

Session 5 Booklet: The outbreak of civil war and Caesar's “monarchy”

Part 1: the looming civil war

1 The political and constitutional status of Caesar

The political and constitutional status of Caesar, after the victory at Alesia, was put under increased scrutiny at Rome. A nearly ten-year long tenure of a provincial command was quite simply unheard of in the history of the Republic; not even Pompey's extraordinary Eastern command had lasted for so long. Moreover, the very extent of Caesar's victory was playing against him: it was apparent that even the most resilient elements of the indigenous population would not have been able to organise a comeback for a decade at least. The case for keeping Caesar in Gaul, and in command of a mighty, ferociously loyal army was becoming increasingly thin. A considerable part of the Senate was keen to put an end to his tenure; some radical elements, like Cato, even argued that Caesar deserved to be impeached because of the atrocities perpetrated in his campaign against the Germans. Caesar was not willing to end his command without precise political guarantees. He intended to run for the consulship as soon as he abandoned his command; however, he knew that he would legally have to abandon his command and disband his army before presenting his candidature.

The recent precedents suggested that a solution to this legal impediment could have been found: the very essence of the first triumvirate was to bend the existing rules of political and institutional spheres and to use them to bring about deeply un-republican arrangements. What made the triumvirate possible was, of course, the personal affiliation and convergence of interests of three men; when that personal relationship collapsed, the triumvirate ended too, and the clash between the traditional forms of Republican politics and the virtually monarchic dimension of the political competition became obvious. The triumvirate did not die in a day, and in fact, since it was an informal agreement, it did not even have an official 'date of death'; its crisis was brought about by a number of concomitant factors.

The main one was the deterioration of the relationship between Pompey and Caesar. Caesar's long absence from Rome did not seriously hinder his possibility to make an impact on the political life of the city, but it had the predictable effect of making the cooperation with Pompey looser and less systematic than it had been in the past. Pompey started to act increasingly as a free agent, already soon after the confirmation of the triumvirate agreed in the Luca talks. In 57 BC he took charge of a programme of free corn supplies in the city of Rome - a clear attempt to ingratiate himself with the plebs; in the same period, various voices from within the circle of Pompey's associates started to advocate the necessity of granting him the dictatorship, so that the challenges faced by the State could be competently and forcefully addressed – as Sulla had done (cf. Cic. *Att.* 9.10.6).

2 A time of Crisis

A decisive destabilising factor was the sudden death, in August 54, in childbirth, of Julia, the daughter of Caesar who had married Pompey as part of the alliance between the two men: a

tragic event, which both men, apparently, sincerely mourned. This saw the disappearance of the only thing that they deeply shared.

By June 53 BC, another death marked a crisis in that relationship: M. Licinius Crassus lost his life in the battle of Carrhae, marking the end of an ill-fated campaign against Parthia, in which he had hoped to consolidate his military credentials. The disappearance of another key-player of the Roman political scene, and of the man whose bad relationship with Pompey had made Caesar's intervention necessary, and the triumvirate possible, must have seemed to many the end of an era. Quite simply, it left only Caesar and Pompey on the scene, in the position to renew their collaboration, as it had been the case in 55 BC at Luca, or to interrupt it, with inevitably traumatic consequences. They chose the second solution.

3 The influence of political violence

Things were further complicated by the rise of political violence within the city of Rome: the use of criminal gangs as tools of intimidation and open coercion was becoming an increasingly common feature of political competition, along with the customary practices of electoral corruption and bribery. Gangs who were involved in episodes of political violence could become independent actors on the political scene; the most notable case being that of Publius Clodius and Titus Annius Milo, respectively a champion of the *populares* (and a one-time friend of Caesar's) and a supporter of the *optimates*, who happily stood for election to senior magistracies while still leading two of the most feared gangs in Rome.

It is worth reading Plutarch's assessment of the situation in the late Fifties (*Caes.* 28.3-6):

But Caesar had from the outset formed this design, and like an athlete had removed himself to a great distance from his antagonists, and by exercising himself in the Gallic wars had practised his troops and increased his fame, lifting himself by his achievements to a height where he could vie with the successes of Pompey. He laid hold of pretexts which were furnished partly by Pompey himself, and partly by the times and the evil state of government at Rome, by reason of which candidates for office set up counting-tables in public and shamelessly bribed the multitudes, while the people went down into the forum under pay, contending on behalf of their paymaster, not with votes, but with bows and arrows, swords, and slings. Often, too, they would defile the rostra with blood and corpses before they separated, leaving the city to anarchy like a ship drifting about without a steersman, so that men of understanding were content if matters issued in nothing worse for them than monarchy, after such madness and so great a tempest. And there were many who actually dared to say in public that nothing but monarchy could now cure the diseases of the state, and that this remedy ought to be adopted when offered by the gentlest of physicians, hinting at Pompey. – trans. from the Loeb edition (1919).

4 Looking for a dictator?

Calls for a dictator in this climate were not surprising, especially in January 52 BC. The extent of political violence was such that the popular assemblies were unable to carry out an orderly election of the consuls, and by the beginning of the new year the magistracy was still vacant.

The Senate was compelled to appoint an interim magistrate, the interrex, who was meant to be changed every five days. Things, however, got even more wildly out of control when, on 18 January 52 BC, the gangs of Milo and Clodius met on the Appian Way, not far from Rome, and Clodius was killed in the resulting riot. We know quite a lot (although by no means enough) about this crucial episode from the speech that Cicero gave in defence of Milo, the *pro Milone*, in which the murder of his long-time political opponent was celebrated as an outstanding service to the Republic, and a consequence of Clodius' recklessness.

The day after the death of Clodius (a predictable accident, which had momentous and unintended political consequences) the Senate declared a state of emergency, and ordered the election of an interrex; Pompey, who still held the proconsulship, was among the magistrates who were entrusted with the defence of public order. On the same day, Caesar arrived in Ravenna, in Cisalpine Gaul, and organised the recruitment of new troops, officially in compliance with the recent senatorial decree that prompted magistrates to act in defence of the Republic, but actually in preparation for what seemed an imminent clash.

5 Efforts at reconciliation

There was an attempt, however, to come to an arrangement. A marriage alliance – which would have entailed a longer term collaboration – was ruled out by Pompey; however, Pompey knew that he may need Caesar's support against the most traditionalist parts of the *optimates*, who still viewed his prestige and military might as a threat, and agreed on a bill that enabled Caesar to stand for consulship for the year 48 BC without having to present his candidature in person, and without having to stand down from his provincial command until the end of 49 BC (Caesar knew that he would have immediately been prosecuted, had he left his office). Unlike Caesar, who could rely on impressive military support but was confined to his province, and did not have many friends in the Senate, Pompey had gained a central position in Roman politics at the time. He could deal with his old ally Caesar, and at the same time he could embark on negotiations with the Senate about his own personal status for the rest of the year. There was resistance to granting a dictatorship; the outcome of the negotiation was to grant Pompey the right to stand for the consulship without a colleague for the rest of the year. The solution pleased even the more traditionalist members of the Senate, including Cato, as it gave a clear temporal limit to Pompey's tenure of office. One of its collateral effects, which Pompey perhaps did not fully appreciate, was to bring him closer to the senatorial oligarchy that used to be his great foe. Although his agreement with Caesar was promptly turned into law, some aspect of Pompey's legislation during his consulship did in fact undermine his bond with Caesar: a law on the rights and prerogatives of magistrates (*de maiestate*) included the provision that a candidate had to canvass in person. Although Pompey stated publicly that Caesar was exempt of that requirement, the legal position of Caesar was doubtful. The developments of this agreement are significant in themselves: the whole concept of lawfulness and constitution were under threat in that period, and practice ended up overrunning the norm all too often.

6 A time of low politics

Even under those precarious conditions, Caesar managed to complete his task in Gaul: after Alesia, as we have seen, his position was highly prestigious. He could seriously regard himself

as a *princeps civitatis*, one of the Republic's great (and wise) men, with a rank to defend and legitimate expectations to fulfil. Moreover, Pompey's attitude to him was becoming increasingly ambiguous: an unusual combination of friendliness and ambiguous agreements with the Senate. The clearest paradox was that Pompey, the new supporter of the Senate, took up a command in the two Spanish provinces for a five-year term as he was still holding the consulship, and some of his supporters – most notably Cato – were advocating the end of Caesar's Gallic command. Surely in light of this recent precedent Caesar asked for a further extension of his Gallic command at the beginning of 51 BC, with a view to depositing it to stand for the consular election in 48 BC. The proposal was rebuffed, and an attempt was made by Marcellus to persuade the Senate that Caesar's anomalous position had to come to an end, and that Pompey's law which required candidates to campaign in person applied to Caesar too. The proposal was vetoed by the tribunes of the plebs who supported Caesar, but Caesar's request was not approved either. One of the consequences of this decision was to stop the enfranchisement of the communities of Cisalpine Gaul that Caesar had inaugurated, and which had the consequence of their inclusion within the colony of Comum (modern Como, in northern Lombardy). The obvious effect was that the strong loyalty of Northern Italy to Caesar became even stronger. Pompey kept a low profile during this phase of the proceedings, as he was preparing for his mission to Spain; before leaving, however, in September 51 BC, he made it clear that, under the law on provincial commands he had passed in 55 BC, Caesar's command in Gaul could be reconsidered after March 50 BC. The Senate promptly agreed on a procedure that would have led to the break-up of the two Gallic provinces by the beginning of the following year. It was also made clear to the pro-Caesarian tribunes that any attempt to veto these plans would be regarded as a breach of senatorial authority.

It is in this combination of low politics and constitutional niceties that the background of the Civil War took shape. Like many tragedies, the disaster that was about to befall Rome did have the touch of comedy.

Part 2: Civil war breaks out

1 The inevitable war

War seemed inevitable, and indeed the preparations on Caesar's side were well under way. He was aware of the difficulties that he would meet: his opponents were more numerous and better equipped, they had Rome as their base, could claim the legitimacy that the Senate's authority conveyed, and were led by one of the most talented military commanders of all times. Caesar, of course, made use of his own considerable political acumen. Suetonius' account of his preparations for the war shows how much of it was about politics, rather than military arrangements.

This is made clear in Suet. *Caes.* 26-28:

Within this same space of time he lost first his mother, then his daughter, and soon afterwards his grandchild. Meanwhile, as the community was aghast at the murder of Publius Clodius, the senate had voted that only one consul should be chosen, and expressly named Gnaeus Pompeius. When the tribunes planned to make him Pompey's colleague, Caesar urged them rather to propose to the people that he be

permitted to stand for a second consulship without coming to Rome, when the term of his governorship drew near its end, to prevent his being forced for the sake of the office to leave his province prematurely and without finishing the war. On the granting of this, aiming still higher and flushed with hope, he neglected nothing in the way of lavish expenditure or of favours to anyone, either in his public capacity or privately. He began a forum with the proceeds of his spoils, the ground for which cost more than a hundred million sesterces. He announced a combat of gladiators and a feast for the people in memory of his daughter, a thing quite without precedent. To raise the expectation of these events to the highest possible pitch, he had the material for the banquet prepared in part by his own household, although he had let contracts to the markets as well. He gave orders that whenever famous gladiators fought without winning the favour of the people, they should be rescued by force and kept for him. He had the novices trained, not in a gladiatorial school by professionals, but in private houses by Roman knights and even by senators who were skilled in arms, earnestly beseeching them, as is shown by his own letters, to give the recruits individual attention and personally direct their exercises. He doubled the pay of the legions for all time. Whenever grain was plentiful, he distributed it to them without stint or measure, and now and then gave each man a slave from among the captives.

Moreover, to retain his relationship and friendship with Pompey, Caesar offered him his sister's granddaughter Octavia in marriage, although she was already the wife of Gaius Marcellus, and asked for the hand of Pompey's daughter, who was promised to Faustus Sulla. When he had put all Pompey's friends under obligation, as well as the greater part of the senate, through loans made without interest or at a low rate, he lavished gifts on men of all other classes, both those whom he invited to accept his bounty and those who applied to him unasked, including even freedmen and slaves who were special favourites of their masters or patrons. In short, he was the sole and ever ready help of all who were in legal difficulties or in debt and of young spendthrifts, excepting only those whose burden of guilt or poverty was so heavy, or who were so given up to riotous living, that even he could not save them; and to these he declared in the plainest terms that what they needed was a civil war.

He took no less pains to win the devotion of princes and provinces all over the world, offering prisoners to some by the thousand as a gift, and sending auxiliary troops to the aid of others whenever they wished, and as often as they wished, without the sanction of the senate or people, besides adorning the principal cities of Asia and Greece with magnificent public works, as well as those of Italy and the provinces of Gaul and Spain. At last, when all were thunder-struck at his actions and wondered what their purpose could be, the consul Marcus Claudius Marcellus, after first making proclamation that he purposed to bring before the senate a matter of the highest public moment, proposed that a successor to Caesar be appointed before the end of his term, on the ground that the war was ended, peace was established, and the victorious army ought to be disbanded; also that no account be taken of Caesar at the elections, unless he were present, since Pompey's subsequent action had not annulled the decree of the people. And it was true that when Pompey

proposed a bill touching the privileges of officials, in the clause whereby he debarred absentees from candidacy for office he forgot to make a special exception in Caesar's case, and did not correct the oversight until the law had been inscribed on a tablet of bronze and deposited in the treasury. Not content with depriving Caesar of his provinces and his privilege, Marcellus also moved that the colonists whom Caesar had settled in Novum Comum by the bill of Vatinius should lose their citizenship, on the ground that it had been given from political motives and was not authorized by the law. – trans. from the Loeb edition (1913).

2 The Senate

The best part of 50 BC was spent in endless infighting between the Senate, most of the ruling magistrates (especially the consul C. Marcellus), Pompey, and Caesar, who could rely on the staunch support of the tribune Curio, who was prepared to make a generous use of his veto power. The bone of contention was still the date when Caesar would be expected to depose his command and come back to Rome; an attempt was made to reconcile Caesar and Pompey by suggesting the involvement of one of them in a new Parthian campaign, but neither party could afford to leave Italy at such a crucial time. Indeed, both Caesar and Pompey devoted a significant part of the year touring respectively Cisalpine Gaul and Campania. It is perhaps needless to specify that the personal relationship between the two men was by then completely over. It must not be overlooked, however, that it was not simply a clash of personalities. The crisis that led to the outbreak of the Civil War was the symptom of a broader failure of the Roman political machinery; and, as some ancient authors realised very well, it was also the consequence of a deep anthropological change within the Roman elite, whose members were quite simply prepared to push the boundaries of their competition to ends that had not been tested before. Moreover, the increasing size of the empire posed challenges and rewards that did not exist in the past. The crisis was, therefore, a political issue, not a personal one. Like many political issues, it came to the fore as a constitutional crisis: a proconsul who, with the help of a tribune, was rebuking the attempts of a legitimate government to change the structure of provincial administration.

The very few weeks immediately preceding the beginning of the war did have the pace of a catastrophe that announces itself: it is possible to follow the course of events mainly from Cicero's correspondence, who did not surrender to the idea of war until the end. A memorable letter to his friend Atticus reflects the mood of those days.

I saw Pompey on the 10th of December: we were together perhaps two hours. He seemed to me to be much delighted at my return: urged me to claim a triumph: undertook to do his part: warned me not to enter the senate until I had gained my object, for fear of alienating some tribune by the speeches I delivered. Need I say more? In cordiality of mere language nothing could have been more explicit. On the political situation, however, the tone of his remarks assumed the existence of downright war. He held out no hope of maintaining peace: 'he had felt before that Caesar was alienated from him, he had recently become quite sure of it. Hirtius, Caesar's most intimate friend, had been in the neighbourhood, but had not called on him. Moreover, Hirtius having arrived in the evening of the 6th of December, and Balbus having arranged to visit Scipio on the 7th, before daybreak, Hirtius

started to re-join Caesar late in the previous night.' This seemed to him to be a clear 'symptom' of alienation. In short, nothing else consoles me but the opinion that the man, to whom even his enemies have assigned a second consulship, and fortune has given supreme power, will not be so mad as to put these advantages in danger. But if he once begins to run amuck, I verily have many fears which I do not venture to put into writing. However, as the matter stands at present, I think of approaching the city on the 3rd of January. Cic. *Att.* 7.4 – trans. by Evelyn S. Shuckburgh (1908-1909).

3 Senate defending

When the year of his tribunate ended, Curio joined Caesar's ranks in Cisalpine Gaul; he came back to Rome in time to read out Caesar's message to the Senate in the opening session of the year 49 BC. We lack its full text, but we have several summaries, which make it clear how Caesar restated his merits towards the State, and reiterated his request to be allowed to keep his command until the elections were over, or that the other military commanders should resign too. It was the message of a man who knew very well that he could not rely on many friends within the senatorial elite, and who needed to consider both the risk of being prosecuted and that of being physically eliminated. It was virtually impossible to reach a compromise by that time, despite Cicero's generous efforts; when the Senate restated the obligation for Caesar to resign and to come to Rome by the summer in order to be eligible to run for the consulship, two tribunes, Marcus Antonius and Cassius, vetoed the proposal. The Senate passed a decree that was modelled on the one passed in 52 BC and gave full powers to the magistrates to protect the city. Antonius and Cassius read it as a threat (they knew that several tribunes had been put to death under the provisions of a *senatus consultum* in the past) and left Rome with Curio and Caelius.

The news reached Caesar in Ravenna, where he was waiting for developments. His account of the speech that he gave to his soldiers at the beginning of the war is memorable:

These things being made known to Caesar, he harangued his soldiers; he reminded them "of the wrongs done to him at all times by his enemies, and complained that Pompey had been alienated from him and led astray by them through envy and a malicious opposition to his glory, though he had always favored and promoted Pompey's honor and dignity. He complained that an innovation had been introduced into the republic, that the intercession of the tribunes, which had been restored a few years before by Sulla, was branded as a crime, and suppressed by force of arms; that Sulla, who had stripped the tribunes of every other power, had, nevertheless, left the privilege of intercession unrestrained; that Pompey, who pretended to restore what they had lost, had taken away the privileges which they formerly had; that whenever the senate decreed, 'that the magistrates should take care that the republic sustained no injury' (by which words and decree the Roman people were obliged to repair to arms), it was only when pernicious laws were proposed; when the tribunes attempted violent measures; when the people seceded, and possessed themselves of the temples and eminences of the city; (and these instances of former times, he showed them were expiated by the fate of Saturninus and the Gracchi): that nothing of this kind was attempted now, nor even thought

of: that no law was promulgated, no intrigue with the people going forward, no secession made; he exhorted them to defend from the malice of his enemies the reputation and honor of that general under whose command they had for nine years most successfully supported the state; fought many successful battles, and subdued all Gaul and Germany." The soldiers of the thirteenth legion, which was present (for in the beginning of the disturbances he had called it out, his other legions not having yet arrived), all cry out that they are ready to defend their general, and the tribunes of the commons, from all injuries. – trans. by W. A. McDevitte and W. S. Bohn (1869).

4 The die is cast

The above quote speech does not include the famous line that Caesar was said to have uttered as he was about to cross the Rubicon, a river (in fact, barely more than a stream) that marked the southern boundary of Cisalpine Gaul in that part of Italy: ‘let the dice fly high’ (if we are to believe Plutarch; the Latin version *iacta alea est*, ‘the die is cast’, is in Suet. *Caes.* 33). There are good reasons to think that the anecdote is not apocryphal, as Plutarch apparently derived it from the great (and regrettably lost) historical work of Asinius Pollio, who was with Caesar when he crossed the Rubicon (Plut. *Caes.* 32.5-9).

Part 3: In the thick of civil war

1 Crossing the Rubicon

The crossing of the Rubicon took place on January 11th 49 BC. It was a momentous decision, as it marked the completion of Caesar’s evolution into a public enemy: by crossing that river, he was formally accepting that role, and claiming that he was prepared to invade Italy and wage war against fellow Roman citizens in order to secure the success of his agenda. We do not quite get this sense of urgency from the first book of Caesar’s *commentarii de bello civili*, the full-scale account of the civil war that Caesar apparently intended as a continuation of the *commentarii* on the Gallic campaign. Caesar’s factual and calmly paced narrative has the main aim of asserting Caesar’s reasons for embarking on the war, and in portraying the war as a consequence of the abuse and intimidation that he had received from the *optimates*. The beginning of the campaign is therefore given less prominence than we would perhaps expect, but the following account of the campaign is remarkably detailed and engaging. As we get into the thick of the military operations, Caesar’s narrative does justice to the material, and becomes the obvious source for this period of the conflict. Caesar carefully records the development of his campaign, the increasingly favourable reception that his troops got from the communities throughout Italy, and the complexity of his military strategy.

2 The Senate's Reaction

It is unclear whether Caesar had predicted the reaction of his enemies: Pompey persuaded the Senate to leave Rome, cross over to Greece, and organise the reaction to Caesar from the provinces. Pompey could still rely on more numerous troops, and on an impressive network

of *clientelae* that ranged from Spain to the Eastern provinces that he himself had conquered. This was a questionable choice, as the rest of the war proved; but it had the positive effect of confining Caesar under the portrait of a revolutionary who had brought about the collapse of the republican institutions. Caesar realised it, and in a series of messages to the Senate he pointedly insisted upon his peaceful intentions and his desire to embark on talks with Pompey. He even came up with a proposal of mutual disarmament, which in fact met the conditions set by the Senate in the ultimatum it had launched before the crossing of the Rubicon. If it was a gamble on Caesar's part, it was a successful one: Pompey and his associates refused to disarm, and Caesar could break off the negotiations claiming that his opponents were not interested in peace, but in personal power.

3 Dignity and clemency

It was probably the first step in the strategy that Caesar pursued throughout the civil war, and even after his victory, and which is memorably conveyed by the *commentarii*: its central message was that Caesar was not interested in personal power, but intended to have his *dignitas* duly recognised, and to bring about peace and stability within the republic. The willingness to make concessions and, most importantly, to forgive his enemies was central to this propagandistic construction. Caesar carefully advertised it from the beginning of the civil war. His narrative of the war makes much of the support that he managed to obtain in Picenum, a region of central Italy where Pompey traditionally had many supporters; and it makes even more of Caesar's decision not to destroy the city of Corfinium, which had hosted a significant number of Pompeian followers, whom Caesar also decided to leave unharmed (*BC* 1.23).

Such an impressive, and of course calculated display of clemency did not simply set a clear benchmark for Caesar's conduct during the rest of the war, and had the invaluable immediate effect of persuading a sizeable number of Pompeians that Caesar did not have deadly intentions, and that they would be able to make it through a possible defeat without losing their life or their property, even if they had to surrender themselves. Many of the supporters of Pompey, of course, were not prepared for any kind of accommodation, and Pompey refused the last-ditch opportunity offered by Caesar's presence near Brundisium, where Pompey was waiting to leave for Greece. Despite the blockade of the port, Pompey managed to leave for Greece.

4 The Spanish Campaign

That was Caesar's final attempt to separate the destiny of his former ally from that of the *optimates*, a particular sector of the Senate. Despite that failure, Caesar was keen to reach a similar objective with other distinguished members of the nobility who could be persuaded to agree on an agenda of moderation and reconciliation, rather than to follow Pompey overseas. It was mainly for this reason that Caesar decided to spend a few days in Rome after his aborted talks with Pompey, despite the absence of both consuls from the capital. Cicero's correspondence shows the numerous (and ultimately successful) attempts made by Caesar and his associates in this period to persuade him to switch sides. The main effect of Caesar's stay in Rome was the opportunity to get hold of the treasury, the *aerarium sanctius* that was hosted in the temple of Saturn, and which his enemies had left behind; to do so, Caesar did not hesitate to openly intimidate the tribune Metellus, a member of one of the most illustrious families of

the nobility who had vetoed the plunder of the *aerarium*. Caesar's gesture displeased the plebs too, and was badly at odds with the claims of clemency and moderation that he reiterated during his visit before the people and a decimated Senate.

Caesar could not afford not to be ruthless on this occasion. He needed fresh resources to launch the attack on the daunting network of military support that Pompey had gathered in Spain, and which was standing by, waiting to close upon Caesar's forces in Italy as soon as Pompey had organised his in the Greek East. Having left a number of trusted lieutenants in Rome, Caesar set off to Spain, via Massilia, modern Marseilles, a long-time ally of Rome, which was reluctant to give him military support and had to be persuaded by a siege and a sea blockade. The Spanish campaign was very challenging, and it was one of the finest moments of Caesar's career as a military commander. In just forty days, the best forces that Pompey could rely upon, led by his lieutenants Afranius and Petreius, were soundly defeated: when their camp was surrounded and besieged by Caesar's forces, they were compelled to ask for negotiations. Caesar took the opportunity to showcase his clemency in a memorable speech to the enemy soldiers, in which he restated his desire for reconciliation, blamed their commanders for the war, and ordered that the armies that Pompey had quartered in Spain several years before be dismissed with immediate effect. Significantly, this strategic decision was taken with an attention to the personal circumstances of the soldiers: the soldiers that were domiciled in Spain were allowed to stay in the province, while those who had not settled there were dismissed on the Var River, which marked the boundary between Gaul and Italy. A number of former Pompeian soldiers decided to join Caesar's army; Caesar recorded their loyalty as a consequence of his policy of clemency.

5 Dictator

The results of the Spanish campaign were outstanding. Caesar could now focus on the imminent clash with the army that Pompey and the *optimates* had gathered in Greece, and could also take some time to devote to the further stabilisation in Italy. As we have seen, Caesar had already clarified his legal position before leaving for Spain; after his return from Spain, he decided to go one step further. He used the time that was necessary for the organisation of the army that he intended to send over to Greece to stop in Rome for eleven days and settle the political and constitutional situation. He secured his appointment to the dictatorship – the ancient republican magistracy that could be used in situations of serious emergency – and presided over a new round of elections, which ended with the predictable rise of a number of Caesar's associates to the highest magistracies, and with Caesar's re-election to the consulship. The situation of the early phase of the war was reversed: legality was on Caesar's side. The claim to moderation and lawfulness was confirmed by an important policy decision: Caesar rebuffed the numerous requests for a complete cancellation of debts – an old theme in the propaganda of the *populares* – and set out a series of sensible policies to solve the problem of debt, which had been oppressing Italy for several decades. The emphasis on the importance of Italy in the reconciliation envisaged by Caesar was confirmed by another important measure – the extension of Roman citizenship to Cisalpine Gaul: a part of the text of this law is preserved epigraphically (the best edition, with English translation, is in Crawford 1996, no. 28).

6 Pharsalus

Caesar started the decisive clash with Pompey under significantly improved circumstances than a year before, but with plenty of problems still left to face: Pompey and his allies had organised a mighty army and the precedent of Sulla, who had regained Italy after a memorable victory in the East, was present to everybody's minds. The war was still full of unknowns. When he crossed over to Greece, Caesar had to reckon with a certain lack of familiarity with that theatre and with the fatigue and occasional restlessness of his troops. On the other front Pompey surely underestimated Caesar's difficulties and could not persuade himself to launch an early attack; although most of what we know about the Pompeian camp comes from Caesar's account of the civil war and is therefore of dubious value, it seems safe to say that there were some blunders in its chain of command. The coexistence between Pompey and his senatorial associates was not trouble free. Caesar managed to turn the fate of a difficult campaign around by using two familiar tactics; on the one hand he bought time by trying to embark on negotiations with Pompey and on the other hand he managed to keep the loyalty of his soldiers with the usual set of promises and bombastic calls for loyalty. The first phase of the campaign took place in Epirus, a region which roughly corresponds to modern Albania. The operations eventually shifted further inland and were concentrated in Thessaly. It was on the plain of Pharsalus that the forces of Caesar and Pompey finally came to a full scale confrontation on August 9th 48 BC. Pompey's forces considerably outnumbered Caesar's; Caesar managed to win this decisive battle by a formidable combination of strategic ability and psychological mastery (again, we must not forget that the fullest account of the battle is found in Caesar's own writing).

The battle of Pharsalus was perhaps the finest example of Caesar's generalship and it was also the moment in which the myth of Caesar's fortune arguably took shape: all the orders and dispositions that Caesar had given before the beginning of the battle were enforced without significant obstacles and in the most impressive and effective way. The defeat of the Pompeiani was as crushing as it could possibly be: about 23,000 men surrendered themselves to Caesar, (who immediately pardoned them, consistent with the practice he had inaugurated in Spain), while the majority of the commanders including Pompey fled the battle camp and escaped dishonourably. Caesar's own description of the abandoned camp of the Pompeiani is both a vivid portrait of an epoch-making disaster and a masterpiece of political propaganda (Caes. *BC* 3.96):

In the camp of Pompeius one might see bowers constructed, a great weight of silver plate set out, soldiers' huts laid with freshly cut turf, and those of Lucius Lentulus and some others covered over with ivy, and many other indications of excessive luxury and confidence of victory, so that it could easily be supposed that they had felt no fear about the issue of the day, inasmuch as they sought out unnecessary indulgences. Yet these men kept taunting Caesar's most wretched and long-suffering army with luxurious indulgence, though it had always lacked every article of necessary use. When our men were now circulating within the rampart, Pompey, procuring a horse and tearing off his insignia as Imperator, flung himself out of the camp by the decuman gate and, putting spurs to his horse, hurried straight off to Larisa. Nor did he halt there, but, coming across a few of his men in flight, with undiminished speed, not stopping his course at night, arrives at the sea with a retinue of thirty horsemen and embarks on board a corn-ship, often complaining, as it was said, that his expectations had been so utterly falsified that it almost

seemed as if he had been betrayed, the flight having originated with that particular part of his force from which he had hoped for the victory. – trans. from the Loeb edition (1914).

According to Suetonius, as he was inspecting the corpses of his enemies Caesar said with characteristic brevity: *hoc voluerunt*, ‘they wanted this’ (*Caes.* 30.4). It was of course a personal and very biased take on the civil war and its complex background, but it was, at the same time, a fitting epitaph for the dying republic and its laborious crisis.

7 The next steps

Pharsalus was the watershed of the civil war. Caesar’s forces virtually doubled in size after that victory; the whole of the Greek speaking area of the empire, formerly loyal to Pompey, rushed to declare their allegiance to him, and the legendary figure that Pompey had been for more than three decades had been shattered by his disappearance from the battlefield. For this very reason Caesar decided not to pursue Pompey or indeed the remaining clusters of resistance that survived Pharsalus. Instead, he decided to embark on a tour of Asia Minor, the richest region of the empire which he had known well in the 70s and which he needed to reconcile to his own cause. It was not a difficult task. There is a sizeable amount of epigraphical evidence which shows the extent of the honours decreed to Caesar by numerous cities. An inscription from Ephesus calls Caesar a descendant of Ares and Aphrodite, ‘God made manifest and common saviour of mankind’ (see the text and the discussion in Raubitschek 1954; and cf. *Caes. BC* 3.105). It was not mere accident that Caesar was hailed as a god for the first time in Asia Minor, where there was a thriving tradition of rural cults that dated back to the late 4th century BC. Caesar’s claim that his family descended from Aphrodite played a part too. Indeed Caesar spent some time at Ilium, the city of his ancestor Aeneas where he asserted his special bond with the history of the city.

Caesar’s policy in Asia Minor was very straightforward: on the one hand he went to great lengths to assert the autonomy of most of the communities that he dealt with including those that had the strongest ties with Pompey; his reorganisation of the revenue collection system in Asia set the cities free from the greed of the publicani, the infamous contracted tax collectors that had oppressed the province for decades. On the other hand he was quite ruthless in ordering a series of extraordinary collections and requisitions of money and resources that he needed for the rest of the campaign. Somehow this combination of ruthlessness and farsightedness worked.

8 Egypt

The collapse of the coalition gathered around Pompey brought Caesar’s enemies to several different shores of the Mediterranean; some went to North Africa, others to Spain, others became ‘pirates’ and started raiding parts of the East Mediterranean. Pompey himself had ostensibly disappeared after Pharsalus, only to reappear in Egypt in late September. Despite his diminished status, Pompey could apparently rely on some supporters in the East, and he was hoping to persuade the king of Egypt, the young Ptolemy XIII, a former ally, to grant him asylum and protection. It was a misguided hope: Ptolemy murdered him shortly after his

arrival. Since he knew that Caesar had left Asia Minor and was about to reach Egypt; he did not know, however, that Caesar's hope was to capture Pompey alive – possibly to stage another great scene corroborating the myth of his clemency. The new strong man was far from pleased, therefore, when he was presented with Pompey's head and personal signet; according to Plutarch, he even burst into tears (Plut. *Caes.* 48.2).

However, Ptolemy's switch of allegiance gave Caesar the pretext for spending some time in the great capital of the kingdom, Alexandria. He quickly appreciated the crisis that the Ptolemaic administration was going through in this period, after centuries of remarkable stability, both at the territorial level and in the Alexandrian court, where the reins of power were in the hands of some courtiers, notably the eunuch Pothinus, who used their ability against Ptolemy and his sister Cleopatra. Caesar was interested in switching the balance of power away from the courtiers; moreover, he started a close personal relationship with Cleopatra. This combination of strategic and personal interests led to a six-month conflict between Caesar, who supported Cleopatra, and the troops that were loyal to Pothinus and to the general Achillas from Pelusium. It was the so-called *Bellum Alexandrinum*, which is told in one of monographs that are part of the *corpus Caesarianum*: the focus of the war was the city of Alexandria, where the Roman contingent that was protecting Cleopatra had some difficulty in protecting the royal palace from the combined pressure of the army that was loyal to Pothinus and to a part of the Alexandrian populace that was hostile to the Roman presence.

The Alexandrian endeavour had a positive outcome, and the result was the consolidation of the Roman influence on a region like Egypt, which could become an invaluable asset to Rome's hegemony in the Mediterranean. However, this was hardly a suitable time for a sustained military effort. The supporters of Pompey took the opportunity of Caesar's long stay in Egypt to consolidate their positions in a number of regions, in Italy, Spain and North Africa. However, Rome remained formally in the firm control of Caesar and his associates: in September 48 BC Caesar had been appointed to the dictatorship for a year, and the city was in control of his deputy, the *magister equitum* ('master of the knights') Marcus Antonius. Antony was not the safest pair of hands for such a complex situation; his lack of ability in handling the complex political scene in the city is apparent from the reappearance of the theme of debt cancellation, voiced by the tribune P. Dolabella. The relationship between Antony and Dolabella was originally close: Antony needed the support of a tribune to secure the consensus of the Roman plebs, in a situation when most of the propertied classes regarded him either as a liability or as a would-be tyrant. Significantly, Caesar did not heed the requests of Dolabella, which – had they been accepted – would have undone one of the main tenets of his political programme in years.

9 The (slow) return to Italy

Caesar did not seem worried about his prolonged absence from Rome and Italy. On the contrary, he pointedly delayed his return until the affairs of the Eastern part of the empire were properly settled. He left Egypt in June 47 BC, nine months after his arrival; he then went back to Asia Minor, where he had to deal with a regional war waged by the king of Pontus Pharnaces against the Roman provinces of Bithynia and Asia. It was a very brief war, which ended with Caesar's victory at Zela, and with Caesar's famous report to the Senate: *veni, vidi, vici* ('I came, I saw, I conquered').

Caesar returned to Italy only in September, via Tarentum and Brundisium. He returned to Rome in October, with a very difficult agenda facing him. On the one hand, he needed to regain full control of the political scene, which Antony had partly jeopardised; on the other hand, he needed to raise an army to deal with the two surviving nuclei of resistance, in Africa and in Spain. The most urgent problem was to placate the crowd of veterans that were supposed to leave for Africa and were asking for firm guarantees on the land that they would be receiving after their commission. A mutiny was taking shape in Rome, and none of Caesar's closest aides (Antony, P. Sulla, and the historian-to-be Sallust) even managed to address them without being pelted with stones. Caesar decided to get personally involved, and addressed them with a memorable speech, whose fullest account can be found in Appian (*BC* 2.93-94):

The soldiers ran together tumultuously without arms, and, as was their custom, saluted their commander who had suddenly appeared among them. When he bade them tell what they wanted they were so surprised that they did not even venture to speak openly of the donative in his presence, but they adopted the more moderate course of demanding their discharge from the service, hoping that, since he needed soldiers for the unfinished wars, he would speak about the donative himself. But, contrary to the expectation of all, he replied without hesitation, 'I discharge you.' Then, to their still greater astonishment, and while the silence was most profound, he added, "And I shall give you all that I have promised when I triumph with other soldiers." At this expression, as unexpected as it was kind, shame immediately took possession of all, and the consideration, mingled with jealousy, that while they would be thought to be abandoning their commander in the midst of so many enemies, others would join in the triumph instead of themselves, and they would lose the gains of the war in Africa, which were expected to be great, and become hateful to Caesar himself as well as to the opposite party. Moved by these fears they remained still more silent and embarrassed, hoping that Caesar would yield and change his mind on account of his immediate necessity. But he remained silent also, until his friends urged him to say something more to them and not leave his old comrades of so many campaigns with a short and austere word. Then he began to speak, addressing them first as 'citizens,' not 'fellow-soldiers,' which implied that they were already discharged from the army and were private individuals.

They could endure it no longer, but cried out that they repented of what they had done, and besought him to keep them in his service. But Caesar turned away and was leaving the platform when they shouted with greater eagerness and urged him to stay and punish the guilty among them. He delayed a while longer, not going away and not turning back, but pretending to be undecided. At length he came back and said that he would not punish any of them, but that he was grieved that even the tenth legion, to which he had always given the first place of honour, should join in such a riot. 'And this legion alone,' he continued, 'I will discharge from the service. Nevertheless, when I return from Africa I will give them all that I have promised. And when the wars are ended I will give lands to all, not as Sulla did by taking it from the present holders and uniting present and past owners in a colony, and so making them everlasting enemies to each other, but I will give the public land, and my own, and will purchase as well the necessary implements.' There was

clapping of hands and joyful acclaim on all sides, but the tenth legion was plunged in grief because to them alone Caesar appeared inexorable. They begged him to choose a portion of their number by lot and put them to death. But Caesar, seeing that there was no need of stimulating them any further when they had repented so bitterly, became reconciled to all, and departed straightway for the war in Africa.
– trans. by Horace White (1899).

The revolt was suddenly tamed; none of the insurgents was punished, although the names of the instigators were apparently noted and written down. The plan was to use them in desperate operations, where they would be bound to meet certain death, in case the opportunity arose.

10 Cato

In December 47 BC, after securing himself the consulship for the coming year, he left for Africa, via Sicily. It was the beginning of the *bellum Africum*, which is the topic of another historical monograph written by one of Caesar's officers and based on his notes. It was a complex campaign, in which Caesar proved himself as daring as ever, deploying his troops on a broad geographical spectrum. It was a war in which not much room was left for manifestations of clemency. The decisive battle of Thapsus, which took place on April 6th 46 BC, ended with the defeat of the Pompeiani, and the pointed refusal of Caesar's veterans to allow their surrender: over 10,000 men died, curiously blaming their own leaders and commanders for having caused the war, according to the narrative of the *bellum Africum* (85.6). Soon after this victory, Caesar could concentrate on his deadly enemy Cato, who was in charge of the garrison quartered in the fortifications of Utica. Surely the victor's hope was to defeat his enemy in an open military confrontation, but he was not given the opportunity to do so: Cato committed suicide as soon as he saw him and his troops on the horizon. It was not simply a way to avoid defeat and captivity; it was, more than anything else, a political and philosophical statement. Cato chose to die as a republican, refusing to live under a monarch, and to take the risk of being forgiven by a power which he deemed illegitimate. He also died as a follower of the Stoic philosophy, and a committed believer in freedom, both on the individual and the political level. Cato's death became the centre of a myth that lasted for centuries, and fascinated writers, poets, artists, and musicians, much more deeply than that of the 'clemency of Caesar'.

11 The last Pompeians

Unlike Cato, most members of the Pompeian faction managed to save their lives after Thapsus. Many were forgiven by Caesar; others, like Pompey's son Sextus and Caesar's former lieutenant T. Labienus, fled to Spain, where they set out to resume their fight, relying on the old *clientelae* that Pompey had built in the region, that not even Caesar's victory had entirely wiped out. Caesar's clemency was dispensed quite widely, as usual, but the price that North Africa paid after Caesar's reorganisation of that territory was remarkable. Several communities were expected to make contributions to the cause of the victor; new colonies for the veterans were founded at Clupea and Curubis; and the governorship of the new province of Nova Africa was assigned to one of the most loyal supporters of Caesar, the former praetor Gaius Sallustius Crispus. Although in his later career as a historian Sallustius (better known in the

English-speaking world as Sallust) became a fierce critic of corruption and greed amongst the Roman elite, his tenure of the African governorship was excessively greedy, even by the usual standard of Roman provincial governors. He was duly prosecuted after he left office, but he was acquitted, apparently thanks to the generous bribe that he paid the jurors.

12 Master of the Empire

In June 46 BC Caesar left Africa, and made his way to Italy via Sardinia. His conduct in this period already betrays the new nature of his power: he was not simply the victor of the Civil War, he was also the new master of the Roman Empire, which had virtually been split in two halves by the clash between Caesar and Pompey, and was now heading for a complete reunification under Caesar's watch. In this context, it is not surprising that Caesar decided to familiarise himself with every province of the Empire, and that he took care to visit Sardinia on this way back to Italy. Moreover, Sardinia had supported Pompey, and Caesar did not miss the opportunity to make more exactions in money and in kind. It appears that, while his readiness to avoid bloodshed as much as conceivably possible was a constant feature of his practices, Caesar became increasingly ruthless when it came to gathering resources from the individuals and communities he had defeated. The likeliest explanation is that he was getting ready for the considerable tasks that awaited him in Rome, and was conscious of the importance of securing adequate resources, which he needed both to support his projects and to secure his firm control of the political scene.

We should not make the mistake of thinking that Caesar did not follow the events at Rome and in Italy with great care even when he was busy campaigning in the East and in Africa. After all, he held the dictatorship, a magistracy that gave him almost unlimited power and control in all constituencies. He was conscious of that, and he was not intending to follow the precedent of Sulla, who resigned from the dictatorship a year or so after starting the office. His plan was to hold on to power indefinitely. He was also mindful of another mistake of Sulla's: unlike his predecessor, he did not intend to find the land he needed for his veterans by confiscating the land and properties of some hostile communities, or by launching a campaign of mass-murder (proscriptions). On the contrary, he made it clear that he intended to provide land from his own property, and to purchase it with his own money. He kept the promise.

Part 3: Caesar's monarchy

1 Back in Rome

When Caesar reached Rome in July 46 BC, he found a city and a political community mainly interested in peace and stability. He was willing to secure that, and his policy of clemency was intended precisely to achieve that aim. It is possible to get a sense of the expectations that surrounded Caesar by reading the speeches that Cicero gave in this period, especially the speeches in defence of the senator Quintus Ligarius (*pro Ligario*) and of the Galatian king Deiotarus (the *pro rege Deiotaro*). Cicero, like many others, was pardoned by Caesar and returned to Rome unscathed. Despite being marginalised, he did not withdraw from politics altogether. From his correspondence we learn beyond doubt that he kept loathing Caesar, at least from a political point of view; his public statements, however, had a very different tone,

and – if we are prepared to overlook their questionable moral background, they provide us with a very interesting idea of what many may have expected Caesar to do and achieve. This can be seen, for example, in the concluding paragraphs of the successful plea for Ligarius' pardon (37-38):

As you granted him [Marcellus, a supporter of Pompey who had been expelled from the Senate] to the senate, so grant this man [Ligarius] to the people, whose affections you have always considered most important to you. And if that day was one most glorious to you, and at the same time most acceptable to the Roman people, do not, I entreat you,--do not hesitate to earn the praise of a glory like that as frequently as possible.

For there is nothing so calculated to win the affections of the people as kindness. Of all your many virtues, there is none more admirable, none more beloved than your mercy. For there is no action by which men make a nearer approach to the gods, than by conferring safety on others. Fortune has no greater gifts for you than when it bestows on you the ability--nature has no better endowment for you than when it bestows on you the will, to save as many people as possible. The cause of my client, perhaps, requires a longer speech than this a shorter one would certainly be sufficient for a man of your natural disposition. Wherefore, as I think it more desirable for you to converse, as it were, with yourself, than for me or anyone else to be speaking to you, I shall now make an end. This only will I remind you of, that if you do grant this protection to him who is absent, you will be giving it also to all these men who are here present. – trans. from C. D. Yonge (1900).

2 "Oppositions"

Cicero was speaking and writing, of course, with the background and perspective of a committed republican, who realised the revolutionary nature of Caesar's power, and was yet hoping to be able to influence the new strong man. It is doubtful that Caesar had much time for this sort of attempt to tame his ambition. He had spent several years in the East, where he had been able to experience first-hand the fascination and the rewards of monarchic power (especially through his acquaintance with the Ptolemaic house), and where he had happily accepted honours as divine saviour and patron from a number of Greek communities. No doubt he realised that these practices were typical of the Hellenistic world, and that they were not exportable to Rome; moreover, he knew full well that kingship at Rome was still a taboo, as it had been for centuries, since the fall of the monarchy and the instauration of the republic. Accusing someone of wanting to become a *rex* was the most damaging accusation that could be levied against a political opponent: on at least one occasion, during the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus in 133 BC, it was even used to justify the physical elimination of the tribune.

3 A new role

However, there were some objective factors that made Caesar's position absolutely exceptional, and indeed unprecedented. First of all, he was dictator: his constitutional status enabled him to make decisions with little or even no control on the part of other institutions.

The Senate was filled with associates of his, who unsurprisingly decreed the most lavish celebrations to salute his homecoming: a festival of thanksgiving of forty days to celebrate his victories, a lavish triumphal procession, and the renewal of the dictatorship for ten years. Other honours were decreed on the side, and the most one had a clear religious dimension: a triumphal chariot on which stood Caesar's statue with a globe at its feet was put inside the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. According to the Greek historian Cassius Dio, the statue was also accompanied by an inscription that labelled him as an *emitheos*, a 'semi-god' (43.14.6). In fact, placing the statue of a mortal inside a temple was a pretty forceful statement on the position of that individual *vis-à-vis* the gods: if it was not an acknowledgement of his divine status, it was something quite close to that. Stefan Weinstock argued that the inscription read in Latin as 'Divus Caesar', and that the statue on the Capitol was indeed part of a wider plan, conceived and enacted by Caesar to be recognised as a god. It is a complex problem, which can be better understood by considering in some detail the impressive set of policies that Caesar enacted between his return to Rome and his death.

3.1 Reconciliation

First of all, the policy of reconciliation was restated and carried even further by involving some former associates of Pompey with the provincial administration, and by showing open friendliness towards a onetime enemy like Cicero. Caesar's priorities, however, lay elsewhere. First of all, the veterans had to be rewarded suitably. Since the number of people involved was extraordinarily high, the operations were exceptionally complex. Caesar delegated the land assignments to a commission of legates with praetorian authority, whose work he supervised closely. The proceedings were remarkably complex, and the assignments took over several years: it was not over when Caesar died, and the position of the veterans remained a significant issue for several years to come. The veterans were not simply eager for land; they were also expecting the acknowledgement of their merits for the victory of Caesar.

The triumph decreed for Caesar was the perfect opportunity. It was an unprecedented occasion: it was the celebration of four victories, in Gaul, Egypt, against Pharnaces in Asia Minor, and against Juba in North Africa. It is important to note that the victory in the Civil War was not included in that triumph – the implication was there was nothing to celebrate. Much was made, on the contrary, of the defeat of Caesar's great foreign enemies: the most prominent one, Vercingetorix, the great Gallic leader, was displayed in the triumphal procession amongst the war booty that Caesar had gathered. He had been kept in captivity for years, since his capture at Alesia, and he was promptly executed after the triumph. After the conclusion of the procession, the large war booty – which consisted of a significant amount of gold and precious metals – was distributed mainly amongst the veterans and the Roman plebs, especially in the form of free corn distributions. It was a forceful political gesture, which summarised the main fronts of Caesar's political activity: on the one hand, loyalty to the plebs and their cause; on the other hand, a special, almost charismatic relationship with the soldiers. The coexistence between these two elements was not necessarily easy. There was some discontent amongst the soldiers at the amount of money that Caesar spent organising a number of games after the triumph – again, a familiar way to covet popular favour in Rome. For Caesar, there was not simply the need to keep the people happy. There was also a deliberate plan to innovate his communication strategy and his position within the Republic by staging a number of public

occasions in which Caesar would play a central role. Games were held in honour of Julia, the late daughter of the dictator (the first step of the celebration of the family tradition), and some public sacrifices were staged in which he resumed his central role in Roman public religion as *pontifex maximus*.

3.2 Religion

The increasing interest of Caesar in religious themes was confirmed by the inauguration of a new Forum, the *Forum Julium*, whose construction he had initiated in 54 BC as a direct response to Pompey's major works in the Campus Martius area in 55 BC. The centre of the Forum was a new temple, dedicated to Venus Genetrix (the generator): the shrine had been inaugurated before Pharsalus, where the watchword of Caesar's troops was indeed Venus Victrix, and it was a formidable opportunity for Caesar to give great prominence to the goddess from whom his family claimed direct descent. It was another step in Caesar's complex religious strategy, and one that would have significant consequences for the rest of the Roman religious history. The presence in such a central site of a sacred space that was so immediately referable to the *gens Julia* played a very important role throughout the history of the early Principate, and would be developed by Augustus.

3.3 Legislation

The most impressive achievement of Caesar in this period was arguably his considerable legislative output. A bare list of the main projects that he carried out or undertook in this period can convey an idea of the range of his initiatives and his interests:

- a reform of the corn distributions, which set a maximum limit of 150,000 beneficiaries;
- a reform of the magistracies (*leges Juliae de magistratibus creandis*), with an increase in the number of praetors, aediles and quaestors: the aim was to make more staff available for the needs of Roman administration and to create more opportunities for the supporters of Caesar to start a political career;
- a reform that increased the membership of the main priesthoods by one more member (*lex Julia de sacerdotiis*), based on the same principles as the law on magistracies;
- a law limiting the tenure of a provincial command to one year for the former praetors and two years for the former consuls (*lex Julia de provinciis*): Caesar knew very well what a destabilising potential an extended provincial command could have;
- a reform of the calendar, which made the calendar year agree with the astronomical year and abolished the pontiffs' prerogative to add an intercalary month (= extra month) and create artificially long years for political reasons. It is with Caesar's reform that we have for the first time the full astronomical year of 365 ¼ days that is still used today (albeit slightly tweaked in the Gregorian calendar);
- a reform of the criminal courts, whose scope is not entirely clear;

- a law that set out general rules for the administration of the communities inhabited by Roman citizens (*municipia*); it is possible that a part of this text, usually referred to as *lex Julia municipalis* is preserved epigraphically as the charter of the *municipium* of Heraclea in Calabria, the so-called *Tabula Heracleensis* (edited with an English translation in Crawford 1996);
- a number of provisions intended to make sure that there was no decrease in the free population in Italy: a prohibition for Roman citizens domiciled in Italy to be absent for more than three consecutive years, unless they were serving in the military; and an obligation for landowners to employ at least a third of their employees on pasturage from free men;
- a law recognising Latin status for Sicily;
- a wide range of colonial foundations, both in Italy and overseas; the foundation of overseas settlements was an unprecedented decision, which was made necessary by the shortage of available land in Italy and was also advantageous because it could ensure a more stable presence in some provinces. Most of Caesar's colonies were not new foundations, but were settlements of veterans on the territories of already existing sites. Some of them, such as Carthage and Corinth, were planned by Caesar, but their foundation was carried out only after his death. We have a fairly detailed idea of how a Caesarean colony was supposed to work thanks to an inscription found at Urso, the *lex coloniae Genetivae Juliae*, which outlines in great detail the institutional and administrative functioning of the community.
- a sumptuary law, whose aim was to restrict the expenditure of the wealthy and avoid extravagance. Sumptuary laws were fairly common practice in the Roman world, and they reflected a deeply engrained prejudice against wealth and its ostentation. In Caesar's case, the limitation of extravagance was also a powerful tool to control the behaviour of the Roman elite and its strategies of construction of the consensus.

4 Another War

The scope of Caesar's plan was exceptionally vast, as the short summary just outlined shows. It is all the more remarkable that Caesar carried it out in barely more than a year, which – moreover – he did not spend entirely in Rome, as he decided to lead the fight against the last contingent of Pompeiani in Spain personally. It was a sudden decision: Caesar left Rome in November 46 BC, and he spent several months leading a difficult winter campaign, with occasional difficulties in obtaining supplies in food and shelter. Only in March 45 BC did a full-scale military confrontation take place between the troops of Caesar and those of Sextus Pompey, at Munda, only a few miles from the site of Urso, the future *colonia Genetiva*. Despite their numerical advantage, Caesar's men seemed to suffer very severe difficulties in the first phase of the battle. According to an ancient tradition, it was only Caesar's personal involvement that turned the destiny of the battle around (Plut. *Caes.* 56); whatever we make of it, it is beyond doubt that the strategic situation in Spain was very difficult for Caesar, and that the battle of Munda was in many ways a gamble on his part. It was arguably the moment in the whole of his career in which Caesar found himself in the greatest difficulty, and feared both for his political future and his physical survival. Caesar's legendary fortune saved him on this

occasion too. Caesar's cavalry launched a successful counter-attack, which led to the complete defeat of the Pompeiani, and to the death of 30,000 men, including Sextus Pompeius and Labienus.

On his way back to Italy, Caesar stopped in Narbonese Gaul, where he presided over the foundation of several colonies, and was met by Mark Antony, with whom he had had some clashes in the previous months, and with whom he staged a public reconciliation. In May 45 BC, he hosted in his camp a promising seventeen-year old, his great-grandnephew Gaius Octavius, the son of a knight from Velitrae and of a woman called Atia, whose father had married Julia, Caesar's sister. After the death of Octavius' father, the relationship between the two men soon became very close; Caesar's role in his great-nephew's education became increasingly prominent.

5 Ideological Conflicts

Caesar returned to Italy at the beginning of July, and spent the rest of the summer in Cisalpine Gaul; his delay in coming back to Rome was both a consequence of his dislike for the Roman political scene, and a consequence of his deep-seated conviction that the capital was simply a part, and not even the most significant one, of the complex chessboard that was the Roman Empire. Moreover, Caesar could afford to be away from Rome because the nature and scope of his powers enabled him to avoid the hurdle of the Senate and the popular assemblies to see his agenda through. Most of his legislation was passed through dictatorial decrees and edicts which had the force of law immediately. In this case, form and substance coincided. This state of affairs brought about frustration in significant sectors of the senatorial elite, including circles that had traditionally been close to Caesar. Indeed, the months that followed Munda witnessed the emergence of an awkward climate around Caesar. Some ancient sources hint that Antony was aware of some plots that were taking shape against Caesar, and did not do anything to warn Caesar of them; from Cicero's correspondence we gather that intolerance of the dictator and his methods was mounting in many quarters. It is in this month that the myth of Cato took shape. Marcus Iunius Brutus, a brilliant follower of Pompey whom Caesar had pardoned and even promoted to important positions, wrote a treatise, the *Cato*, in which he celebrated the virtues of the great champion of liberty. Caesar responded promptly with an *Anticato* in two books, which he completed in barely more than a month, after Munda.

Caesar was all too aware of the importance of building strong ideological and cultural foundations to his wide-ranging political strategy. We should not make too much of the often repeated claim that he was not interested in religion, and that he mainly viewed it as a tool of political manipulation: while he may have had an interest in Epicureanism and a complex attitude to the Roman religious tradition, it would be far-fetched to dismiss Caesar as a sceptic, or an atheist in disguise. Whatever his philosophical convictions may have been, Caesar was capable of thinking about religion in deeply innovative ways, and the record of his dictatorship shows it most forcefully.

6 Divus?

Even during his absence, the complex religious strategy that he had started after Thapsus took several further steps. After Munda, it was decided that the day following the battle, which also coincided with the legendary date of the foundation of Rome, April the 21st, would become a day of great celebration in the circus. A new temple of *Libertas* (Freedom) was inaugurated; Caesar was given both the title of imperator ('victorious commander', a fairly usual honour under the Republic) and that of liberator. It was a pointed, if indirect, reply to those who idolised Cato and viewed Caesar's victory as the end of Republican liberty. Within a few months, a taboo was ostensibly broken when a statue of Caesar was placed on the Capitol amongst those of the kings and that of Lucius Brutus, the legendary founder of the Republic. The list of the honours received by Caesar in this period could continue. It poses a difficult problem to the student of this period: was it carefully masterminded and enacted by Caesar himself, or was it a spontaneous flow of honours which were put in place by a clique of over-zealous supporters?

Stefan Weinstock famously argued that Caesar had a deliberate plan to obtain monarchical power and to be recognised as holding divine status; others have advocated a much more complex picture, and made much of Caesar's pointed and repeated refusal to be given the title of 'king'. The most famous episode occurred on February 15th 44 BC, during the festival of the Lupercalia, one of the most important occurrences of the Roman religious calendar. Caesar was attending the ceremony in the Forum dressed in the ceremonial garb of the ancient kings (or in what was thought to be it); at some point, when the procession of the priests reached the Forum, Antony, who was the most senior of them, climbed up to Caesar's seat and placed a diadem on his head. It was an open invitation for him to accept regal status. Caesar refused the honour, stating that the only king of Rome was Jupiter Optimus Maximus. One could speculate at length on how definitive that refusal was, or indeed on Antony's motives: some scholars have argued that Antony was in fact implicated in the plot to eliminate Caesar, and that his public gesture at the Lupercalia was meant to put the dictator in an untenable position and to make the climate around him even more toxic.

Doubts are made even stronger by the clear, if rather sparse evidence for the creation of a cult of *divus Julius* by the end of 45 BC. We have evidence that a priest of *divus Julius* was created by the Senate, and that its first holder was meant to be Mark Antony (Cic. *Phil.* 2.110; Dio 44.5-6). The creation of this priesthood is a clear signal, but it is interesting that the deification of Caesar does not really feature in the literary tradition on his life, as if more complex preparations were needed at a later stage. It is also worth noting that Caesar was not proclaimed a *deus*, a god, but a *divus* – a mortal who did have divine qualities. On the other hand, the existence of a cult of Caesar during his lifetime was a major factor of discontinuity from the Republican tradition, and it was, at the same time, an unparalleled event in Roman history altogether. When the imperial cult was introduced under the Julio-Claudians, it was never the cult of the living emperor, at least at Rome: it was the cult of the late emperors, whose divine status was recognised and made official after their death.

7 The Ides of March

It is apparent that Caesar was thinking about an agenda for the medium, or indeed the long term; for this very reason and because of the lack of an autobiographical account of the last part of his life, it is so difficult to read his intentions. Sometime in February 44 BC (we do not know the exact date) he took up the title of *dictator perpetuus* – a perpetual dictatorship, which marked the full transition from the emergency magistracy of the early Republic to a new political and constitutional construction, which broke the ground for an entirely monarchic power. Caesar had a very specific reason for pushing the limits of his dictatorial power even further: he was planning another major military campaign. Now that he had defeated any internal opposition, he could fully confront the daunting comparison with Alexander the Great that his military reputation and his victory on Pompey commanded him to face: a campaign against the Parthians was in order, and a new army was being recruited. The plan was quite straightforward: leaving Antony in charge at Rome, and taking on the great kingdom beyond the Euphrates; there was also the plan to stop on the way and bring order in the north of the province of Macedon, a traditionally unstable area for Rome, usually subject to the pressure of some populations from the Danubian area. The desire to avenge Crassus' defeat and the recapture of the Roman standard were certainly in Caesar's mind. It is conceivable that the desire to leave Rome for some time played a part too. The preparations for this campaign have an inevitably ominous touch to them.

According to a tradition that took shape soon after Caesar's death, a Sibylline oracle appeared shortly before Caesar's departure for the East, according to which only a king would have been able to defeat the Parthians; L. Cotta, a supporter of Caesar and a member of the priestly college that was in charge of the Sibylline books, the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*, was apparently intending to propose the appointment of Caesar to the kingship on the session of the Senate of 15 March 44 – the Ides of March (Suet. *Caes.* 79.3). As is well known, Caesar was murdered on that very day, as he was meeting with the Senate. The episode is usefully summarised near the end of Plutarch's biography (Plut. *Caes.* 66):

The place... which was the scene of that struggle and murder, and in which the senate was then assembled, since it contained a statue of Pompey and had been dedicated by Pompey as an additional ornament to his theatre, made it wholly clear that it was the work of some heavenly power which was calling and guiding the action thither. Indeed, it is also said that Cassius, turning his eyes toward the statue of Pompey before the attack began, invoked it silently, although he was much addicted to the doctrines of Epicurus; but the crisis, as it would seem, when the dreadful attempt was now close at hand, replaced his former cool calculations with divinely inspired emotion.

Well, then, Antony, who was a friend of Caesar's and a robust man, was detained outside by Brutus Albinus, who purposely engaged him in a lengthy conversation; but Caesar went in, and the senate rose in his honour. Some of the partisans of Brutus took their places round the back of Caesar's chair, while others went to meet him, as though they would support the petition which Tillius Cimber presented to Caesar in behalf of his exiled brother, and they joined their entreaties to his and accompanied Caesar up to his chair. But when, after taking his seat, Caesar continued to repulse their petitions, and, as they pressed upon him with greater importunity, began to show anger towards one and another of them, Tillius seized his toga with both hands and pulled it down from his neck. This was the signal for

the assault. It was Casca who gave him the first blow with his dagger, in the neck, not a mortal wound, nor even a deep one, for which he was too much confused, as was natural at the beginning of a deed of great daring; so that Caesar turned about, grasped the knife, and held it fast. At almost the same instant both cried out, the smitten man in Latin: 'Accursed Casca, what does thou?' and the smiter, in Greek, to his brother: 'Brother, help!'

So the affair began, and those who were not privy to the plot were filled with consternation and horror at what was going on; they dared not fly, nor go to Caesar's help, nay, nor even utter a word. But those who had prepared themselves for the murder bared each of them his dagger, and Caesar, hemmed in on all sides, whichever way he turned confronting blows of weapons aimed at his face and eyes, driven hither and thither like a wild beast, was entangled in the hands of all; for all had to take part in the sacrifice and taste of the slaughter. Therefore Brutus also gave him one blow in the groin. And it is said by some writers that although Caesar defended himself against the rest and darted this way and that and cried aloud, when he saw that Brutus had drawn his dagger, he pulled his toga down over his head and sank, either by chance or because pushed there by his murderers, against the pedestal on which the statue of Pompey stood. And the pedestal was drenched with his blood, so that one might have thought that Pompey himself was presiding over this vengeance upon his enemy, who now lay prostrate at his feet, quivering from a multitude of wounds. For it is said that he received twenty-three; and many of the conspirators were wounded by one another, as they struggled to plant all those blows in one body. – trans. from the Loeb edition (1919).

As far as we can tell, the intentions of the murderers of Caesar were to restore the Republic and to vindicate freedom; some of those who did not take part in the conspiracy, like Cicero, shared that hope too. That was a truly ideological conviction, based on little understanding of reality. Caesar's legacy was not to fade away; the sudden death of its leader did not entail the collapse of the system of power and allegiances that he had created. Antony was prepared to take up Caesar's legacy; as were other key players, like Aulus Hirtius and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus; Rome was still full of Caesar's veterans waiting for their land to be assigned. Moreover, the opening of Caesar's testament led another player to the scene: young Octavius, whom Caesar adopted at the very end of his life, and chose as the main heir of his patrimony.

Octavius – who after the adoption became Caesar Octavianus – managed to secure not simply the legal heritage of Caesar, but the political one. However, this is an altogether different story: the story of the Second Triumvirate, of another civil war, and of the transformation of Octavian into Augustus, which coincided with the transformation of the Republic into the Principate.