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The Ides of March

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## THE IDES OF MARCH<sup>1</sup>

There are three sorts of evidence for Roman history, particularly events at Rome, in the last two years of Caesar's life. First and best, there is the contemporary evidence, and its bulk is considerable. There are the letters of Cicero's correspondence – 80 from the year 46, 163 from 45, 122 from 44; though, disappointingly, there are only fifteen of any importance from the five months which Caesar spent in Rome between his return in October 45 from Spain and his death five months later. There is a bulk of Ciceronian writing about philosophy and oratory from the years 46 to 44, and there are the speeches which he delivered for Marcellus, Ligarius and Deiotarus in 46 and 45 and, in the year after Caesar's death, the *Philippics*. There is book 8 of the *De bello Gallico*, written by the gentle and modest Hirtius in the last months of 44, in the interval between Caesar's death and his own; and, in some people's opinion – but not in mine – Caesar's own three *commentarii* on the Civil War were written at the very end of his life and that is why they break off so abruptly; they stopped at the point where their author was killed. There is the tedious little essay on government which Sallust sent to Caesar in 46, and which most scholars regard as genuine. And there are the coins, whose great significance R. A. G. Carson has illustrated so clearly in the Caesar-bimillenary number of *Greece and Rome*.

The second category of evidence consists of the lost contemporary evidence which, in however small a degree, we can hope to reconstruct – the hagiologies of Cato, written after his noble suicide at Utica in 46, and the reply which Caesar was provoked to write – the *Catonnes* and the *Anticato*. There was the slander and the propaganda current after Caesar's death, the desperate effort of self-justification by his murderers and their friends, the 'killed in the nick of time' stories; there were the recollections of Brutus by his stepson, Calpurnius Bibulus. There was the ungrateful T. Ampius Balbus, and there was Tanusius Geminus and his poison-pen. And there were the retorts of Caesar's friends who were not afraid to defend the reputation of a murdered man – the *eques* C. Matius in his talk, Balbus, Oppius and others with their pens. (The surviv-

<sup>1</sup> This paper, based on a talk given to the Southampton branch of the Classical Association in January, was read before the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies in London on 25 March 1957.

The following abbreviations will be used in the notes: C.D. (Cassius Dio); Plut. (Plutarch, *Julius Caesar*); Suet. (Suetonius, *Divus Julius*); N. D. (Nicolaus of Damascus, *Βίος Καίσαρος* – *F. G. H.* 90 F. 130); T. P. (Tyrrell and Purser, *Correspondence of M. Tullius Cicero*); Meyer (Eduard Meyer, *Caesars Monarchie und das Principat des Pompeius*, 3rd editn., 1922).

ing account of his murder, written under Augustus by Nicolaus of Damascus is of this same apologetic sort).

Thirdly, there are the accounts written in the following centuries by Velleius Paterculus, Plutarch, Suetonius, Appian and Cassius Dio, partly based on evidence in our first category, partly based on evidence in our second, and partly coloured by their own sensational historical imagination.

It is fatally easy to take pieces of information from this third source and pieces from the first, and to try to make out of them a composite historical picture. But this is to make what Collingwood called scissors-and-paste history of the most unconvincing sort. For good or bad, therefore, the smallest possible use will be made here of this third source of information, and the murder of Caesar will be considered mainly from the point of view of contemporary evidence which survives. For that is the only evidence which, for any reconstruction whatever, cannot possibly be disregarded.

So much for the sources.

.....

If education is a good thing, then the murder of Caesar was not wholly a tragedy. For it taught two valuable lessons. First, that republicanism was not dead after all. Caesar had presumed it dead too easily, just as, after two years campaigning in Gaul at the end of 57, he had too easily assumed that Gaul was conquered. Republicanism, therefore, had still to receive the *coup de grâce*; it had still to be helped to its grave by that kind of violence which was abhorrent to Caesar, but had not been abhorrent to Marius and Cinna, and would not be abhorrent to Caesar's youthful heir. There was still need of a blood-bath, of more proscriptions. And the second lesson was that, if an authoritarian government was to be established successfully in the Republic's place, it must not be, like Caesar's, an inconsiderate, careless, frank authoritarianism; it must wear a republican mask, however false. The *political* genius of Octavian – so much greater than that of Caesar – learnt these two lessons from Caesar's murder.

And if from the point of view of world-history, the murder of Caesar was not altogether a tragedy, it was not, perhaps, so overwhelming a tragedy even from the point of view of Caesar himself. The man who refused the Senate's offer of a personal bodyguard of senators and knights<sup>2</sup> might well have been a man afraid of dying; but the man who, a month before the Ides, dismissed his Spanish bodyguard and lived and moved in Rome without any military protection<sup>3</sup>, was evidently a man who was not frightened at all. That on the night before the murder the after-dinner talk was about dying, and that Caesar wished for sudden death, is not necessarily true: *ma se non è vero, è ben' trovato*. That two years earlier he had said, 'Satis diu vel naturae vixi, vel gloriae,' is

<sup>2</sup> Plut. 57,7; C.D. 44,6,1.

<sup>3</sup> Suet. 86,1; C. D. 44,7,4 – the act being attributed in both cases to his false confidence after the voting of honours to him in the Senate in February 44.

<sup>6</sup> *Historia* VII, 1

certainly true<sup>4</sup>. This was the *praeclarissima et sapientissima vox* which Cicero heard so unwillingly – a remark so striking that, six months after Caesar was dead, Cicero pronounced it himself, with every show of originality, as his own<sup>5</sup>.

After the violent death of a dictator whose rule has, to all outward appearance, been regarded with approving acquiescence by his subjects, the world is surprised to learn belatedly of all the brave but abortive schemes there were for killing him earlier. So it was in Rome after the Ides. In 47, it seems, when Caesar was in Asia Minor after the battle of Zela, Deiotarus' supposed conspiracy, whose fantastic improbability Cicero mocked so amusingly in his speech for King Deiotarus<sup>6</sup>, was not the only one. C. Cassius Longinus who, like Brutus, surrendered to Caesar after Pharsalus and was pardoned<sup>7</sup>, as if one good deed deserved another, plotted at once to kill Caesar at Tarsus; but Caesar landed on one bank of the river Cydnus and Cassius was waiting on the other<sup>8</sup>. An easy explanation of why the plot failed. But it was a useful story, for it proved that Cassius had tried to kill Caesar long before such an idea was entertained by Brutus. It established Cassius' claim years later to the part of First Conspirator. In the following year 46 Caesar was certainly in danger of assassination<sup>9</sup>; but that an assassin – a man with a knife – was found in Caesar's house, sent this time by Antony, and that Caesar referred openly in the Senate to Antony's having commissioned the man, is a different story<sup>10</sup>. It is strange that in all our day-to-day knowledge of the year 46 there is no murmur of such melodrama in Cicero's letters if – and of course it isn't – the story is true. Finally when Caesar was at Narbo on his way back to Rome from Spain in summer 45, Trebonius – this time – planned to kill him, with Antony's co-operation. But when it came to the point, Antony's courage failed<sup>11</sup>. However, this association in abortive crime was explanation of why Trebonius detained Antony at the door of the Senate House while Caesar was being murdered on the Ides of March 44<sup>12</sup>.

Convenient tales and, in the particular moment of their invention, after Caesar's death, stories which were highly creditable to their inventors.

They are the 'I all but killed him myself earlier' stories.

Then there are, invented also after the event, the 'it is lucky we killed him when we did', the 'killed in the nick of time' stories. For when you have killed a tyrant, it is disconcerting to find yourself surrounded by people who are not convinced, from the acts performed during his lifetime, that the man whom you have killed was a tyrant at all<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> *Pro Marcello* 25; Suet. 86,2.

<sup>5</sup> *Phil.* 1,38.

<sup>6</sup> *Pro Deiot.* 15–22.

<sup>7</sup> C. D. 42, 13,5; cf. *Pro Marcello* 21, 'Qui magis sunt tui quam quibus tu salutem in-sperantibus reddidisti?'

<sup>8</sup> *Phil.* 2,26; T. Rice Holmes (*The Roman Republic* iii, 210, n. 6) rightly rejects; Meyer, 536, believes this story.

<sup>9</sup> *Pro Marcello* 21–3; Suet. 75,5.

<sup>10</sup> *Phil.* 2,74.

<sup>11</sup> *Phil.* 2,34; Plut. *Ant.* 13,2.

<sup>12</sup> *Phil.* 2,34; 13,22; *Fam.* 10,28,1 (T. P. 6,819).

<sup>13</sup> *Fam.* 11,28 (T. P. 5,785); cf. *Att.* 14,1,2 (T. P. 5,703).

There were not a few episodes which discredited Caesar's reputation in the last five months of his life – the only continuous period that he had spent in Rome since fourteen years earlier: episodes which, happily, from the point of view of his enemies, were true.

When in October 45 he returned in triumph from Spain, he abandoned the *punctilio* which had marked his earlier triumph, and did not pretend that his defeated enemies had been anything but Romans<sup>14</sup>. On the last day of 45, when he was presiding over the election of quaestors in the *Comitia Tributa*, and news was brought that one of the consuls was dead, he broke every constitutional tradition that, in the matter of a consular election, it was possible to break, and made Caninius Rebilus consul for less than a day. Enough, Cicero said – and justly – to reduce a constitutionalist to tears<sup>15</sup>. On January 26th. 44, when he returned from the Latin Games, when some people in the streets shouted, 'Rex', and he replied, 'Non rex sum, sed Caesar,' he found that two of the tribunes had removed a diadem which had been placed on his statue on the *rostra*, and had arrested certain men for the demonstration in the streets. He commanded a tribune to secure their deposition from office, and himself expelled them from the Senate<sup>16</sup>. For a man who had climbed to power on the shoulders of two insulted tribunes five years earlier<sup>17</sup>, this was more than indiscreet.

On February 14th.<sup>18</sup>, the Senate indulged in its last acts of sycophancy, and made Caesar dictator for life. The next day was the Lupercalia – when Caesar sat on his golden chair on the *rostra* and the half-naked Luperci (Cicero's hateful young nephew Quintus, no doubt, one of their number<sup>19</sup>) interrupted their fertilizing chase through the streets while Cassius and Casca and Antony conspired in an effort to crown him, Cassius and Casca placing the crown on his knees, Antony seeking to place it on his head – until Caesar impatiently took it and threw it into the crowd with instruction that it should be taken to the Capitol and placed in Juppiter's temple<sup>20</sup>. Lepidus, Caesar's Master of the

<sup>14</sup> Plut. 56,7–9; C.D. 43,42,1; it is curious that there is no Ciceronian evidence of resentment on account of this triumph, either in the letters or in the *Philippics*.

<sup>15</sup> *Fam.* 7,30,1f. (T.P. 5,694), written to Curius in January 44.

<sup>16</sup> N.D. 20,69 (in 22,76 he says Caesar subsequently allowed them to return to Rome); Livy, *Epit.* 116; Velleius Paterculus 2,68,4; Plut. 61,8; C.D. 44,10; Meyer 527, n. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Bellum Civile* 1,7,2f.

<sup>18</sup> The date is an (uncertain) inference of Meyer, 526, n. 2, based on the evidence of *De Div.* 1,119 and Val. Max. 8,11,2.

<sup>19</sup> Young Quintus became a Lupercus in 46 (*Att.* 12,5,1 (T. P. 4,471)). His participation in the Parilia on 21 April 44 was probably as Lupercus. There is no reason for thinking that he was out of Rome on 15 February. (*R.E.* vii A, 1309f. (F. Münzer, who does not, however, make this suggestion about the Lupercalia.))

<sup>20</sup> N.D. 21,71–5 (mentioning Cassius, Casca and Antony); *Phil.* 2,84–7; 3,12; 5,38; 13,17 (mentioning, naturally, Antony alone). For other references, Meyer 528, n. 2. According to the nature of the source on which later historians drew, the crowd (a) approved or (b)

Horse, who was on the platform with Caesar, behaved in such circumstances as a Roman should. He stood and wept<sup>21</sup>.

One more degradation remained, the last. The sycophantic decrees of the 14th. February were engraved on silver tablets, and the whole Senate met to carry them in procession and lay them on the Capitol, passing on the way the temple of Venus Genetrix in Caesar's new forum, where Caesar himself sat, doing business of state, letting out public contracts. The startling and unexpected procession, led by Antony, was on top of him before he had warning of its approach. He went on with his business, and did not get up. Too late he realized the offence that he had given, and evidently regretted his act; for he was quick to spread the story in self-excuse that it was not rudeness or arrogance, but a sudden bout of illness, which had clamped him to his seat<sup>22</sup>.

Then came the Ides and he was dead.

Two days later, on the 17th. March, the Senate met in the temple of Tellus, abolished the dictatorship and confirmed Caesar's *acta*<sup>23</sup>. Here was patent self-contradiction. Was there not one single act of the murdered tyrant which, with a fine flourish, might have been revoked? Evidently, not one. The count against Caesar was a heavy one – but in the matter of his having planned to import alien Hellenistic practice and set himself up as a God and a King, there was a distressing lack of evidence. When in 46 he found the inscription, 'He is a demi-god' – 'Divus est', perhaps – cut on the base of his statue, he ordered it to be erased<sup>24</sup>. His statue was in the temple of Quirinus<sup>25</sup> – whose fate, through murder to posthumous godhead, he was later so startlingly to re-enact<sup>26</sup> – and had even been carried in procession with the statues of the gods<sup>27</sup>, but he had never claimed cult. He had been voted a Flamen, and Antony had been named for the office – but nothing had been done to implement the vote; there had been no initiation<sup>28</sup>. With the title of King, the record was

disapproved of Caesar's refusal, Antony acted (a) with or (b) without Caesar's knowledge and approval and, if without, Antony (a) hoped to win Caesar's favour by the act or (b) hoped to increase Caesar's unpopularity.

<sup>21</sup> *Phil.* 5,38; 13,17. <sup>22</sup> *N.D.* 22,78f.; *Livy Epit.* 116; *Suet.* 78; *Plut.* 60, etc.

<sup>23</sup> *Phil.* 1,1ff., etc.; cf. *Att.* 14,6,2 (T.P. 5,708), 'Quid enim miserius quam ea nos tueri propter quae illum oderamus? . . . nihil tam σβλοικον quam tyrannoctonos in caelo esse, tyranni facta defendi.'

<sup>24</sup> *C.D.* 43,14,6; 21,2. <sup>25</sup> *Att.* 12,45,3; 13,28,3 (T.P. 5,595,604); *C.D.* 43,45,3.

<sup>26</sup> Appian notices the parallel in *B.C.* 2,114,476. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *A.R.* 2,56 and 63, does not suggest it in his account of the death of Romulus, but Romulus (too) died at the age of 55, leaving no son (2,56,7). Cf. *Cic. De Rep.* 2,20, *Livy* 1,16,5–8 on Romulus' death and apotheosis.

<sup>27</sup> *Att.* 13,28,3 (T.P. 5,604); 13,44,1 (T.P. 5,646), written in May and July 45 respectively.

<sup>28</sup> *Phil.* 2,110; 13,41 and 47. See, on this, the wise remarks by W. Warde Fowler, *Roman Ideas of Deity*, 117–120; and, for an altogether different view, L. R. Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 67ff. You cannot, with Meyer 513, n. 7, appeal to *I.L.S.*

just as unsatisfactory<sup>29</sup>. He had refused it. In the matter of the crown, things were worse still. Who had tumbled over themselves to crown him? Two of the glorious tyrannicides, Cassius and Casca – and Antony, whose personal relations with Caesar were notoriously bad. Nor could help be got from Caesar's will, made in the previous autumn, when he was in the country, before his Spanish triumph<sup>30</sup>. His chief heir, whom he also adopted, was his only young male relative, his great-nephew Octavius. Nothing objectionable there.

Hence the necessity for the 'killed in the nick of time' stories. Hence the invention of 'Caesar's supposed plans.'

First the Sibylline oracle which declared that Parthia could only be conquered by a Roman King – an oracle which could hardly have been found or invented without the connivance of the High Priest, of Caesar, himself. Indeed, so well has the story been told that it is not easy even today to realize that there never was any such oracle. Even Dio is cautious here, and does not commit himself further than to state that 'there was a rumour of the existence of such an oracle.' Suetonius is more circumstantial: 'There was a rumour that at the next meeting of the Senate' – the meeting which never happened because of Caesar's death – 'Cotta the quindecemvir was going to propose. . . . ' Cicero, in the *De Divinatione*, written soon after Caesar's death, stated outright that the story of the existence of such an oracle was false. We do not need Mommsen's authority – glad as we are to have it – to throw the story of this oracle overboard<sup>31</sup>.

But what, it may be asked, of Caesarion, Caesar's son by Cleopatra? What of the senatorial decree that any son of Caesar's body should count as his legitimate heir? Was he not planning already to make Cleopatra his Queen, and under this senatorial decree to legitimize Caesarion as his heir?<sup>32</sup>

It is a splendid tribute to the skilful invention of Caesar's enemies in the months after Caesar's death that we should even allow ourselves to entertain such nonsense.

6343, 'Decurioni beneficio dei Caesaris,' as contemporary evidence of deification; there is not the smallest reason for thinking that the inscription was erected when Caesar was alive rather than after his death and official consecration in January 42.

<sup>29</sup> No significance attaches to bare Ciceronian references to Caesar as 'rex' in, e.g., *Att.* 13,37,2 (T.P. 5,657), written in August 45. Was not Cicero himself called 'rex' in public earlier by Clodius (*Att.* 1,16,10 – T.P. 1,22)?

<sup>30</sup> On 13 September 45: Suet. 83,1.

<sup>31</sup> C.D. 44, 15,3; Suet. 79,4. (The reference to Cotta in *Att.* 13,44,1 (T.P. 5,646), written on 20 or 21 July 45, cannot have anything to do with this proposal); *De Divinatione* 2, 110f.; Meyer, 528f., who accepts the story, thinks it was an alternative scheme of Caesar to secure recognition as King, devised when the coronation at the Lupercalia (also, in Meyer's view, a plan of Caesar) had failed. Whoever invented the story naturally invented an oracle as part of it. Mommsen realized that; so Meyer's criticism of Mommsen (529, n. 1) is pointless. Nothing on this question is better, to my mind, than Mario Attilio Levi, "La 'affectatio regni' di Cesare," *Annali dell' Istituto superiore di magistero del Piemonte* vii (1934), 1–10.

<sup>32</sup> The suggestion is first found in N.D. 20,68.

First the decree – that Caesar might consort with whatever women he liked, and the issue be legitimate. It was never proposed. It was – on Caesar's initiative, of course – *going to be proposed* as soon as Caesar had left Rome for the East as, three days after the Ides, he planned to do<sup>33</sup>. And on whose authority does the story rest? On the authority of the tribune C. Helvius Cinna, 'who confessed to a number of people that he had a law drafted and ready to be passed, on Caesar's instruction, once Caesar had left Rome<sup>34</sup>.' Cinna had acted as Caesar's toady in deposing the two tribunes earlier in the year<sup>35</sup>; so he was the obvious man for the job. Helvius said that, on Caesar's instruction, he was to propose the measure, once Caesar had left Rome. Who but Helvius could have denied the story? Nobody – and not even Helvius Cinna himself, for five days after Caesar was dead, he was dead too, a case of mistaken identity, torn to pieces by the mob at Caesar's funeral<sup>36</sup>.

And Caesarion. Was he conceived when Caesar lived with Cleopatra in Egypt in the winter of 48 and the spring of 47? If so, why is there no murmur of his existence in Cicero's extensive correspondence during Caesar's lifetime? Why do we first hear of him from Cicero when Caesar is dead<sup>37</sup>? Was he then conceived in the period when Cleopatra was in Rome from 46 to 44, and Caesar was for the most part out of it? It is a problem set by Clio herself for Professor Jérôme Carcopino to solve. In a stimulating article, arguing from the silence of contemporary sources and from dates, and from the movements of the two protagonists, Caesar and Cleopatra, Carcopino has argued that Caesarion was born after Caesar was dead, and that Caesar was not his father<sup>38</sup>.

A simpler and cruder form of argument may be used to the same end. Caesar was about seventeen years old when his first wife Cornelia bore his child Julia – his only certain child<sup>39</sup>. Was Cornelia for the remaining fourteen

<sup>33</sup> Appian, *B.C.* 2, 114, 476. This is an important date, and it is a pity that the evidence for it is not better.

<sup>34</sup> Suet. 52, 3. Meyer 525 f. accepts the story with all its implications concerning Cleopatra and Caesarion.

<sup>35</sup> C.D. 46, 49, 2.      <sup>36</sup> Val. Max. 9, 9, 1, etc.; *R.E.* viii, 225 f. (no. 11).

<sup>37</sup> First mention of Cleopatra in Cicero's correspondence is in *Att.* 14, 8, 1 (T.P. 5, 710) written on 15 April 44: 'Reginae fuga mihi non molesta est.' Next, on 11 May 44 in *Att.* 14, 20, 2 (T.P. 5, 727) he wrote, 'De regina velim atque etiam de Caesare illo' (evidence that by then Caesarion was born and rumoured already to be Caesar's son.) Six days later he wrote, 'De regina rumor exstinguitur' (*Att.* 15, 1, 5 – T.P. 5, 730). The last of this series of enigmatic references is *Att.* 15, 4, 4 (T.P. 5, 734), written on 24 May.

<sup>38</sup> César et Cléopâtre,' *Annales de l'école des hautes études de Gand*, 1 (1937), 35–77 (arguing in detail a view stated earlier in *Points de vue sur l'impérialisme romain*, 141 ff.) I am not attracted by the suggestion of K. W. Meiklejohn, countering Carcopino, in *J.R.S.* 24 (1934), 194 f. that Caesarion was born in 47, was Caesar's son, but 'the news of his existence may have leaked out only after the assassination.' C.D. 47, 31, 5, surprisingly, states roundly that Caesar was not Caesarion's father.

<sup>39</sup> Suet. 1, 1; *R.E.* x, 894 (no. 547).



years of her life unable to produce another child? Did his second wife Pompeia, in the six years of their marriage suffer the same misfortune? Calpurnia, too, in the fourteen years in which she was Caesar's wife? The story that Brutus was Servilia's son by Caesar is patently absurd; it breaks down on dates<sup>40</sup>. So from the age of seventeen onwards Caesar, married in succession to three young wives and, for the rest, a notorious Don Juan, fathered no child. It is hardly likely that Caesar's Fortune, which had forgotten him through all the decades, should suddenly remember him when he was in his mid-fifties, and make him a father. What seems good sense here to the layman is, I am assured by my medical colleagues, good sense also to the doctors. The invention was Cleopatra's, directly the child was born, a month or two after Caesar's death<sup>41</sup>. Its exploitation was hers and Antony's later. Antony declared that Caesar had recognized the child as his own, and that Matius and Balbus were witnesses of the fact. Oppius published a book denying this. Nicolaus of Damascus denied it on the evidence of Caesar's will<sup>42</sup>.

Antony and Cleopatra later advertized themselves guardians of the son of Caesar's body. Their opponent at Actium was son only by adoption; in blood he was no more than Caesar's great-nephew. The child himself was victim of his mother's unhappy and ambitious invention, sought out after Actium and killed. Οὐκ ἀγαθὸν Πολυκαισαρίη<sup>43</sup>.

There are reasons, then, why, in opposition to most continental historians, and in particular to the great German historians, English historians in the main do not believe that Caesar wished or claimed to be either King or God<sup>44</sup>. If their view is in part based on silence, it is at least contemporary silence, the silence of Cicero's letters, and it is supported by the – negative-evidence of contemporary coins. Look to them for the attributes of monarchy or of godhead, and you will look in vain<sup>45</sup>.

Of Caesar's arrogance, his unapproachability, at the end of his life, there can be no doubt. Now there are two possibilities. One is that in the last months of his life the old Caesar – a generous, compassionate Caesar – had been replaced by a different Caesar, a man drunk with power, a tyrant such as Greek philosophers had described earlier and Lord Acton was to describe later, a man whom absolute power corrupted absolutely. That view has been expressed recently, and with argument anything but weak, by the American historian, John H. Collins<sup>46</sup>. The difficulty about accepting it is that it draws so little

<sup>40</sup> R.E. iiA, 1819 (F. Münzer); for the story, Appian, *B.C.* 2,112,468f.

<sup>41</sup> See above, p. 86, n. 37.

<sup>42</sup> Suet. 52,2; N.D. 20,68.

<sup>43</sup> Plut. *Ant.* 81,5.

<sup>44</sup> E.g. T. Rice Holmes, *The Roman Republic* iii, 335f.; Sir Frank Adcock in *C.A.H.* ix, 718ff., and the various writers in the recent bimillenary number of *Greece and Rome* (iv, 1 (1957)). See, on national differences of opinion on this matter, John H. Collins, 'Caesar and the Corruption of Power,' *Historia* 4 (1955), 458f.

<sup>45</sup> See R.A.G. Carson, 'Caesar and the Monarchy,' *Greece and Rome* iv, 1 (1957), 46–53.

<sup>46</sup> *O.c.* (n. 44 above), 445–465.

support from contemporary evidence. Neither in what he wrote at the end of Caesar's lifetime nor in what he wrote after Caesar's death did Cicero distinguish between the period before and the period after Caesar's return to Rome.

The other possibility is that Caesar was killed not because he changed in any way, but because he did not change. Since 49 he had been in effect, even when he was not holding the title, a military dictator, governing Rome, just as he was directing military operations, from his supreme Headquarters, with subordinates in Rome as in the field who acted on his instructions and often, until the instructions came, were afraid to act at all<sup>47</sup>. Sanguine men might think that this was an emergency government, tolerable only as long as the emergency lasted. After Munda in 45 the emergency was over, and Caesar returned to Rome. This was the moment for Caesar and for the system to change, the moment for relaxation. But Caesar did not change; nor did the system. Was not this the reason why in the end they killed him?

Caesar was a demagogue, a man who went over the head of the uncooperative Senate, to find his supporters in the Roman populace and in the soldiers and veterans of his new army. There had been a succession of such demagogues in Rome since the revolution started: Tiberius Gracchus, Gaius Gracchus, Saturninus, Livius Drusus. By conventional thought such men were like Greek tyrants, out to destroy the constitution and to seek power for themselves. All had been killed, though it was not easy to make great heroes out of their killers. Earlier Roman history, as written in the temper of conservative reaction by Sullan sympathisers, provided their prototypes, tyrants or would-be tyrants, expelled or gloriously slain: Tarquinius Superbus, expelled by L. Iunius Brutus, who watched impassively while his own young sons were horribly executed as Tarquin-sympathisers; Sp. Cassius, consul for the third time in 486 and executed for his monarchical aspirations (a matter, curiously, of family pride, not of family shame, to the Cassii, for they preferred to remember that it was his father, within the family, who had the glory of condemning and killing his eminent and misguided son<sup>48</sup>); Sp. Maelius, who bribed the people with free corn and whom the *eques* C. Servilius killed, earning thereby the *cognomen* Ahala in 439; and M. Manlius Capitolinus, who by a popular scheme for the cancellation of debts, sought support for his own autocratic power, and was put to death in 384.

Here were stories to reinforce the lesson of the deaths of the Gracchi, of Saturninus and of Livius Drusus. In fact, of course, they are the stories of the Gracchi and their successors as seen through the eyes of the Sullan historians and falsely imposed, as if they were true history, on very slender foundation

<sup>47</sup> As Cicero appreciated while he waited at Brundisium in 47; cf. *Fam.* 15.15.3 (T.P. 4. 448), 'Si auctor adfuisset.'

<sup>48</sup> *Phil.* 2.26.

of remote historical fact<sup>49</sup>. These stories featured large in the post-Sullan history books and they are a part of Cicero's historical stock-in-trade: useful *exempla*<sup>50</sup>. When a contemporary appeared in the image of any of them, you said that he ought, like them, to be liquidated. Cicero, in his outspoken way, said this in the early months of the association of Pompey, Caesar and Crassus in 59, and was known to have said it. Vettius, who gave information about the supposed plot against Pompey's life that summer, did not incriminate Cicero by name; he referred to him as the eminent consular who said to him, 'What we need now is a second Servilius Ahala, a second L. Iunius Brutus.'<sup>51</sup>

It has always been recognized as a weakness of Caesar's position that from 49 onwards he had not better men at his service. This is something which Caesar himself certainly appreciated, and certainly regretted. But if you worked for Caesar, you did so as a subordinate, on his terms, not yours. Cicero discovered this at the end of March 49. He stated the policy which he would sponsor if, instead of following Pompey and the Government overseas, he went with Caesar to Rome. Caesar's answer was decisive: 'Ego vero ista dici nolo'<sup>52</sup>, and he made no suggestion of compromise. He asked Cicero to think it over. He did not offer to think it over himself.

However, in the years of his almost complete absence from Rome, Caesar had no reason for dissatisfaction with the work of the men whom he trusted – Antony, then Lepidus at one level, Oppius and Balbus and Hirtius at another. Urgent reforms were carried, including a reasonable scheme for the repayment of outstanding debts<sup>53</sup>. The dangerous trouble-making of Caelius and Milo in 48 was quashed. With the limited freedom of elections, bribery, which in the previous decade had seemed endemic, had almost vanished. Land was bought for distribution, and at a fair and economic price, though that was not his enemies' view<sup>54</sup>. And, in assessing the value and sincerity of the profusion of honours showered on him at the end, he will have understood well why the Senate waited to be certain first of the result of Thapsus, then of the result of Munda, before giving voice to the ecstatic and sycophantic devotion which it claimed to feel for him. The dictatorship seemed to him to work satisfactorily, judged by the superficial efficiency of the administration of Italy and of Rome;

<sup>49</sup> This subject is fully and admirably treated by Th. Mommsen, 'Sp. Cassius, M. Manlius, Sp. Maelius, die drei Demagogen der älteren republikanischen Zeit,' *Röm. Forsch.* ii, 153–220. <sup>50</sup> All three, with L. Iunius Brutus, listed in *Phil.* 2,87.

<sup>51</sup> *Att.* 2,24,3 (T.P. 1,51). <sup>52</sup> *Att.* 9,18,1 (T.P. 4,376).

<sup>53</sup> *Bellum Civile* 3,1; *Fam.* 9,16,7 (T.P. 4,472); 9,18,4 (T.P. 4,473); *Att.* 12,21,4 (T.P. 5,557); cf. *De Officiis* 2,84 for an indictment of Caesar's measures.

<sup>54</sup> The 'confiscation' of private property, especially of Pompeians, for distribution, or sale by auction, to Caesar's own followers is the most persistent material complaint made by Cicero of the regime: *Att.* 14,6,1 (T.P. 5,708); 14,21,3 (T.P. 5,728); *De Officiis* 1,43; 2,27. But, as Cicero admitted earlier, a republican victory would have had similar consequences (*Att.* 11,6,6 – T.P. 4,418).

the question of a permanent constitutional settlement was one to be faced when, after an absence which he expected to last three years, he returned to Rome. For the time being, the matter was shelved, of no interest to him. Otherwise he must have taken the opportunity of discussing the question off the record when he dined on the 18th December 45 with Cicero at Puteoli. But politics were not discussed at all – σπουδαῖον οὐδέν. Literature was all they talked about<sup>55</sup>.

But Cicero and men like him saw contemporary political life only as political death. 'Hoc tempus est totum ad unius voluntatem accomodandum et prudentis et liberalis et, ut perspexisse videor, non a me alieni,' he wrote to Ser. Sulpicius in April 45<sup>56</sup>. Three months earlier Cassius had written to Cicero from Brindisi, while they were waiting to know how the war had gone in Spain, 'Malo veterem et clementem dominum habere quam novum et crudelem experiri<sup>57</sup>.' Both praise Caesar as a person. Both damn the system which he has imposed. He is 'dominus'. He is a revolutionary: 'haec commutatio reipublicae<sup>58</sup>'. His predominance was 'clades civitatis<sup>59</sup>'. Under the 'res publica' public policy was laid down in the Senate, and in the Senate the consulars were the first men on whom the presiding consul called, to give Rome their weighty counsel. 'Dic, M. Tulli.' The responsible consular gave his *consilium*. The Senate listened, because it respected his *auctoritas*. 'There was no place,' Cicero wrote later, in description of the Caesarian regime, 'for *consilium* or *auctoritas*<sup>60</sup>.' Policy was now decided by Caesar and his associates behind closed doors. The previous decade had given forewarning when, to find out what was in Pompey's mind, Cicero had to go often not to Pompey but to the *familiares Pompeii*. The dynast was emerging, the unrepublican character who was too busy, too important, to be approached except through his agents and his secretaries. So now Cicero had to go to men whom he found it impossible not to despise – to Oppius, who was not even a senator, to Cornelius Balbus, a Spaniard<sup>61</sup>, to Hirtius.

In 45 Cicero longed to be Caesar's counsellor, to do what Aristotle and Theopompus had been privileged to do to Alexander, to write him an essay on the art of government. The letter proved most difficult to draft<sup>62</sup>, was sub-

<sup>55</sup> *Att.* 13,52,2 (T.P. 5,679); for σπουδαῖον meaning 'to discuss politics', cf. *Fam.* 15, 18,1 (T.P. 4,530). <sup>56</sup> *Fam.* 4,6,3 (T.P. 5,574). <sup>57</sup> *Fam.* 15,19,4 (T.P. 4,542).

<sup>58</sup> *Fam.* 13,10,2 (T.P. 4,451). <sup>59</sup> *Brutus* 332.

<sup>60</sup> *De Officiis* 2,2; cf. *Brutus* 6–9; *Fam.* 6,1,6 (T.P. 4,538, to A. Torquatus in January 45); *Fam.* 12,10,2 (T.P. 6,910, to Cassius in July 43) for the same expression. It is used also of a provincial governor in his province, *Fam.* 13,26,2 (T.P. 4,521). *Att.* 13,10,1 (T.P. 5, 624), 'Quid enim sumus, aut quid esse possumus?' (June 45).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 12,60 for an appreciation of the significance of the power of Oppius and Balbus. For Cicero's need to consult them in the years 48 to 45, cf. *Att.* 11,8,1 (T.P. 4,422), Dec. 48; *Fam.* 6,18,1 (T.P. 4,534), *Att.* 13,19,2 (T.P. 5,631), *Fam.* 6,19,2 (T.P. 5,648), *Att.* 13,47a,1 (T.P. 5,654), *Att.* 13,37 (T.P. 5,657), all written in 45.

<sup>62</sup> 'πρόβλημα Ἀρχιμήδειον,' *Att.* 13,28,3 (T.P. 5,604); *Att.* 13,26,2 (T.P. 5,591), May 45. One difficulty was whether or not to urge that Caesar should stay in Rome instead of going off at once to Parthia; see below, n. 64.

mitted through Atticus to Hirtius and his friends for their comments, and was sent back with what was tantamount to a rejection-slip<sup>63</sup>; they objected in particular – in Cicero's view, unreasonably – to his treatment of the question whether Caesar should remain for a time in Rome or go straight to the Parthian war.<sup>64</sup> The letter was never sent.

Cicero had to content himself with the passage which he had slipped into the *Pro Marcello* in the previous year: 'the courts must be established, credit restored, morals improved, the birth rate increased, destroyed standards revived and buttressed up by severe legal sanctions.'<sup>65</sup> That was innocuous enough, like the advice of Sallust in his letter to Caesar in 46, to improve morals, limit spending, put an end to money-lending and see that people went to work instead of idling about and getting into mischief.

In that same year 46 Cicero had written the *Brutus* and all the bouquets which in it he threw at Caesar as a speaker and as a writer<sup>66</sup> could not deflect attention entirely from the fact that the book concluded with the suggestion that Caesar should be killed and that Brutus should kill him.<sup>67</sup>

Brutus, we do not know since when, had on the wall of the *tablinum* of his house – his Parthenon, he called it – the *stemma* which Atticus had worked out for him, showing his descent from the two great enemies of tyrants<sup>68</sup>, L. Brutus, whose only two children had been killed by their father when they were boys (Posidonius had the ingenious idea of inventing a third son, unknown to history, but a means of transmitting to the Iunii Bruti the blood of the man who had expelled the Tarquins<sup>69</sup>) and Servilius Ahala, who killed Maelius. 'Tibi optamus eam rem publicam in qua duorum generum amplissimorum renovare memoriam atque augere possis,' were Cicero's words towards the end of the *Brutus*<sup>70</sup>. How, except by murder, could Brutus do as well as, or even better than, these ancestors of his?

Brutus was pulled two ways. He was not, like Cicero, a man who became unnerved and, unnerved, took murder lightly; that is shown by his response to Cicero's wild suggestion in the months after Caesar's death that if Antony and both his brothers were killed, that would put an end to all Rome's troubles<sup>71</sup>. Murder, Brutus answered, wise after the event, makes trouble, it does not cure it.

<sup>63</sup> Letter sent: *Att.* 12,51,2 and 13,1,3 (T.P. 5,598,601), 20 to 23 May; turned down (σπουδῆ) nostra non est probata), 13,27,1 (T.P. 5,603), 25 May. Should he try again? – *Att.* 13,28 (T.P. 5,604), 26 May.

<sup>64</sup> Cicero had said that Caesar should please himself, but that the argument for his staying in Rome was that he should enforce obedience to his laws; this, he claimed later, agreed exactly with what Caesar himself wrote to Hirtius: *Att.* 13,31,3 (T.P. 5,607); 13,7,1 (T.P. 5,619), written on June 9. (For a fantastic account of Caesar's motives for setting off once again on campaign, see Appian, *B.C.* 2,110,459).

<sup>65</sup> *Pro Marcello* 23,25,27.

<sup>66</sup> *Brutus* 261f.

<sup>67</sup> See note 70 below.

<sup>68</sup> Corn. Nepos, *Atticus* 18,3; *Att.* 13,40,1 (T.P. 5,660).

<sup>69</sup> Plut. *Brutus* 1,7.

<sup>70</sup> *Brutus* 331.

<sup>71</sup> *Ad Brutum* 1,2a,2 (T.P. 6,843); 1,4 (6,857).

When Plutarch called Cassius *μισοκαῖσαρ* and Brutus *μισοτύραννος*<sup>72</sup>, the distinction, in Brutus' case, was a good one; he was conscious of owing his life and the prospect of a distinguished career to Caesar's favour. It was a considerate act of Caesar's to make him governor of Cisalpine Gaul for 46, and thus to remove him as far as possible from the embarrassment of the war in Africa. Brutus returned from his province in the late spring of 45, and Cicero was in a fever of excitement over his coming out to Tusculum to see him at the beginning of June. He came on the 9th., with private affairs on his mind.<sup>73</sup> Then, when Brutus had gone back to the city, and Cicero was about to move south to Arpinum, news came that M. Marcellus, whose recall Caesar had sanctioned in 46, had been murdered in Greece at the end of May, and it was rumoured that he had been killed on Caesar's instruction. Brutus at once wrote indignantly to Cicero to deny the rumour; it was inconceivable to him that Caesar should have behaved in such a way<sup>74</sup>. Soon after this Brutus set off to meet Caesar on his return from Spain, and in early August he believed that Caesar was really going to restore the Republic, and wrote to Atticus to say so. Cicero's comment on this news is a sigh of disappointment: 'Ubi φιλοτέχνημα illud tuum, quod vidi in Parthenone, Ahalam et Brutum?'<sup>75</sup>

Down to August, then, in 45, Brutus was openly loyal to Caesar. What in six months turned him into Caesar's murderer? Was it the discovery of a Caesar who was unrecognizable after more than a year's absence? Was it disappointment at Caesar's failure to restore the Republic after all? *Ou est-ce qu'il faut chercher la femme?*

Nobody will deny that at Utica Cato died well – 'at Cato praeclare'; in life he may have been a pretentious prig and a bore, but once he was dead he became a martyr overnight. A few more months, and there was a hagiology. Cicero published a *Cato*, probably in 46, with a second edition a year later<sup>76</sup>. The Epicurean Fadius Gallus wrote a *Cato*<sup>77</sup>; and so, before March 45, with one passage at least which gravely wounded Cicero's vanity, did Brutus<sup>78</sup>. Caesar retorted, and must have enjoyed retorting – for there was abundance of good material for him to use – with what he declared to be the plain effort of a simple soldier, an *Anticato* in two books<sup>79</sup>. Hirtius did the same<sup>80</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> *Brutus* 8,5.      <sup>73</sup> *Att.* 13,7a (T.P. 5,620).      <sup>74</sup> *Att.* 13,10,3 (T.P. 5,624).

<sup>75</sup> *Att.* 13,40,1 (T.P. 5,660). For remote hopes of a possible restoration of the Republic, cf. Cicero's letters to Torquatus, January–April 45 – *Fam.* 6,1,6 and 6,2,2 (T.P. 4,538; 5,575).

<sup>76</sup> *Att.* 12,4,2, a πρόβλημα Ἀρχιμήδειον, like the 'letter to Caesar', p. 502, n. 62 above; 13,40,1; 13,46,2 (T.P. 4,469; 5,584,663); the second edition, *Fam.* 16,22,1 (T.P. 5,650).

<sup>77</sup> *Fam.* 7,24,2 (T.P. 5,665); on his Epicureanism, A. Momigliano, *J.R.S.* 31 (1941), 152.

<sup>78</sup> *Att.* 12,21,1 (T.P. 5,557); *Att.* 13,46,2 (T.P. 5,663).

<sup>79</sup> *Att.* 12,40,1; 41,4 (T.P. 5,584,588); Cicero had read it by August 45, *Att.* 13,51,1 (T.P. 5,669); Suet. 56,5; Livy 114 F. 45 Weissenborn-Müller.

<sup>80</sup> *Att.* 12,40,1; 41,4; 44,1; 48; 45,2 (T.P. 5,584,588,590,594f.), May 45.

Cicero and Caesar expressed each a polite admiration of the quality of the other's work<sup>81</sup>.

Now Brutus lost his father when he was seven years old, and he owed much of his upbringing to Cato, who was half-brother of his mother Servilia and therefore to all intents and purposes his uncle. When Cato died – whether his second wife Marcia and the boy and two girls which she had borne him were still alive, we do not know – he left by his first marriage, a son Porcius, just over twenty years old, and a daughter Porcia, herself a widow since the death of her husband Bibulus in early 48; she had one surviving son, L. Calpurnius Bibulus.

When Brutus returned from Gaul to Rome in summer 45, in circumstances which caused considerable comment, he divorced his wife Claudia, daughter of Appius Claudius, consul of 54<sup>82</sup>. The comment was caused by the fact that there were no obvious grounds for the divorce. A little later, perhaps not until after his return from meeting Caesar on his way back from Spain, the reason for the divorce became apparent. To the displeasure of his mother Servilia, Brutus married again; he married Cato's widowed daughter Porcia and became in effect guardian of Cato's grandson, Bibulus<sup>83</sup>.

From October Caesar was in Rome, and it was very obvious that the restoration of republican government was no part of his plans. On the wall of Brutus' house was the *stemma*, a daily reminder of his descent from L. Brutus and Servilius Ahala. And, to remind him of Cato and the stern voice of duty, there was Cato's noble daughter. Though, if the famous story is true, the conspiracy was formed before he told her of it<sup>84</sup>, there is no reason for not believing that, however unconsciously, hers was one of the strongest influences in steeling Brutus' resolution. For when he became a conspirator, something of Cato came into him, and something of Brutus went out. For himself, there was no possible advantage in the act. He was praetor in 44, and the interval before his consulship would certainly have been a short one. He would, under Caesar, have had an excellent career.

He had to persuade himself that it was Caesar the dictator that they would kill, not his *familiaris*, Caesar the man; and he was able in the end with remarkable skill to eliminate from his mind all the personal properties of a man, and to consider him simply in terms of the poisonous principle which he represented. The Antonii later embodied no *principle* at all. There was no reason, therefore, for their elimination<sup>85</sup>. On the other hand, as Brutus wrote to Cicero, if he was convinced that his own father aspired to tyranny, he would kill him<sup>86</sup>. This,

<sup>81</sup> *Att.* 13,46,2 (T.P. 5,663); 13,51,1 (T.P. 5,669), August 45.

<sup>82</sup> *Att.* 13,9,2; 10,3 (T.P. 5, 623f.).

<sup>83</sup> *Att.* 13,11,2; 16,2; 22,4 (T.P. 5,625; 629; 635).

<sup>84</sup> Plut. *Brutus* 13 (story derived from her son, Bibulus).

<sup>85</sup> Plut. *Antony*, 13,3; see above, p. 91, n. 71. <sup>86</sup> *Ad Brutum* 1,17,6 (T.P. 6,865).

in fact, was easily argued, as the third book of Cicero's *De Officiis* shows. A tyrant is a parricide on the grand scale; he has committed *parricidium patriae*; and Caesar was the worse parricide for masquerading as Pater Patriae, Father of the country which he killed<sup>87</sup>.

Brutus need not have been the only idealist among the sixty<sup>88</sup>; Decimus Brutus, one hopes, was another; he too claimed L. Brutus for an eminent forbear<sup>89</sup>. But of the rest, the majority were mean men, jealous and self-seeking; men who thought that Caesar had not advanced them as fast as they deserved, men who hoped for better things if Caesar was dead; men who dreamed, some of them, of being cardboard Caesars themselves<sup>90</sup>.

Cicero was not invited to join the conspiracy, for obvious reasons, and Nicolaus of Damascus managed to write his detailed account of Caesar's murder without once mentioning Cicero's name; yet it is not unreasonable to consider that he played a vital part under the regime in keeping discontent alive<sup>91</sup>. Antony was not approached either, though – and with some reason – the conspirators hoped for his co-operation after the event.

Whether – apart from the unmistakable import of words used by others, by Cicero, for instance, at the end of the *Brutus* – the first suggestion that Caesar should be killed before he set out from Rome on the eighteenth came from Brutus or from Cassius (who was of tyrant-killing stock, himself also<sup>92</sup>) is not to be known, and is in any case immaterial<sup>93</sup>. Without the immense prestige of Brutus' personality, enhanced by his marriage to Porcia, the conspiracy could never have taken place.

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<sup>87</sup> *De Officiis* 3,83; cf. 3,19.

<sup>88</sup> The number of the conspirators comes from Suet. 80,4 (the text of N.D. 19,59 gives 80). Appian, *B.C.* 2,111,464 and 2, 113, 474 lists fifteen; for the twenty known conspirators see *R.E.* x,255.

<sup>89</sup> *Phil.* 2,26; 4,7.

<sup>90</sup> See N.D. 19,59–65 on the wide variety of motives on the part of the conspirators, Antony is stated by Plutarch to have said that Brutus, alone of them all, killed Caesar from high-principled motives, *Plut. Brutus* 29,7; cf. 10,1; 18,10–12.

<sup>91</sup> Antony saddled him with responsibility for the conspiracy, *Phil.* 2,25ff.; cf. Meyer 456f.

<sup>92</sup> *Phil.* 2,26.

<sup>93</sup> *C.D.* 44,14,1f. (cf. the account of N.D.) names Brutus; *Plut. Brutus* 8–10 and Appian, *B.C.* 2,113,470ff. name Cassius. Both views, evidently, were current from the start.