The Assassination of Julius Caesar

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Introduction

Michael Parenti's book, "The Assassination of Julius Caesar" discusses the questions that almost every man, woman, and child has asked ever since. Why was Julius Caesar assassinated? Why did a group of Rome's most respectable men gather at Pompey's Theatre and kill the great man on that fateful day? What did Caesar do to suffer such wrath? Parenti's book provides a detailed account of the events that led up to 15 March, 44 B.C. (*The Assassination of Julius Caesar, by Michael Parenti – History in Review*).

Michael Parenti's book gives a detailed account of a time in the history of ancient Rome (100-33 B.C). The details discuss Rome when the republic was going through hard times. He states that Caesar's death resulted from a series of events. In those days, there was rampant corruption and growing economic differences which resulted in class conflict. He is probably one of those few writers who have written history from the perspective of the common man. At that time Rome had a significant number of slaves, poor farmers, and plebs who had absolutely no power. Hence, the top 1% controlled 99% of the republic's wealth ("The Assassination of Julius Caesar by M. Parenti").

Not until 60 B.C. did the local people find spokespeople in the Senate, like Tiberius Gracchus and his brother, Gaius. Both of these prominent people were killed by the upper class (*Swans Commentary: Michael Parenti's "The Assassination of Julius Caesar," by Gilles d'Aymery – Ga166*). After their assassination, Julius Caesar took up their fight and introduced laws for the betterment of the poor by bringing down the unemployment rate and redistributing land. Land redistribution was the one thing that threatened the landed aristocracy and reduced their power in the Senate.

Comparative Analysis

The book is written in chapters, each of which complements the others. The discussions in the chapter range from Caesar to Cicero, who is known to have been anti-Caesar. Cicero was comparatively conservative and an outspoken orator. It is Cicero whom historians have repeatedly referred to in relating the events of those days ("Nonfiction Book Review").

The primary argument presented by Parenti revolves around the historians' preoccupation with Cicero. He claims that most of these historians were patricians themselves. Hence, they would

naturally tell the narrative suitable for them. His usage of the term “Gentlemen’s History” shows that there is a substantial difference between the history written by rich, aristocratic historians and that written by the inferior classes of that time. Additionally, later historians continued to accept this distinction matter-of-factly. Parenti considers this the primary reason behind the vast literature condemning Caesar as a power-hungry and greedy dictator. He says this is a lie; in reality, Caesar loved the people and respected the institutions more than anything. He says that Caesar would have stepped down if he was given time.

To establish his point of view, Parenti has quoted Cicero sometimes. He has mentioned Cicero saying, “the artisans and shopkeepers and all that kind of scum.” Parenti has Cicero’s quotes on so many occasions that one would find the book littered with them. It is evident that Parenti wants the audience to know clearly how much the aristocrats hated the general populace of that time, and how much they were hated.

Comparison Of Parenti’s Gentlemen’s History With The Modern Times

Parenti’s book might have been about Julius Caesar, who ruled the greatest empire on Earth more than two millenniums ago, but it can also be related to the current situation. The class differences and the events connected to them are still present today. In Parenti’s book, Caesar was assassinated because he spoke for the masses and became popular with them, something that the ruling elite did not like. There are several cases today that are similar to it.

Today, we know that there are nations with rampant poverty, political and bureaucratic corruption, and economic disparity. Hundreds of thousands of people live in these countries and go to sleep hungry. Their problems can be connected to unemployment, nepotism, social class differences, and unequal distribution of economic resources. Such problems are caused when there is political corruption. Besides, the aristocrats are unwilling to share their resources with their fellow countrymen.

In modern times, the concept of empires has been given a new meaning. The contemporary empire is economic, where the more affluent countries rule other countries by controlling their resources. Thus, the United States entirely fits the definition of an empire. The U.S. currently has corporations that have branches all around the world. Through these subsidiaries, they control the resources of other nations.

Legal and Policy Considerations

Parenti used the following words for the aristocrats of his time:

". . . That policy which pretends to aspire to peace but unerringly generates war, the policy of continual preparation for war, the policy of meddlesome interventionism, there was no corner of the known world where some interest was not alleged to be in danger or under attack. If the interests were not Roman, they were those of Rome's allies; if Rome had no allies, then allies would be invented. Why was it that the national honor had been insulted when it was impossible to contrive such an interest? The fight was always invested with an aura of legality. Rome was always being attacked by evil-minded neighbors, always fighting for a breathing space. The whole world was pervaded by a host of enemies, and it was manifestly Rome's duty to guard against their indubitably aggressive designs."

In the above passage, if Rome and Rome were replaced with Washington and America, we would understand how this book relates to modern times. Apparently, the current president of the United States is not Julius Caesar, but in fact one of the aristocrats. The rulers of various nations who rule the poverty-stricken nations under American rule are part of the aristocratic society. The few who raise their voices in favor of the masses can be considered Julius Caesar.

Health and Medical Considerations

It is quite evident in the era of Mac Denationalization of America when the food giant pays its sales counter rep around $14,000 a year, which is below the poverty line and forces its employees to pay for their health insurance. Globalization, which has led to multi-national companies, has led to a few wealthy people plundering the resources, while the vast majority strives to survive. These corporations are backed by powerful and well-armed armies that always serve them.

Parenti's writing is an excellent piece of memorabilia that shows that the struggle for justice and equality remains. The only difference is that today, the things that were forcefully given to us are now neatly packaged and marketed. The people who do this are the Gentlemen Historians who work for or with these corporations.

References

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