



Julius Caesar's Ghost and the politics of the late 40s BC

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



The decade-and-a-half to come

- Series of conflicts and oscillating coalitions (44 BC to 31 BC).
 - Octavian initially aligned with Senate in Rome (with Cicero as a leading figure).
 - Antony, Lepidus and Octavian form “Second Triumvirate”.
 - The “Tyrannicides”.
 - Sextus Pompeius.
- Ultimately Octavian will defeat Antony and Cleopatra at Actium (31 BC).
 - Ushering in the “principate” (30/27 BC).



Battle of Actium, 31 BC Illustration from Panorama der Weltgeschichte, by M Reymond (Berlin, c. 1905).



The Immediate Aftermath

“Then the murderers had perpetrated their gloomy crime... there was **an immediate flight throughout the curia and throughout the whole city**. Some senators were wounded in the tumult and others killed. **Many other citizens and strangers were murdered also**, not designedly, but as such things happen in public commotions, by the mistakes of those into whose hands they fell... **the markets were plundered. All citizens closed their doors and prepared for defence on their roofs.**” – Appian *BC* 2.118.

Portrait of the so-called “Brutus”. Marble, Roman artwork, 30–15 BC. From the Tiber, Rome.

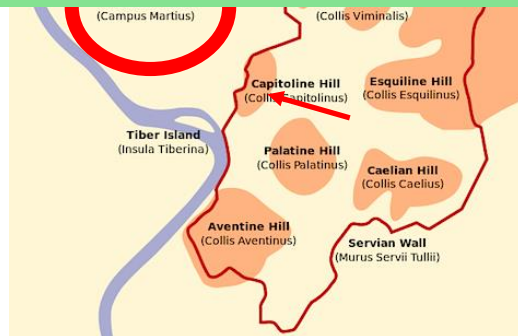


Denarius (42 BC) issued by Cassius Longinus and Lentulus Spinther, depicting the crowned head of Liberty and on the reverse a sacrificial jug and lituus. From the military mint in Smyrna

The Two Factions

- The Praetor L. Cornelius Cinna took to the Forum to denounce Caesar.
- P. Cornelius Dolabella declares himself consul (supported by Cinna) – they brought Brutus and Cassius back to the forum to support them.
 - Announced the restoration of the two tribunes (who had been deposed by Caesar) and the recall of Sextus Pompeius (who had was still fighting in Spain).
- This attempted power grab cut short by Lepidus who moved troops into the Roman Forum.
 - The conspirators flee back to the Capitol.

Troops traditionally mustered in the Campus Martius (Field of Mars).



Does it surprise you that an amnesty was agreed? What factors do you think may lie behind it?

Claimed reasons for agreement:

- Appian: Antony and Lepidus worried about D. Iunius Brutus who commanded armies in Gaul.
- Cassius Dio: Antony and Lepidus distrusted each other, both as heirs to Caesars legacy (*contra* Appian).

Purported speech of Cicero: “Do you not see what is taking place — that the people are again being divided and torn asunder and that, with some choosing this side and some that, they have already fallen into two parties and two camps, and that the one side seized the Capitol as if they feared the Gauls or somebody, while the others with headquarters in the Forum are preparing, as if they were so many Carthaginians and not Romans, to besiege them?” – **Cassius Dio 44.25.1.**

The Funeral

“Caesar's will was now produced and the people ordered that it be read at once. In it Octavian, the grandson of his sister, was adopted by Caesar.” – **Appian BC 2.143.1.**

“Many other things Antony said in a kind of divine frenzy, and then lowered his voice from its high pitch to a sorrowful tone, and mourned and wept as for a friend who had suffered unjustly...” (146.1).

“...somebody raised above the bier an image of Caesar himself made of wax. The body itself, as it lay on its back on the couch, could not be seen. The image was turned round and round by a mechanical device, showing the twenty-three wounds in all parts of the body and on the face, that had been dealt to him so brutally.” (147.1).



- Outbreak of violence – Caesar’s body burned in the forum.
- Conspirators leave Rome (Brutus and Cassius spend some months in Italy – subsequently receiving propraetorian commands, the latter Cyrene and former Crete).

“Antony also moved that Sextus Pompeius (the son of Pompey the Great, who was still much beloved by all) should be recalled from Spain, where he was still attacked by Caesar's lieutenants, and that he should be paid 50 millions of Attic drachmas out of the public treasury for his father's confiscated property and be appointed commander of the sea, as his father had been, with charge of all the Roman ships, wherever situated, which were needed for immediate service. The astonished Senate accepted each of these decrees with alacrity and applauded Antony the whole day; for nobody, in their estimation, was more devoted to the republic than the elder Pompey, and hence nobody was more regretted.” – **Appian *BC* 3.4.**

Does this seem surprising to you? What do you think Antony's motives may have been?

Why do you think there was resistance to Antony's moves among some senators?

- Antony and Lepidus had the senate pass a decree transferring Cisalpine Gaul to Antony (5-year command).
 - Antony uses his brother Gaius to transfer legions from Macedonia to Italy.
 - Lepidus given Nearer Spain and Gallia Narbonensis.
 - Pansa and Hirtius made consuls for 43 BC.
- Attempt to control main Roman forces in Roman Empire (Nearer Spain, southern Gaul and Macedon).
- However, some in the Senate had sent word to D. Brutus to resist Antony.



“At the age of twenty he usurped the consulship, marching on Rome as though it were an enemy city and sending messengers ahead in the name of his army to demand the appointment. When the Senate hesitated to obey, the centurion Cornelius, the leader of the legation, opened his military cloak, displayed the hilt of his sword, and boldly said, „If you do not make him consul, this will!”” – **Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 26.**

flees).

A (“polyamorous”) Marriage of Convenience

- Octavian as Consul rescinds the amnesty for “tyrannicides”.
- Antony no longer outlawed; the 3 men meet at Bononia.
- Curiate Assembly (*comitia curiata*) – a *lex* passed confirming Octavian’s adoption.





Mark Antony



Octavian



Marcus Aemilius Lepidus

- November 43 BC: a tribune carried a law establishing the *tresviri rei publicae constituendae consulari potestate* (5-year period).
- Magistrates designated for the next several years, the senate packed with supporters.

“For ten years Augustus [Octavian] remained a member of the triumvirate commissioned to organize the commonwealth, and though at first opposing his colleagues’ plan for a proscription, yet once this had been decided upon he carried it out more ruthlessly than either of them... Augustus alone demanded that no one be spared...” – **Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 27.**

Deification of Julius Caesar

- January 42 BC, Caesar declared a god and a state-cult is instituted.
 - Caesar's comet on July 44 BC.
- Octavian becomes the son of a god (*divi filius*).

“... a certain star... appeared in the north toward evening, which some called a comet, claiming that it foretold the usual occurrences, while the majority, instead of believing it, ascribed it to Caesar, interpreting it to mean that he had become immortal and had been received into the number of the stars, Octavius then took courage and set up in the temple of Venus a bronze statue of him with a star above his head.” – **Cassius Dio 45.7.**



