

What impressions of Rome and politics do you get?

There is little sense of normal everyday life in Rome from what Cicero says, but he depicts Catilina as being hostile to it, and Cicero would like us to believe that he can preserve it for Romans simply by getting rid of Catilina, either by getting him to stop or by killing him.

Discontent in Rome which Catilina probably wants to use (and maybe eventually to reduce) is depicted as simply a result of immorality and a lack of patriotism. But from what Cicero says or does not say, we can see that there was substantial support for Catilina as someone willing to challenge Rome's ruling elite (even though he belonged to it).

Although there was probably much genuine discontent, Cicero can be seen trying to reduce support for Catilina by stressing the risks of disturbances in the city and the possibility of warfare outside Rome. (There had been civil wars in Italy in the previous 20 years.) He refers to this danger while also wishing to play it down, in order to reduce support for Catilina in Rome itself in particular. He also claims that the gods will defend the status quo.

We can also see that meetings in the Senate are important as a centre for debate and decision-making, and that the attitude of senators, as Cicero would have us believe, could be important. But Cicero thought a public meeting was necessary, possibly because of the support for such things as cancellation of debts among the poor - who needed to be reminded of the risks of any fighting.