Ancient History Sourcebook:  **Polybius (c.200-after 118 BCE): Rome at the End of the Punic Wars  [History, Book 6]**

[Thatcher Introduction]: ROME, with the end of the third Punic war, 146 B. C., had completely conquered the last of the civilized world. The best authority for this period of her history is Polybius. He was born in Arcadia, in 204 B. C., and died in 122 B. C. Polybius was an officer of the Achaean League, which sought by federating the Peloponnesus to make it strong enough to keep its independence against the Romans, but Rome was already too strong to be resisted, and arresting a thousand of the most influential members, sent them to Italy to await trial for conspiracy. Polybius had the good fortune, during seventeen years exile, to be allowed to live with the Scipios. He was present at the destructions of Carthage and Corinth, in 146 B. C., and did more than anyone else to get the Greeks to accept the inevitable Roman rule. Polybius is the most reliable, but not the most brilliant, of ancient historians.

* An Analysis of the Roman Government
* Rome And Carthage Compared

An Analysis of the Roman Government**:**

THE THREE kinds of government, monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, were all found united in the commonwealth of Rome. And so even was the balance between them all, and so regular the administration that resulted from their union, that it was no easy thing to determine with assurance, whether the entire state was to be estimated an aristocracy, a democracy, or a monarchy. For if they turned their view upon the power of the consuls, the government appeared to be purely monarchical and regal. If, again, the authority of the senate was considered, it then seemed to wear the form of aristocracy. And, lastly, if regard was to be had to the share which the people possessed in the administration of affairs, it could then scarcely fail to be denominated a popular state. The several powers that were appropriated to each of these distinct branches of the constitution at the time of which we are speaking, and which, with very little variation, are even still preserved, are these which follow.

The consuls, when they remain in Rome, before they lead out the armies into the field, are the masters of all public affairs. For all other magistrates, the tribunes alone excepted, are subject to them, and bound to obey their commands. They introduce ambassadors into the senate. They propose also to the senate the subjects of debates; and direct all forms that are observed in making the decrees. Nor is it less a part of their office likewise, to attend to those affairs that are transacted by the people; to call together general assemblies; to report to them the resolutions of the senate; and to ratify whatever is determined by the greater number. In all the preparations that are made for war, as well as in the whole administration in the field, they possess an almost absolute authority. For to them it belongs to impose upon the allies whatever services they judge expedient; to appoint the military tribunes; to enroll the legions, and make the necessary levies, and to inflict punishments in the field, upon all that are subject to their command. Add to this, that they have the power likewise to expend whatever sums of money they may think convenient from the public treasury; being attended for that purpose by a quaestor; who is always ready to receive and execute their orders. When any one therefore, directs his view to this part of the constitution, it is very reasonable for him to conclude that this government is no other than a simple royalty. Let me only observe, that if in some of these particular points, or in those that will hereafter be mentioned, any change should be either now remarked, or should happen at some future time, such an alteration will not destroy the general principles of this discourse.

To the senate belongs, in the first place, the sole care and management of the public money. For all returns that are brought into the treasury, as well as all the payments that are issued from it, are directed by their orders. Nor is it allowed to the quaestors to apply any part of the revenue to particular occasions as they arise, without a decree of the senate; those sums alone excepted. which are expended in the service of the consuls. And even those more general, as well as greatest disbursements, which are employed at the return every five years, in building and repairing the public edifices, are assigned to the censors for that purpose, by the express permission of the senate. To the senate also is referred the cognizance of all the crimes, committed in any part of Italy, that demand a public examination and inquiry: such as treasons, conspiracies, poisonings, and assassinations. Add to this, that when any controversies arise, either between private men, or any of the cities of Italy, it is the part of the senate to adjust all disputes; to censure those that are deserving of blame: and to yield assistance to those who stand in need of protection and defense. When any embassies are sent out of Italy; either to reconcile contending states; to offer exhortations and advice; or even, as it sometimes happens, to impose commands; to propose conditions of a treaty; or to make a denunciation of war; the care and conduct of all these transactions is entrusted wholly to the senate. When any ambassadors also arrive in Rome, it is the senate likewise that determines how they shall be received and treated, and what answer shall be given to their demands.

In all these things that have now been mentioned, the people has no share. To those, therefore, who come to reside in Rome during the absence of the consuls, the government appears to be purely aristocratic. Many of the Greeks, especially, and of the foreign princes, are easily led into this persuasion: when they perceive that almost all the affairs, which they are forced to negotiate with the Romans, are determined by the senate.

And now it may well be asked, what part is left to the people in this government: since the senate, on the one hand, is vested with the sovereign power, in the several instances that have been enumerated, and more especially in all things that concern the management and disposal of the public treasure; and since the consuls, on the other hand, are entrusted with the absolute direction of the preparations that are made for war, and exercise an uncontrolled authority on the field. There is, however, a part still allotted to the people; and, indeed, the most important part. For, first, the people are the sole dispensers of rewards and punishments; which are the only bands by which states and kingdoms, and, in a word, all human societies, are held together. For when the difference between these is overlooked, or when they are distributed without due distinction, nothing but disorder can ensue. Nor is it possible, indeed, that the government should be maintained if the wicked stand in equal estimation with the good. The people, then, when any such offences demand such punishment, frequently condemn citizens to the payment of a fine: those especially who have been invested with the dignities of the state. To the people alone belongs the right to sentence any one to die. Upon this occasion they have a custom which deserves to be mentioned with applause. The person accused is allowed to withdraw himself in open view, and embrace a voluntary banishment, if only a single tribe remains that has not yet given judgment; and is suffered to retire in safety to Praeneste, Tibur, Naples, or any other of the confederate cities. The public magistrates are allotted also by the people to those who are esteemed worthy of them: and these are the noblest rewards that any government can bestow on virtue. To the people belongs the power of approving or rejecting laws and, which is still of greater importance, peace and war are likewise fixed by their deliberations. When any alliance is concluded, any war ended, or treaty made; to them the conditions are referred, and by them either annulled or ratified. And thus again, from a view of all these circumstances, it might with reason be imagined, that the people had engrossed the largest portion of the government, and that the state was plainly a democracy.

Such are the parts of the administration, which are distinctly assigned to each of the three forms of government, that are united in the commonwealth of Rome. It now remains to be considered, in what manner each several form is enabled to counteract the others, or to cooperate with them.