

Social War: 1st Battle of the Melfa Gorge 90 BC

Historical Background:

“Vettius Scato routed Sextus Iulius (Caesar), killing 2,000 of his men, and drove on against Asernia, which supported the Romans. Lucius Scipio and Lucius Acilius who were organizing the defense, fled disguised as slaves and eventually the enemy starved the town into submission.” (Chapter 41 Book1 from Appian’s Civil Wars)

Terrain Set-up

X9 Crag Hextiles (Impassable): B1, C1, C2, C3, D1, E1, G1, H1, I1 (use hill Tiles from Battle Cry or Memoir '44)

X9 Unfordable River: A12, B11, C12, D11, E11, F11, G12, H11, I12

X5 Broken Terrain: B3, A11, G11, G5, I10

X18 Hill Tiles: A7, B7, C4, D2, D3, D4, D5, E2, F1, F3, F4, F6, F7, H2, H3, H7, H9, I2

Initial Set-up:

Roman Army (use Roman blocks): x10 units & 1 Leader

X2 Heavy Infantry: (see legionary special rules) : D7, C8

X6 Medium Infantry (see legionary special rules): D9, C9, C7, C6, C5, B4

X1 Light Archers: D4

X1 Medium Cavalry: C10

X1 Leader: (Sextus Caesar) C8

Italian Army: (use Carthaginian Blocks): x11 units & 1 Leader

X3 Heavy Infantry: (see legionary special rules): F4, G5, H5

X5 Medium Infantry (see legionary special rules): G6, G7, G8, G9, H8

X1 Medium Cavalry: H6

X1 Auxillia: G10

X1 Light Infantry: G4

X1 Leader: G5 (Vettius Scato)

War Council:

Roman Army

Leader: Sextus

4 Cards

Italian Army

Leader: Scato

5 Cards

Move First

Victory: 5 Banners scored in the normal fashion.

Special Scenario Rules:

Command Rules:

The “Marian” Command Card Deck

Historical Note: Combat in the 1st Century BC between Roman/Italian Legions was somewhat different than the wars between civilized states in the 3rd Century BC. There was less room for combined arms tactics and maneuver, and battles probably tended to be more of the nature of hand to hand full bore slugfests.

This particular scenario utilizes a different Command Card Deck than the original C & C Ancients Deck. Eight (8) Cards are removed from the original deck leaving 52 Cards for scenario play. This new deck is called the “Marian Deck” and it is named after Caesar’s uncle Gaius Marius, a general in the Social War, and a reorganizer of the Roman Legions in circa 105-103BC (several years before Caesar was born) to meet the challenges of the Germanic Tribal invasions that threatened the Roman Imperial Republic of the time.

The following eight cards are removed before play and put aside to create the Marian Deck:

X4 “Order Light troops”, x1 “I Am Spartacus”, x2 “Move-Fire-Move”, x1 “Mounted Charge”---note that one Mounted Charge” card is still retained in the deck.

Leader Command & Rally Special Rules:

All Leaders may cancel a retreat or a sword hit if present with the unit.

Units on both sides involved in close combat with the support of a Leader may only count one helmet hit amongst those rolled to inflict a hit on an opposing unit, if the Leader is Scato up to two helmet hits may be counted.

Units and the Rally Card: No unit can be rallied to beyond its strength at the start of the scenario. If a Player rolls “swords” when attempting to rally he may freely chose which unit gets a block back.

Reduced Missile Range Special Rules:

a) Light Archers only have a range of 2 hexes in this scenario—and may missile fire at adjacent enemy units.

b) Auxillia & Light Infantry only have a range of one hex in this scenario—and may missile fire at adjacent enemy units.

c) An ordered unit may either missile fire or conduct close-combat in a player-turn—never BOTH.

Roman/Italian Legionary Infantry Rules:

The following types of infantry units in the game on BOTH sides are assumed to be Roman/Italian Legionaries: Heavy Infantry, and Medium Infantry. ALL of these units are considered to be Roman/Italian Legionary Infantry.

Roman Pilum:

Each Roman/Italian Legionary Infantry unit starts with a Pilum Marker. The Pilum is a one-time use weapon that is generally fired right before a Roman/Italian Legionary unit attacks in close-combat or is itself attacked by the enemy in close-combat. Once the pilum is fired (or lost see below) –the Pilum marker is removed from the Roman unit to

indicate that the pilum has been expended and the unit may not throw Pilum for the rest of the battle.

Just before a Roman/Italian unit with pilum is attacked or is itself attacked by the enemy for the very first time in the battle in close-combat it throws its pilum—roll one die and apply normal hits for swords, color, or a Flag/retreat hit Afterwards remove the Pilum marker. The act of throwing the pilum **is not** considered to be part of the Close-Combat—so any result of the pilum throw is resolved before the Close-combat. If two Roman Legionary Infantry units that have not thrown pilum yet engage the attacker resolves his pilum throw first. An attached Leader may use his special ability to cancel a “swords” hit that was inflicted via a pilum hit (see special Command rules) on the unit he is stacked with.

Roman/Italian Legionary units, adjacent to the enemy, that have not expended their Pilum may also be ordered to throw Pilum if the card “Darken the Sky” is played by their commanding player. The Player picks one adjacent enemy unit and throws two dice – apply the results just as one would before close combat—and remove the Pilum Marker.

Roman/Italian Relief Moves & Cohort Maneuvers:

Adjacent and on the same side Roman or Italian Legionary Infantry, instead of moving, may switch places in a “Relief/Cohort Maneuver”. Relief/Cohort Maneuvers may only be conducted through the play of Section cards ONLY. Instead of ordering one unit via a section card, the controlling Player may order a pair of adjacent Legionary Infantry units to switch hexes—at least one of the units switching places must not be adjacent to an enemy unit. A unit that switched places via the Relief/Cohort Maneuver into a hex adjacent to the enemy may close combat in the same player-turn.

Outflanking---*This is an easy way of introducing facing and flanks to the game with little fuss—it can be retrofitted to other scenarios where appropriate:*

A unit is said to be “Outflanked” if it is surrounded **in all** six adjacent hexes by either enemy units, or hexes adjacent to an enemy unit. The presence of friendly units or impassable terrain does not negate an “Outflanked” situation **in any way**. Units on the board edges (and not surrounded by six adjacent hexes) **cannot** be “Outflanked”. Effects of being Outflanked: “Outflanked” units when battling back roll only half the normal number of dice they would be normally entitled to rounded up—to a maximum of only two dice—“Outflanked” units when battling back **never** hit on helmet rolls even if supported by a leader. A unit’s “Outflanked” situation is judged at the instant it battles back.

Special Terrain Rules:

. Crag Hexes: All Crag hexes are impassable mountain terrain.

Hill Hexes & Cavalry: Cavalry units on both sides may not enter, retreat, evade, or attack into hill hexes in this scenario. Hill hexes are totally impassable for Cavalry units in this scenario; Cavalry units may battle-back into them, however, if attacked from a hill hex.

The Social War: 91 BC to 88BC

The Social War in Italy began in late 91BC when, after a long period of unrest over the issue of Roman citizenship, the Italian peoples, who had linked up as allies in the last two centuries to the Roman state, revolted and formed the makings of their own republic. They called their new polity Italia and inaugurated their nation and their capital in the city of Corfinium that was itself renamed Italica. They created their own coinage to both pay their troops and as gilded popular propaganda against Rome. Their coins displayed the Italian bull gorging and raping the Roman wolf. The Italian armies of the new state were trained and led by the battle-hardened veterans of Rome's many wars, and were generally organized at the lower levels on the Roman pattern in Legions & cohorts. The peoples of Italia initially were able to field over a 100,000 men divided up into individual armies according to their positions within Italy.

The organization of the infant state of Italia mimicked the style of the Roman republic. Like the Romans the Italians selected two consuls to lead their armies and their new government. Lesser posts in the Italian republic were parceled out to prominent Italian nobles to head the forces newly raised from the various peoples of Central and South-Central Italy. The Italian consuls were Quintus Poppaedi Silo of the Marsi, and Gaius Papius Mutilus of the Samnites. The Italians also formed their own Senate of about 500 members.

The Roman Senate and people were caught by surprise at the sudden onset of the war and the genesis of Italia. They had to hastily cobble together Legions, recruit volunteers, levy taxes on the wealthy classes, and call for the help from their outer Imperial provinces as well as the Roman client kingdoms. Italia's very existence posed a dire threat to the integrity of what remained of the Roman confederation. Non-Roman or partly Roman/Latin areas of Italy, particularly in Umbria, northern Campania, and Etruria, as well as scattered & initially besieged cities like Alba Fucens, Acerrae, and Asernia remained precariously loyal to Rome, but almost all of Lucania, Apulia, and parts of southern Campania quickly moved into the Italian column via both Italian invasions and diplomacy. It was necessary for the Romans and their remaining loyal allies to survive the first onslaughts, and quickly recover from their early defeats as this would discourage further defections and allow time for Rome's ultimately superior resources and greater cohesion to be brought to bear.

The initial trigger for the start of the Social War in late 91BC was the assassination of the Roman Tribune Livius Drusus, who had proposed laws for the enfranchisement of the Italians and the purchase & distribution of land in Italy to settle lower-class Romans. He was struck down on the poorly lit portico of his house while conducting business with his clients one evening. A knife was discovered driven into his hip.

The Course of the Social War in 90BC: The Scales of Victory and Defeat

The consuls of Rome for the year 90BC were Sextus Julius Caesar and Publius Rutilius Lupus. Sextus Caesar took command of the southern front in Campania, while Lupus commanded an army in central Italy opposite the Marsic homeland. The first months of the war featured a series of stunning Roman defeats—Strabo was driven into Firmum Picenum, Sextus Caesar was defeated by Scato in the Melfa gorge with the loss of 2,000 men, Gaius Perpena was ambushed in a mountain pass where 4,000 Romans fell. The survivors of Perpena's force were incorporated into Gaius Marius' new army.

But the worst was yet to come. Asernia and Nola fell to the Italians---Publius Lupus, the consul for Rome, was killed along with his legate and the force with him virtually wiped out by Scato. This defeat was partly retrieved by Marius' arrival the following day. Scato's camp was over-run and his army was forced to retreat from the site of their victory with the loss of 2,000 dead. Another Roman army under Quintus Caepio, after a successful skirmish, near Varia, was lured by Silo, the Italian consul, into an ambush and utterly destroyed. In Campania the initial advances of the Italians were balanced out by a victory won by Sextus Caesar at Acerrae. The other Italian Consul Mutilus was defeated there via a sudden counterattack out of the gates of the Roman camp. Sextus, however, was himself badly defeated in turn during his second foray into the Melfa gorge, and the Italian stranglehold over southern Campania was hardly disturbed.

Meanwhile in faraway Lucania, P. Licinius Crassus, commander of the local Roman garrison, was driven from his burning camp with the loss of 800 men and forced to take refuge behind the walls of Grumentum. Much of Apulia was also lost to Rome through the sudden raids conducted by Vidacilius, with many cities, including Canusium and Venusia being won over to the Italian cause.

On the central Marsic front the scales finally tilted toward Rome in the latter part of the year. Gaius Marius led a successful campaign against the Marrucini and the warlike Marsi** under Silo. In the final battle Marius managed to push the Marsi out of an area of rolling vineyards, over stone walls, and into the shields of Sulla's legions, perhaps 15-20,000 Marsi were killed or taken prisoner. Pompey Strabo too won a major success against Lafrenius and the Vestini thereby breaking the siege of Firmum Picenum. Strabo sent his legate Sulpicius behind the enemy camp. When the two main armies engaged the Italian camp was set alight resulting in a panic. The Italians fled in rout back to Asculum and their general, Lafrenius, fell in the fight.

As the year ended the military situation had, at the very least, reached a condition of stalemate. The Romans had suffered hard blows, but on the whole maintained themselves in the field, and had prevented wholesale defections among the still loyal Italian and Latin communities. In fact, among the many Latin cities, only Venusia had turned coat.

The surviving consul, Sextus Caesar, returned from the war to Rome at the end of the year to conduct the consular elections for the next year (89BC). More importantly he

pushed through the so-called “Lex Julia” law which offered full Roman citizenship to all communities in Italy which had not revolted. This necessary political concession took much of the wind out of the Italian rebels’ cause and prevented any significant future defections from the Roman confederacy.

** Note: It was a saying among the Marsi at the time, who had fought as staunch allies in all of Rome’s many wars for the last two centuries that: ‘It is impossible to celebrate a triumph either over the Marsi or without them.’