

The “First Triumvirate”: Caesar in Gaul

The Life and Times of Caesar and
Cicero (HPAH5046/6046)



Caesar takes up Command

- P. Vatinius (tribune) proposes bill for 5-year command in Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum.
- Transalpine Gaul added after death of Q. Metellus Celer.
- Helvetii to gather on 28th of March.
- Caesar recruits 2 new legions – now 6.



“...he was assigned Gallia Comata [long-haired] as well by the senate, since the members feared that even if they should refuse it, the people would give him this also...” – **Suet. *Div. Jul.* 22.**

Early Successes

- Defeat of Helvetii (58 BC).
- Defeat of Suebi and Ariovistus (58 BC).
- Caesar has eight legions by 57 BC.
- Campaigns against the Belgae (May-June) and Nervii (July) – 57.



“...these wild and savage men [Germans] had become enamoured of the lands and the refinement and the abundance of the Gauls, more were brought over, that there were now as many as 120,000 of them in Gaul: that with these the Aedui and their dependents had repeatedly struggled in arms...” – **Caesar *The Gallic War* 1.31.**

Propaganda? Caesar's Style

“Asinius Pollio thinks that they were put together somewhat carelessly and without strict regard for truth; since in many cases Caesar was too ready to believe the accounts which others gave of their actions, and gave a perverted account of his own, either designedly or perhaps from forgetfulness; and he thinks that he intended to rewrite and revise them.” – **Suetonius *Divus Julius* 56.4.**

Limited vocabulary – deceptively matter of fact style – lack of poeticisms.

The *de Analogia* – a desire for purity and clarity of style.



Commentarii meant to be firsthand memoirs but narrated in third person.

Use of speeches – though usually not direct.



“Cicero, also in the Brutus, observes, ‘Caesar wrote admirably; his memoirs are cleanly, directly and gracefully composed, and stripped of all rhetorical trappings. And while his sole intention was to supply historians with factual material, the result has been that several fools have been pleased to primp up his narrative for their own glorifications...’ – **Suetonius *Divus Julius* 56.1-2.**

Politics at Rome: The 50s



Is the narrative of “triumviral” domination of politics in the 50s an exaggeration of the reality of the situation?

- Attacks on Caesar’s consular acts.
 - L. Domitius Ahenobarbus and C. Memmius (Praetors of 58 BC).
- Clodius takes son of Armenian king out of prison and strips Deiotarus of some of his privileges.
- Publius Clodius – law exiling those who execute citizens without trial.
 - Bill passed to allow Cicero’s return (4th August 57).
- Cn. Cornelius Lentulus Marcellinus (56) proposes to make Cisalpine Gaul consular for 54 BC.
- Tribune L. Antistius attempted unsuccessfully to prosecute Caesar.



“But as soon as it was known that he had fled, Clodius caused a vote of banishment to be passed upon him, and issued an edict that all men should refuse him fire and water... within 500 miles of Italy. – **Plut. Cicero 32.1, 33.1.**

“After Caesar had fallen upon warlike nations and at great hazards conquered them, and when **it was believed that he had attacked the Germans even during a truce and slain 300,000 of them**, there was a general demand at Rome that the people should offer sacrifices of good tidings, **but Cato urged them to surrender Caesar to those whom he had wronged**, and not to turn upon themselves, **or allow to fall upon their city, the pollution of his crime.**” – Plutarch *Cato the Younger* 51.1.



Can we now speak of Caesar as being an equal partner in this “alliance”?

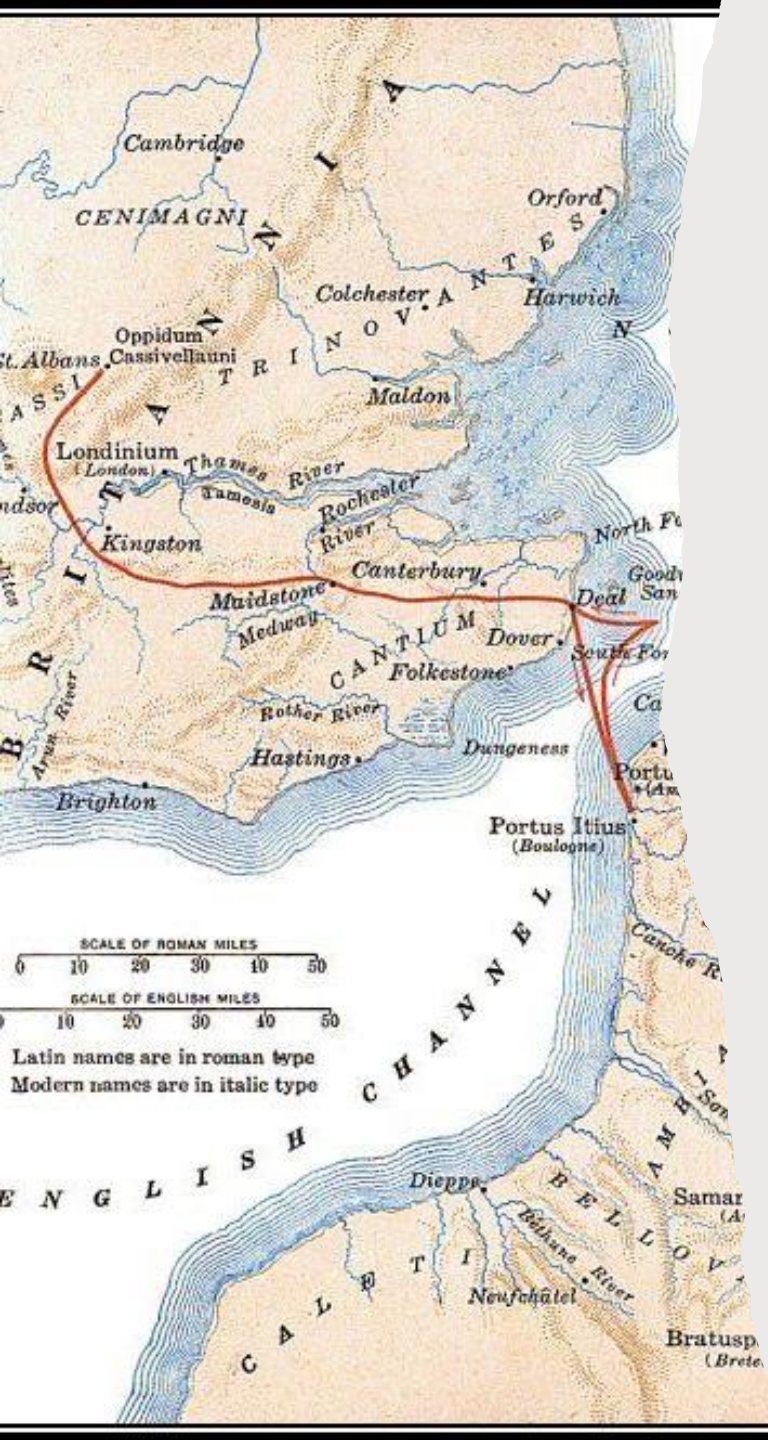
- Crassus meets Caesar at Ravenna (8-13 April 56 BC).
- Pompey meets Caesar (+ Crassus?) on 17 April at Luca.
 - 120-200 senators are said to have been present.
- Cicero more clearly working for interests of the “triumvirs”.



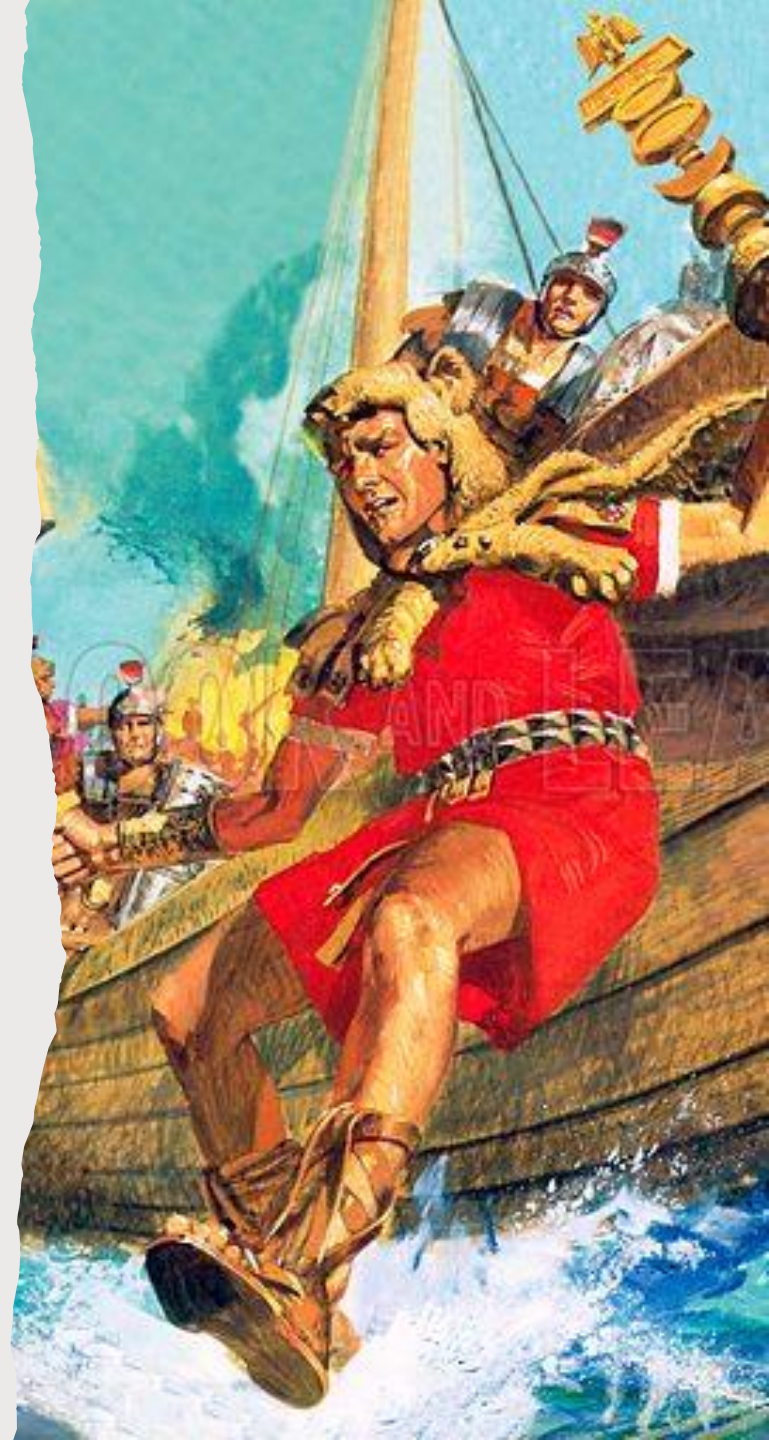
“...he filled all the rest with hopes and loaded them with money, and sent them away; but between himself, Pompey, and Crassus the following compact was made: these two were to stand for the consulship, and Caesar was to assist their candidacy by sending large numbers of his soldiers home to vote for them; as soon as they were elected, they were to secure for themselves commands of provinces and armies, and to confirm Caesar's present provinces to him for another term of five years.” – **Plut. *Pompey* 51.4.**



Caesar Campaigns Continued

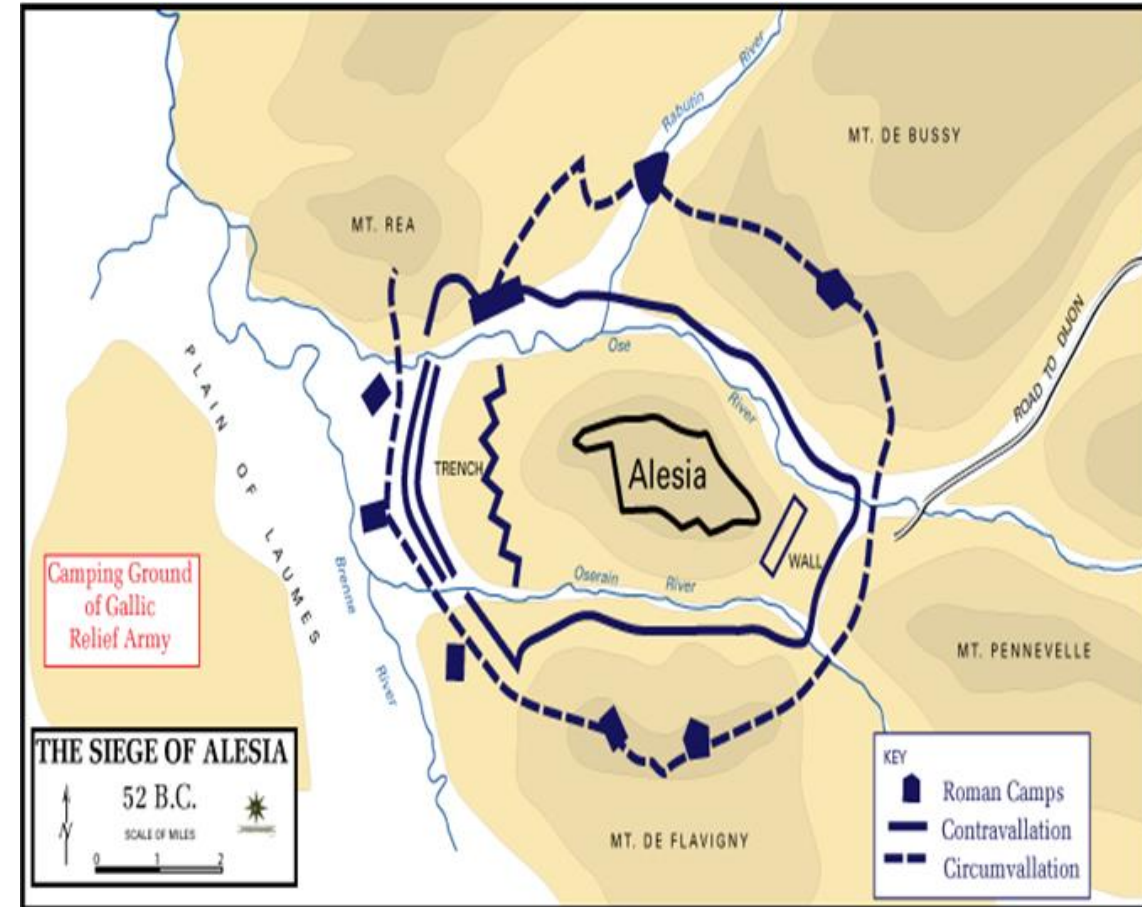


- Rebellion of the Veneti (56 BC).
- Initial foray into Britain (late summer 55 BC) – fleet wrecked in storm.
- Second expedition (54 BC) – defeats coalition of Cassivellaunus.
- Uprising in Gaul – 15 cohorts (= a legion and a half) lost to the Ebrones late 54 BC.



The Great Rebellion

- Widespread rebellion under the leadership of Vercingetorix.
- Defeat of Caesar at Gergovia.
- Circumvallation to besiege enemy – contravallation to protect Caesar's forces.
- Fall of rebel strong hold of Alesia in autumn of 52 BC.





The Breakdown of the Partnership

- Death of Julia (Aug. 54 BC).
 - Genuine affection of Pompey – **Plutarch Pompey 53.4.**
- 55 BC: Crassus raises an army to march against the Parthians.
 - Reaches Syria in the Spring of 54 BC, taking control of 7 legions.
 - Crassus crosses Euphrates at Zeugma (rather going north through Armenia) in Spring 53 BC.
 - In May Crassus reaches Carrhae – abandoned by his allied cavalry.



Violence and Bribery in Rome

- Bribery scandal in September 54.
 - Consuls and praetors not elected till summer of 53.
- Gang violence between Clodius and Milo (53 BC).
 - Riots sparked by Clodius' murder on 18th January 52 BC.
- Pompey elected Consul without colleague for 52 BC – motion proposed by M. Bibulus.



“...the people carried the body of Publius Clodius into the Senate House where... they cremated him. With Clodius the Senate House itself went up in flames, the Basilica Porcia, which adjoined the Senate House also burned down.” – **Asconius On Cicero's Milo 29.**



How early do you think the “break” was between Pompey and Caesar – already in 52 BC or not until 50 BC?

Caesar undermined?

Law passed by all ten tribunes to allow Caesar to stand for consulship *in absentia*.

- Pompey passes the *lex Pompeia de iure magistratum* (52 BC).

Dangers of prosecution once Caesar ceases to hold imperium.

- *lex de provinciis* (requirement of 5-year gap between office and governorship).

Pompey has his proconsular powers extended for a further 5 years.

Curio blocks Pompey's proposal that Caesar leaves his province by 13th November 50 BC.

Request by Senate for a legion each from Pompey and Caesar over fears of the Parthians (May 50 BC).

Motion by Curio (1st December 50 BC) for both Caesar and Pompey to dismiss their armies – 370 supporters vs. 22 naysayers.