Priscus was seriously attracted to Stoicism early in his life Tac.H.IV.5. He achieved the quaestorship under Nero. Soon afterwards he married Fannia, who was the daughter of Thrasea Paetus, the leader of the Stoic group under Nero. In 66 Priscus and Thrasea Paetus were both tried for treason Tac.Ann.XVI.29, as were four other people connected with the Stoic group. Thrasea Paetus was executed, but Helvidius Priscus merely exiled Tac.Ann.XVI.33. It is unlikely that he had offered any active opposition to Nero before the trial. He returned to Rome after Nero's death and promptly stood for and gained the praetorship Tac.H.II.91. It soon became obvious that Priscus had inherited the position of Thrasea Paetus as leader of the Stoic group. The members of the group attempted unsuccessfully in 69/70 to punish the delatores who had prospered under Nero. Priscus was notable for his outspoken behaviour towards Vespasian in the years 70-73. Vespasian consequently expelled Priscus c.73/4 and later ordered his execution Vesp.15, Suetonius.

HELVIDIUS Priscus II the son of Helvidius Priscus I and his first wife, Helvidius Priscus II was a member of the Stoic group during the period of Flavian rule. He had attained the consulship by 93 Pl.Ep.IX.13. In that year he was tried for treason with six other members of the group and subsequently executed. The only charge recorded against him is that he had written a play in which he satirized Domitian, holding up his private life to ridicule Suet.Dom.10

HERENNIUS Senecio a member of the Stoic group under the Flavians. Senecio held the quaestorship, thus gaining admission to the senate, but failed to advance beyond this office. This appears to have been a matter of choice, and was intended as a protest against Domitian's reign. Senecio twice engaged in controversial legal actions during Domitian's reign (Pl.Ep.IV.11, VII.33), and probably earned himself powerful enemies as a result. At the request of Helvidius

Priscus I's widow Fannia, Senecio composed a biography of Helvidius Priscus Pl.Ep.VII.19. When he was tried in 93 - at the same time as other members of the group - for treason, the biography and his political inactivity counted against him and he was convicted and executed.

IUNIUS Mauricus a member of the "Stoic opposition" under Nero and the Flavian emperors, and brother of Iunius Arulenus Rusticus, who was also a member of the Stoic group. Mauricus was a senator by 70, when he participated in the attempt by the Stoic group to bring to justice the Neronian delatores, especially those who had secured the conviction in 66 A.D. of six members of the Stoic group. His activities 70-98 are not known. Pliny claims that he had been guided by Mauricus and Arulenus Rusticus during this period (Ep.I.14), which implies that the two brothers were both of some standing in the political and legal world at Rome. Mauricus' elevation in the second century suggests that he had held the consulship at some stage. In 93, under Domitian, several members of the group were convicted of treason. Iunius Mauricus was one of them, although the precise charges against him are not given. He was exiled as a result of his conviction, together with Arria, Fannia and Gratilla Pl.Ep.III.11, Since his brother was executed at this time, Mauricus subsequently assumed responsibility for Rusticus' three children and apparently ensured that they received a Stoic education. Mauricus returned from exile in 97, under Nerva, with whom he was on good terms. When Trajan came to the throne, he placed Mauricus on his consilium (Pl.Ep.IV.22). Mauricus still displayed his independence, but worked happily with Trajan.

IUNIUS Arulenus Rusticus a Stoic senator who belonged to the Stoic group during the reigns of Nero and the Flavian regime. He was the brother of Iunius Mauricus and probably the father of Q. Iunius Rusticus. He was plebeian tribune in 66 under Nero Tac.Ann.XVI.26, at the time of the trials of other members of the Stoic group. He held the praetorship A.D.70. He was attached to Thrasea Paetus and composed a laudatory biography of him during Domitian's reign Suet.Dom.10, Tac.Ag.2. He held the consulship in 92, but his career and his life ended in 93, when he and six other members of the Stoic group were convicted of treason. The biography and his interest in philosophy were brought up against him and he was subsequently executed. Tac.Ag 45, Dio/Xiph.LXVII.13.ii

Q. IUNIUS Rusticus a second century Stoic who was the tutor, friend and adviser of the emperor Marcus SHA Marcus 3, Dio LXXI.35, Marcus ad seips. I.7,17. He held the consulship in 133 (CIL III p.1978.VI.858) and 162 (Fasti cos.) and the urban prefecture about 163-5. He was probably the son of the Iunius Arulenus Rusticus who was executed under Domitian in 96 for his part in the activities of the Stoic group (see ch.4 #2).

MUSONIA daughter of Musonius Rufus. She was sought after by many men of high rank, but she was given in marriage by her father to the philosopher Artemidorus Pl.Ep.III.11

MUSONIUS Rufus a Stoic philosopher who participated in the activities of the Stoic group under Nero and Vespasian. Musonius accompanied the Stoic Rubellius Plautus to Asia when he retired there at Nero's request in A.D.59. While in Asia, Musonius and Plautus associated with the Stoic governor Barea Soranus and his philosophic teacher Egnatius Celer, who was also a Stoic. It is likely that all four were already attached to Thrasea Paetus' Stoic group at this time (59-62). When Nero suddenly had Rubellius Plautus killed in 62 for his allegedly seditious activities, Musonius Rufus returned to Rome. In A.D.65 he was exiled on the assumption that he had been implicated in the conspiracy of Piso (see chapter 2 #3). Tacitus did not believe the charge, but assigned it to Nero's jealousy, for Musonius had already won fame for his skill as a philosopher.

Musonius was absent from Rome in 66, when several members of the Stoic group were convicted of treason, but when he returned from exile in 69 after Nero's death, he joined with the surviving members of the group in attempting to punish the prosecutors who had prospered during Nero's reign. Musonius appears to have gained admission to the senate between 69-70. He instituted charges against Egnatius Celer, whose false testimony against Barea Soranus in the trials of 66 had contributed to Soranus' conviction and execution Tac. Ann. XVI.32, Dio/Xiph.26.ii. Musonius' prosecution was successful Tac.H.IV.41, but when other members of the Stoic group attempted to follow it up with further prosecutions, the emperor's representatives in the senate checked their actions Tac.H.IV.44.

In c.73/5, Vespasian expelled philosophers from Rome, but excepted Musonius by name from the decree. This was later rescinded and Musonius went once more into exile, where he was sought out by disciples. He may have returned to Rome during Titus' rule 79-81 (according to Ieronymus, Interpr. Euseb.), but he was teaching in Syria at the time of Pliny's military tribunate in that province 81-3. It was at this time that Musonius chose the philosopher Artemidorus as his daughter's husband. Musonius may not have returned to Rome before his death.

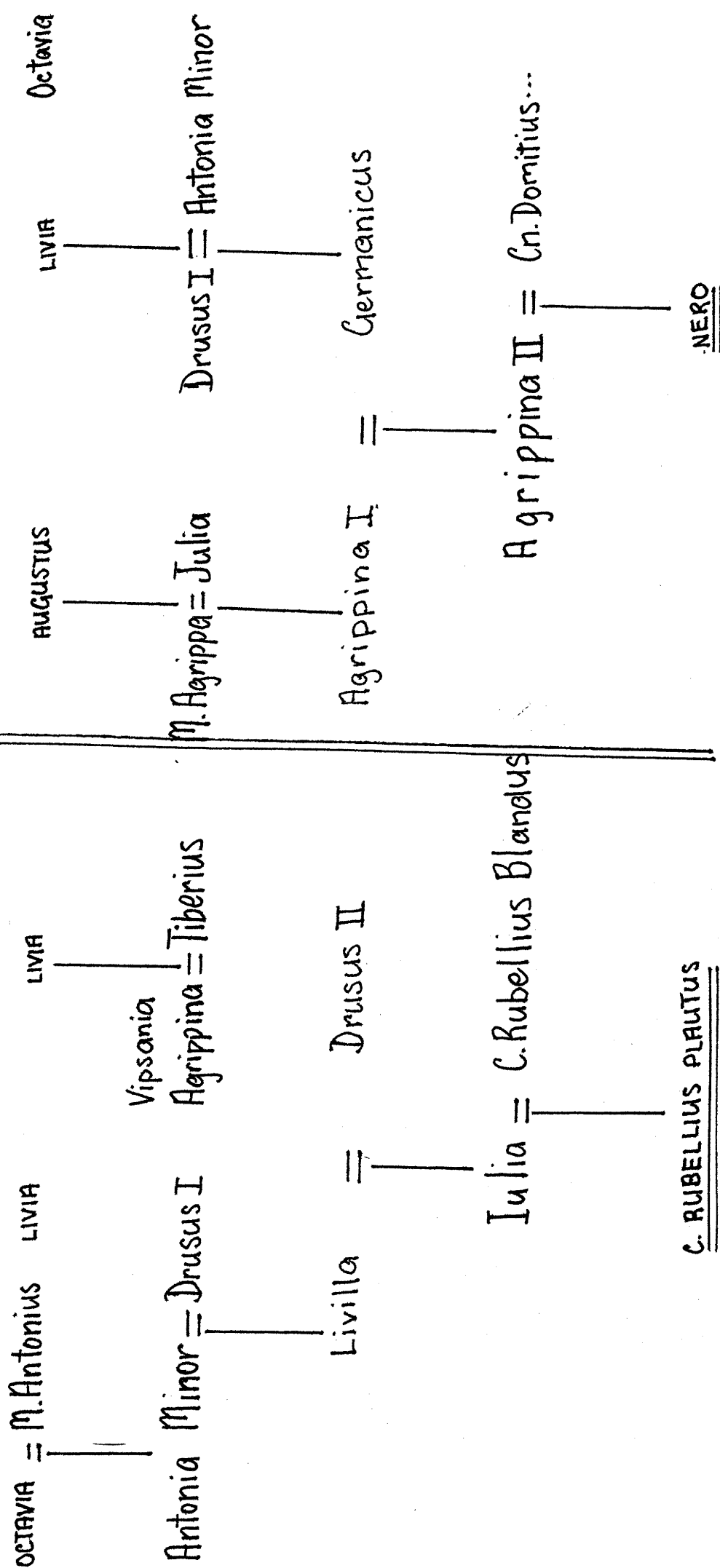
PACONIUS Agrippinus a member of the Stoic group under Nero. He was prosecuted in 66 together with other members of the group. Tac. Ann. XVI.28,29. No specific charge is recorded other than that he was suspected of having inherited the rebellious spirit which had earned his father's conviction on a treason charge under Tiberius. Paconius Agrippinus was exiled as a result of the trial Tac. Ann. XVI.33. He is mentioned favourably by Epictetus Disc. I.2.xii-xiv. He returned from exile after Nero's death and was an imperial legate in Cyrenaica A.D.71-2 Ann. epigr. 1919 nr.91.92. If he played a part in the later activities of the Stoic group there is no record of it. (RE XVIII.2 Paconius 5).

PLINIUS Secundus Pliny was a novus homo who established his position in Roman political life by his rhetorical and administrative talents. He was befriended early in his career by the brothers Iunius Arulenus Rusticus and Iunius Mauricus, to whom he looked for guidance (Ep. I.14). The two brothers were central figures in the Stoic group under the Flavians, but Pliny had no part in the activities of the group. Pliny was also friendly with Arria II and Fannia (e.g. Ep. VII.19). In 93, when some of the Stoic group had been executed and others exiled and philosophers were banished once more from Rome, Pliny was called on to help the philosopher Artemidorus (Musonius Rufus' son-in-law) Ep. III.11. Pliny claims also that he comforted Arria and Fannia during their exile 93-96 Ep. VII.19, and when the exiled members of the group returned under Nerva in 97 Pliny attempted unsuccessfully to initiate proceedings against the people who had prosecuted the group in 93 Ep. IX.13. After his return from exile, Iunius Mauricus consulted Pliny on various personal matters (e.g. Pl. Ep. I.14, II.18). It is possible that Pliny later exaggerated his ties with the persecuted group, but it is certainly true that he was involved in their personal lives after 96.

RUBELLIUS Plautus a Stoic senator whose family was almost as distinguished as that of Nero himself (Tac. Ann. XIII.19), both being descended from Livia Augusta. This earned him Nero's suspicion, and he went in 59 to Asia at Nero's request Tac. Ann. XIV.22. The assumption was that he could not pose a threat to the emperor if he were removed from the centre of political activity. While in Asia Plautus associated with the governor Barea Soranus, who was also a Stoic. For whatever reason, Nero's suspicion of Plautus was revived. The emperor had him killed in 62, and later announced to the senate that Plautus had been fomenting rebellion in Asia. There seems to have been no basis to the charge.

SERVILIA wife of Annius Pollio, who was exiled under Nero for his part in the conspiracy of Piso in 65 (chapter 2, #3 for the conspiracy). She was the daughter of Barea Soranus, the Stoic senator whose governorship in Asia had coincided with Rubellius Plautus' stay there. In 66, both Barea Soranus and Servilia were charged with treason and tried in the senate at Rome. Soranus was accused of having fostered rebellion in Asia in conjunction with Rubellius Plautus. The charge against Servilia was that she had consulted astrologers on her father's behalf. Tac. Ann. XVI.30. Both were found guilty and condemned to death Tac. Ann. XVI.33. Their trials took place at the same time as that of Thrasea Paetus, Helvidius Priscus I, Curtius Montanus and Paccanius Agrippinus - all members of the Stoic group with which Soranus and possibly Servilia herself were connected.

(see chapter 2 #2, esp II 4)



FAMILY TREES: B) A FAMILY TRADITION OF OPPOSITION

Caecina Paetus = Elder Arria



Thrasea Paetus = Younger Arria



Plautia Quinctilia (1) = Helvidius Priscus I = (a) Fannia



Helvidius Priscus II = Anteia



Helvidius Priscus III a daughters



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