



The "Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre"

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THE *SENATUS CONSULTUM DE CN. PISONE PATRE*

Edited by D. S. POTTER

Translated by CYNTHIA DAMON



Editorial Conventions

- () expansion of abbreviation
- [] restoration of letters written but now missing
- { } deletion of letters written by mistake
- ⌈ ⌋ correction of letters considered wrongly inscribed
- < > necessary supplements
- << >> in translation, material supplied for clarity

1 December 10, on the Palatine in the portico adjacent to the Temple of Apollo. Present at the writing were M. Valerius M.f. Messallinus from the voting tribe Lemonia, C. Ateius L. f. Capito from the voting tribe Aniensis, Sex. Pompeius Sex. f. from the voting tribe Arnensis, M. Pompeius M. f. Priscus from the voting tribe Teretina, C. Arrenus C. f. Gallus from the voting tribe Galeria; L. Nonius L. f. Asprenas from the voting tribe Pomptina, quaestor, M. Vinicius P. f. from the voting tribe Poblilia, quaestor.

5 WHEREAS Ti. Caesar Augustus, son of the deified Augustus, *pontifex maxumus*, in the twenty-second year of his tribunician power, having been consul three times, consul-designate for the fourth time, referred to the Senate for decision:

how the case of the elder Cn. Piso had seemed and whether he seemed to have taken his life with due cause, and

how the case of M. Piso had seemed (to which item he had added that the senators be mindful of his entreaties on behalf of the young man); (and)

10 how the case of Plancina had seemed (for which person he had previously explained what he sought and for what reasons), and

what the Senate's judgment was concerning Visellius Karus and Sempronius Bassus, members of the elder Cn. Piso's staff,

CONCERNING THESE MATTERS THEY DECREED AS FOLLOWS:

THAT the Senate and Roman people, before all else, expressed gratitude to the immortal gods because they did

A heading, "Decree of the Senate Concerning the Elder Cn. Piso, put up for view when N. Vibius Serenus was proconsul," appears in Copy A only.

not allow the tranquility of the present state of the republic—
 than which nothing better can be desired and which it has
 fallen to our lot to enjoy by the favor of our *princeps*—to be
 15 disturbed by the wicked plans of the elder Cn. Piso; then to
 Ti. Caesar Augustus, their own *princeps*, because he made
 available to the Senate everything necessary for seeking out
 the truth; and

20 THAT the Senate admired his fairness and forbearance on
 this account also, because, although the crimes of the elder
 Cn. Piso are most manifest and Piso himself had exacted
 punishment from himself, nonetheless he wanted Piso's case
 to be tried, and, when his <<Piso's>> sons had been summoned,
 he encouraged them to defend their father's case, going so
 far as to be willing for even the one who was not yet of the
 senatorial order to be brought in to the Senate for this
 business and to grant each the opportunity of speaking on
 behalf of their father and mother and M. Piso; next,

25 THAT¹ after the case was argued for several days by the
 accusers of the elder Cn. Piso and by the elder Cn. Piso
 himself, letters and copies of documents that Germanicus
 Caesar himself had written to the elder Cn. Piso were read out,
 witnesses of every order produced, <the Senate> deemed

¹For a translation based on a different punctuation for these lines see Talbert, this issue.

THAT the remarkable restraint and forbearance of Germanicus Caesar were overborne by the savagery of the elder Cn. Piso's character and

THAT because of this the dying Germanicus (who himself declared the elder Cn. Piso to have been the cause of his death) not without due cause renounced his friendship with a man

30 WHO, when he should have remembered that he had been given as a special assistant to Germanicus Caesar (who had been sent by our *princeps* in accordance with the authority of this order to settle overseas affairs that required the presence of either Ti. Caesar Augustus himself or of one or the other of his two sons), ignoring the majesty of the imperial house, and also ignoring the law of the land—having been attached to a proconsul and indeed to a proconsul about whom a law was put before the people providing that in whatever province he

35 entered he had greater *imperium* than the province's proconsular governor, with the proviso that in every case Ti. Caesar had greater *imperium* than Germanicus Caesar, he conducted himself when he was in the province of Syria as if everything ought to be subject to his decision and control—insofar as it lay in him, stirred up both an Armenian and a Parthian war, in that he was unwilling, despite the instructions of our *princeps* and the frequent letters

40 of Germanicus Caesar when he was elsewhere, that
Vonones, who was viewed with mistrust by the king
of the Parthians, be moved further away lest he be
able to flee from custody (which he did), and
allowed certain wicked and bold persons of the
Armenians to speak with Vonones, so that by the
agency of these same persons a disturbance would
be stirred up in Armenia and Vonones, when the
king of Armenia had been either killed or driven out
(a king whom Germanicus Caesar had given to that
45 people according to the wishes of his father and the
Senate), would seize (it, i.e., Armenia), and did these
things corrupted by the great gifts of Vonones;

WHO also tried to stir up civil war (though all the
evils of civil war had long since been laid to rest
by the divine will of the deified Augustus and the
virtues of Ti. Caesar Augustus) by trying to return to
the province of Syria after the death of Germanicus
Caesar, a province which, when Germanicus was
alive, he had left with the worst of intentions and
50 <<setting the worst>> of precedents. Because of this
Roman soldiers were forced to fight Roman soldiers.

Also evidenced was the unexampled cruelty <<of a
man>> WHO had inflicted capital punishment on

many without their cases having been heard, without the recommendation of his advisors, and crucified not only noncitizen <<soldiers>> but even a centurion, a Roman citizen;

55 WHO had corrupted the military discipline established by the deified Augustus and maintained by Ti. Caesar Augustus, not only by indulging the soldiers, (so that they would not) obey their superiors in accordance with our most venerable tradition, but also by giving donatives in his own name from the funds of our *princeps*, after which he took pleasure that some soldiers were called "Piso's men" and others "Caesar's men," and also by honoring those who, after assuming such a name, had obeyed himself;

60 WHO after the death of Germanicus Caesar, whose demise not only the Roman people but also foreign peoples mourned, dared to send to the best and kindest father a document in which he <<Piso>> accused him <<Germanicus>>, having forgotten not only the reverence and affection owed to the son of the *princeps* but also human kindness, which does not allow hatreds to persist beyond death.

And that he rejoiced in his death was clear to the Senate from these proofs: because impious sacrifices

65 were made by him, because the ships in which he sailed showed full colors, because he opened the temples of the immortal gods, which the most steadfast devotion of the entire Roman empire had closed; and it was evidence of the same frame of mind that he was proven to have given a present of money to the man who reported to him about the death of Germanicus Caesar and to have held banquets frequently during those very days in which the announcement reached him about the death of Germanicus;

THAT the Senate also deemed

70 THAT the divinity of the deified Augustus was violated by him, since all the honor that had been accorded either to his memory or to statues that (had been set up) to him before he was included in the number of the gods had been withdrawn;

THAT for these reasons the Senate deemed

THAT he did not subject himself to the punishment he deserved, but

THAT he withdrew himself from a greater one and one that he realized was threatening him from the devotion and severity of his judges; next,

THAT to those punishments he had exacted from himself it added

75 THAT no lamentation on account of his death be undertaken by the women by whom he ought to have been mourned according to ancestral custom if this decree of the Senate had not been made, and

THAT statues and portrait masks of Cn. Piso, wherever displayed, be removed;

80 THAT those who at any time belonged to the Calpurnius family or who were related to that family by blood or marriage would act rightly and properly if they saw to it, if anyone of that family or any of those related by blood or marriage to the Calpurnius family died and was to be mourned, that the portrait mask of the elder Cn. Piso not be carried among the other portrait masks with which they customarily celebrate the rites of those funerals, and that his portrait mask not be placed among the portrait masks of the Calpurnius family, and

THAT the name of the elder Cn. Piso be removed from the inscription of the statue of Germanicus that the *sodales Augustales* erected to him in the Campus <<Martius>> next to the Altar of Providence, and

85 THAT the property of the elder Cn. Piso be confiscated, with the exception of the lands which were in Illyricum;

THAT it was <<the Senate's>> pleasure

THAT these lands be returned to Ti. Caesar Augustus our *princeps*, by whose father the deified Augustus they had been presented to the elder Cn. Piso, since he

90 «Tiberius») had desired it to be given to him for this reason, because the (peoples) whose borders touched those of the lands had frequently complained about injuries at the hands of the elder Cn. Piso and of his freedmen and slaves, and because of this he thought it should be seen to that hereafter allies of the Roman people could not rightly and justly complain; likewise

THAT the Senate, mindful of its own clemency, justice, (and) magnanimity, which virtues it learned from its forebears and especially from the deified Augustus and Ti. Caesar Augustus its *principes*, decreed

95 THAT it was fair and considerate that from the confiscated property of the elder Cn. Piso be given to his elder son Piso (about whom nothing had been said, who was the quaestor of our *princeps*, whom Germanicus, too, had honored with his generosity, who had given many assurances of his own moderation, from which it could be expected that he would be quite unlike his father) in the name of the *princeps* and of the Senate, a half share of the property, and

THAT he, since he would be obliged by so great a favor, would act rightly and properly if he changed his first name, that of his father;

100 THAT also to M. Piso (to whom the Senate, agreeing
with the humanity and restraint of its *princeps*, thought
that impunity should be granted), so that the kindness
of the Senate could more easily reach him unimpaired,
the other half share of his father's property be given, on
these terms, that out of the entire property that by decree
of the Senate had been confiscated and granted to them,
105 one million sesterces be given as a dowry to Calpurnia,
the daughter of Cn. Piso, likewise four million sesterces
as her personal property; likewise

THAT it was <<the Senate's>> pleasure

THAT the structures the elder Cn. Piso had built over the
Fontinal gate for the sake of joining his private houses,
the curators of adjudging public places undertake to have
removed and destroyed;

110 THAT, as far as the case of Plancina was concerned, against
whom numerous weighty charges had been lodged, since she
admitted that she placed all hope in the compassion of our
princeps and of the Senate, and since our *princeps* has often
and with marked attention requested of this order that the
Senate, content with the punishment of the elder Cn. Piso,
spare his wife as also his son Marcus, and interceded for
Plancina at his mother's request, and received very just

115 reasons, made to him by her, as to why his mother wanted to obtain these concessions, the Senate deemed

THAT both Julia Augusta, who was most well deserving of the republic not only because she gave birth to our *princeps* but also because of her many and great kindnesses to men of every order—although she rightly and deservedly should have the greatest influence in what she requested from the Senate, she used it most sparingly—and the very great devotion of our *princeps* to his mother should be supported and indulged; and

THAT it was ⟨⟨the Senate's⟩⟩ pleasure

120 THAT the punishment of Plancina be remitted;

THAT it was right

THAT Visellius Karus and Sempronius Bassus, members of the elder Cn. Piso's staff and partners and agents in all of his crimes, be refused water and fire ⟨⟨i.e., be exiled, in effect⟩⟩ by the praetor who hears cases under the law of treason and

THAT it was ⟨⟨the Senate's⟩⟩ pleasure

THAT their property be sold by the praetors in charge of the treasury and ⟨⟨the proceeds⟩⟩ placed in the treasury; likewise

125 THAT since the Senate judged that Ti. Caesar Augustus our *princeps* had exceeded the devotion of all parents, (evidences of) a grief so great and so constant having so often been

witnessed, by which even the Senate was deeply moved,
 <<(the Senate)>> earnestly asked and sought

THAT all the care he had previously divided between his
 two sons he devote to the one he had; and

THAT the Senate hoped

130 THAT the one who survives would be all the more
 an object of the immortal gods' concern insofar as they
 understood that all future hope of his father's
 guardianship of the state was now placed in one man;
 and on this account <<(the Senate thought)>>

THAT he ought to end his grief and restore to his
 country not only a frame of mind but also a countenance
 befitting public happiness; likewise

THAT the Senate earnestly praised the restraint of Julia
 Augusta and Drusus Caesar, emulating the justice of our
princeps, and

THAT this order noticed

135 THAT these had not shown a greater devotion to
 Germanicus than fairness in reserving their judgments
 until the case of the elder Cn. Piso was tried;

THAT also of others connected to Germanicus Caesar by
 personal ties <<(the Senate)>> had earnest commendation:

140 of Agrippina, whom <<(the Senate says)>> that the memory
 of the deified Augustus, by whom she had been greatly
 esteemed, and of her husband Germanicus, with whom
 she had lived in unique harmony, and the numerous
 children born by a birth most fortunate for those who
 survived, recommended; likewise

of Antonia, mother of Germanicus Caesar, who, having
 experienced a single marriage—to Drusus, father of

Germanicus—has shown by the integrity of her character that she was worthy of such close kinship with the deified Augustus; and

145 of Livia, sister of Germanicus Caesar, of whom both her grandmother and her father-in-law and at the same time paternal uncle, our *princeps*, had a most favorable opinion, persons whose opinions, even if she did not belong to the house, she might deservedly vaunt, and much more so as a woman bound by such close personal ties;

THAT of these women the Senate commended equally both their loyal grief and their restraint in grief; likewise

THAT, as far as the fact that in the children of Germanicus the children's grief (and in the case of Nero Caesar in particular already even a youth's grief) at the lost of such a father, and likewise that of Ti. Germanicus, brother of Germanicus Caesar, had not exceeded a commendable limit, the Senate judged

150 THAT this should be ascribed especially to the discipline of their grandfather and paternal uncle and of Julia Augusta, but

THAT nonetheless on their account also <<the Senate>> considered

THAT it was praiseworthy; likewise

THAT the care and exertions of the equestrian order won the Senate's special commendation, because it had loyally understood how great a matter, and how greatly relevant to everyone's safety and devotion, was being discussed, and because by frequent acclamations it bore witness to the disturbance of its own spirit and its grief at the injuries to our *princeps* and his son and on behalf of the interest of the republic;

155 THAT the Senate also praised the people, because they have agreed with the equestrian order and signified their devotion to our *princeps* and the memory of his son and because, though with a wild outpouring of enthusiasm they had been roused to effect the punishment of the elder Cn. Piso themselves, they nevertheless allowed themselves, after the example of the equestrian order, to be governed by our *princeps*; likewise

160 THAT the Senate commended the fidelity of those soldiers whose spirits had been solicited in vain by the crime of the elder Cn. Piso, and

THAT it hoped

THAT all soldiers under the auspices and command of our *princeps* would forever display the fidelity and devotion that they were displaying to the house of Augustus, since they knew the safety of our empire had been placed in the custody of that house;

THAT the Senate thought

165 THAT it was their ‹‹the soldiers’› concern and duty that those who at any time were in command should have most authority who with the most loyal devotion had cherished the name of the Caesars ‹‹which›› preserves this city and the empire of the Roman people; and

THAT in order that the sequence of the entire transacted affair could more easily be handed down to the memory of future generations and they might know what the Senate had thought both about the exceptional restraint of Germanicus Caesar and about the crimes of the elder Cn. Piso, it was ‹‹the Senate’s›› pleasure

THAT the speech our *princeps* read out and likewise these decisions of the Senate be set up, inscribed in bronze, in whatever place seemed best to Ti. Caesar Augustus; likewise

- 170 <<THAT>> this decree of the Senate, inscribed in bronze,
 be affixed in the most frequented city of every province
 and in the most frequented place of that city; and likewise
- <<THAT>> this decree of the Senate be affixed in the winter
 quarters of each legion near the standards.

- They decreed. In the Senate were 301. This single decree of the
 Senate was passed on the motion.² I, Ti. Caesar Augustus,
 in the twenty-second year of my tribunician power, have
 written in my own hand that I wish this decree of the Senate,
175 which was made on 10 December in the consulship of Cotta
 and Messalla, on my motion, written by the hand of Aulus,
 my quaestor, on fourteen tablets, to be entered into the public
 record.

²On the translation of this sentence see the Introduction.