**Claudius Pompeianus, Chief Military Advisor**

This is a fictional accountthat authentically represents options available to Marcus Aurelius during this time period.

**Background information:** You are the primary military advisor of Marcus Aurelius. You’ve served alongside Marcus Aurelius in the campaign against the German barbarians since 169. Marcus Aurelius handpicked you for this position based on your prior experience in this region.

Caesar,

We have reached a critical point in our campaign against these barbarian hordes. The time is now to strike a blow that will permanently secure our frontier for future generations. We’ve come too far to stop now. Need I remind you of the sacrifices we’ve made? Just a few years ago, the Marcomanni raided our frontiers at will and we could barely respond. Every plague ridden soldier, slave, mercenary, and gladiator was mustered to raise the legions needed to save our settlements. We may not be as lucky next time. Thousands of soldiers have died and our homeland of Italy was attacked for the first time in a hundred years. This can not be allowed to continue.

This war is a grim reminder of the reality that faces us on the northern frontier. We face the unique threat of united German tribes; a threat unlike any we’ve faced previously. This requires decisive action. You’ve tried diplomacy in an attempt to weaken the resolve of our foes, but with limited results. We continue to allow deserters and other willing Germans to join our ranks, but this alone will not resolve the situation we face.

The Danube can no longer be the buffer between the empire and these barbaric peoples. I strongly advocate using all available military might to push those who face us well beyond our borders. We must annihilate all opposition. I am perhaps willing to go along with your previous practice of granting “citizenship” to those willing to lay down their arms and settle as Romans in the newly conquered regions. Let them do the heavy work of defending our lands in the future. However, those who challenge us will face the wrath of our armies. Let our soldiers loot, burn, and pillage the barbarian villages. Take no prisoners!

We have much to gain by pursuing this approach to dealing with the Germans. Resources such as timber, farmland, metals, and anything else our armies can secure will be used to restock the imperial treasury and lessen our financial woes. Fewer Roman legions will need to protect the border since our enemies will be vanquished and our new “citizens” can help with defense if necessary. After our final push is over, we can move our forces to other parts of the empire to deal with other threats. Don’t leave a job unfinished.

Your humble servant,

Claudius Pompeianus

**Guiding Questions:**

1. What is Claudius asking Marcus Aurelius to do?
2. What reasons does he give to support his position?
3. What possible positive consequences might occur should Marcus Aurelius accept his advice?
4. What possible negative consequences might occur should Marcus Aurelius accept his advice?
5. How far is too far? If you make a new boundary between Germanic lands and Roman lands, where should it be?