

*Decebal NEDU**

THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN ROME AND APOLLONIA IN 266/264 B.C.

Abstract: According to Livy, Valerius Maximus and Zonaras, between the years 266-264 B.C., an embassy sent by Apollonia visited Rome. Most probably, the contact between Rome and Apollonia led to the conclusion of an economic agreement. Moreover, it seems likely that the treaty might have included clauses pertaining to the protection of the Greek and Italic traders against the pirates from the Adriatic Sea.

Keywords: Apollonia, Brundisium, First Illyrian War, Livy, Rome, Valerius Maximus, Zonaras.

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For the period 266-264 B.C, Livy, Valerius Maximus and Zonaras record the visit of an Apollonian delegation to Rome. The three records, probably inspired from the same annalistic source, do not mention anything regarding the finality of this contact, since they focus more on the elements their readers might have found interesting.

In Rome, the members of the Greek embassy were insulted and even aggressed by Q. Fabius. The Senate, in compliance with the norms of respect and protection due to foreign envoys, sent Q. Fabius to Apollonia, but from there he returned unpunished¹. It is very difficult to find an explanation for Fabius's deed, if this record is real². Nevertheless, it is worth attempting to see whether, behind this incident, there was a diplomatic arrangement, negotiated by the Roman officials and the delegates of Apollonia.

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¹ Livy *per.* 15: *Cum legatos Apolloniatium ad senatum missos quidam iuvenes pulsassent, dediti sunt Apolloniatibus*; Valerius Maximus 6.6.5: *Repraesentemus etiam illud senatus nullo modo praetermittendum opus. legatos ab urbe Apollonia Romam missos Q. Fabius, Cn. Apronius aedilicii orta contentione pulsaverunt. quod ubi conperit, continuo eos per fetiales legatis deditit quaestoremque cum his Brundisium ire iussit, ne quam in itinere a cognatis deditorum iniuriam acciperent*; Zonaras 8.7: "They surrendered to the people of Apollonia, on the Ionian Gulf, Quintus Fabius a senator, because he had insulted their envoys But they, on receiving him, sent him back home unharmed".

² P. Derow, *Rome and the Greek World from the Earliest Contacts to the End of the First Illyrian War*, Princeton, 1970, p. 74 presumed that the attack against the delegation from Apollonia was caused by the fact that the city had belonged to Pyrrhus.

In a famous work dealing with the relations between Rome and the Hellenistic world before 205 B.C., M. Holleaux attempted an in-depth analysis of the problem and, as a conclusion, he only stated that, around 266 B.C., Rome and Apollonia simply exchanged some diplomatic amiabilities³. In support of his interpretation, the French scholar reminded Apollonia's situation during the First Illyrian War. Threatened by the Illyrians, in 230-229 B.C., Epidamnus, Corcyra and Apollonia pleaded for the help of the Aetolian League and of the Achaean League, but Apollonia issued no warning to Rome during this crisis⁴.

M. Holleaux tried to rule out the hypothesis of an official agreement between the Romans and the Apollonian Greeks, between 266 and 264 B.C., and his main argument was their non-cooperation when confronted with the Illyrian threats. Nevertheless, Holleaux's depiction of the way Apollonia was involved in the First Illyrian War has some weak points, noticed by P. Derow, another well-versed scholar in the first contacts between Rome and the Greek world. For 230 and 229 B.C., the sources attest only attacks against Corcyra and Epidamnus, but not against Apollonia. This fact allows for a new interpretation of its attitude in foreign policy. Along with the two attacked cities, Apollonia preventively made a plea to the Achaean Federation and to the Aetolian League. But, since no effective pressure was exerted upon it, Apollonia probably did not consider it necessary to demand military support from its powerful partner in Italy⁵.

Of course, this scenario equally does not prove that in 266 B.C. the two states concluded a treaty. Nonetheless, it suggests at least that, as long as we do not have any serious proof to rule it out, the existence of a treaty between Rome and Apollonia can be accepted, though we cannot say anything certain about its specific content.

In this situation, the context of the first quarter of the 3rd century B.C. could offer support to the hypothesis that the two states concluded an agreement. Between 280 B.C. and 270 B.C., Rome pacified the Italic Peninsula and, after Rhegium's fall, only minor centres of opposition could be found in Italy. The statute of the communities in the Sallentine area was settled in 267-266 B.C., when, most probably, they joined the Roman Confederation by a treaty. On this occasion, Rome

³ M. Holleaux, *Rome, la Grèce et les monarchies hellénistiques (273-205)*, Paris, 1969, pp. 1-5; his hypothesis has been taken on by F. Càssola, *I gruppi politici romani nel III secolo A.C.*, Roma, 1968, 38: only "un scambio de cortesie"; A. Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East. From Anarchy to Hierarchy in the Hellenistic Mediterranean, 230-170 BC*, Oxford, 2008, p. 30: Apollonia evidently sent an embassy to Rome, for reasons unknown to us.

⁴ M. Holleaux, *op. cit.*, p. 4; the plea to the leagues from Greece: Polybius 2.9.8; see also A. Eckstein, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁵ P. Derow, *op. cit.*, p. 76; for the context, see N. Hammond, *Illyris, Rome and Macedon in 229-205 B.C.*, in "The Journal of Roman Studies", 58 (1968), pp. 4-7, E. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*, vol. II, Berkeley / Los Angeles, 1984, pp. 356 sqq., P. Green, *Alexander to Actium. The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age*, Berkeley / Los Angeles, 1990, pp. 253-254, P. Derow, *The Arrival of Rome: from the Illyrian Wars to the Fall of Macedon*, in A. Erskine (ed.), *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, Oxford, 2005, pp. 51-53, A. Eckstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 32 sqq.

occupied Brundisium, the best ranked port of Italy at the Adriatic Sea⁶ and, with a 20 years delay, due to the outburst of the First Punic War in 244 B.C., it settled there a Latin colony⁷. For Apollonia, which operated the traffic of the most part of the commodities exported from the Illyrian area to Italy, the establishment of a Roman colony in Brundisium, from whence it was possible to survey the navigation through the Otranto channel, raised many questions regarding Rome's interests in the Adriatic Sea⁸.

Therefore, the presence of the Greek embassy in Rome shortly after 266 B.C. is not surprising. Given the commercial relations between Apollonia and the Italic centres, it seems likely that, as a result of the negotiations carried out by the two states, an economic agreement favouring both parties was concluded. During the first half of the 3rd century B.C., no activity of the Italic traders on the Adriatic Sea is recorded in literary sources, but we must not lose sight of the fact that the First Illyrian War had begun, in 229 B.C., due to the prejudices brought by Queen Theuta's pirates to the ships transiting from Italy to the Greek colonies on the Dalmatian coast⁹. During the last decades of the 3rd century B.C., the trade carried by the Italics with the Eastern area of the Adriatic Sea involved a noticeable amount of commodities and this allows us to presume that the commercial routes pertaining to this trade had been known since the beginning of the century. Moreover, the above mentioned reasons that account for the outburst of the First Illyrian War in 229 B.C. allow us to cautiously presume that Rome and Apollonia also negotiated some clauses regarding the prevention of piracy on the Adriatic Sea.

Politically, this contact with the Hellenistic world had no major impact upon Rome in the first half of the 3rd century B.C. But we have to consider its consequences from a different perspective also. Gradually, through its connections with Greece and the Hellenistic world, Rome and the Italic Peninsula joined the economic system of the Mediterranean bay, and the issue of the *denarii*, starting with 269 B.C., evinces some new needs, which the old bronze coins could not meet anymore¹⁰. All these newly established relations also incurred a noticeable ideological benefit to the Roman Republic. Rome's prestige was strengthened and its leaders acknowledged this. Moreover, they began to gradually realize that the state they governed was an important country which had started its way in the history of the "civilized world".

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⁶ Livy *per.* 15; Florus 1.15; Zonaras 8.7; Th. Mommsen, *Istoria romană*, vol. I, București, 1987, pp. 242-243; A. Piganiol, *La Conquête romaine*, Paris, 1967, p. 212.

⁷ Velleius Paterculus 1.14.8; Livy *per.* 19 dates the establishment of the colony in 246 B.C.; cf. E. Salmon, *Roman Colonization and Roman Colonization in Italy*, in "Phoenix", 9 (1955), p. 69; idem, *Roman Colonization under the Republic*, New York, 1970, p. 64.

⁸ P. Derow, *op. cit.* 1970, p. 75; idem, *op. cit.* 2005, p. 52; J. Thiel, *A History of Roman Sea-Power before the Second Punic War*, Amsterdam, 1954, p. 35; E. Gruen, *op. cit.*, p. 64, p. 76.

⁹ Polybius 2.8.2-3; N. Hammond, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-6; E. Gruen, *op. cit.*, pp. 359 sqq.; P. Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-254; P. Derow, *op. cit.* 2005, pp. 51-53; A. Eckstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 33 sqq.

¹⁰ Livy *per.* 15; Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 33.3; T. Frank, *An Economic History of Rome*, New York, 2004, pp. 44-45.