

MUTINA 43 BC

Mark Antony's struggle for survival



NIC FIELDS

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER DENNIS

CAMPAIGN 329

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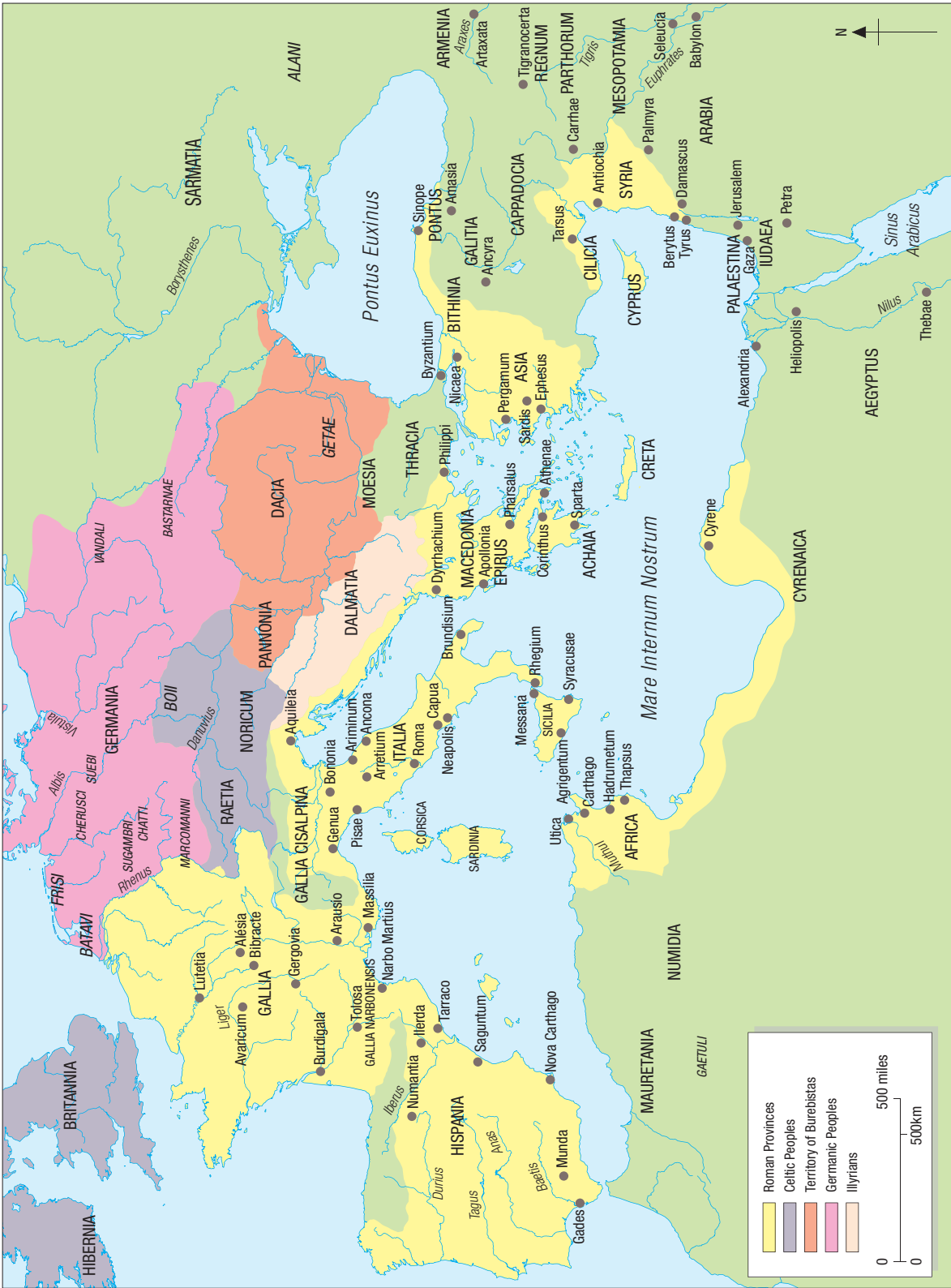
ILLUSTRATED BY PETER DENNIS

Series Editor Marcus Cowper

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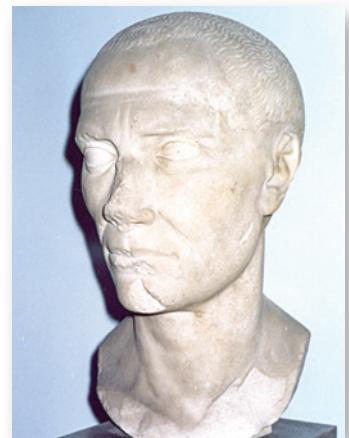
ORIGINS OF THE CAMPAIGN

On 15 February 44 BC Caius Iulius Caesar (*cos.* V) was appointed *dictator perpetuus*, dictator for life, by the Senate. On the same day, crowds gathered in Rome for Lupercalia – a primitive and rough festival when young men of noble blood ran oiled and naked, touching women of childbearing age as they did so with strips of goatskin to assist their future fertility. This annual event turned society upside down, for the Romans were not liberal in their views of nudity, despite what Hollywood would have us believe. As is well known, while running with the Lupercali, or wolf-men, Mark Antony offered Caesar a ‘kingly crown’, only to see him throw it ostentatiously away (App. *B civ.* 2.108). An offer such as this was a strict taboo in Rome, where the early kings had been vanquished in order that the Republic could be formed.

It will perhaps be pertinent to add that on an earlier occasion, when he was returning from the Feriae Latinae (26 January), the crowd had hailed Caesar as *rex* and he had retorted with the polemical bon mot ‘No, I am Caesar, not King’ (Sue. *DI* 79.2). For the Romans, the title of king still had ancient evil connotations, and it is highly improbable that Caesar wanted to be called *rex*, a term belonging to the vocabulary of Roman political invective. But as Caesar the Dictator, he certainly did not want to behave in an entirely constitutional manner and the very premise of republican government – that power should be shared and that the Senate was the chief governing body – was at stake. Napoleon, surely a critic as qualified as any other, once said: ‘If Caesar wanted to be king, he would have got his army to acclaim him as such’ (*Correspondance*, vol. XXXII, p. 88), but the simple truth is that we do not know for sure. It is important to remember this.

Whatever his true motives (a different matter and a different discussion), on the Ides of March Caesar fell to the daggers of conspirators who were anxious to preserve the liberty of the Republic. By a stroke of poetic justice, some would add, he perished at the foot of a life-size statue of his old foe Cnaeus Pompeius Magnus (better known in the English-speaking world as Pompey). Brandishing their bloody daggers and calling on Marcus Tullius Cicero (arch-orator, political broker, self-publicist, and social climber), though the nervous old man was not privy to the dastardly plot, the conspirators proclaimed to all they met that they had killed a king and a tyrant (Cic. *Phil.* 2.28, 30, Dio 44.20.4). The conspiracy itself included some 60 individuals, and not only ex-Pompeians forgiven and favoured by Caesar, men such as Marcus Iunius Brutus and his brother-in-law Caius Cassius Longinus, but dyed-in-the-wool Caesarians too. Among the

Marble bust (Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale, inv. NI 1967) of Caius Iulius Caesar, Iulio-Claudian copy of a 1st-century BC original, provenance unknown. Ancient and modern commentators alike cannot agree upon the meaning of Caesar’s refusal to have himself crowned king. Some believe that he orchestrated the entire incident for his own political advantage. Perhaps he secretly wished to become a king, or perhaps he was genuinely opposed to the idea of kingship, as his own public comments would indicate. What is undeniably clear, however, is that many in Rome opposed Caesar’s autocracy in any form, whether as *dictator perpetuus* or *rex*, and his assassination rekindled the banked fires of civil war. (© Nic Fields)



Male bust of Marcus Iunius Brutus (Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano di Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, inv. MNR 48), the so-called 'Brutus', found in the Tiber and dated to 30–15 BC. According to Dio Cassius (44.19.1), the conspirators originally intended to murder Mark Antony and Lepidus as well as the dictator. They chose, apparently at the insistence of Marcus Brutus, to kill only Caesar, so their deed would be perceived as a righteous strike to save the Republic from a tyrant and not as a bloody massacre of political opponents to secure personal power. With hindsight it is clear that Brutus' insistence on limiting the plot to one victim was short-sighted, although splendidly noble. (Marie-Lan Nguyen/Wikimedia Commons/ Public Domain)



latter was Caius Trebonius (*cos. suff.* 45 BC), an admirer of Cicero (himself a former opponent of Caesar's who had become a grudging collaborator), and Decimus Iunius Brutus Albinus (a distant relative of Marcus Brutus), who had been a legate of Caesar during his high-handed conquest of Gaul.

In fear of his own life, Mark Antony had cast off his consular clothes and escaped to his house in disguise as a slave. As the sole remaining consul of Rome, Mark Antony was now the most senior official of the state. That night he obtained from Calpurnia documents that had belonged to her slain husband. In effect, Calpurnia handed over to Mark Antony the minutes of Caesar's tyranny. These papyrus rolls, safely spirited away to Mark Antony's house long before Caesar was eulogized and cremated, would soon plunge Rome into a constitutional crisis of unprecedented magnitude.

Nor can we overlook the assassination itself: 'Speak, hands, for me!' cries Casca in Shakespeare's play, but Shakespeare fails to mention that the conspirators had concealed their daggers in writing cases and that Caesar fought back with the stylus he held ready for that day's business of the Senate (Dio 44.16.1, cf. Sue. *DI* 82.1). The conspirators promptly transformed into the Liberators, for, in their opinion, and in the opinion of their supporters, they had liberated Rome from the contagious tyranny of Caius Iulius Caesar. After all, tyrannicide was an exceptional event, and, within days of the dictator's assassination while the Senate was still hesitant about how to react, the place of his funerary pyre was a shrine, and a self-appointed 'priest' was honouring Caesar as a god. The ordinary people of Rome plainly preferred Caesar to yet more high-minded 'liberty' from the senatorial aristocracy who, after all, had suffered a political paralysis during Caesar's heavy-handed dictatorship. In truth, Caesar was slain for what he was, not for what he might become.

The spectre of a *rex* haunted the corridors of republican minds, and Brutus and Cassius believed they were saving the Republic when they struck down Caesar. Instead, they unleashed a chaotic chain of events that ultimately culminated in the deaths of the conspirators, their associates and the very Republic they were trying to save. It was the biggest miscalculation since Goliath decided to take on David in single combat. The fate of the aforementioned Trebonius may illustrate. He was to have his head cut off and paraded on a spear by the Caesarian partisan who invaded his province of Asia. Coincidentally, the killer was Cicero's former son-in-law Publius Cornelius Dolabella, who was in turn eliminated a couple of months afterwards. Cicero himself was to perish in the shakeout that took almost a decade and a half to subside.

MARK ANTONY'S DOMINATION

When it came to words, Mark Antony was said to favour a flamboyant form of oratory known as the Asiatic style (Plut. *Ant.* 2.5). Cicero, certainly no friend of Mark Antony, accused him of 'spewing rather than speaking' (*ad fam.* 12.2.1, cf. 25.4) – his own words – when he made a speech, while Octavian ridiculed the use of archaisms in Mark Antony's literary style (Sue. *DA* 86.3). We may mock along with Cicero, but at the



German woodcut illustration (leaf [m] 8v, fol. cviii) circa 1474 depicting Porcia Catonis counselling her husband Marcus Junius Brutus; Caesar's murder at the hands of Brutus and Cassius; and Porcia's suicide in 42 bc. Caius Cassius Longinus was a far better commander and politician than Brutus, but lacked Brutus' moral authority. Plutarch held Cassius in low regard, describing him as a man who was not well liked and who ruled his soldiers through fear. That being so, Cassius had entered the sweep of Roman history back in 53 bc as a quaestor on the staff of Crassus during the ill-fated invasion of Parthia. Cassius' sound tactical advice was consistently ignored, and at Carrhae Crassus' army was all but annihilated. Cassius rallied the survivors and led them safely back to Syria. (Penn Provenance Project/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-2.0)

funeral of his fellow consul and kinsman (Mark Antony was Caesar's third cousin once removed on his mother's side) he was to prove a powerful orator. Cassius is said to have argued against permitting Caesar a public funeral and allowing Mark Antony to conduct it, but allowed himself to be overruled by Brutus. This proved to be a gross mistake.

Concerning this notoriously controversial funeral address there are two main versions of what Mark Antony said to those 'Friends, Romans, countrymen' (*Julius Caesar* III.ii.79), as Shakespeare memorably puts it, who lent him their ears. One is that he said only a few words after a proclamation by a herald (Sue. *DI* 84.2). Another is more compelling and builds on what we can infer from the loquacious Cicero (*ad Att.* 14.10.1, *ad fam.* 11.1, *Phil.* 2.91) – though no general, Cicero has entrances and exits throughout this work. Thus, after speaking of Caesar's deeds, Mark Antony began to work with the rising emotions of the volatile crowd, which was packed shoulder-to-shoulder in the Forum. He chanted a lament of his own and began to weep. He held up Caesar's toga, complete with dried bloodstains and rents, on a spear; as feelings rose, he then displayed a wax model of Caesar's wounded corpse. Songs of lament are said to have followed from the crowd, in which Caesar himself appeared to be speaking. Evidently, the clever Mark Antony had mobilized actors to orchestrate the occasion. The crowd erupted, and Caesar's body was cremated there and then in the Forum. Now, at all events, a tribune, Helvius Cinna – Cinna the Poet – mistaken for the conspirator Lucius Cornelius Cinna, was accidentally lynched, and the homes of the other leaders of the plot almost fired.

The people's anger had been stirred, a timely warning to Mark Antony's opponents. Mark Antony had adeptly turned the tables on the conspirators with his tear-jerking panegyric. Over the next month or so all of them slipped away from Rome. In the funeral speech Mark Antony demonstrated his loyalty towards Caesar, but also showcased the power of his oratory and furthered his political ambitions.



Marble bust (Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, inv. ROM 2002) of Mark Antony, late 1st century BC. Renowned for his prodigious strength, this portrait clearly depicts Mark Antony's bull-like features and neck, which gave some credibility to his claim of being descended from the semi-divine Hercules. A proficient soldier and a skilled politician, Mark Antony was a poor arbitrator and administrator with an immense appetite for wild living. Bawdy lifestyle apart, unlike some of his contemporaries, he circulated comfortably among his men's campfires, exchanging small talk and battlefield gossip. (© Esther Carré)

Those ambitions of Mark Antony had taken root quickly, for on 16 March he had issued an edict, as consul, to convene a meeting of the Senate for dawn the following day. Still wary of going the same way as his chief, Mark Antony specified that his fellow senators meet at the temple of Tellus (Cic. *Phil.* 1.1, 31, 2.89, *ad Att.* 16.14.1). The ostensible reason for the choice of location was the safety offered by the temple's proximity to Mark Antony's own house, in the Carinae district of Rome (App. *B civ.* 2.126). The Senate declared an amnesty for the assassins but also adopted a blanket fiat of the Caesarean status quo. Part and parcel of Caesar's *acta* entailed that the pre-election of the next two years' consuls and tribunes, undertaken by Caesar before his planned Dacian and Parthian campaigns, was to remain valid (Dio 43.51.5, cf. Cic. *ad Att.* 14.6.1–2).

It was a crucial moment. In Appian's fanciful reconstruction of the scene, republican senators agree to the compromise after Mark Antony wryly reminds them that many of them in fact owe their present positions to Caesar's bountiful favours. In case they hesitated, armed soldiers, Caesar's veterans, were on hand to clarify their minds (App. *B civ.* 2.126–8). It appears that at this particular point in time Mark Antony was quite prepared to build his hegemony on a friend-or-foe dichotomy.

As is suggested by Cicero's complaints to Titus Pomponius Atticus (the cognomen was a personal acquisition), financier, man of learning and renowned hypochondriac who was the diplomatic friend of all important men in Rome, Mark Antony seems to have begun forging new entries in the papers of Caesar, apparently with the help of Caesar's secretary Faberius. A direct reference to forgery comes in a letter written on 26 April: 'Things that Caesar neither did nor ever would have done or permitted to be done are now brought out from his forged memoranda [*ex falsis eius commentariis*]. As for me, I have shown myself all compliance to Mark Antony. After all, having once made up his mind that he had a right to do what he pleased, he would have done it just the same if I had opposed' (Cic. *ad Att.* 14.13.6).

Cicero's letter to Atticus makes it clear that in certain matters of state Mark Antony was employing fraudulent evidence, but in his reply to Mark Antony he gives his unqualified assent (ibid. 14.13B.2, cf. *Phil.* 2.97, 100). Thus, in a letter to Atticus (the two were in fact close trusted friends) only two or three days later, he exclaims: 'We could not bear Caesar as our master, but we bow to his notebooks' (*ad Att.* 14.14.2). Clearly, Mark Antony's handling of the *acta Caesaris* was anything but above board, and perhaps Shakespeare has hit the mark when he makes his Antony exclaim: 'Fortune is merry, / And in this mood will give us anything' (*Julius Caesar* III.ii.278–9). However, we cannot know whether the corruption really was as unrestrained as Cicero implies.

The approval of the *acta Caesaris* – in truth, a farrago of decrees, decisions, and promises – on 17 March meant that Mark Antony was assigned Macedonia for two years, a rich and important province, manned by the six legions mobilized by Caesar. He had planned to fight the Dacians on the Danube before leading an invasion of Parthia to punish the Parthians and avenge Crassus (rumour had it he was preparing to repeat the conquests

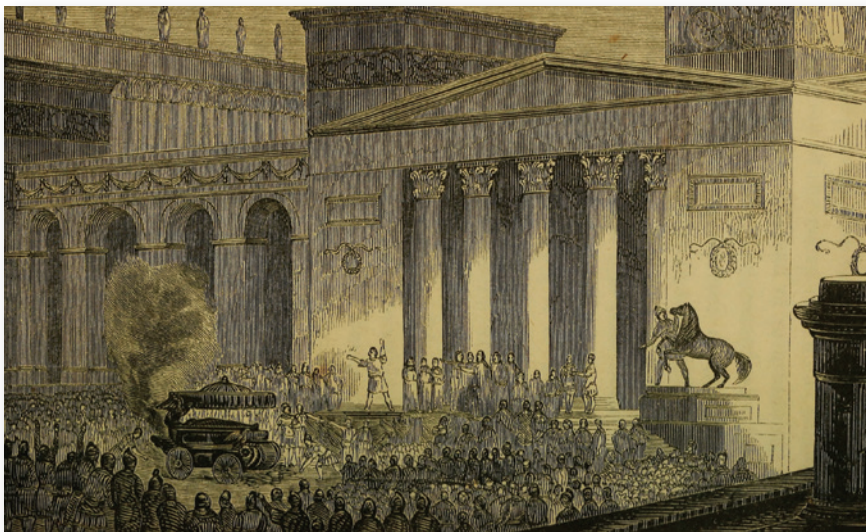
of Alexander and more). Obviously, for his own political survival, Mark Antony needed the proconsular *imperium* and Caesar's army. However, he also wanted to be closer to the power in Rome and to be protected by the proconsular *imperium* for longer than the two years stipulated in Caesar's legislation.

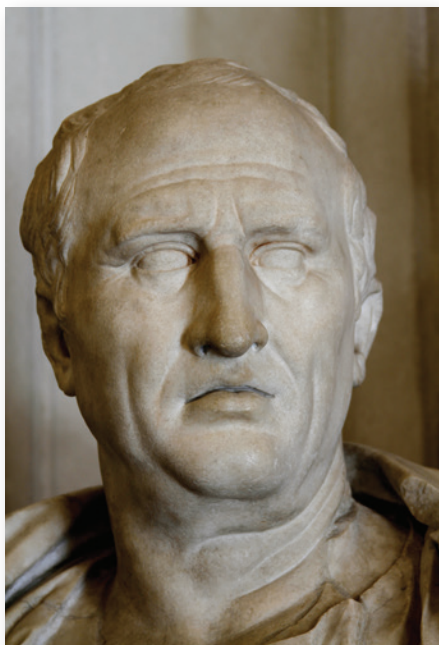
In a letter from Cicero to Atticus from 28 or 29 April Cicero spreads the rumour that Mark Antony apparently desired a different proconsular assignment; in the place of Macedonia he wanted the Gallic provinces, that is, Gallia Cisalpina and Gallia Comata (*ad Att.* 14.14.4). Affluent Gallia Cisalpina, rich in men and *matériel*, was now closely linked with Rome, while Gallia Comata, ripe for exploitation, was the part of Gaul that Caesar had conquered with that well-known animal brutality which awakens our guilt complexes today. Cicero's letters often contain rumours, but in this case he was not wrong. Mark Antony worked to change Caesar's settlement of the provinces and, on 2 June, the consul irregularly passed a law under which he would, at the expiration of his consulate, displace the conspirator Decimus Brutus as proconsul of Gallia Cisalpina, in lieu of Macedonia, for five years, while retaining Caesar's legions stationed in Macedonia plus a personal bodyguard – in effect a re-creation of Caesar's great command (*Cic. Phil.* 1.19, Dio 43.25.3).

Decimus Brutus, having lost Gallia Cisalpina, was to be removed to Macedonia now minus its legions (Mark Antony took four; one was given to his colleague Dolabella, and the other to his brother Caius Antonius). Decimus Brutus, claiming that Mark Antony's law of 2 June was illegal (due notice had not been given, and violence was used), refused to submit to the consul's demands and adopted a tactic of obstructionism to gain time.

A couple of weeks after the Ides of March, Decimus Brutus had taken over the administration of Gallia Cisalpina, as Caesar had arranged before his death. He thus became the only conspirator to gain command of an army during the year 44 BC. Decimus Brutus had entered his province, where he was received by three legions as their lawful commander (*App. B civ.* 3.49, cf. 97 where the author implies four). He had made these the nucleus of a rapidly collected army (*Cic. Phil.* 5.13, 36), and was soon in a position to stand his ground

In the wake of the political earthquake caused by the assassination of Caesar, Mark Antony officiated at Caesar's funeral. He bent over the body, weeping, pulled off Caesar's bloody toga, and waved it on a pole. The crowd moaned, and Mark Antony spoke for Caesar. Caesar was cremated on the spot. Sacred flesh turned into sacred smoke. No wonder the conspirators fled. Even Cicero, who was not a conspirator, fled. Mark Antony was actually quite polite to Cicero – for the moment. Incidentally, or perhaps not, Cicero (*Phil.* 13.41) viewed the Lupercalia 'crowning' as a direct cause of Caesar's assassination and therefore held Mark Antony responsible for the murder. Shakespeare (cribbing shamelessly from Plutarch) was to recreate Mark Antony's fine performance (*Julius Caesar* III.ii.79–113), a famous scene that has naturally caught the imagination of generations of scholars, students, theatre- or filmgoers, and general readers. (Library of Congress/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)





Marble bust (Rome, Musei Capitolini, Palazzo Nuovo, inv. MC 0589) of Cicero (106–43 BC). His *Philippics* are models of eloquence, rancour, and misrepresentation. Even in an age of extravagant political denunciation and character assassination, Cicero's charges gave evidence of his deep personal hatred, and—taken all too literally—they have blackened Mark Antony's reputation and branded him permanently before the bench of history. Cicero himself predicted correctly his impact on Mark Antony's public reputation: 'I will brand him with the truest marks of infamy, and will hand him down to the everlasting memory of man' (*Phil.* 13.40). Invective may have been an art and convention in Rome, yet Cicero's condemnations of Mark Antony are unrivalled in their ferocity and vitriol. (José Luiz Bernardes Ribeiro/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-4.0)

having sensibly exercised his legions by fighting a war against Alpine tribes at the far end of his province. Cicero was to receive in early December a letter from him asking for support in the Senate for a motion recognizing his victories, which had won him the title of *imperator* from his soldiers (*ad fam.* 11.4.2). After all, Decimus Brutus did enjoy the confidence of that august body. So much for the historical gist of what we shall be reading, it is also worth a glance at the circumstances that served as the catalyst for the war of Mutina.

ENTER THE RIVAL

The phrase 'fortunes of war' was surely coined by a soldier, not a poet, for the element of chance must never be underestimated. Undeniably, not just in warfare, but in most human endeavours, no matter how things are set up, there is always a strong element of something just going terribly wrong. The events of autumn 44 BC were to give credence to this argument.

On 9 October, Mark Antony set out for the port city of Brundisium (Brindisi) in southern Italy. His mission was to greet the four Caesarian legions arriving from Macedonia and, contrary to Cicero's claim that the consul was 'to march them on Rome' (*ad fam.* 12.23.2), to arrange the logistical details of their northwards march to their new posting in Gallia Cisalpina. A month later Cicero's new 'friend and ally', Octavian, marched into Rome at the head of his private army. Here it is important to note that there had always been an aversion to having armed troops within the capital. This is reflected in the fact that, when a proconsul returned from campaign, he officially laid down his *imperium* or power of command as he crossed the *pomerium* or sacred boundary of the city. Likewise the soldiers who took part in the triumphal processions of successful generals wore only their tunics, military belts and boots as they marched through Rome, and were thus unarmed and unarmoured. And so the most prominent power-seeker when the government of the Roman Republic was manifestly breaking down had entered the affray.

The venture had started on 11 April when a sickly, inexperienced young man landed near Brundisium. It was then that Octavian – then still known as Caius Octavius – learned of his formal adoption as Caesar's son and principal heir. Neither the consul Mark Antony, nor the Senate, with Cicero to the fore, took the 18-year-old 'boy' seriously, but he soon made it clear that he was not to be trifled with. Two months later, Caius Iulius Caesar Octavianus, destined afterwards to rule the Roman world under the name of Augustus, went down to Campania with a convoy of wagons loaded with cash and equipment. There he toured the military colonies recently established for the veterans of Caesar's *legio* VII and *legio* VIII and persuaded upwards of 3,000 of them, by appealing to their chief's memory and by open bribery, to rally to his standard and return with him to Rome.

Cicero, belittling his plan in a letter to Atticus, was not at all surprised by the fact that Octavian had won over his adoptive father's veterans 'since he gives them 500 *denarii* apiece' (*ad Att.* 16.8.1), more than twice the annual

The events of winter 44/43 BC





Marble bust (Aquileia, Museo Archeologico, inv. PG 1) of a young Octavian. The young Octavian is difficult to like. He was unprincipled, could be sadistic and at times a physical coward. In the political arena that was the Senate, he wooed like a gangster, not a lover, a cunning negotiator with skills varying between brute force, charm and obfuscation. Admirers of the Augustan system will tend to pardon the brutality of his path to power. His highly unorthodox career was made possible only by the troubled times when no more than a mere handful of men could decide the destiny of Rome. Soon, by successive eliminations, they were reduced to three, then two, and then one alone who became the first emperor of the empire. (Wolfgang Sauber/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

salary of a legionary.¹ He also promised, in the event of success, no less than 5,000 *denarii* to each soldier. Successful he may have been playing the part of a maverick Pompey at the head of a private – and wholly illegal – army he had levied against a consul, but he was to be unsuccessful in the role of a mature Lucius Cornelius Sulla – ‘he is very much a boy’, Cicero harped to his friend (*ad Att.* 16.11.6).

Having occupied the Forum with armed men on 10 November, Octavian hoped for a meeting of the Senate and the backing of senior statesmen. Yet he failed to rouse support to his cause, and he was forced to scuttle north into Etruria and lay low for a while. Mark Antony was fast approaching with the legions from Macedonia and many veterans, not prepared to fight fellow veterans of Caesar just yet, slipped away to return to their homes in the south, none the worse for a brief but profitable autumnal adventure. The *coup d'état* of the new Caesar may have failed miserably, but his time was to come.

As autumn gradually turned to winter, it was, perhaps, sheer chance that in Etruria the rash young adventurer and his dwindling band of desperadoes received an unexpected

boost. Two of Mark Antony's legions marching north along the Adriatic seaboard towards Ariminum (Rimini), declared for Octavian (*Cic. Phil.* 13.19, *App. B civ.* 3.45), turned westward along the Via Valeria towards Rome, and took up a position at the town of Alba Fucens in Picenum, a hundred kilometres or so east of the capital. Both these formations, *legio IIII* and *legio Martia*, had made the acquaintance of Octavian while he was in Apollonia on the Illyrian coast, waiting for Caesar to launch his campaigns against the Dacians and the Parthians. The legions from Macedonia had been raised by Caesar and were prepared to fight for him, but after his death their loyalties will have been sorely divided between the two Caesarian heavyweights. They did not know Mark Antony and he did not know them.

For any army to function at all, let alone be successful, a system of stern discipline is essential. When the commander commands he must be sure his officers, the centurions, tribunes, prefects, quaestors and legates, and his men will obey. This, it scarcely needs to be said, was true of the Roman army. Patriotic sentiment, a strongly inculcated sense of duty and, we may add, fear of ferocious punishment, all ensured obedience. From this, one consequence relevant to the war of Mutina comes. In the course of this work, even when military justice in the Roman army could be severe and menacing, we shall discover circumstances which gave rise to mutiny and desertion in a body, but we shall also find that *esprit de corps* was still preserved. Those who reject authority rarely dissolve into an inchoate mass. They remain an ordered body ready to serve the next master. The innate sense of discipline remains strong. Lest we forget, civil war or no civil war, the Roman army was a paid, professional army (even if the degree of its professionalism is still a matter of scholarly debate). There was no shame in obedience, no shame in taking money, and money, or just as often promises of money, figures prominently in the narrative of the war of Mutina.

¹ The annual salary of Caesar's legionaries was 225 *denarii* (*Sue. DJ* 26.3). At the same time a clerk in a Caesarian colony was to be paid 300 *denarii* a year, and a municipal dogsbody 150 *denarii* (*Roman Statutes* 1 no. 25, ch. lxii).

All armies that are busy tend to remain disciplined and thus under control. Mutinies usually occur in periods of forced idleness, when resentment over real or imagined grievances has time to fester and spread. Similarly, mutinies can commence when soldiers (usually battle-hardened veterans) stir their comrades to unite around a common cause. The insolence of veterans and their ability to stand up to even the most respected officers and generals are well known.

Mark Antony was to experience the latter circumstance for himself in Brundisium, where angry and mutinous soldiery confronted the consul: the seditious pamphlets and the agents of Caesar's heir had done their work. As well as expressing their anger at his failure to avenge their dead chief, Caesar's intensely loyal legionary soldiers had jeered at Mark Antony's beggarly bribe of 100 *denarii*, for Octavian's agents had promised them five times as much. Determined (too determined, as we shall see) to assert his authority from the start, Mark Antony, apparently urged on by the notorious Fulvia (Mark Antony was her third husband), executed the seditious ringleaders of the rebellious soldiers. Still, in order to return the soldiers to an obedient state, he had to pay as well in order to counter Octavian's sizeable sweetener (App. *B civ.* 3.43–4). The dangerous precedent was thereby set: the soldiery could and must be bought. The practice had been used by Caesar. Now it had begun again, the bribery drained ever more of Mark Antony's personal and the state's wealth until, much later, Mark Antony would be forced to devalue the coinage by minting *denarii* with a very low silver content to make his war chest go further; these coins, especially the remarkable 'galley' type issued prior to Actium, would continue to circulate well into the 2nd century AD. Bribes are dangerous beasts; they have a habit of growing larger and larger.

Mark Antony, after trying without success to persuade the defectors to reverse their decision, resolved to hurry north to Gallia Cisalpina with his two remaining formations, *legio* II and *legio* XXXV, and with the regrouped *legio* V *Alaudae*, its Gallic War veterans having been at hand somewhere in southern Italy waiting to be paid off. As the legally appointed proconsul of Gallia Cisalpina, he graciously invited the conspirator Decimus Brutus to leave it. The Senate, on the other hand, had ordered Decimus Brutus to stay where he was. Mark Antony, the 'legal' proconsul, chose to take it, and Decimus Brutus, the 'sitting' proconsul, chose to barricade himself in Mutina (Modena), just south of the Padus (Po) on the Via Aemilia (Via Emilia), and wait out the winter. However, winter ends and winter snows melt.

THE NEW CAESAR

The Roman people were once again embroiled in open civil war, but even if winter held up warfare in the north, not so intrigue and politicking in Rome. On 1 January 43 BC the Senate, acting on a motion of Cicero (*Phil.* 5.16–17), voted the young outsider, Octavian, a place among their own number. He was awarded the *imperium*

Marble bust (Toulouse, Musée Saint-Raymond, inv. 30002) of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa (63–12 BC). A close companion and colleague of Octavian (eventually marrying his daughter, Iulia), Agrippa would prove to be a brilliant naval tactician, attaining for the triumvir the victories at Mylae, Naulochus, and, significantly, Actium – the final episode in Rome's prolonged civil wars. When Mark Antony lost that battle and later committed suicide in Alexandria, Octavian was left the unrivalled leader of the Roman world. Of obscure family, which limited his personal ambitions, Agrippa was content to serve his more famous associate as a dependable and faithful friend. Without his military abilities and total loyalty, it is improbable that Octavian would have survived the struggle with Mark Antony (and others), let alone come out on top. (© Esther Carré)





Sextus Pompeius Magnus Pius, a portrait with an oak wreath (*corona civica*) and the inscription MAG(nus) • PIVS • IMP(erator) • ITER(um) on the obverse of an *aureus* struck in Sicily 42–40 BC. The 'Pius' reflects his loyalty to his dead father's doomed cause, and, uncommonly for a Roman of this period, Sextus wears a beard, probably in mourning for his father. The reverse bears a right-facing bust of his father, Pompey, and his older brother (executed after Munda in 45 BC), Cnaeus Pompeius, with the inscription PRÆF(ectus) • CLAS(sis) • ET • ORÆ • MARIT(imae) • EX • S(enatus) • C(onsultus), the title awarded to Sextus by the Senate in 43 BC. One of Rome's famous unknowns, he was quickly branded a buccaneer, a desperado, and even an anarchist by the Augustan propaganda circus. (Borsenova/ Wikimedia Commons/ CC-BY-SA-3.0)

of a *propraetor*, which, according to Appian (*B civ.* 3.48), his men had wanted to seize for him, and the promises of money made by him were solemnly ratified. Praetorian *imperium* now allowed him to command his private army legally. With that, the new *propraetor* was instructed to co-operate with the two new consuls, Aulus Hirtius and Caius Vibius Pansa (old partisans of Caesar, to whom they owed all), and with Decimus Brutus (Caesar's former admiral and one of his assassins), to eliminate Mark

Antony (erstwhile trusted chief lieutenant of Caesar) in Gallia Cisalpina (Dio 46.29.2). Further, by a special dispensation, he was to be allowed to stand for the consulship ten years before the legal age. Octavian was barely 19; this young and arrogant man would still have 13 long years to wait.

Overnight Octavian had turned from a boy-buccaneer bent on supreme power and revenge for Caesar's death, to the boy-hero whose timely action had saved the state from the would-be tyrant Mark Antony. The Senate, under the vocal leadership of Cicero, had previously granted *propraetorian imperium* to a man who had held no public office, but never before had it conferred senatorial rank on a private citizen. Such an irregularity had not been performed even for that Roman colossus, Pompey. Yet Cicero's plan was a good deal more cynical and immediate in its application; the young Caesar, with all his political appeal, could be utilized as part of a perverse republican cause to destroy Mark Antony and his associates.

Cicero prided himself on his reputation as a wit, and Caesar knew this, and ordered that his witticisms be sent to him in Gaul. Even when we translate his well-wrought words from antique Latin to modern-day English, his style is still superb. Let us take for instance his quip of the day, namely 'the young man must get praises, honours, and – the push [*laudandum adulescentem, ornandum tollendum*]' (*Ad fam.* 11.20.1). The senators got the joke, for it satisfactorily summed up the general feeling behind their motives at the time, though not all of them agreed. Marcus Brutus, who did not see Octavian as a naive and ineffectual youth who could be easily manipulated, as Cicero seemed to think him to be, warned Cicero that Octavian was more dangerous than Mark Antony (*Cic. ad Brut.* 12.1, cf. 25.5, *Plut. Brut.* 22). His warning was not heeded.

Certainly to us with the luxury of hindsight, it may have seemed a rather high-risk, high-stakes policy – flattery always works, but the last verb in the Ciceronian witticism seems to be used with a double meaning, 'exalt' and 'get rid of' – but the gamble may have paid off if Octavian, like Pompey before, had settled down after the flattery and the applause. That was an error of judgement, as events proved.

Brutus had been right about the new Caesar. He was more dangerous than he seemed. He was only 19 years old when he inherited the name and for a time concealed his aggressive nature behind a façade of good will. Octavian was to show a cool callousness, a calculation and a lack of heroics, which were to carry him eventually to 45 years of supreme power. As for Cicero, hubris was inexorably succeeded by nemesis.

CHRONOLOGY

44 BC

1 January	Consuls Caius Iulius Caesar and Mark Antony, and (after Caesar's death) Publius Cornelius Dolabella.	7 April	Cicero leaves Rome for his seaside villa at Puteoli (Pozzuoli) in the bay of Naples.
26 January	Returning to Rome from the Feriae Latinae on Mount Alban, Caesar hailed <i>rex</i> .	11 April	Octavian lands in Italy.
15 February	Caesar appointed <i>dictator perpetuus</i> . Mark Antony at the Lupercalia offers Caesar a crown.	Mid-April	Mark Antony proceeds to Campania to enlist Caesar's veterans. Dolabella (who had assumed Caesar's vacant consulship) overthrows Amatius' altar to Caesar.
15 March	Assassination of Caesar; Cicero visits Marcus Brutus and his associates encamped on the Capitol.	18 April	Octavian reaches Neapolis (Naples).
17 March	Mark Antony as sole consul calls a meeting of the Senate at the temple of Tellus, which is near his home; none of the conspirators being present, Cicero proposes a general amnesty for all those involved in Caesar's assassination.	19 April	Octavian meets with Lucius Cornelius Balbus, formerly Caesar's financial agent and trusted confidant.
18 March	All Caesar's 'acts' are ratified by the Senate. The conspirators are invited down from the Capitol.	22 April	Octavian meets with Cicero in Cumae.
19 March	Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, Caesar's father-in-law, reads Caesar's will before the Senate.	Mid-May	Octavian arrives in Rome to claim his inheritance. Mark Antony hurriedly returns to Rome 'in battle array' (Cic. <i>Phil.</i> 2.42).
20 March	Caesar's funeral is held in the Forum; Mark Antony's funerary oration, in which he recites Caesar's achievements, is followed by riots.	1 June	Mark Antony summons the Senate to the temple of Concord, which he surrounds with armed men, and carries out a number of fictitious 'acts' of Caesar.
Early April	Caius Amatius, claiming to be the grandson of the war hero and seven times consul Caius Marius, erects an altar and a statue in the Forum in honour of Caesar as a god. Riots ensue, and Mark Antony has the 'pseudo-Marius' killed as a danger to the state.	2 June	Mark Antony obtains the province of Gallia Cisalpina in lieu of Macedonia.
		5 June	The Senate passes a decree granting Brutus and Cassius quasi-diplomatic missions, namely grain supply jobs in Asia and Sicily respectively.
		8 June	The conspirators meet at Antium (Anzio) and decide to leave Italy and sail east.
		30 June	Cicero sets out from his Tusculan villa for Greece.
		7–13 July	The <i>ludi Apollinares</i> are held by the praetor Caius Antonius, Mark

	Antony's younger brother, on behalf of Marcus Brutus, the nominal <i>praetor urbanus</i> , in his absence; pro-Liberator demonstrations and counter-demonstrations.		meritorious parent'), Mark Antony replies to the tribune Tiberius Cannutius to the effect that the conspirators were traitors: Cicero was the head of the plot, and Brutus, Cassius, and Cannutius were acting on Cicero's advice.
20–30 July	The <i>ludi victoriae Caesaris</i> , in honour of the triumph of Caesar's arms and of Venus Genetrix, are held with Caius Matius, one of the procurators in charge.	5 October	Mark Antony accuses Octavian of hiring men to murder him.
1 August	Lucius Piso, in a speech in favour of Brutus and Cassius, attacks Mark Antony before the Senate; the balance in politics begins to turn against Mark Antony.	9 October	Mark Antony sets out for Brundisium to take command of the four legions from Macedonia. Mark Antony butchers Roman civilians and soldiers at Suessa and Brundisium.
4 August	Brutus and Cassius issue a manifesto in which Mark Antony is bade to take warning from the fate of Caesar.	25 October	Cicero leaves Rome to spend time at his Puteoli villa; he composes the second <i>Philippic</i> , which pretends to be a response delivered immediately afterwards, in Mark Antony's presence.
31 August	Having abandoned his voyage to Greece, Cicero enters Rome amid cheering crowds.	10 November	Octavian illegally occupies the Forum with armed men; delivers a vigorous speech praising Caesar and denouncing Mark Antony.
1 September	In the Senate, Mark Antony furiously attacks Cicero (feigning exhaustion from the journey) for his absence, and threatens to have his house torn down as a penalty for his defection.	Mid-November	Mark Antony returns to Rome with his praetorian cohort and <i>legio V Alaudae</i> .
2 September	Mark Antony departs for Tibur (Tivoli). Cicero delivers before the Senate the first <i>Philippic</i> , a critical review of Mark Antony's actions since March, with particular emphasis on his misuse of the ratification of Caesar's <i>acta</i> .	24 November	Mark Antony summons the Senate, threatening death to absentees, but is too drunk to attend.
15 September	Marcus Brutus arrives in Athens (where his statue was placed beside those of Athens' own tyrannicides), ostensibly to study.	28 November	Mark Antony summons the Senate with a view to declaring Octavian a public enemy. On hearing of defection of <i>legiones</i> IIII and <i>Martia</i> , Mark Antony hurriedly departs for Alba Fucens to quell the mutiny. Being refused admission, Mark Antony proceeds to Tibur, where he appeases every man still serving him with a donation of 500 <i>denarii</i> a head. Mark Antony then sets out for Gallia Cisalpina to remove Decimus Brutus. Cicero publishes and circulates the second <i>Philippic</i> (the one Juvenal calls
19 September	Mark Antony rejoins with a blistering attack on Cicero's entire career.		
2 October	After his dedication of Caesar's statue on the <i>rostra</i> with the title <i>Parenti optime merito</i> ('to the most		

	the <i>divina Philippica</i>) to his associates; it was not intended for oral delivery at all.	3 February	Cicero in the eighth <i>Philippic</i> deprecates any peace with Mark Antony.
9 December	Cicero returns to Rome.	4 February	The Senate awards a statue on the <i>rostra</i> and a funeral at public expense to Servius Sulpicius. Cicero delivers the ninth <i>Philippic</i> in the Senate. Military cloaks (<i>saga</i>) are donned in recognition of a military emergency (<i>tumultus</i>).
20 December	Tribunes convene the Senate to provide for the public safety. Cicero delivers the third <i>Philippic</i> in the Senate (morning), in which he praises Octavian, and the fourth in the Forum (afternoon).		
43 BC		Mid-February	Letter to Senate from Marcus Brutus stating that he had taken over Macedonia from Caius Antonius and the Illyrian legions from Vatinius; Cicero in the tenth <i>Philippic</i> carries a proposal that Brutus should be commended, that he should retain his command, and be ordered to protect the provinces of Macedonia, Illyricum and Achaia.
1 January	Consuls Aulus Hirtius and Caius Vibius Pansa. Mark Antony, who is declared an outlaw by the Senate (however, the formal condemnation is vetoed by the tribune Salvius), has shut up Decimus Brutus and his three legions in Mutina. Cicero in the fifth <i>Philippic</i> proposes Octavian's position be legitimized, which is approved, and opposes a suggested Senate delegation to Mark Antony, but is overruled.	End February	Cicero in the 11th <i>Philippic</i> proposes that command in Syria should be conferred on Cassius. But the commission is given to the two consuls after the relief of Decimus Brutus.
4 January	After four days of debate in the Senate, Cicero delivers the sixth <i>Philippic</i> in the Forum, exhorting the people to be constant in their exertions to recover their liberty. The delegation of three <i>consulares</i> to Mark Antony departs.	Early March	Caius Antonius is besieged in Apollonia by Marcus Brutus, the rival proconsul of Macedonia. Seizing the province of Asia, Dolabella treacherously murders Caius Trebonius at Smyrna.
Mid-January	Cicero delivers the seventh <i>Philippic</i> in the Senate.	Mid-March	The Senate proclaims Dolabella a public enemy. The next day Pansa proposes a second embassy to Mark Antony, to include Cicero himself, who opposes it in the twelfth <i>Philippic</i> , and the proposal is abandoned.
1 February	The surviving envoys, Lucius Calpurnius Piso (<i>cos.</i> 58 BC) and Lucius Marcius Philippus (<i>cos.</i> 56 BC) – Servius Sulpicius Rufus (<i>cos.</i> 51 BC) having perished en route – return from their mission to Mark Antony bearing his 'intolerable demands'.	19 March	Pansa leaves Rome to join his colleague before Mutina.
2 February	The Senate passes the ultimate decree – the consuls, in concert with the <i>propraetor</i> Octavian, are to take steps for the security of the Republic. The proposal of a second delegation to Mark Antony is defeated.	20 March	A vote of thanks from the Senate to Sextus Pompeius for his promise to defend the Republic against Mark Antony.

Early April	Lucius Munatius Plancus, proconsul of Gallia Comata, and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, proconsul of Gallia Transalpina and Hispania Citerior, write a joint dispatch urging peace and an accommodation with Mark Antony.	10 May	Decimus Brutus, pursuing Mark Antony, is 30 Roman miles behind him at Pollentia, north-west of Genua.
9 April	The <i>praetor urbanus</i> , Marcus Cornutus, convenes the Senate in temple of Iuppiter to consider the letter.	24 May	Decimus Brutus informs Cicero that his comment about Octavian, <i>laudandum adolescentem, ornandum tollendum</i> , has been passed on to Octavian (Cic. <i>ad fam.</i> 11. 20. 1).
10 April	Votes of thanks to both men are passed. Cicero in the 13th <i>Philippic</i> deprecates peace. He also reads aloud a sarcastic and threatening letter from Mark Antony to Hirtius and Octavian, in which Mark Antony attacks Cicero, sneers at the young Caesar as ‘a boy’ (<i>Phil</i> 13.24) and at the Senate as a mere Pompeian camp.	29 May	In Gallia Transalpina Lepidus meets Mark Antony near Forum Iulii.
		30 May	Mark Antony and Lepidus join forces.
		6 June	Plancus, who has been approaching Mark Antony and Lepidus down the Rhône Valley, hears of their alliance, retreats, and asks for help.
		10 June	Decimus Brutus joins Plancus.
14 April	First battle of Mutina, at Forum Gallorum; Pansa is mortally wounded.	Mid-June	Embassy of Octavian’s veterans to the Senate seeking a consulship for their chief; Cicero is suggested as his colleague.
20 April	Cornutus, as <i>praetor urbanus</i> , convenes the Senate. Cicero in the 14th <i>Philippic</i> delivers a funeral oration to the fallen soldiers. A public thanksgiving (<i>supplicatio</i>) of 50 days is voted.	30 June	Lepidus is declared a <i>hostis publicus</i> .
		Mid-July	Octavian’s march on Rome from Gallia Cisalpina.
		19 August	Elected consul, Octavian enters Rome.
21 April	Second battle of Mutina, outside the town itself; Mark Antony defeated and Hirtius killed.	Late October	Mark Antony, Octavian and Lepidus meet near Bononia and form a triumvirate.
22 April	Mark Antony retreats west along the Via Aemilia.	27 November	The triumvirate comes into being, decreed by <i>lex Titia</i> (so named after the tribune who proposed it), which limits their terrible powers to five years.
23 April	Pansa dies of his wounds in Bononia.		
27 April	Rome hears of the victory at Mutina; Antonians are declared <i>hostes</i> , enemies of the state. Cassius is instructed to hunt down Dolabella.	7 December	Cicero’s head and right hand are nailed above the <i>rostra</i> in the Forum.
3 May	Mark Antony is met by Publius Ventidius at Vada Sabatia.		
4 May	Decimus Brutus reaches Dertona.		

OPPOSING COMMANDERS

What made a good general on the battlefield? It is easy to make lists of abstract virtues, although they tell us little:

He must be resourceful, active, careful, hardy and quick-witted; he must be gentle and brutal; at once straightforward and designing, capable of both caution and surprise, lavish and rapacious, generous and mean, skilful in defence and attack; there are many other qualifications, some natural, some acquired, which are necessary to one who would succeed as a general. It is well to understand tactics too...

Xen. *Mem.* 3.1.6-7

This sounds like Shakespeare's Polonius, but it is in fact Socrates (through Xenophon); and it avoids the real problem, which is not finding a general who is rash and unadventurous, kindly and cruel and so on, but finding one who knows when each quality is appropriate.

Thus an attack which, when successful, is described as 'bold and daring' is condemned as 'rash and fool-hardy' in the event of failure; while a protracted defence is likely to earn applause as 'dogged determination' or be criticized as 'obstinate folly' according to the result. In other words, there are no magic keys to successful generalship. The most that we can say seems to be that good generals made few serious mistakes on the battlefield and ruthlessly exploited the mistakes of their opponents.

A specific word about Roman generals is in order, however. Most Roman generals of the Republic were not just military commanders, but provincial governors as well. This combined position elevated them to the status of *propraetor* or *proconsul*. As a provincial governor, therefore, the *propraetor* or the *proconsul* combined both civil and military responsibilities, administering the province or leading an army, whatever the situation required.

Mark Antony (83– or 82–30 BC)

To anyone with an interest in the fall of the Roman Republic, Marcus Antonius, the future triumvir, and the 'Mark Antony' of Shakespeare and of history, is a familiar figure. An aristocrat with more ancestry than money, Mark Antony saw himself as the legitimate heir and successor of Caesar, to fortune as well as to political power. A *nobilis* born in 83 BC (some sources state 82 BC) into a prominent but notoriously impoverished plebeian family, his paternal grandfather (*cos.* 99 BC) was the celebrated orator of the same name, while his amiable but incompetent father (*pr.* 74 BC), also of the same



Green basalt bust (New York, Brooklyn Museum, inv. 54.51) of Mark Antony, reputedly found in Egypt, late 1st century BC. It contrasts interestingly with the heavy-jowled figure that we usually see on Roman coins and in Roman sculpture. Mark Antony's later years and the tragic close of his life generally stirs the imagination more deeply than did the earlier and worldlier part of his story. For the purposes of our story, however, Mark Antony comes swaggering onto the Roman political stage already 39 years old and more than a little scarred by the sharp teeth of capricious Fortuna and full of Dionysian cunning. (Sailko/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

name, suffered the double agony of being roundly humiliated by friend and foe alike, namely the Senate in Rome and the pirates on Crete (where he died a broken man).

The father's legacy to his son was, therefore, far from glorious: a fatherless home, a tarnished name, an overspent purse. The son, however, was of a different stamp altogether. Notorious for his wine-sodden impropriety and irresponsible womanizing, Mark Antony was equally undaunted upon the field of battle, and even to his last days he was heading his legions in the fighting line after long nights of reckless carousing, probably not the best preparation for an early-morning fight. A potent mix of testosterone, hooliganism and brashness, Mark Antony was at his best when goaded by the spur of action, and Caesar was quick to realize that the other reputation, namely for courage in battle and perseverance on campaign, was the one deserving attention. Thus we witness Mark Antony's rapid advancement in Caesar's favour.

The years of hedonistic amusement and high adventure brought him, after service with Pompey's legate in Syria, Aulus Gabinius (*cos.* 58 BC), to bigger and brighter prospects in the camps and councils of Caesar. Mark Antony was an intrepid and dashing cavalry commander who evolved into a steady and resourceful general. As one of his legates in

Gaul, he helped Caesar crush the revolt of conquered Gaulish tribes led by Vercingetorix and it was at the climactic siege of Alesia that Caesar first makes mention of Mark Antony (*B Gall.* 7.81). At Pharsalus, where Caesar's veteran legions squared off against a Pompeian army that was superior in numbers but far less dependable and disciplined, Caesar entrusted command of his left wing to him, *legiones* VIII and VIII, now so battle scarred that together they formed only one full legion. Nevertheless, on a day of hard fighting Mark Antony proved to be a battle commander worthy of the stern veterans he had led, veterans whose character was formed by two formidable elements in their training and attitude to war: ferocity and discipline. It was these, as much as tactical skills, which enabled them to win the harsh and brutal close-quarter fights at Pharsalus and by doing so had contributed significantly to Caesar's victory.

Obviously for Mark Antony, to join Caesar meant both fighting under Rome's finest general and allying with the Caesarian political faction. Cicero, about the Ides of March, would write to his trusted friend Atticus: 'That affair was handled with the courage of men and the policy of children. Anyone could see that an heir to the throne was left behind. The folly of it!' (*ad Att.* 14.21.3).

The Liberators thought that all that was required to restore the Republic was to murder Caesar. 'I do lack some part / of that quick spirit that is in Antony', so Shakespeare's Marcus Brutus admits (*Julius Caesar*, I.ii.30-1). Cicero too, for he would come back to this again in a letter to Caius Trebonius, writing mockingly that Trebonius – it was he who had taken the hefty Mark Antony aside and detained him in conversation – and his fellow assassins had left 'that splendid feast' unfinished: there were 'leftovers' (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.28.1).

There was a cold logic to Cicero's callous judgement: Mark Antony had worked too long and closely with Caesar; he was powerful as consul and popular with Caesar's loyal veterans; he was able and personally ambitious; though a lesser man, he was enough in Caesar's mould and training to seize Caesar's role as his own. One of Cicero's boldest moments in the second *Philippic* comes in an icy aside about the Ides of March in which he notes: 'If, as the saying goes, the pen [*stilus*] had been mine, then trust me, I would have finished the whole play, not just one act' (*Phil.* 2.34). Cicero here turns a common expression to pointed use; the joke, of course, is on the fact that the conspirators had concealed their murder weapons in writing cases. But there is an even deeper significance in Cicero's words, for as he wrote them, the pen literally was his, and he will put it to use quite deliberately to finish what the conspirators had left undone. For in Cicero's view, a living, breathing Mark Antony was a major obstacle to the return of liberty. Cicero was to be proved all too correct.

It is a *topos* in our ancient literary sources that the good officer in the Roman army shares the menial labours of his troops. He eats camp food, sleeps on the ground, bandies vulgar jests with the rankers, mucks in, and ostentatiously roughs it in a way that would have got an Edwardian subaltern cashiered for conduct unbecoming an officer. Yet it is important to understand that the military opinion-community was by its nature fragile, for its embrace of men of widely different social origins placed a great vertical strain upon it. So the aristocratic officer carried burdens, slept beneath the stars, and belched loudly precisely to show that he did not scorn his baseborn soldiers, as a man from his rank in Roman society would naturally be expected to do; he acted this way to show that he was a member of their community, and was willing to live by their standards. Incontestably, in a modern army every *professional* soldier requires complete membership of the cult and environment of camaraderie and endorsement, but tactical and technological constraints limited the physical and psychological distance between the soldiers and their commanding officers. On the other hand, in the Roman army, despite the stark social distinction existing between officers and men, it was common that even the highest-ranking officers fought side by side with their soldiers while crossing ditches, scaling walls, and directly engaging the enemy.

If Caesar was famous for his special relationship with his soldiers, then Mark Antony was quick to learn. Unlike his mentor, however, Mark Antony wrote nothing of significance even about his wars and, typically, his last known writing was flippantly entitled *De ebrietate sua*, 'On His Drunkenness', a satiric defence against charges of his over-fondness for the pleasures of Bacchus (Pl. *NH* 14.147–48). In truth, among both friends and enemies of a literary bent, Mark Antony was well out of his league. Again, unlike his mentor, Mark Antony had the down-to-earth coarseness of a

hardened soldier. Strong of body and genial in manner, the cheery Mark Antony used to stand in the mess line sharing the ribald jokes of his soldiers and relishing the reckless life of the camp (Plut. *Ant.* 4.2, 5, 6.9). Though Caesar had the leadership skills to make his soldiers follow him through every hardship, unlike Mark Antony he lacked the warmth to bind men close in real friendships and the generosity to welcome them as equals.

The danger here is obvious. Soldiers wanted their officers to act like them, but not be like them; over-familiarity could lead to a slackening of discipline. Getting this right is more of an intuitive art than an intellectual skill. This is exemplified in the case of Mark Antony; he could be brutally ruthless towards those who failed him, and at such times discipline was swift and harsh and included summary execution. On one occasion, when his defences had been set ablaze by the enemy, Mark Antony 'decimated the soldiers of two cohorts of those who were on the works, and punished the centurions of each cohort' (Front. *Strat.* 4.1.37, cf. Plut. *Ant.* 39.18–20). He then cashiered the legionary legate, *pour encourager les autres*, and put the rest of the legion on barley rations, that is, inferior victuals to the rest of the army. Humiliating inadequate soldiers by feeding them on barley rather than wheat was an ancient custom. Cicero, who unquestionably lacked any military experience worth noting (he served briefly, without distinction, as a soldier), would accuse Mark Antony (when he was a consul) of needless cruelty by claiming he put to death innocent men not for blatant mutiny, but 'for a word or a jest' (App. *B civ.* 3.53, cf. 44). The need to maintain firm discipline from the outset of any military campaign was vital. Such discipline demanded harsh, unmerciful punishment. For a man like Mark Antony, a seasoned campaigner in contrast to the militarily incompetent Cicero, such actions did not pose a problem. Mark Antony was a bit of a tyrant – they *say* all good commanders are – but the soldiers respected him all round; and would much rather fight a dozen battles with him, than one with a lavender water soldier.

Mark Antony, bluff, hearty, honest in an army camp way, could be harsh and ruthless to political opponents too; and the proscriptions of the triumvirate revealed the dark side of his personality. Cicero's public denunciations in the *Philippics* had so enraged Mark Antony that he had insisted – even to the extent of trading the death of his own uncle to Octavian – that Cicero be on the first list of those proscribed. It was a contemptible murder of an old man of dignity, honour, and learning, who had served the Republic well. In the centuries since, Mark Antony has retained an undeniable notoriety and his reputation has suffered the censure of the ages for the brutality, while Cicero's has risen proportionately. No matter how you slice it, the present belonged to Mark Antony, but history belongs to Cicero.

Mark Antony has been misrepresented and undervalued by ancient and modern traditions; even so, paradoxically, Mark Antony's life and character continue to fascinate us. Why? As Shakespeare readily understood, his greatness and his weakness made him human and a figure one could easily relate to (Mark Antony was no Achilles, no Alexander, not even a Caesar). Shakespeare took what he needed from Plutarch (or Hollingshead) and gave us something magnificent. In writing late republican history, it is impossible to escape from the genius of Shakespeare. He was and is the undisputed master of representing other people's experiences to themselves, perhaps better than they could. As Plutarch wrote concerning Mark Antony and the aftermath of

Mutina: ‘But it was characteristic of Mark Antony to show his finest qualities in the hour of trial, and indeed it was always when his fortunes were at their lowest that he came nearest to being a good man’ (Plut. *Ant.* 17.3).

Regardless of the odds, Mark Antony believed no situation was really hopeless. Besides, as the down-to-earth Mark Antony would have worked out, ascribing hopelessness demands omniscience, something mankind is notoriously lacking. After all, his standard for masculinity cohered to the Homeric: men were mighty and remembered or else they were weak and ridiculed before they were forgotten.

Mark Antony was capable of exerting mastery over his circumstances in the Senate, in hostile territory, on the battlefield, but not in the bedroom. Consequently, Mark Antony had one critical weakness: cursed with limitless lust he was easily distracted by women. Even worse, he continually pursued women who would damage his reputation and his relationship with Rome.

Lets us take a cursory glance at the tale of Mark Antony and the notorious freedwoman Volumnia, a Roman mime actress who was known professionally as Cytheris (her stage name hinted an association with goddess Aphrodite of Kythera). She had been the property of the wealthy and ambitious Publius Volumnius Eutrapelus, an enthusiastic equestrian patron of the theatre, who had trained her as a mime and introduced her to the stage in her early teens. He was a friend of Caesar and, after his murder, an adherent of Mark Antony (Cic. *Phil.* 13.3). Having manumitted Cytheris, the ex-possessor had now assumed the role of her patron-cum-pimp, and the Greek-named demimondaine was accordingly trafficked between Rome’s elite men.

According to Cicero, who knew Cytheris personally and disliked her intensely (*ad fam.* 9.262), Mark Antony travelled about Italy in the spring and summer of 49 BC, whilst Caesar’s *magister equitum*, shamelessly carrying her ‘around with him in an open litter, a second wife’ (*ad Att.* 10.10.3). In another place Cicero elaborates further, implying everyone from Italian dignitaries to common soldiers saw her: ‘You came into Brundisium, that is to say, into the lap and into the embraces of your dear mime... What soldier was there that did not see her at Brundisium?’ (*Phil.* 2.61). For Cicero, Mark Antony’s so-called administrative tour was no more than a Bacchic rout.

Only one of Cytheris’ regular clients from this period has a renowned name, Decimus Iunius Brutus Albinus, though some modern commentators favour the argument that the more famous member of the Iunii Bruti, namely Marcus Brutus (reported in the anonymous 4th-century AD source *De viris illustribus*), was the one to have shared with Mark Antony the seductive favours of Volumnia Cytheris (*ibid.* 82.2). Actually, Mark Antony may once have been close to Decimus Brutus, for the two men had been comrades of old.

Decimus Iunius Brutus Albinus (d. 43 BC)

Decimus Iunius Brutus Albinus was ‘one of Caesar’s most intimate associates’ (App. *B civ.* 2.111), and had been a highly esteemed and fully trusted adherent for a decade or so. He had served as a legate under Caesar during both the Gallic and Civil wars (there were ten senatorial Caesarian *legati* in number from 56 BC onwards), and in this capacity was widely employed.

In a tough campaign against the Veneti in 56 BC, Decimus Brutus commanded Caesar’s new fleet, which was designed for Mediterranean conditions and warfare and not those of the Atlantic. Nonetheless, in the

decisive sea battle that destroyed the Venetic fleet, his sailors had cut the enemy's rigging using sharpened hooks fixed into long poles, leaving their stoutly built sailing ships immobilized and easy prey to Roman boarding parties (Caes. *B Gall.* 3.11, 14-15). Four years later, Caesar makes mention of him again, this time during the campaign against Vercingetorix, a near-run thing that was to be decided at Alesia (ibid. 7.9, 87).

Decimus Brutus had participated in a protracted siege of the city of Massilia (Marseilles), which had opted for the Pompeian cause and held out against Caesar's forces for months in 49 BC (Caes. *B civ.* 1.36, 57-8, 2.22). Decimus Brutus had also commanded the Caesarian fleet that had taken on a combined fleet of Pompeian warships and warships from Massilia, and routed it (ibid. 2.5-7). Richly rewarded by Caesar, he went on to govern Gallia Transalpina in Caesar's name from 48 BC to 46 BC.

Plutarch judged (wrongly, perhaps) Decimus Brutus to be an individual who 'had no great reputation for enterprise or even physical courage', but he had always served Caesar loyally and without question, and was well known for the fact that he 'commanded Caesar's confidence' (*Brut.* 12.4). As a reward, Caesar had marked him for a consulship in 42 BC. In the meantime, Caesar had decreed that Decimus Brutus become *propraetor* of Gallia Cisalpina when that post became vacant early in April 44 BC.

Not only did Caesar rank Decimus Brutus among his most trusted associates, it also would be revealed once the contents of his last will and testament became public that he considered him like family, making him his heir in the second degree (Plut. *Caes.* 64.1) – Roman heirs in the second degree inherited when heirs of the first degree were unable or unwilling to accept a bequest. Under the terms of this will, Caesar even made provision to adopt Decimus Brutus as his son should he inherit his estate (Sue. *DI* 83.2). Small wonder, therefore, people 'thought it monstrous and sacrilegious', these were Appian's words, 'that Decimus Brutus should have plotted against Caesar when he had been named as a son' (*B civ.* 2.143). He was put to death by order of Mark Antony the following year.

Octavian (63 BC to AD 14)

If Mark Antony favoured the saltier, more pernicious arena of adulthood, his ultimate nemesis Octavian sought solace in philosophy, literature, art, composition – almost anything that would be of no virtue on a field of battle – intellectual pursuits his bull-like, hard-drinking rival would view as effeminate. As Suetonius reports of Octavian: 'During the siege of Mutina, according to Cornelius Nepos [a friend of Cicero], he never took more than three drinks of wine-and-water at dinner' (*DA* 77.1).

The abstemious Octavian, later known as Augustus, was born on 24 September 63 BC. On the paternal side, Octavian came from a respectable family that lacked nobility; his grandfather, a wealthy moneylender established at the small Latium town of Velitrae (Velletri), had shunned the cut and thrust of Roman politics. Ambition broke out in the son, seemingly a model of all the virtues (Vell. 2.59.2). He married Atia, the daughter of Iulia, Caesar's sister.

Caesar's will, which was drawn up on 13 September 45 BC, named Octavian as his son and heir to his name and fortune; Caius Octavius (his given name) as a result became legally known as Caius Iulius Caesar Octavianus (Sue. *DI* 83.1). Henceforth, the Roman world knew him as 'Caesar', though

subsequent generations (for clarity) have called him 'Octavian'.

As the political situation in Rome heated up in the wake of the Ides of March, the 18-year-old Octavian had to decide how to position himself as heir to his murdered adoptive father, how to negotiate an alliance with Caesar's long-time friend and colleague Mark Antony, and how to avenge Caesar's death. The problem was, or so it seemed at the time, Octavian was no soldier.

Octavian was made of different stuff. He was ruthless and tenacious in pursuit of his political aims, meriting the tag once applied to Pompey, *adulescentulus carnifex*, the 'teenage butcher'. Yet unlike Pompey he could not boast of genuine military victories. Then again, he was fortunate to live long enough to consolidate his power, to outlive the unsavoury image of his youth, and to pass away in his bed as *pater patriae*, Father of his Country. By the time he died, as Tacitus tartly says, 'Actium had been won before the younger men were born. Even most of the older generation had come into a world of civil wars. Practically no one had ever seen truly republican government' (*Ann.* 1.3).

In his brilliant analysis of Octavian's rise to power, Ronald Syme commented that it was '[n]ot for nothing that the ruler of Rome made use of a signet-ring with a sphinx engraved' (2002 [1939]: 113). A cold-blooded master of *realpolitik*, his grey genius was to create peace, prosperity and the system of imperial rule known as the Principate. But that was later.

Aulus Hirtius (d. 43 BC) and Caius Vibius Pansa (d. 43 BC)

The designated consuls, Aulus Hirtius and Caius Vibius Pansa Caetronianus (for the full name, *ILS* 8890), would take office on 1 January 43 BC. They had been friends of Caesar, who had nominated them consuls for that year, but wanting peace and order in an increasingly tumultuous state, they were so averse to an armed Mark Antony that they were willing to lead the senatorial forces against him. Clearly Hirtius and Pansa were both, by the standards of these troubled times, moderates. Yet, for all their importance to our story, we know very little about these two men. Hirtius was probably the son of a municipal magistrate from Ferentinum in Latium (*ILS* 5242), while Pansa hailed from Perusia and had been elected to the tribunate in 51 BC (*Cic. ad fam.* 8.8.6).



Marble bust (Toulouse, Musée Saint-Raymond, inv. 30007) of Octavian. Ambitious, calculating, politically brilliant and unwavering in his beliefs, on his return to Italy from Macedonia, the stripling Octavian would style himself Caius Iulius Caesar after his adoptive father. The name of Caesar would serve him well in the vicious struggles to come, and so there was certainly more than a little truth in Mark Antony's barrack: 'et te, o puer, qui omnia nomini debes'. However, with a sure sense of his own victorious destiny, he was a rule breaker, just like his adoptive father who helped him on the road to autocracy. (© Esther Carré)

Intriguingly, Hirtius is nowhere mentioned as a legate in the Gallic campaigns. Caesar is known to have made special use of *legati* by appointing one to assume executive responsibilities over each of his legions as a *legatus legionis* (Cae. *B Gall.* 1.52.1). Nevertheless, he was not overgenerous in naming and praising his subordinates in his *commentarii*.

Hirtius was a wealthy person of scholarly taste and a man of letters. To Caesar's own seven *commentarii* covering his campaigns in Gaul, Hirtius added an eighth book not long after the dictator's death, which brought the historical record up to 50 BC (Sue. *DI* 56.1). Hirtius was probably responsible for the *Bellum Alexandrinum*, too. He combined Caesar's unpublished notes with additional material, some of which he wrote himself. Earlier he had produced less unobtrusive works of propaganda for his friend and patron, attacking the memory of Cato. Nine or more collections of his correspondence with Cicero were extant in antiquity. Apparently he was also something of a gourmet, and Cicero reckons (*ad fam.* 9.20.2) it was a danger to ask him to dinner.

While Caesar was alive, Hirtius and Pansa allegedly advised the dictator to use the military to control the state (Vell. 2.57.1). If Hirtius is indeed the author of the *Bellum Alexandrinum*, then we are additionally confronted with an indirect chastising of Caesar's overly-abundant benevolence in Egypt ([Caes.] *B Alex.* 24.6). However, this did not stop his high estimation of the dictator, even after Caesar's death (Cic. *ad Att.* 14.22.1).

We have a tendency to view Roman commanders as bold by instinct and training – Mark Antony standing as a prime example – but it appears not to be the case with the two consuls of 43 BC. Though Hirtius is nowhere mentioned as a legate in the Gallic campaigns, Quintus, the younger brother of Cicero who had served Caesar in that capacity with heroic distinction, held a low opinion of Hirtius and of his colleague Pansa, too. Judging from their behaviour on campaign in Gaul, Quintus considered both of them pleasure-loving and effeminately feeble. It seems the consuls were, whatever their other qualities, easy prey for Mark Antony, who would have no difficulty in wooing 'them over by comradeship in vice' (Cic. *ad fam.* 16.27.1). As Cicero himself was to scoff in a letter to Atticus, '[t]hose fellows think of nothing but drinking and sleeping' (*ad Att.* 16.1.4). Clearly, the Tullii brothers derided the two consuls as torpid and bibulous.

OPPOSING FORCES

The organization and training of the late republican legion is too well known to require much comment, and besides I have dealt with this topic in depth in another place (Fields 2008B: 1–24). I shall therefore concentrate upon the make-up of the contending armies in the war of Mutina. We start, therefore, with Caesar's legions.

Most of Caesar's legions from Gaul were subsequently disbanded and their plunder-rich personnel settled in colonies in Italy, Gallia Cisalpina and Gallia Transalpina. For instance, veterans of *legiones* VII and VIII were given land at Calatia and Casilinum in Campania, of *legio* VIII in Picenum (Marche), of *legio* XI at Bovianum (Boiano) in Samnium, of *legio* XII at Parma and of *legio* XIII at Hispellum (Spello) in Umbria; meanwhile, those of *legio* VI were settled at Arelate (Arles) and those of *legio* X *Equestris* ('Mounted', see Caes. *B Gall.* 1.42.5–6) at Narbo (Narbonne). New legions had been recruited by Caesar as consul of 48 BC in Italy (these consular legions being numbered I to IIII as per tradition), and having gained experience in the early battles of the civil war, they now brought it to a successful conclusion for Caesar in Asia Minor, Africa and Hispania.

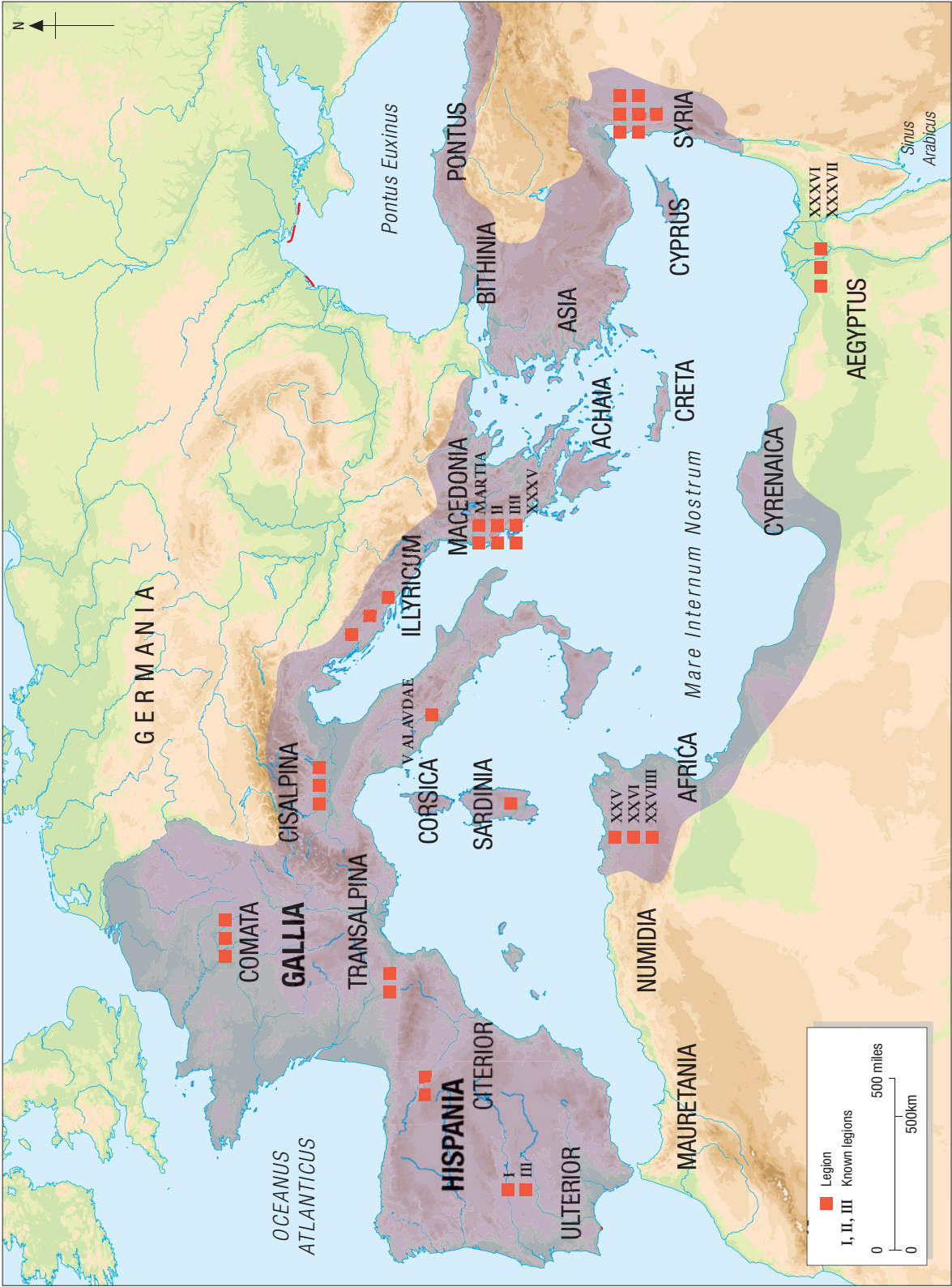
At a first glance it would appear that the Caesarian legions consisted of a veteran soldiery that was accustomed to victory, endurance of toil, unity, order, discipline, frugality and watchfulness. Yet it is clear that all these units were not of the same professional calibre. We may note the statement of Aulus Hirtius that in 51 BC *legio* XI was serving in its eighth campaign, but had still not yet equalled the quality of the veteran legions in the army (Caes. *B Gall.* 8.8). Strange as it may seem, this is despite the fact that the unit had fought for most of Caesar's campaigns in Gaul. It is important to understand that Caesar, who according to the elder Pliny (*NH* 7.92) had notched up 51 pitched battles to his credit, fought considerably more battles than any other Roman commander. Legionary soldiers fighting in campaigns under other commanders, including Marius, Sulla, and Pompey, spent even less time in pitched battles. Most of the fighting a soldier saw during his career consisted of skirmishing, raids, detachments, garrison duty, and sieges, rather than the initiation of full-scale war. Caesar's legions were obviously in a league of their own.

Thirty-six legions were still under arms when Caesar was murdered (see map opposite). A number of Caesar's surviving legions were in Italy and the western provinces, while others

Buggenum-type helmet (Trieste, Museo Civico di Storia ed Arte, inv. 3648), dated to the time of the triumvirate wars. With its larger, flatter neck guard and the addition of a brow-ridge to deflect downward blows, the Buggenum helmet started to replace the Montefortino pattern commonly worn by legionaries of Caesar's legions. An interesting detail here. On the neck guard of this bronze helmet are scratched two inscriptions, one above the other: the external (older) one reads | • POSTVMI • M • VALERI • BACINI (Marcus Valerius Bacinus (or Bacenus) century of Postumus); the internal (newer) one reads | • CAESIDIENI • C • TOMIVS (Caius Tomius century of Caesidienus). The helmet plainly served two triumphal legionaries (with Celtic *cognomina*), one after the other. (© Esther Carré)



Distribution of legions, 44 BC



had been left behind as part of the garrison of Macedonia and Syria. These had been supplemented by legions made up of former Pompeian soldiers. In the meantime, Mark Antony reconstituted *legio V Alaudae* from its veterans in Italy, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus *legio VI* and Lucius Munatius Plancus *legio X Equestris* in Gaul (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.11.2), Octavian *legiones VII* and *VIII* in Campania (Cic. *Phil.* 11.37, App. *B civ.* 3.47), and Publius Ventidius *legio VIII* in Picenum along with two others, which he seems to have numbered VII and VIII (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.33.4).

Legionaries, from personal loyalty, might follow great leaders like Caesar or Mark Antony: they had no mind for intriguers such as Plancus or Lepidus, still less for political catchwords such as liberty, the laws and the constitution. The soldiers, therefore, whether they were pressed into service or volunteers from poverty and the prospect of pay and loot, regarded loyalty to their leaders as a matter of their own choice and favour. The legions therefore turned out to be an unwieldy instrument, the more so when the soldiers came to realize their value during the civil wars that followed after the murder of Caesar. Appian characterizes the armies of the failing Republic as little more than mercenaries:

Instead of serving the common interest they served only the men who had enlisted them, and even so not under compulsion of the law, but by private inducements. Nor did they fight against enemies of the state but against private enemies, nor against foreigners, but against Romans who were their equals in status... Desertion, formerly an unpardonable offence for a Roman, was at that time actually rewarded by gifts, and it was practised by both armies *en masse* and by some prominent men, because they considered that changing the like for like was not desertion (App. *B civ.* 5.17).



Caesarian *lorica hamata* (Alise-Sainte-Reine, MuséoParc Alésia). Combining strength with flexibility, mail consisted of a matrix of alternatively riveted and solid iron rings, each being linked through its four neighbours. It was very laborious to make, but made easier by the introduction of alternate rows of solid rings, which did not require being riveted. The 'rivet' to secure the flattened ends of riveted rings was a small triangular chip of metal, closed with a pair of tongs with recessed jaws. (© Esther Carré)



Modern mail made of alternating rows of riveted and solid rings. Several patterns of linking the wrought rings together have been attested, but the most common was the 4-to-1 pattern, where each ring was linked to four others, two in the row above and two in that below. With this complicated construction, the force of a sword blow was spread over a wide enough area for the wearer to be no more than bruised. (Roland ZH/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

Noticeably in these wars between Roman citizens, commitment by the soldiery to any political cause was conspicuously absent. Although the soldiers swore a personal oath of loyalty to their commander, it was only Caesar, and to a certain extent Marcus Brutus, who inspired much personal devotion amongst their men. Thus, the story of the civil wars after the death of Caesar often involves desertion, selling of services or mutinous demands for improved conditions of service.

It is important to note that desertions of commanders by soldiers were not exactly uncommon in civil wars, where the lure of bonuses and the desire to be on the winning side when the spoils were divided proved to be powerful motivating factors to switching sides, especially when both spoke the same language and shared the same traditions. Roman soldiers were a volatile lot, especially in the uncertainty of civil wars. Even Caesar had difficulty with them at times and, even after Actium, Octavian would face mutiny among his victorious legions (Dio 51.4.3–4).

Full-scale reconstructions of Caesarian *scuta* (Alise-Sainte-Reine, MuséoParc Alésia). Further body protection for a legionary was afforded by the convex, oblong shield known as the *scutum*. This was made of three, alternating layers of birch plywood, covered in leather and finished with a central iron boss and an edging of iron. By Caesar's day, as attested by sculptural evidence, the unadorned leather outer face was clearly decorated with designs and perhaps colours, which may possibly have indicated the bearer's unit. The necessity of unit identification by shield motif seems a logical development during the recurrent civil wars of the late Republic. (© Esther Carré)



MARK ANTONY'S ARMY

In the late summer of 44 BC, Mark Antony, as sole consul, had the four legions stationed in Macedonia transported across the Adriatic – *legiones* II, III (from Caesar's consular series in 48 BC), *Martia* (its numeral is unknown and its lifespan was short) and XXXV (formed in the aftermath of Pharsalus from former Pompeians). Two of these, *legio* III under Mark Antony's quaestor Lucius Egnatuleius and *legio Martia*, went over to Octavian (Cic. *Phil.* 3.6–8, 4.2, 14.27, *ad fam.* 11.7.2), who had already reconstituted Caesar's old *legiones* VII and VIII and their numbers made up by recruits (Cic. *Phil.* 11.37, App. *B civ.* 3.47). The veterans of *legio* VII had been settled at Calatia (*ILS* 2225) and those of *legio* VIII at Casilinum, veteran colonies in Campania.

As proconsul Mark Antony, after trying without success to persuade the defectors to reverse their decision, hurried north to Gallia Cisalpina with his two remaining formations, *legiones* II and XXXV, and with the regrouped *legio* V *Alaudae*. This Caesarian unit had originally been raised in the winter of 53/52 BC by enrolling non-citizen recruits from Gallia Transalpina, who were subsequently awarded their citizenship by Caesar.

Mark Antony also had a substantial force of auxiliaries, including Moorish horse. The Moors had perhaps been recruited by Caesar for his Parthian campaign. Their main arm was the javelin; but their small, fast and hardy horses were almost as important a feature of their military value. At Mutina Mark Antony was also to be joined by a body of Gaulish horse deserting Octavian (Dio 46.37.2). According to Lepidus, even after his retreat from Mutina, Mark Antony had no less than 'five thousand [*milia quinque*] troopers' (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.34.1).

SENATORIAL ARMY

With a state of emergency, *tumultus*, having been declared by the Senate, it was now possible for a force to be turned against Mark Antony in Gallia Cisalpina. The consul Aulus Hirtius hastened

north with the *propraetor* Octavian and *his* four Caesarian legions nominally under his control, namely *legiones Martia*, III, VII and VIII – the cognomen *Mutinensis* on an inscription (ILS 2239) implies that the last of these was to distinguish itself at Mutina. These four veteran legions could not be ignored and, though they may not have been up to full strength, they had a fighting power far greater than their numbers. Take, for instance, the following observation of Lucius Munatius Plancus. When he comes to count up the tally of Decimus Brutus' army pursuing Mark Antony, we find only one veteran legion, one of two years' standing, and eight legions of recruits, which presumably included three of the five initially recruited by Pansa. 'The combined army is therefore very strong numerically, but meagre from the standpoint of reliability. We have seen only too often how much reliance can be placed on raw troops [*tironi*] in battle' (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.24.3, cf. 11.20.4, App. *B civ.* 3.97).

The *tumultus* meant that the state could summon anybody to be conscripted into the army (Cic. *Phil.* 8.3, cf. 6, *ad Att.* 1.19.2, App. *B civ.* 4.137). Despite the Marian reforms, therefore, the *dilectus* and the attendant conscription continued to be a constitutional instrument whereby the state could raise an emergency army in a time of crisis (Smith 1958: 44–5). This was obviously the case at the beginning of 43 BC. As Cicero explained, writing from the comfort of Rome, to Decimus Brutus in a rather optimistic missive dated to late January of that year – the recipient was currently bottled up in Mutina, of course: 'The levy [*dilectus*] is proceeding in Rome and all over Italy, if 'levy' is the right word to use when the whole population is freely volunteering in a flush of enthusiasm inspired by craving for liberty [*desiderio libertatis*] and disgust of their long servitude' (*ad fam.* 11.8.2).

Caius Vibius Pansa, Hirtius' colleague, therefore levied additional troops in central Italy. According to Keppie (1998: 199) Pansa's consular series, which had been raised for the occasion and yet to see combat, consisted of *legiones* I (later I *Germanica*), II *Sabina* (later II *Augusta*), III (later III *Augusta*) and IIII *Sorana* (its subsequent history unknown), and *legio V urbana* (later V *Macedonica*), which was left to defend Rome when the consul departed for Gallia Cisalpina.

Within the said province, behind the walls of Mutina, Decimus Brutus commanded 'a quantity of gladiators and three regular legions, of which one was composed of recent and untried recruits, while the other two, which had previously served under his command, were completely loyal' (App. *B civ.* 3.49). It may be of some significance that at the time of Caesar's murder Decimus Brutus had been training a 'number of gladiators' (Plut. *Brut.* 12.4).

Elsewhere, and nominally under the command of the Senate, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus (*cos.* 46 BC), proconsul of Gallia Transalpina and Hispania Citerior, and Lucius Munatius Plancus, proconsul of Gallia Comata (Gaul from Lugdunum northwards), along with Caius Asinius Pollio in Hispania Ulterior, raised fresh troops and recalled veterans to their old legionary standards. In particular, Lepidus was able to re-form Caesar's old *legio* VI from its colony at Arelate (Arles), and likewise Plancus *legio* X *Equestris* from Narbo (Narbonne).

The praetorians

The praetorian cohorts are often thought of as the innovation of Rome's first emperor, Augustus. This is not the case, for such cohorts served consular or



Caesarian *gladius* and *pugio* (Alise-Sainte-Reine, MuséoParc Alésia). A sword whose design (though not its use) was of the utmost simplicity, the *gladius* was essentially a Roman weapon, though it was doubtless Iberian in its origins. As Livy once wrote, 'the *gladius* is the weapon employed in close fighting, in a confused *mêlée*, and it is with that weapon that the Roman *miles* wins his battles' (44.35). The Roman emphasis on training for sword combat suggests that military training sought to overcome the natural fear of cold steel and inhibition towards killing at close range. Indeed, legionaries had to be taught to thrust with the point of their *gladius*, inflicting a killing blow. (© Esther Carré)

Full-scale reconstructions of *pila*. The *pila* was employed by legionaries as a short-range shock weapon; it had a maximum range of 30m or thereabouts, though in all likelihood it was discharged within 15m of the enemy for maximum effect. The armour-piercing capability of the *pila* made it an effective missile weapon, deadly to both armoured and unarmoured opponents alike. A *pila* volley delivered at less than 20m distance could be devastating both physically and morally. (Álvaro Pérez Vilariño/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-2.0)



The war gear of a Roman legionary (London, British Museum). The *gladius* and *pugio* were suspended from two individual belts that crossed over back and front in 'cowboy' fashion. These belts were covered with rectangular plates usually of tinned bronze: the *cingulum militare* became the unmistakable hallmark of a professional soldier, who often paid for striking plate decoration. The ring suspension arrangement, was essentially Iberian in origin. This smart system allowed a legionary to draw his weapon in combat without exposing the sword arm. (Davidangelleoacedo/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)



proconsular commanders in the late Republic, each *cohors praetoria* being composed of select soldiers serving as a guard for the commander's headquarters or *praetorium*, especially in the context of the civil wars.

The units used as *cohortes praetoriae* were usually raised at the start of each campaign. The Roman commander would select the most experienced soldiers from his legions. They would be volunteers who were of good health and usually veterans recalled to the standards, *evocati*. We know that Mark Antony, ignoring the simmering discontent in some of his Macedonian units, selected 1,000 soldiers from all four legions, men 'who had the best physique and character', and formed them into a single praetorian cohort (App. *B civ.* 3.45). This elite unit is probably the 'royal cohort' and 'private guard' mentioned in Appian's reconstruction of Cicero's speech against Mark Antony (ibid. 3.52). These praetorians acted as his personal guard when he was staying in Rome on his way to Ariminum and are referred to as 'his own bodyguard' by Appian (ibid. 3.46). Their unit would loyally serve as Mark Antony's bodyguard for the rest of his career.

Armed with the same war gear as their legionary brethren – *pila*, *gladius*, *pugio*, *scutum*, *lorica hamata*, and helmet (Montefortino or Buggenum) – the praetorians were expected to function as shock troops when called upon to do so. At Mutina there were four of these elite fighting *cohortes*; as well as the one fielded by Mark Antony, there was another commanded by a former legate of Caesar (Cae. *B Gall.* 6.1.1), Marcus Iunius Silanus (in fact, on loan from the proconsul Marcus Aemilius Lepidus),² one serving the consul Aulus Hirtius, and the one Octavian had mustered privately. Whether or not the last three were *cohortes milliaria* comparable to that protecting Mark Antony, we do not know.

² Lepidus had apparently sent this force to Mutina without explicit orders concerning which side Silanus was to assist, or at least under instructions to pretend that was the case (Dio 46.38.6). This arrangement allowed Lepidus to reserve the fiction that he had sent troops to aid Decimus Brutus, when he was actually helping the public enemy Mark Antony. After Mutina, Lepidus was quick to claim that Silanus had joined Mark Antony in complete disregard of orders (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.34.2, Dio 46.51.1).

OPPOSING PLANS

MARK ANTONY'S PLAN

The driving motivation of most rulers is not ideology or to do worthy things, but to maintain and strengthen their grip on power: to propagate their rule. This requires coercion – the ability to enforce power – and crucially, some form of legitimacy.

In 88 BC Sulla had turned his legions on Rome itself, seizing power and liquidating his political opponents, the Marians. The soldiers, who had possibly already served with Sulla during the Social War (91–89 BC), were prepared to follow him. Their officers, bar one, deserted (App. *B civ.* 1.57). Mark Antony was born while the civil war that followed this act still raged. In fact, four or five years before his birth his paternal grandfather, the illustrious orator and consular of the same name, was brutally killed and decapitated, a victim of Marius' purge. This was the era when the Romans learned to fight against each other, and Sulla, Marius, and their followers and imitators fought Rome's first civil wars, so Mark Antony's formative years had been at a time that witnessed the shifting of the locus of power from the Senate and Roman aristocracy to a single dynast. Growing up in a republic already fractured by street violence, discord and civil wars, it would have been difficult for anyone of his generation to mature with much



Reconstructed *caligae* (Alise-Sainte-Reine, MuséoParc Alésia). The standard form of military footwear for Caesar's legionaries, *caligae* were heavy-soled hobnailed footgear worn by all ranks up to and including centurions. Though they look to us like stout sandals, they were in fact marching boots. The open design allowed for the free passage of air (and water) and, unlike modern military boots, was specifically intended to reduce the likelihood of blisters during 'yomping', the bane of all fighting soldiers, as well as other incapacitating foot conditions such as trench foot, a severe fungal infection caused by wearing wet boots over a long period. (© Esther Carré)

respect for the traditional constitution of the Republic. That is if, of course, they survived the hazards of war and revolution. Of a dozen or so sons of consular families born between 90 BC and 80 BC, only the future triumvirs Mark Antony and Lepidus were left.

With the death of his chief, Mark Antony's ambition was to secure enough power so that he could protect himself, ensure his control of the state, and run the empire effectively. He had learned much from Caesar about means as well as ends. Like Caesar, he saw autocracy as the inevitable new form of Rome's government, but, more than Caesar, he acknowledged the need for a republican façade for one-man rule. Four days after the assassination of Caesar he won warm plaudits from the senators, though not from the people, by proposing the formal abolition for all time of the dictatorship (Cic. *Phil.* 1.3, 2.91, App. *B civ.* 3.25), surely a sharp comment on why Caesar had been murdered. Constitutionally, the dictatorship had been an ancient emergency measure that gave one man supreme executive power. The office lasted six months and could not be renewed, so in this way the principle of preventing any individual from gaining permanent power was preserved. Sulla had set no time limit to his dictatorship, but even he, once his enemies had been removed and the Senate packed with his own sympathizers (Mark Antony's father among them), had given up the position and retired to private life. Not so Caesar, for he had been appointed *dictator perpetuus* – in fact, he had openly called Sulla 'a dunce' for retiring from the dictatorship (Sue. *DI* 77.1).

In the event, Mark Antony found himself on untenable middle ground between Octavian's Caesarianism on one hand and Cicero's anti-Caesarianism on the other. As we discussed earlier, he had in June 44 BC prepared his position by transferring the province of Gallia Cisalpina from Decimus Brutus to himself for a term of five years. By early October he and Octavian were open enemies and it is to this stage that Octavian's alleged attempt to assassinate Mark Antony belongs (Plut. *Ant.* 16.4, Sue. *DA* 10.3). Finding himself worsted in the political field, Mark Antony went to Brundisium to

Bronze *patera* (Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, inv. ROM 1334), dated to 1st century AD. The Roman soldier may have been adorned with various pieces of killing hardware, but each also carried one of these, a humble mess tin, *patera*. A *patera* consists of a ladle-shaped dish with a flat bottom, sloping sides, and a long, flat handle with a hole punched in the end. A *patera*, including the handle, was spun and formed from a single sheet of bronze. Much like a modern mess tin, the Roman version not only gave the soldier something that served both as a cooking pot and eating/drinking container, but like its modern counterpart it had many other practical uses, too. (© Esther Carré)



collect the legions recalled from Macedonia. He would thus be equipped to deal forcibly with any opposition before marching north to take over his province, and another army, from Decimus Brutus. However, Octavian induced two of the legions to desert to him, thereby forcing Mark Antony to retire to Gallia Cisalpina sooner than he had intended. Now he had to fight for his political survival.

THE SENATE'S PLAN

As for Decimus Brutus, within days of the assassination, he had expressed fear that he would soon be outlawed for his part in the crime (Cic. *ad fam.* 11.1.2). If he now allowed Mark Antony to take over his province, he would not only lose the protection of an army whose loyalty he had assiduously cultivated, but he would also have to resume life in Rome as a civilian until he entered office again as consul in January 42 BC. If that prospect made him uneasy, preventing Mark Antony from ousting him was the pragmatic course to follow. But for this plan to succeed he needed the support of the leading statesman in Rome, Cicero.

The lever available to Cicero was not money or an army or a clientele, but the Senate. As he himself observed, 'the Senate was my right arm' (*ad fam.* 11.14.1), and in the early stages of the contest he probably had a firmer grasp of the Senate than others did of money or armies. The Senate had come into play again at Caesar's death because no single individual was then in a position to appropriate the overwhelming power that Caesar had been able to amass. Even Mark Antony's most high-handed actions in the months after the assassination rested on his use of conventional consular authority, and that was set to expire at the end of the year. Other pretenders to power had weaker credentials than Mark Antony. And so it was at least conceivable that, with Caesar gone, government might revert again to the Senate, as had happened after the Sullan regime. In the absence of an unquestioned strongman, all members of the political class needed the authority of the Senate to underwrite the arrangements, opportunities, and honours on which their careers depended. As long as it appeared that the Senate had the capacity to make good on its guarantees, it would have a political role.



Artwork by Graham Sumner based upon the well-known funerary stele (Padova, Museo Archeologico) of Minucius Lorarius, centurion *legio Martia*. Though depicted unarmoured, the fact that Lorarius is holding a *vitis* tells us that he was a centurion. Other than his antiquated greaves, and perhaps a helmet adorned with a transverse crest, *crista traversa*, a centurion of this period was equipped pretty much like the rankers he commanded. He did, however, carry his *gladius* on his left rather than his right hip, perhaps to keep it clear of the *vitis*. He also appears to be wearing an enclosed soft leather boot probably of the type known in the Principate as a *calceus*. The funerary stele possibly dates to 43/42 BC and its mutilated inscription gives Lorarius' unit as *legio Martia* (its exact numeral is unknown – III, XIII or XXIII?). Lorarius may have been killed at Forum Gallorum, or drowned in the Adriatic the following summer when his battle-hardened legion, en route to Philippi to fight the Liberators, was tragically lost at sea. (© Graham Sumner)







ROME, 2 SEPTEMBER 44 BC: CICERO ATTACKS MARK ANTONY IN THE SENATE (PP. 36–37)

Dedicating himself to speaking about the horrors of Mark Antony, throughout the latter part of 44 BC Cicero (1) thundered out his series of *Philippic* orations against him, leaving no part of the consul's public or private life untouched. These speeches (particularly the second) offer a vituperative review of the early years and rise to power of Caesar's chief lieutenant. In a hailstorm of Cicero's most hurtful invective (he was fond of extravagant language), Mark Antony was not only labelled a drunkard, a gambler, a gladiator, a thug, and a debauchee, he was a passive homosexual (the antithesis of everything a Roman citizen ought to be) and a flagrant coward. His wives were pilloried – to date, he had been officially married thrice – particularly his current wife Fulvia, who 'sold off' public property in her private rooms. Politically, he was termed a tyrant, with all the implications of illegality, corruption, brutality, and pride; and Cicero urged the republicans to do their duty and send him to join his fellow tyrant Caesar.

By 2 September Mark Antony had already left Rome. The Senate meeting on that day was conducted by the *consul suffectus* Publius Cornelius Dolabella (2). It was probably held in the Curia Pompeia (3), which was part of the Theatre of Pompey complex.

Cicero rose to deliver the first of the 14 diatribes against Mark Antony. He claimed to be fighting for the traditional Roman *mos maiorum* (customs), *libertas* (liberty), *auctoritas* (authority) of the Senate, though others also saw Cicero's abhorrence of Mark Antony in the admonitions. This first attack, though firm, was still moderate and restrained, for the *consularis* Cicero was

not eager for a total rupture in relations with the consul Mark Antony. He spoke of Mark Antony's good deeds, like the popular elimination of the dictatorship. But far more, he emphasized the bad deeds. Mark Antony had plundered the treasury and sold state privileges; he had seized Caesar's papers, and then had manipulated decisions of Caesar which he had sworn to uphold; he had tampered with the judicial system to weight it in his favour; and he had used armed force at will. Before long Cicero would be arguing for war to the death against the enemies of the Republic.

Finally, an important reminder concerning the senatorial toga, a single large piece of un-dyed woollen cloth, one end of which was draped over the left shoulder and arm, and the other passed under the right arm and then over the left shoulder (4). It was supposed to be held in place not by pins or brooches but by the clinging nature of the woollen cloth, and by the holding up of the left forearm to provide support. There were two versions worn by senators, the *toga praetexta* and the *toga pura*. The first was off-white in colour with a 'purple' (more like a deep crimson) border, thus denoting the wearer as a curule magistrate (curule aedile and above) in office (5). The second was again, off-white in colour, of undyed wool but minus the purple border (6). It was worn by senators *not* holding a curule magistracy. All senators, however, were entitled to wear a broad purple stripe (*latus clavus*) over each shoulder of their tunics and red senatorial boots made of soft leather.



FAR LEFT

Reconstructed *aquila* and *signum* (Alise-Sainte-Reine, MuséoParc Alésia). The most important standard of the legion was the *aquila*, a silver, later gilded, statuette of an eagle. In addition to the *aquila*, legions carried secondary standards, whereby each individual century was identified by its own *signum*. While there are seemingly endless small variations to these depicted in the sculptural and numismatic evidence, *signa* were basically an assemblage of *phalerae*, discs, mounted on a pole surmounted by a spearhead, as shown here, or *manus*, effigy hand. The latter was probably originally associated with the maniple, viz. *manipulus* or 'handful'. (© Esther Carré)

LEFT

Modern re-enactor posing as the *aquilifer* of Caesar's *legio* VII, which was formed in 59 BC and re-formed by Octavian in 44 BC. Like his opposite number in the Antonian forces, he wears *lorica hamata*. This type of body armour, which was ultimately of Celtic origin, had doubled shoulder-pieces, which betrays a concern with protecting the wearer from slashing blows from above. It was worn with the belt over it to transfer some of the weight from the shoulders to the hips. The Romans replaced the butted rings common to Celtic mail with much stronger riveted rings, one riveted ring linking four punched rings. Such shirts weighed around nine to fifteen kilograms, depending on the length and number of rings – 30,000 minimum. However, a word of caution: this re-enactor looks more like a centurion (*gladius* at left hip, greaves, *phalerae*) than an *aquilifer*. (Elliott Sadourny/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

But the post-Caesarian Senate was fractious, and Cicero's command of it was tenuous. At the time, the Senate comprised – and these were not mutually exclusive blocs – survivors of the Pompeian coalition during the last civil war; former partisans and allies of Caesar now jostling one another; and those participants in the assassination who had not yet left Rome, together with their sympathizers. Consensus among them did not form easily, so that Mark Antony was able to represent decisions taken against him as mere manifestations of factional wrangling.

On 1 January 43 BC, Cicero urged his fellow senators to declare Mark Antony a *hostis publicus*, enemy of the state, and send a force to raise the siege of Mutina. The Senate as a whole was more cautious, however, and it resolved first to send envoys, summoning Mark Antony to desist in his blockade of Mutina and to yield Gallia Cisalpina. Cicero had protested in vain, and naturally Mark Antony refused the summons. However, Mark Antony did tell the envoys that he was willing to surrender Gallia Cisalpina on condition that he could govern Gallia Comata for five years with the three legions currently under his command along with the three Publius Ventidius was currently recruiting. The Senate soon afterwards declared him a *hostis publicus* and in addition decreed that those soldiers under his command who did not desert him would also be branded as enemies of the state.

Defensive strategies did not work well in Rome's civil wars, for they immediately handed the initiative over to the opposition. It created an impression of passivity and weakness, which made it unlikely to convince those who were wishy-washy to join. For that reason, the political battle had to be fought (and won), too. It comes as no surprise, therefore, to find the Senate opting to take the offensive against Mark Antony, once they regarded him as a rebellious nuisance. Very soon Mark Antony would find himself at war, sandwiched between the three legions of Decimus Brutus behind the walls of Mutina, and the relieving armies of the consuls Hirtius and Pansa and the *propraetor* Octavian.

THE CAMPAIGN

Limestone stele (Lyon, Musée gallo-romain de Fourvière) from Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, ancient Glanum, depicting eight legionaries (a *contubernium*?) in formation. Even for an ordinary legionary, it was no matter of indifference to have been among those led by Caesar to the farthest corners of the known world. Thus, the memory of their legionary solidarity united veterans, like the old soldiers of *legio* XI who at Bovianum (Boiano) continued to call themselves the *Undecumani*, 'Of the Eleventh'. (Ursus/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)



Mark Antony figured that as his enemies' supplies of food and water dwindled, so would their will to fight, and he reckoned that it was only a matter of time before Decimus Brutus would realize that his cause was lost, and surrender. But Mark Antony had underestimated the current consuls of Rome.

In February 43 BC, rising weak and emaciated from his sickbed, the consul Hirtius set out for the seat of war and hastened north up the Via Flaminia (today's Strada Statale 3 Via Flaminia) to Ariminum (Rimini). His army consisted of those Caesarian old hands, *legiones Martia*, III, VII and VIII. Accompanying him was the *propraetor* Octavian. From Ariminum the consul and *propraetor* pushed north-westward up the Via Aemilia (Via Emilia) and came to Forum Cornelii (Imola), where they settled into their winter quarters (Dio 46.35.7, cf. App. *B civ.* 3.65). During a period of skirmishing between the opposing forces, Hirtius easily dislodged an Antonian outpost at Claterna (Ozzano dell'Emilia), the next station along the Via Aemilia and a little south-east of Bononia (Bologna). After taking possession of the town, Hirtius

then had to defend it against a counterattack. 'I drove out the garrison', he hastily wrote to his colleague Pansa, 'I got possession of Claterna. The cavalry were routed. A battle was fought. A good many men were slain' (Hirtius *epistulae* 11.1 apud Cic. *Phil.* 8.6). They were the first deaths of the war of Mutina. It was late February.

OPENING MOVES

In early March Hirtius and Octavian moved forward in the direction of Mutina, passing Bononia, which Mark Antony was forced to abandon. Mark Antony allegedly controlled Regium Lepidi and Parma on the Via Aemilia north-west of Mutina, but nothing else (Cic. *Phil.* 8.6, cf. *ad fam.* 12.5.2). According to Appian, however, 'Antonius was keeping a tight guard on Mutina'. He continues: 'There were frequent cavalry skirmishes but although

Antony possessed far more cavalry, the difficulty of the terrain, which was cut up by winter streams, deprived him of the advantage of numbers' (App. *B civ.* 3.65).

Cavalry skirmishing aside, for the moment Hirtius and Octavian were waiting for the other consul Vibius Pansa. He had quit Rome on 19 March with four of the five consular legions of recruits that had been rapidly mobilized in January, marching north along the Via Cassia to Arretium (Arezzo). From Arretium he had the choice of crossing the Apennines either from Florentia (Florence) to reach Bononia directly or from Arretium itself along the Via Flaminia Minor to Claterna, which sat astride the Via Aemilia between Forum Cornelii and Bononia. Whichever route he took, events were now to move on apace.

When Mark Antony became aware of the approach and imminent concentration of his enemies, he set out to take the initiative and launch an attack on Hirtius' army before the two consuls could join forces. It nearly paid off. After leaving a small part of his army behind to detain Decimus Brutus inside Mutina, he brought up the bulk of his forces, supported by a sizeable contingent of cavalry, and started to harass with continuous skirmishes the camp of his opponents. Hirtius and Octavian, however, did not take the bait but continued to sit tight and await Pansa's arrival.

According to Frontinus (*Strat.* 3.13.7, 8), Hirtius kept Decimus Brutus abreast of his plans through various clever ruses. The author, who was one of Rome's leading commanders in the late 1st century AD, also imparts that the beleaguered inhabitants of Mutina were 'furnished the necessities of life', such as fresh meat in the form of mutton and the salt to preserve it, 'by way of the Scultenna river' (*Strat.* 3.14.3, 4, cf. Pl. *NH* 3.16), today's Fiume Panaro, which passes a little to the east of Modena. It thus seems Mark Antony's blockade of the town was not completely airtight, which gives a patina of credibility to the report of Dio Cassius that two foraging parties came to blows outside Mutina and each side sent reinforcements. A sharp engagement ensued, in which the Antonians were victorious (Dio 46.37.3, cf. Diod. 37.24). Prior to Mark Antony's arrival outside Mutina, Decimus Brutus had taken the practical measure of laying in all the provisions that he could find, including arranging for the slaughter and salting of all available cattle, 'for fear of a long siege' (App. *B civ.* 3.49). This must have resulted in the land around Mutina having been stripped of everything edible.

Next, Mark Antony decided on a new approach. Having learned of the arrival of scouts from Pansa's legions moving along the Via Aemilia from Bononia, Mark Antony thought he could easily attack and destroy them with his veterans. Obviously he was in a confident frame of mind, for he was counting on the arrival of three legions from the south-east, recruited by his capable lieutenant Publius Ventidius (*cos. suff.* 43 BC) from among



Larger-than-life manikin (Alise-Sainte-Reine, MuséoParc Alésia) of a Caesarian centurion (note his Montefortino helmet adorned with a *crista traversa*). In the late Republic centurions, who furnished a legion with a broad leavening of experience and discipline, were normally promoted on the basis of merit from the ranks to the lowest grade of centurion. From here they worked their way up, the most senior grade being that of *primus pilus* (first spear), the chief centurion of the legion who nominally commanded the first century of the first cohort. Caesarian centurions were a tough, hand-picked body of men of great dependability and courage. It was these men more than any others that welded Caesar's legions into a fighting force. (© Esther Carré)



Members of the Praetorian Guard, bas-relief (Paris, Musée du Louvre-Lens, inv. LL 398) from the Arch of Claudius erected in AD 51 in honour of the successful invasion of Britannia eight years earlier. The heads of all three figures in the foreground are restored. Above is a large *aquila*. The praetorians are depicted in richly decorated equipment, perhaps on guard or on parade, though the Attic-style helmets with thick crests housed in long crest-boxes are almost certainly an artistic convention. The praetorian cohorts are often thought of as an innovation of Augustus. This is not the case; four such cohorts were unquestionably present at Forum Gallorum. (Historien spécialiste du bassin minier du Nord-Pas-de-Calais JÄNNICK Jérémy/Wikimedia Commons & Louvre-Lens/GFDL-1.2)

Caesar's veterans settled in Picenum (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.33.4, 34.1, App. *B civ.* 3.66, 72). Leaving his brother Lucius Antonius to maintain the blockade of Mutina, with two legions, *legio* II and *legio* XXXV, and two praetorian cohorts, Mark Antony launched a feigned attack on Hirtius' camp. Then, under the cover of darkness, he slipped past Hirtius in order to catch Pansa coming up the Via Aemilia from the south-east with his four consular legions, which were composed mostly of inexperienced recruits.

When it comes to his style of war making, Mark Antony is not generally viewed as the equal of his late chief, Caesar. As a cunning, tactical, stratagem-minded commander, Caesar fought in the tradition of Scipio Africanus, who was the masterful exponent of subtle and careful manoeuvre, patient and calculating. In contrast, Mark Antony's style consisted of audacity, a headstrong rush, and aggressive assault full of panache. However, the execution of the manoeuvre that led to the engagement in the wooded wetlands outside Forum Gallorum was masterly.

THE FIRST BATTLE

On 14 April,³ with his back to Forum Gallorum (Castelfranco Emilia), a village some 11km along the Mutina–Bononia leg of the Via Aemilia, Mark Antony fell upon Pansa. According to Ovid it was 'a day of hail' (*Fasti* 4.627), while in the more informative words of Frontinus, 'Antonius near Forum Gallorum, having heard that the consul Pansa was approaching, met his army by means of ambushes, set here and there in the woodland stretches along the Via Aemilia, thus routing his troops and inflicting on Pansa himself a wound from which he died in a few days' (Front. *Strat.* 2.5.39).

The battle plan Mark Antony had drawn up was as ingenious as it was uncomplicated, but, like most battle plans, enacting it successfully would prove much more difficult than drafting it on paper. Besides, according to Appian (*B civ.* 3.67), the Antonian concealment was betrayed to Pansa's scouts by the swaying of long reeds and the gleam of equipment.

Because of the uneven and marshy terrain near Forum Gallorum, through which the antagonists would have to pass, Mark Antony could not easily deploy his cavalry forces, but decided to attack by sending *legiones*

³ The date is confirmed by the Augustan calendar from Cumae, the *Feriale Cumanum*, which says: 'On this day Caesar (Octavianus) was victorious for the first time. Thanksgiving for the Victory of Augustus [*victoria Augusta*]' (*Inscr. Ital.* 13.1.279). Note well also, Ovid *Fasti* 4.628, where the Augustan poet makes the bold claim that 'Caesar in battle array smote hip and thigh his foes at Mutina'. By his own account, the playful love poet was born 'in the very year / when both consuls fell in battle' (*Tristia* 4.10.5–6), viz. 43 BC. Publius Ovidius Naso, to give him his full name, is best known for his 15-book epic narrative poem *Metamorphoses* and the *Ars Amatoria*, an instruction book for young men on where in Rome to find women and how to seduce them.



A denarius found in 2008 in Lincolnshire (Find ID: 206795). This is an example of the remarkable coin series issued by Mark Antony at his Patrae (Patras) winter quarters in 32–31 BC to honour the 23 legions (LEG PRI [*legio prima*] to LEG XXIII [*legio vicensima tertia*], the three *cohortes praetoriae* (C[O]HORTIVM PRÆTORIARVM) and the *cohors speculatorum* (C[O]HORTIS SPECVLATORVM, either mounted scouts or a personal bodyguard) then serving in his army. At the time he was preparing for the final showdown with Octavian, which culminated on 2 September 31 BC at the naval engagement off the Actium promontory. The obverse (left) shows a warship, with the legend III VIR • R • P • [C] (*triumvir rei publicae constituendae*), hence Mark Antony reminds his soldiers that he is still *triumvir*. The reverse (right) depicts an *aquila* flanked by two *signa*; unfortunately in this instance the part of the coin detailing which unit is being honoured is illegible. (Adam Daubney/ Wikimedia Commons/ CC-BY-SA-2.0)

II and XXXV into the marshes right and left respectively, and deploying his praetorian cohort and that under Marcus Iunius Silanus astride the Via Aemilia, which at this point ran along a raised causeway over the low, marshy ground. The legionaries were deployed in the shelter of the tall reeds of the marshland at a point where the causeway was narrowest. Mark Antony's horsemen, who were numerically superior, along with his light-armed troops, moved forward along the Via Aemilia to harry Pansa's recruits, more raw than ripe, and draw these unready legionaries into the ambush.

Hirtius and Octavian had expected the legions of Pansa to arrive outside Mutina before attacking the forces of Mark Antony. When they learned of the approach of the latter's four consular legions, they dispatched their own praetorian cohorts and *legio Martia*, formerly commanded by Servius Sulpicius Galba (*pr.* 54 BC) but presently led by Decimus Carfulenus (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.30.1, 4), who is mistakenly called 'Carsuleius' in Appian's account (*B civ.* 3.66, 67). Carfulenus was presumably of equestrian rank, promoted to senatorial rank by Caesar, who obviously valued him as 'a man outstanding both for dauntlessness and for military skill' ([Caes.] *B Alex.* 31.3). It should also be borne in mind that this veteran legion held a grudge against Mark Antony for the decimation which had resulted from his earlier discipling of the unit. The energetic Carfulenus moved in the darkness eastwards along the Via Aemilia and, obviously before it was occupied by the Antonians, passed through Forum Gallorum; he made a junction with Pansa on the night of 13/14 April.



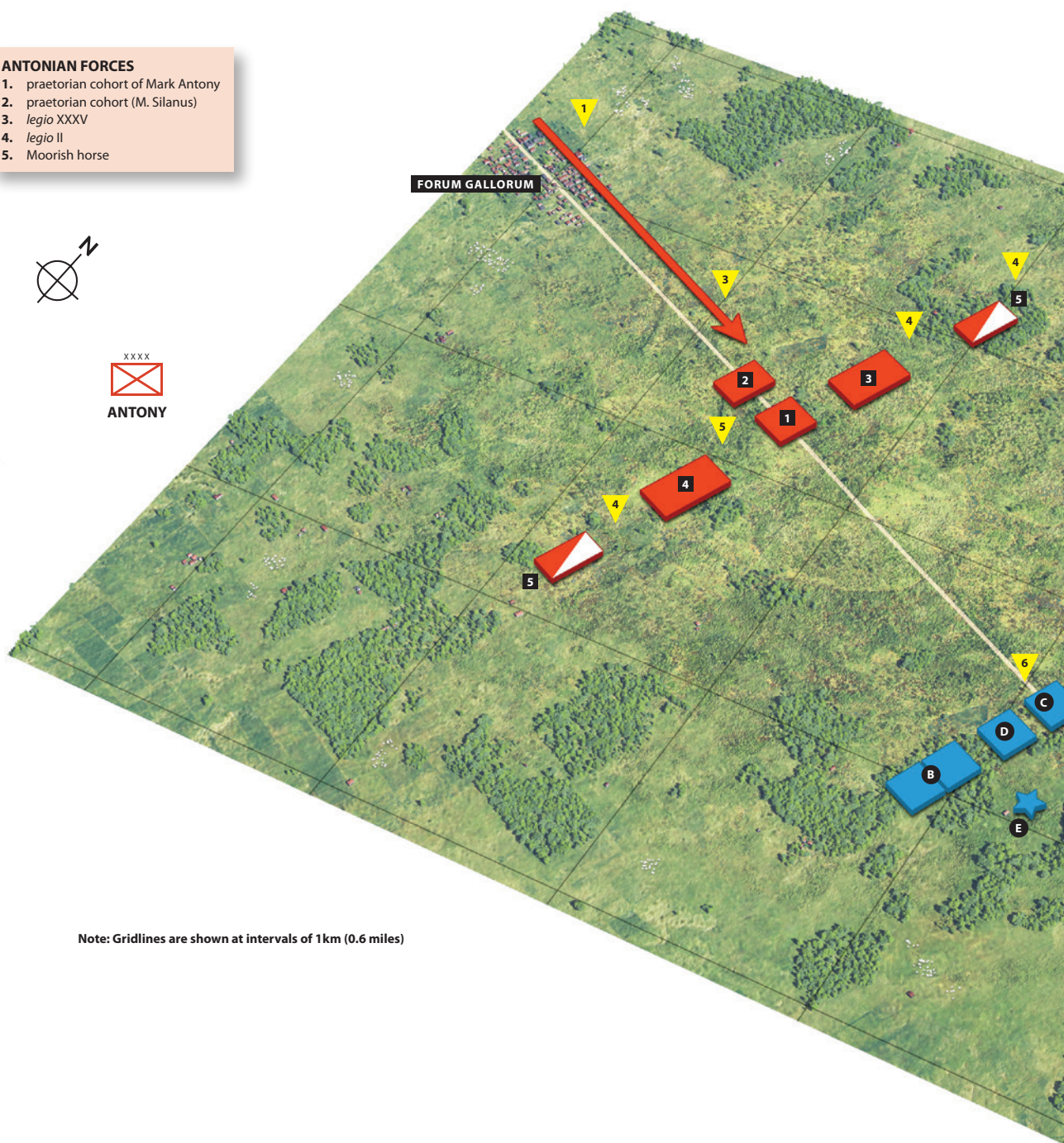
The Roman columns marking the terminal point of the Via Appia at the port of Brindisi, ancient Brundisium. A major centre of Roman naval power and maritime trade, Brundisium was the chief point of embarkation for Greece and beyond by way of Dyrrhachium and Apollonia; it was at this seaport that Mark Antony met his four legions from Macedonia. The port was connected to Rome by the Via Appia, whose termination, at the water's edge, was formerly flanked by two monumental columns. As we can see, only one remains *in situ*, the second having been misappropriated and removed to the neighbouring town of Lecce. (AlMare/Wikimedia Commons/ Public Domain)

ANTONIAN FORCES

1. praetorian cohort of Mark Antony
2. praetorian cohort (M. Silanus)
3. *legio XXXV*
4. *legio II*
5. Moorish horse



ANTONY



Note: Gridlines are shown at intervals of 1 km (0.6 miles)

EVENTS

1. Believing that he has only four legions of recruits opposing him, Mark Antony hastens to take the initiative in an attack against Pansa with two of his legions, II and XXXV, and two praetorian cohorts.
2. However, while marching from Bononia Pansa has received reinforcements from Hirtius in the form of two praetorian cohorts and *legio Martia*. Pansa orders his quaestor Manlius Torquatus to construct a marching camp.
3. Having bypassed Hirtius' camp outside Mutina, Mark Antony dashes along the Via Aemilia and passes through Forum Gallorum. Lucius Antonius is left to maintain the blockade of Mutina with *legio V Alaudae*.

4. His two legions Mark Antony places in ambush hoping surprise will overwhelm the numerically superior senatorial forces. *Legiones II* and XXXV are thus concealed in the marshy terrain either side of the Via Aemilia a little to the southeast of Forum Gallorum.

5. Meanwhile Mark Antony takes position with the two praetorian cohorts he has deployed on the raised causeway of the Via Aemilia.

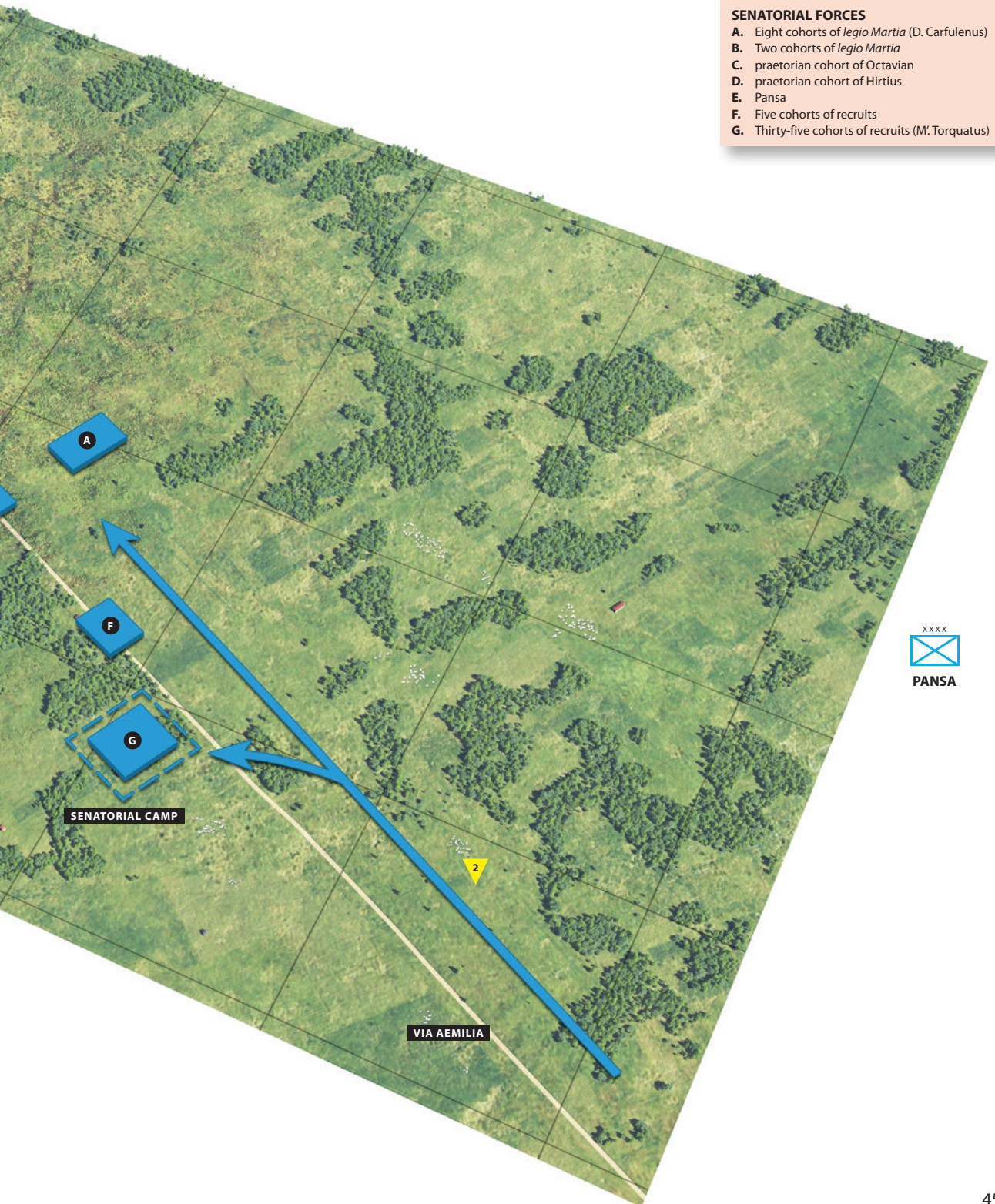
6. Unfortunately for Mark Antony his ambush fails to completely escape detection. Pansa thus orders *legio Martia* and the two praetorian cohorts to deploy from their column of march to a single battle line of 12 cohorts.

FORUM GALLORUM, 14 APRIL 43 BC, THE FIRST STAGE

Mark Antony launches a sudden attack on the consular army of Pansa.

SENATORIAL FORCES

- A. Eight cohorts of *legio Martia* (D. Carfulenus)
- B. Two cohorts of *legio Martia*
- C. praetorian cohort of Octavian
- D. praetorian cohort of Hirtius
- E. Pansa
- F. Five cohorts of recruits
- G. Thirty-five cohorts of recruits (M'. Torquatus)



Apollonia in Illyria, now outside the Albanian village of Pojani, was an ancient Greek *polis*, then known as *Apollonia pros Epidamnon*, which became part of the Roman province of Macedonia in 148 BC. For the Romans, like Dyrrhachium farther north, Apollonia was an important seaport on the Illyrian coast, serving as the most convenient link between Brundisium and northern Greece. It was also one of the western starting points of the Via Egnatia leading east to Thessaloniki and Byzantium in Thrace. This is the view from the archaeological site across the Myzeqe Plain. (Benutzer:Albinfo/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)



According to Appian (*B civ* 3.67), whose account is perhaps based on the contemporary writings of Caius Asinius Pollio, Pansa and Carfulenus marched just before daybreak along the Via Aemilia with *legio Martia*, five cohorts of recruits (presumably, the other 35 cohorts were prudently detailed to construct a marching camp), and the praetorian cohort raised by Octavian (he fails to mention that of Hirtius). In the marshes on either side, the first signs of the enemy were spotted, and presently Mark Antony's and Silanus' praetorian cohorts appeared to block the causeway carrying the consular road. On the other hand, the eyewitness account of Galba (which does mention Hirtius' praetorian cohort), who was with Pansa that day, reports that 'Antonius kept his forces at Forum Gallorum, wanting to conceal the fact that he had the legions; he only showed his cavalry and light-armed' (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.30.2).

The ensuing engagement was, in fact, threefold, for the high embankment that carried the Via Aemilia over the extensive marshes made the combatants on one side of it invisible to those on the other. While the praetorian cohorts

The Roman amphitheatre, Alba Fucens, with the twin peaks of Monte Velino (2,487m) in the distance. Excavated by a Belgian team in the 1960s, the site lies 6.5km north of Arezzano, Abruzzo. A colony with Latin rights founded in 303 BC, Alba Fucens was an important wayside station on the Via Valeria, the consular road built four years previously and connecting Rome with the rugged heart of the central Apennines, on the frontier between two warlike Italic tribes, the Aequi and the Marsi. It was at Alba Fucens that *legio* VIII and *legio Martia* abandoned Mark Antony's cause for that of Octavian. (Claudio Parente/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-4.0)





The Via Flaminia crossing Il Ponte Mallio, Cagli, Marche. Connecting Rome over the rugged Apennines to Ariminum (Rimini), this military highway was the best option for travel between Latium, Etruria and Gallia Cisalpina. Having traversed the divide that marks the division between the central and northern Apennines, at what is now the Passo della Scheggia (632m), the Via Flaminia descended into Umbria. The town of Cagli occupies the site of an ancient village on the Via Flaminia, which probably bore the name Cale. (RenioLinossi/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

of Mark Antony, Silanus and Octavian would fight on solid ground that was the raised road, the veterans of *legio Martia* split themselves into two unequal forces. Thus, under the command of Carfulenus, eight cohorts descended into the swampy, slippery ground to the right of the Via Aemilia. At the same time, in equally soggy marshes on the left side of the road, Pansa took command of the other two cohorts of the legion, along with the praetorian cohort of Hirtius.

The 'classic' organization of the cohortal legion for battle is the *triplex acies*, in which each legion's cohorts were deployed in a 4–3–3 formation, echoing the three lines of the old manipular legion. This is the battle formation



The Roman-period bridge over the river Marecchia, just outside modern Rimini (Ariminum), was the starting point of the Via Aemilia. Today known as Il Ponte Tiberio, the stone bridge was built in AD 14 under Tiberius as part of a major upgrading of the Via Aemilia started under his stepfather and sanctified predecessor, Augustus. The road connected at Ariminum with the Via Flaminia to Rome, which had been completed thirty-three years earlier in 220 BC. The modern Via Emilia follows the line of the Roman Via Aemilia from the Adriatic through Bologna to Piacenza. (it:Utente:Soma/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)







FORUM GALLORUM, 14 APRIL 43 BC: MARK ANTONY HEADS THE ATTACK (PP. 48–49)

It is worth noting that an able Roman commander, although he stationed himself close behind the fighting line, did not habitually emulate the bellicose behaviour of a Homeric hero by engaging in hand-to-hand combat. His principal responsibility was to encourage his centurions and legionaries and control their battleline. However, the knowledge that their commander was prepared to share many of the grave realities of combat helped to inspire his men. Bravery, or the perception that one was brave, was a crucial component in the skill set of a successful Roman commander.

Mark Antony was at his best when the challenge was greatest and his slackest at times of ease. With the character of a battlefield warrior, his finest qualities as a man and a soldier were evident when he was prepared to cross swords himself. From the very beginning of his military career, in what was his baptism of fire, Mark Antony at once proved his heedless courage and his capacity for hands-on leadership. In the siege of Alexandrinum, a fortified town near the Jordan north-east of Jerusalem, he was the first man on the wall (Plut. *Ant.* 3.2). Nine years later, at Dyrrhachium, Mark Antony was so prominently in what were touch-and-go engagements that 'his reputation

with the army was second only to Caesar's' (ibid. 8.2). Even at the end of his adventurous life, Mark Antony offered Octavian single combat. Prudently, Octavian declined the challenge from the aging but indomitable pugilist (ibid. 75.1). We can only speculate whether or not Mark Antony would have won if Octavian had accepted.

At Forum Gallorum Mark Antony (1) was to lead in person his thousand-strong *cohors praetoria* (2) in a head-to-head clash with that raised by his Caesarian rival, Octavian. As the very nature of the terrain meant that two separate battles were fought in the two areas of marshland either side of the Via Aemilia, it was upon this consular road, elevated high and dry on a causeway, that the praetorian cohorts fought another battle of their own. In this respect Mark Antony was probably in his element, a throwback to the days when he had served under Caesar, such as at Dyrrhachium where he led *legio* VIII or at Pharsalus where he led the amalgamation of *legiones* VIII and VIII (Caes. *B civ.* 3.46, 89). The inclusion of the eagle (3) carried by Mark Antony's praetorian cohort may be a matter of pure conjecture. *Aquilae* are certainly depicted on the 'galley' coins honouring the three *cohortes praetoriae* that fought for Mark Antony at Actium 12 years later.

Caesar regularly used throughout the Gallic and civil wars. As with the manipular legion, the rear lines of cohorts automatically served as reserves, which could be used to strengthen the fighting line and so maintain the impetus of attack. However, it appears that at Forum Gallorum *legio Martia* deployed in a single line of cohorts – an unusually shallow formation for a Roman legion.

The commanders might command and throw ‘the dice of war’, but the reality of the forthcoming battle would be controlled entirely by the *centuriones* and the *optiones* (junior officers). As the lines of battle moved to engage each other stoutly, Mark Antony’s *legio XXXV* attacked the eight cohorts of *legio Martia*, while on the Antonian right *legio II* moved against the other two cohorts and the praetorian cohort of Hirtius on the left of the Via Aemilia. This fierce battle between trained soldiers hardened by the Gallic and civil wars continued in the marshes, initially without decisive results. It should be noted that according to Galba’s account ‘there was no holding *legio Martia* and the praetorian cohorts’ (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.30.2), which suggests these three senatorial units launched their attacks before being ordered to do so by Pansa.

On the senatorial right wing, according to Appian, the eight cohorts of *legio Martia* managed slowly to gain ground, their opponents, Mark Antony’s *legio XXXV*, ‘gave way, not discredibly, little by little’ (*B civ.* 3.69). Conversely, Galba makes the bold claim that *legio XXXV* was put to flight ‘at the first charge’ (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.30.2), which, on the face of it, is an inconsistency. Appian may here be preferred.

Meanwhile, on the left wing the other two cohorts of *legio Martia* and Hirtius’ praetorian cohort, all under Pansa’s command, first offered a stiff resistance but then began to crumple before Mark Antony’s *legio II* and the action on the senatorial left was decided. So, too, in the centre along the Via Aemilia, for there Mark Antony, leading his own and Silanus’ praetorian cohort, prevailed in a brutal clash with the praetorian cohort raised by Octavian, which was eventually annihilated (App. *B civ.* 3.70).

The battle finally turned in Mark Antony’s favour. In the marshes to the right of the highway, the veterans of *legio Martia*, who had advanced some 500 Roman paces or so, were now being threatened by Mark Antony’s Moors, who darted venomously forth like a cloud of midges, flinging javelins into the ranks of the legionaries as they did so. As a consequence, their legate Carfulenus fell mortally wounded (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.33.4), and the veterans began to fall back slowly and reluctantly, while still repulsing repeated assaults from the Moors. Close to exhaustion, both physically and mentally, the legionaries of Mark Antony’s *legio XXXV* did not at first pursue the retreating enemy. According to Galba’s account, at this point of the battle he personally led light-armed troops to impede the Moorish horse, which was attempting to encircle the retreating legionaries (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.30.3).

As we might predict, a Roman commander was expected to share in the hazards of the battlefield. We often hear of those who led from the front. This is what Pansa was obviously doing in the marshes to the left of the Via Aemilia, for the consul received a mortal wound while being present where the



Panoramic view of rice fields in the province of Vercelli, eastern Piedmont, with the Po in the foreground, the major river that runs right across the broad flat land above the northern slopes of the Tusco-Emilia Apennines. Gallia Cisalpina – ‘Gaul-this-side-of-the-Alps’ – was the gateway to Italy proper and a region that was always of great value precisely for its economic wealth and as a recruiting ground for legionaries. Furthermore, it lay across the consular routes to the north and west, where the confirmed Caesarians Lepidus, Plancus, and Pollio held the provinces in Gaul and Hispania with their seasoned legions. (Alessandro Vecchi/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)



Rocca Sforzesca, Imola, the early 14th-century castle rebuilt by Galeazzo Maria Sforza (1444–76), the ruler of Milan whose daughter Caterina (1463–1509) married Girolamo Riario (1443–88), lord of Imola, and held the fortress after his assassination until her defeat by Cesare Borgia (1475–1507) in 1500. The town of Imola occupies the site of the Roman Forum Corneli, founded by Sulla in 82 BC. It was here that Hirtius and Octavian encamped in winter quarters before pushing up the Via Aemilia towards Bononia. (Ruben Alexander/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

fighting was thickest; his wound from a thrown javelin unnerved the two cohorts of *legio Martia* and Hirtius' praetorian cohort he was leading. While the injured consul was transferred to Bononia, the veterans of *legio II* finally put the three shaken cohorts on the back foot; they now began to fall back in disorder, sowing panic in the ranks of Pansa's citizen recruits, whose five cohorts had been held back in reserve. At the sight of the apparent collapse of the veterans of *legio Martia* and the praetorian cohort, the recruits scattered, falling back to the senatorial marching camp in disorder. An army is still a crowd, though a highly organized one. In times of the extraordinary stresses of campaigning in

war, it is subject to the same principles that govern crowds and it is only the presence of strong self-control and tactical unity that prevents it from acting like an armed rabble or, to use the eloquent words of Xenophon, 'like a crowd leaving the theatre' (*Hipp.* 2.7). It is true that these were green troops who were having their first taste of combat.

In the meantime, Mark Antony's legionaries hastened to pursue the enemy, inflicting heavy losses on the veterans and recruits alike as they fled back towards their camp. This was the ubiquitous marching camp, which was habitually fortified before a Roman army accepted pitched battle and served as 'the shelter of the conqueror, the refuge of the conquered' (Livy 44.39). In any case, the survivors of *legio Martia* actually remained outside the camp and by their presence dissuaded the Antonians from attacking further (App. *B civ.* 3.69) – *Martia* meant 'sacred to Mars' and, according to Appian, the legion 'took its cognomen from its reputation for valour' (ibid. 4.115). Truly did the legion live up to its warlike name that day.

Pansa's remaining 35 cohorts, now commanded by his quaestor Manlius Torquatus (*praenomen* unknown), though intact, were virtually trapped inside their camp, and the Antonians would have probably forced them to surrender in the event of prolonged siege, but Mark Antony was rightly concerned about losing time, fearing that the situation would deteriorate outside Mutina if Hirtius and Octavian sought to break his siege there. Mark Antony therefore felt that he could not remain on the field of victory and decided to return with his forces to his lines of circumvallation around the town.

But this was not the end of the contest. In the afternoon, Mark Antony's victorious legions and praetorian cohorts began to return westward along the Via Aemilia in the direction of Mutina. His soldiers were tired but euphoric after apparently achieving a brilliant success. Little did they know that the day was yet to be decided.

Pansa, while leading his citizen recruits into the marshes outside Forum Gallorum, where he was later to fall seriously injured, had seen fit to send a messenger to his colleague Hirtius to inform him of the unexpected battle with the Antonians and his difficult situation. Hirtius was some 60 *stadia* (c.11km) from the battlefield (App. *B civ.* 3.70). He decided at once to march to Pansa's aid 'with twenty veteran cohorts' (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.30.4), namely *legio III*, the other Caesarian legion that had defected to Octavian,

and *legio* VII, the Caesarian formation reconstituted by Octavian (Cic. *Phil.* 14.27, cf. App. *B civ.* 3.70). These fresh troops moved quickly and, in the late afternoon came unexpectedly into contact with the Antonians who, exhausted after the tough battle, were marching towards Mutina in about as good order as a flock of sheep and heedless of danger to their front.

The two Caesarian legions, experienced and reasonably fresh despite their rapid march, came to the attack in tight formation against Mark Antony's disorderly and tired troops. Despite attempts at resistance and instances of bravery, the Antonians could not withstand the assault, but suffered heavy losses and disintegrated under the attacks of Hirtius' veterans. The tide of battle – fickle at best – had turned and they became the losers. As the evening turned into night on that fateful day, the Antonians took a terrible beating and disintegrated, scattering into the marshes and nearby woods; the eagles of *legiones* II and XXXV were captured, along with 60 of their other standards (most likely *signa* standards). Only with great difficulty could Mark Antony rally the remnant with the help of his cavalry, which managed to round up the surviving legionaries during the night and bring them back to camp near Mutina (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.30.4, cf. App. *B civ.* 3.70). Hirtius, hindered by the fast vanishing light and wary of being lured into a trap, chose not to pursue the defeated Antonians to their good fortune. What is more, he probably also feared the chance of mistaking friends for foes. Such was the long, tenacious and bloody contest fought at Forum Gallorum.

Octavian's direct involvement in all this fratricidal blood-letting had been minimal. The *propraetor* held the senatorial camp outside Mutina with the other legion (viz. *legio* VIII), busying itself with checking and repulsing the faint diversionary attacks led by Lucius Antonius on his brother's



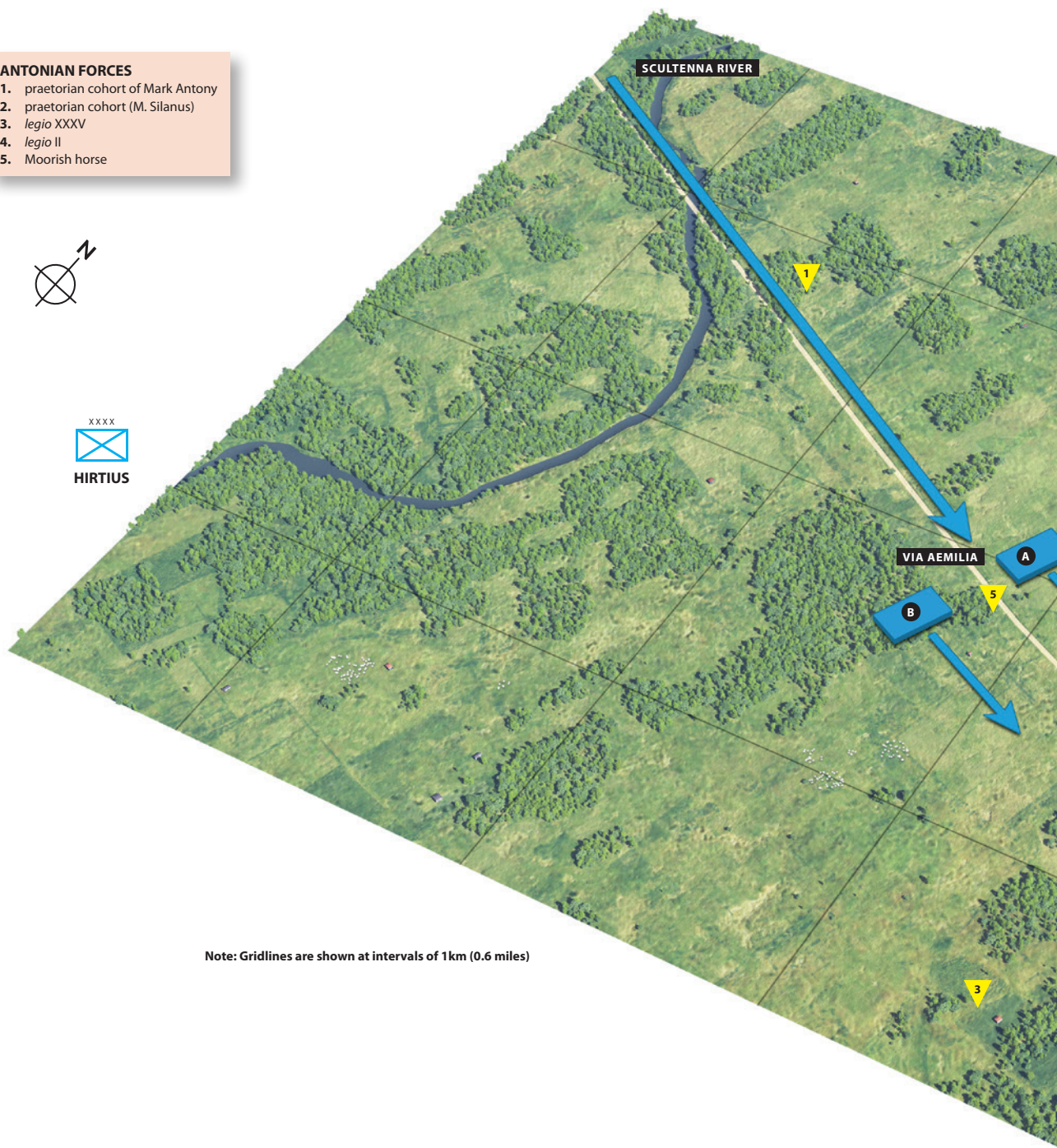
The Via Emilia crossing the city centre of Bologna. Completed in 187 BC, the Via Aemilia connected Ariminum (Rimini) on the Adriatic coast with Placentia (Piacenza) on the Padus (Po), dissecting such Roman colonies as Bononia, Mutina and Parma along its route. It was here that Pansa died of his wounds after the battle of Forum Gallorum. (Tango7174/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-4.0)



The Italian-led excavations at the Roman town of Claterna, village of Maggio, commune of Ozzano dell'Emilia, have uncovered both domestic dwellings and workshops. Here we see a 1st-century AD *domus* with mosaic floor and *opus signinum* pavements situated on the south side of the Via Aemilia. Claterna sat at a crossroads between the Via Aemilia and the Via Flaminia Minor. This was the setting, in late February 43 BC, for the first clash between the Antonine forces and those of the Senate led by the consul Hirtius. (Desyman/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

ANTONIAN FORCES

1. praetorian cohort of Mark Antony
2. praetorian cohort (M. Silanus)
3. *legio* XXXV
4. *legio* II
5. Moorish horse



Note: Gridlines are shown at intervals of 1km (0.6 miles)

EVENTS

1. While Mark Antony's soldiers celebrate and collect the booty of victory over the consul Pansa, Hirtius, the other consul, force marches the twenty cohorts of *legiones* IIII and VII from his camp outside Mutina. Octavian is left to hold the senatorial camp with *legio* VIII.
2. The Antonians are strung out along the Via Aemilia in a loose column of march when Hirtius' fresh force hits them hard and fast.
3. Weary and disordered the Antonians suffer heavy losses and, despite a show of resistance, disintegrate, scattering into the nearby marshes and woods.

4. Only with great difficulty can Mark Antony rally the remnants with the aid of his strong cavalry arm, which manages to round up the surviving Antonians and escort them back to their camp outside Mutina.
5. Hirtius, hindered by the failing light and the difficult terrain, chooses not to pursue the broken Antonians.

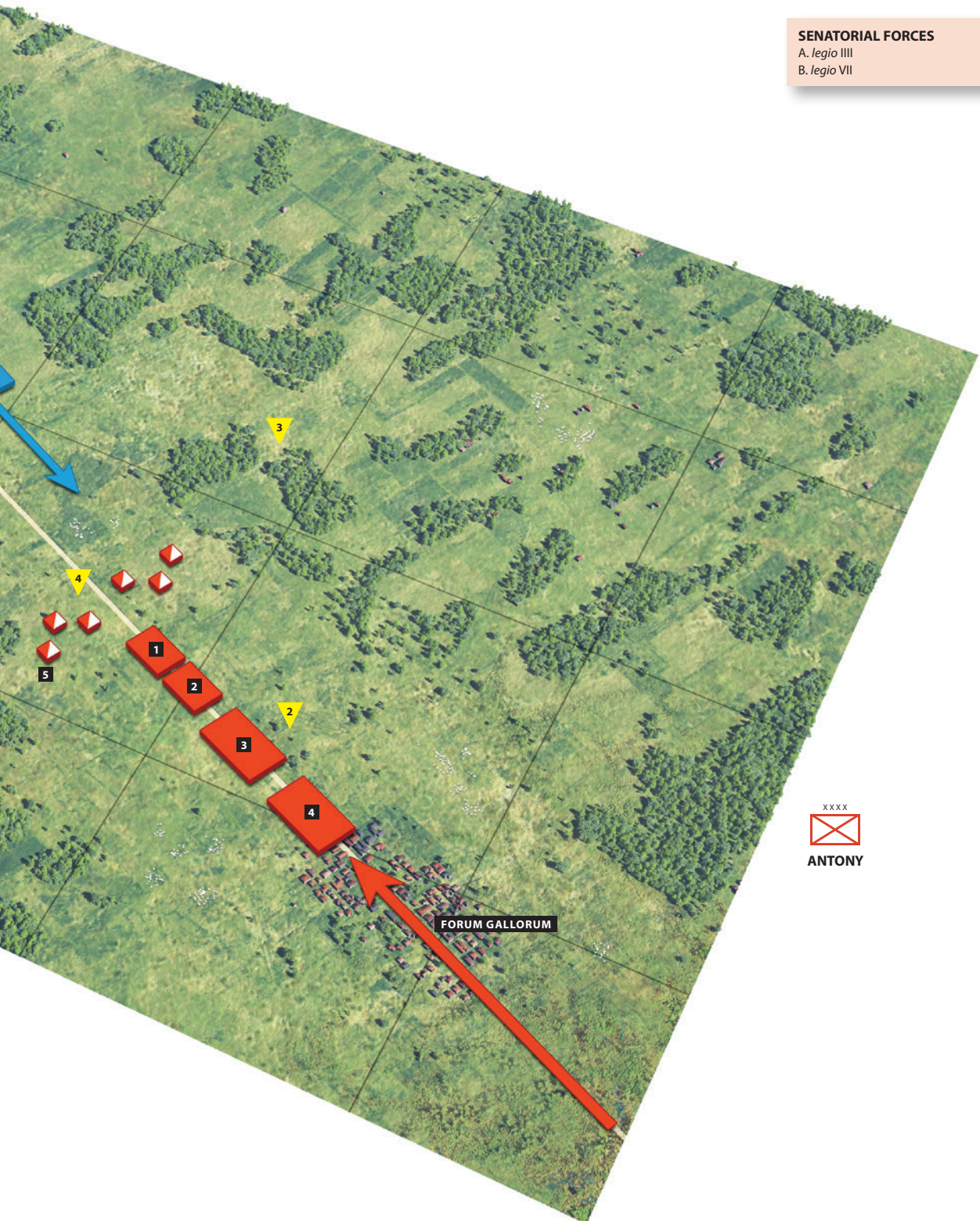
FORUM GALLORUM, 14 APRIL 43 BC, THE SECOND STAGE

Hirtius counter-attacks Antony's disorderly forces.

SENATORIAL FORCES

A. *legio* IIII

B. *legio* VII



The Via Flaminia Minor at Pian di Balestra. This consular road, completed in 187 BC, connected Arretium (Arezzo) with Claterna (Ozzano dell'Emilia). Departing Rome on 19 March for Gallia Cisalpina, the consul Pansa at the head of his four newly recruited legions may well have taken this trans-Appennine route in order to arrive at the Via Aemilia a little to the east of Bononia. From Claterna he would have been in a position to advance towards Mutina and thus form a junction with his colleague Hirtius. (Sandro Baldi/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)



instructions. Despite having a far lesser role than the two consuls Hirtius and Pansa, two days after the battle, as recorded by the *Feriale Cumanum*, Octavian was acclaimed as *imperator* on the field by his soldiers: ‘on this day (16 April) Caesar was first acclaimed [viz. *imperator*]. Thanksgiving to the good fortune (*felicitas*) of his *imperium*’ (*Inscr. Ital.* 13.I.279, cf. *Cic. Phil.* 14.11). It is normal in any age for a government to exalt and embellish trivial successes in the field; and the age of Augustus can show imperial salutations taken and registered for next to nothing.

THE SECOND BATTLE

Mark Antony, although mauled and beaten, still held his camps and circumvallation about Mutina, and Decimus Brutus still remained under siege within. As Mark Antony well knew, circumvallation lessened the chance of a successful breakout by the besieged and provided morale-boosting additional security to the besieging force. Thus, to avoid a major pitched battle, he held the enemy under control by dexterous handling of his superior cavalry arm. But the fact that Decimus Brutus’ army was bottled up in Mutina and in imminent danger of starvation induced Hirtius and Octavian to force an action while Mark Antony was at a disadvantage. The second battle of Mutina was fought on 21 April, one week after that fought at Forum Gallorum.

To this end Hirtius and Octavian launched a direct attack on the circumvallation of Mark Antony in order to break the siege. Mark Antony responded by leading two legions into battle, presumably the unscathed *legio V Alaudae* and the remnants of his other two units, *legiones* II and XXXV, amalgamated as one. The fighting was fierce and bloody beneath the walls of Mutina, nothing more subtle than a slow slogging match involving Caesar’s hard-bitten veterans on each side; Pansa’s recruits are not mentioned at all. With little tactical finesse and brilliance the fighting was of unparalleled desperation, but eventually the Antonians were feeling the pressure. In due course, the senatorial forces broke into Mark Antony’s camp but he withdrew

troops from other points on the circumvallation in order to oppose them. Fighting in an enclosed area such as a fortified camp would have absorbed too many troops too rapidly, producing nothing but a shapeless slaughter without purpose, and an army beyond control of its commander.

It hardly needs saying that for a commander to operate in the thick of things is to put himself in considerable danger. Hirtius was killed in the ensuing *mêlée* near Mark Antony's *praetorium* or command tent, and with the consul fallen, the senatorial army was leaderless. However, with uncharacteristic bravery Octavian risked life and limb as he personally intervened at this critical point of the battle in order to avoid defeat (App. *B civ.* 3.71). Not only did the young *propraetor* recover the consul's dead body but, according to Suetonius, 'in the thick of the fight, when the eagle-bearer [*aquilifer*] of his legion (probably *legio VIII*) was sorely wounded, he shouldered the eagle [*aquila*] and carried it for some time' (DA 10.4). Needless to say, as a focal point around which their unit could coalesce, both physically and psychologically, legionaries looked to their standards and eagles in battle and followed them.



THE RETREAT FROM MUTINA

Retreating in the face of the enemy is one of the more difficult manoeuvres for any army. More to the point, retreat is no one's favourite manoeuvre, but sometimes it is the best one available in a commander's playbook. Sometimes, when a plan goes out of kilter and disaster is visible on the horizon, it is time to swallow pride and about face. As Mark Antony always did when he met a crisis, he immediately launched into action. Thus, despite contrary advice from his staff, Mark Antony now lifted his siege of Mutina and rounded up what was left of his army (App. *B civ.* 3.72). Defeated but not routed, he was afraid that with the arrival of senatorial reinforcements in the form of Pansa's consular legions he might in turn be besieged himself. After all, he had experienced such a predicament once before, namely at Alesia, where Caesar had raised a double ring of siege works, both against the perched stronghold, where Vercingetorix had taken shelter, and the vast Gaulish army of relief, which had gathered to break the Roman cordon. Besides, if he was going to fight for his very survival, it should be at least under conditions, and at a time, of his choosing. Wisely (though not in Appian's judgement), Mark Antony decided to turn tail and run.

Like much else in the lottery of warfare, timing is everything. Decision made, and sensing the time was ripe for definitive action, Mark Antony broke camp and, tricking Decimus Brutus (now nominally in charge of *all* the senatorial forces), he skilfully retreated along the Via Aemilia towards the north-west with Caesarian rapidity, intending to cross the Maritime Alps into

The Via Emilia is the main artery of Modena, and as it crosses the city centre it still exhibits the cobblestone paving dating back to the late medieval period. This was a boom time for the northern Italian cities located on or near the coast, on the Arno or the Adige or the Po, or along the Via Emilia, becoming as they did natural centres of commerce and banking. It was here, in what was then Mutina, that Decimus Brutus had taken his three legions and prepared to defend it to the bitter end. Mark Antony established a blockade, but does not seem to have attempted a direct assault, for it was winter, with poor weather and difficult conditions for foraging. Having slaughtered and salted all available cattle, Brutus' men were doubtless happier to be billeted in the town than camping in the siege lines beyond the walls and exposed to the inclemency of the wintry conditions.

(© Esther Carré)







MUTINA, 21 APRIL 43 BC: OCTAVIAN RETRIEVES THE BODY OF HIRTIUS (PP. 58–59)

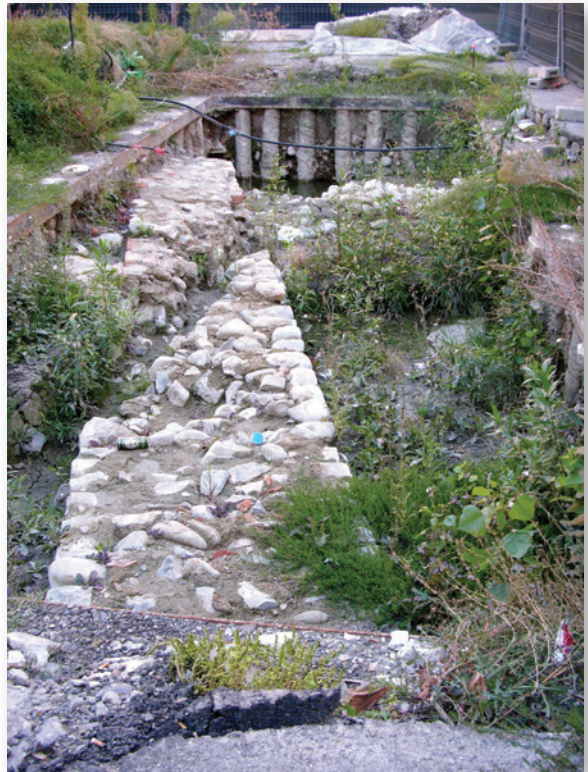
Mark Antony, albeit badly bloodied and battered, still held his siege lines unbowed, and so Decimus Brutus remained firmly under siege. To avoid another major engagement, Mark Antony kept the senatorial forces in check by the skilful use of his superior cavalry force. But the fact that Decimus Brutus' army was in imminent danger of starvation induced Hirtius and Octavian to force an encounter while Mark Antony was still licking the wounds received in the first engagement. Accordingly, on 21 April, Hirtius broke into Mark Antony's camp, but he fell fighting there. Although Octavian (1) alone could not hold Mark Antony's camp (2), he did manage personally to retrieve the corpse of the fallen consul (3). There was gossip that two years previously Octavian had 'sold his favours to Aulus Hirtius in Hispania' (Sue. *DA* 68.1).

Another rumour alleged that Octavian had not distinguished himself at Forum Gallorum, the first of the Mutina battles, and

Mark Antony was to write that he had run away and appeared only two days later, minus his charger and commander's cloak (Sue. *DA* 10.4). According to Dio Cassius, however, when Hirtius marched against Mark Antony 'Caesar had remained to keep watch over the camp' (46.37.7), which seems a more likely scenario. Either way, eager to reassert himself, Octavian apparently performed deeds of derring-do at the second engagement: when the *aquilifer* of one of his legions was seriously wounded, Octavian shouldered the *aquila* and carried it into battle, or so it was later claimed (Sue. *DA* 10.4). True or not that legion was probably *legio* VIII, easily identified by the bull insignia painted on its members' *scuta* (4), a Caesarian unit closely associated with Octavian (it would later receive the cognomen *Augusta*).

Gallia Transalpina. He still had the trustworthy unit, *legio V Alaudae*, relatively intact, and the wreckage of *legiones* II and XXXV, augmented by the press-ganging of civilians and even ‘by throwing open the slave-barracks [*ergastula*’ (Cic. *ad fam.* 11.10.3).

Troops, no matter what their level of training, professionalism and discipline, have finite endurance thresholds. Pre-modern armies in a pre-mechanized age were totally dependent on animal and human sources of power. When either the men or their mounts were deprived of adequate food or water supply or subjected to extremes of winter cold and summer heat, the whole body of the army rapidly became dysfunctional. For Mark Antony’s men and mounts it was a hard march, exposed to the elements and beset by a shortage of food; distance was the only thing that was not in short supply. However, Mark Antony’s skeleton of an army may have been in tatters, footsore, ill-fed, drenched and demoralized, but Mark Antony was often at his best in a crisis and, as always, was a model of endurance for his suffering men. Command must always look confident no matter the circumstances, and the effective commander always strives to keep hopes – even if they were essentially illusory and unrealistic – alive in his subordinates’ breasts. Maurice de Saxe, military theorist of great acumen and victor of Fontenoy (11 May 1745), would stipulate anon that ‘Hope



An exposed excavated section of the 12th-century fortification walls of Modena. The thriving Roman town of Mutina would eventually slip into a period of decline during which its monuments were wholly buried beneath a deep layer of alluvial deposits. Currently about 5m below street level, the layers datable to the Roman period are consequently situated well below the foundations of the buildings in the medieval centre of modern Modena. (© Esther Carré)



Rua del Muro, Modena, which follows the line of the 12th-century fortification walls. The present city dates its prosperity from the time of countess Matilda of Tuscany (r. 1076–1115), the most politically involved woman of medieval Europe, who is still remembered for her military accomplishments. (© Esther Carré)

Fiume Panaro, between Ponte Sant'Ambrogio and San Cesario sul Panaro, unquestionably the *Scultenna* (alternatively called the *Panarus*) of antiquity, a name it still retains (viz. Scoltenna) in the upper part of its course. One of the principal right bank tributaries of the Po, the Panaro runs right across Emilia-Romagna in a north-easterly direction from its source close to the Apennine watershed. Passing to the east of Mutina, it was on this river that Hirtius floated jars of salt and carcasses of sheep for the beleaguered inhabitants of the town. According to the contemporary geographer Strabo (d. AD 23), 'the softest wool and by far the best is produced in the country around Mutina and the river Panarus' (*Geographia* 5.1.12), so it appears that sheep were aplenty. (Giorgio Galeotti/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-4.0)



encourages men to endure and attempt everything; in depriving them of it, or in making it too distant, you deprive them of their very soul' (*Mes rêveries* IV). The art of leadership, as Mark Antony understood well, is the art of dealing with humanity.

Besides having shown a clean pair of heels to the senatorial forces, the retreat from Mutina represents the other side of Mark Antony's boldness. Here his savvy consisted not in facing danger but in avoiding it at all cost. If fortune truly favours the bold, then in the next month, ironically, Mark Antony was the beneficiary of fortunes he could never have predicted or planned, arriving in forms both physical and psychological. The first sign of good fortune turned up in the shape of reinforcements under Caesar's one-time military supplies contractor, Publius Ventidius. The game in Italy had now indubitably passed to Octavian, but Mark Antony was not finished. A battle had been lost but the war itself could still be won.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

We return to the Mutina battles, this time in an attempt to delve into the minds and emotions of soldiers in combat. Popular opinion in Rome was not unaware of the horrors of war. The battlefield was (and still is) the epitome of war, and the explicit justification for watching gladiatorial combat was that seeing criminals and slaves meet death in the arena with courage prepared the audience to do the same on the battlefield. As Cicero had posed rhetorically some two years before Mutina, 'What gladiator of moderate reputation ever groaned, or lost countenance, or showed himself a coward, as he stood in combat, or even as he lay down to die?' (*Tusc.* 2.41)

The Roman crowd roared as their gladiators bled and died in the sand so that there could be winners on the field of battle. The horrors, however, were usually considered in the context of the other side, that is to say, the 'barbarian' foe, not fellow Roman citizens. Cicero was not interested in the tactical fact which still remains to this day at once the simplest and the most



Fiume Secchia near Campogalliano, Modena, the *Secia* of antiquity, though the elder Pliny calls it the *Gabellus* (NH 3.20 [16]). Another of the principal right bank tributaries of the Po, it is believed that in our period of study the river flowed farther to the west of its current course and was thus much farther from what was then Mutina. This is a timely reminder that the floods and the changes in the courses of rivers in the lower Po Valley are a topos of ancient literature. However, whatever their courses at that time, the rivers Secia and Scultenna marked the boundaries of the territory of Mutina to the west and east respectively. (Sailko/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

complex topic in the military art – man himself as a figure on the field of battle. After all, this is the arena upon which two forces close, each with the object of overriding the body of the enemy while avoiding being overridden.

Contemporary evidence is seldom exhaustive (how many ancient commanders wrote their memoirs?), yet for the first of the Mutina battles we are fortunate enough to have a letter penned the day after to Cicero by his friend Servius Sulpicius Galba, serving on the staff of Aulus Hirtius as one of his legates. Galba, having previously served Caesar loyally during the Gallic and civil wars, was one of his assassins. Caesar was notorious for his unbridled sexuality. A serial seducer of other senators' spouses – he had slept with the wives of both his political associates, Pompey and Crassus, and had maintained a long-term relationship with Servilia, the mother of Marcus Brutus – it was rumoured that he had once seduced Galba's wife. This was reason enough for Galba, a patrician, to bear him a grudge. If it was not for this reason, then his personal resentment against Caesar could perhaps stem from the fact that he had not been made consul in 49 BC as apparently promised (Caes. *B Gall.* 8.50.4).⁴

As we have previously discussed, Mark Antony had launched a diversionary attack on Hirtius' camp, and then slipped past him in order to catch Pansa's citizen levies coming up the Via Aemilia from the south-east. Galba now takes up our story.

Galba to Cicero greetings

1. On 14 April, that being the day Pansa was to have joined Hirtius' camp (I was with him, having gone a hundred miles [*millia passus centum*] to meet him and expedite his arrival). Antonius led out two legions, II and XXXV, and two praetorian cohorts, one his own and the other Silanus', together with part of his reservists. In this strength he advanced to meet us, thinking that we had only

⁴ The great-grandson of Servius Sulpicius Galba was the emperor Galba, he who succeeded the toppled Nero in June AD 68, but was himself spectacularly dead early the following year.

four legions of recruits. But the previous night Hirtius had sent us *legio Martia*, which used to be under my command, and the two praetorian cohorts [i.e. Hirtius' and Octavianus'] for our better security on the march to his camp.

2. When Antonius' cavalry came into sight, there was no holding *legio Martia* and the praetorian cohorts. We started to follow them willy-nilly, since we had not been able to hold them back. Antonius kept his forces at Forum Gallorum, wanting to conceal the fact that he had the legions; he only showed his cavalry and light-armed. When Pansa saw the legion advancing contrary to his intentions, he ordered two legions of recruits to follow him [note, Appian says only five cohorts of recruits]. Having traversed a narrow route through marsh and woodland, we drew up a battle line of twelve cohorts [i.e. *legio Martia* and the two praetorian cohorts]; the two legions had not yet come up.

3. Suddenly, Antonius led his forces out of the village, drew them up and immediately engaged. Both sides at first fought as fiercely as men could fight. But the right wing, where I was placed with eight cohorts of *legio Martia*, threw back Antonius' *legio XXXV* at the first charge, and advanced more than 500 paces [*passus D*] from its original position in the line. The cavalry then tried to surround our wing, so I started to retire, setting our light-armed against the Moorish horse to stop them attacking our men in the rear. Meanwhile I found myself in the thick of the Antonians, with Antonius some distance behind me. All at once I rode at the gallop towards a legion of recruits, which was on its way up from our camp, throwing my shield over my shoulders. The Antonians chased me, while our men were about to hurl their *pila*. In this predicament some providence came to my rescue – I was quickly recognized by our men.

4. On the Via Aemilia itself, where Caesar's [i.e. Octavianus'] praetorian cohort was stationed, there was a long struggle. The left wing, which was weaker, consisting of two cohorts of *legio Martia* and one praetorian cohort [i.e. Hirtius'], began to give ground, because they were being surrounded by cavalry, which is Antonius' strongest arm. When all our ranks had withdrawn, I started to retreat to the camp, the last to do so. Having won the battle, as he considered, Antonius thought he could take the camp, but when he arrived he lost a number of men there and achieved nothing.

Having heard what had happened, Hirtius with 20 veteran cohorts [i.e. *legiones IIII* and *VII*] met Antonius on his way back to his camp and completely destroyed or routed his forces, on the very ground of the previous engagement near Forum Gallorum. Antonius withdrew with his horse to his camp at Mutina at about ten o'clock at night.

5. Hirtius then returned to the camp from which Pansa had marched out where he had left two legions, which had been assaulted by Antonius. So, Antonius has lost the greater part of his veteran troops; but this result was achieved at the cost of some losses in the praetorian cohorts and *legio Martia*. Two eagles [*aquilae duae*] and 60 standards [*signa LX*] of Antonius have been brought in. It is a victory.

Written from the camp, 15 April (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.30).

Galba, whose ambitions were high, had no doubt written to Cicero in search of a ringing commendation from the Senate, and in this he failed. Yet his dispatch certainly does not conform to the 'eye deep in hell' category of war writing. In reality, the detached, unemotional language used to describe

this battle – even when Galba found himself in the heat of the action or behind the enemy's battleline – disguises a whole series of complex, confused and bloody incidents. It misses the essentially horrific heart of the perversion that is war, to what Tolstoy in 'Sevastopol in December, 1854' called 'war in its real phase – in blood, in suffering, in death'.⁵

It cannot pass without comment that in the case of much pre-gunpowder warfare, and Roman infantry fighting in particular with its reliance on the *gladius* (Fields 2008B:17–24), the soldier experiences each combat closely enough to smell his foe and get spattered with sweat and blood. The battlefield was truly a horrible place. The din of shouting and screaming by combatants on both sides as well as the clashing of weapons was sufficiently close and loud to drown out much other noise, including orders. Dust and sand thrown up by so many men and horses gets in the eyes and ears and under armour adding to the discomfort, further circumscribing the soldiers' focus. Moreover, the horizon of a soldier was narrow and personal, barely exceeding the boundaries of his *contubernium*, of his *centuria*, of his *cohors*. In these circumstances, soldiers often have no definite idea how things are going outside their own field of vision.

Additionally, it has to be recognized that such eyewitness reports as Galba's letter do not necessarily provide a typical picture. Personal accounts are by definition individual, and those written contemporaneously lack the element of hindsight implicit in those written up later. Thus, events and observations are enumerated according to the interest or importance they held for the author at the time, rather than filtered and ordered by subsequent developments.

But what of human nature? Galba's plain blunt style may be typical of a seasoned commander, lacking as it does the immediacy and personal empathy to the day's events, but at Forum Gallorum that day, as undoubtedly Galba would have witnessed first hand, men would have cheered, cursed, cried, and fought stubbornly and brutally. Moreover, his report of this fratricidal battle painted a rosier picture for the senatorial forces than the events warranted. Civil wars are never pretty affairs, and, at the end of the day on the stricken field of Forum Gallorum, the men, almost certainly physically and morally spent after the fighting, would not have been even certain whether the battle was won or lost.

The previous month, Cicero, who was all for other people smiting the enemy, had smugly boasted in the Senate that the Caesarian veterans were on the wane, and certainly no match for the freshly raised citizen soldiers of republican Italy who would soon be marching to war fairly quivering with patriotic gusto (*Phil.* 11.39). For the exuberant orator, the coming clash was to be one of two ideals, one patriotic and idealistic, the other professional and mercenary. This, almost euphoric, reaction to the current



Canal Torbido, Castelfranco Emilia. At present the plain around Modena is intensely cultivated, and the remnants of the original prevalent vegetation, particularly mixed broadleaved oak woods and wetlands with hygrophilous trees (alder, poplar and willow), are extremely scarce. Nevertheless, though the surrounding countryside has been much altered with the advent of intensive farming, water and mire are still much in evidence as they were on the day of the first battle. Currently the big crop is semi-aquatic rice – the Po Valley being the rice bowl of Europe – whereas in our period of study, as indicated by recent pollen and seed/fruit analysis, the chief cereal was millet (*millium*). As Strabo reports in his discourse on Gallia Cisalpina: 'Being well supplied with water, millet grows there in perfection' (*Geographia* 5.1.12). The Romans knew rice (*oryza*) as an extremely expensive commodity imported from India for medicinal purposes. (Giorgio Galeotti/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

⁵ Leo N. Tolstoy, *Sevastopol* (New York, 1888), p. 18. The author served as a battery commander during the defence of the formidable Russian naval base of Sevastopol in the Crimea.



An exposed excavated section of the late medieval fortification walls of Castelfranco Emilia. Now long buried under several metres of alluvial sediment and yet to be excavated systematically, the Roman *vicus* of Forum Gallorum would have been unfortified, being little more than a strip settlement either side of the Via Aemilia. The likely construction of its domestic dwellings would have been a half-timbered affair with low walls of clay-bonded stone rubble supporting timber uprights and frame, filled with wattle and daub. Usually such buildings would have had shingled or thatched roofs. (© Esther Carré)

civil crisis might be expected to have created, to say the least, a relaxed attitude to the war of Mutina in the collective hearts and minds of the Senate. Did Cicero really believe that the fervour every citizen recruit felt for the republican cause could make up for inferior battle skills? On the other hand, like any lawyer worth his salt, and he was Rome's leader in this particular field, Cicero was not above massaging the facts to make his case. However, from a fighting soldier's point of view this sounded like a fairytale. In his comfortable remove in Rome, Cicero was huffing and puffing on the dying embers of the fire and glory of the Republic.

Cicero was, of course, quite wrong: *legio Martia* was certainly ready to fight Mark Antony, from whom it could expect no mercy; this legion's well trained and campaign-seasoned men were hardly inspired by republican ardour, as he claims. More to the point, triumphalism in words did not lead to triumph in swords, for when it came to the serious blade work in the dank marshes just beyond the village boundary of Forum Gallorum, the citizen recruits were definitely not borne along by some nationalistic lust for battle. On the contrary, as novices in the military art, they were terrified by the grim sight of tough, battle-hardened veterans who, in the words of Appian:

[F]ell on each other in the belief this battle was more their own concern than their commanders'. Because of their experience, they raised no battle cry, which would have terrified neither side, nor did any of them utter a sound as they fought, whether they were winning or losing. Since the marshes and

ditches gave them no chance of making outflanking movements or charging, and they were unable to push each other back, they were locked together with their swords as if in a wrestling contest. Every blow found a target, but instead of cries there were only wounds, and men dying, and groans. If one man fell, he was immediately carried away and another took his place. They had no need of encouragement or cheering on, because each man's experience made him his own commanding officer. When they were tired, they separated for a few moments to recover as if they were engaged in training exercises, and then grappled with each other again. When the new recruits arrived they were amazed to see this going on with such discipline and silence (App. *B civ.* 3.68).

The first entry of Pansa's legions into the war had been a bloody one, an experience the survivors were not to forget easily. In Appian's version of events, which differs in many important respects from Galba's, the experience of fighting is more graphically (and brutally) told.

One word of criticism, however, for Appian does tend to like the idea of opposing sides in civil war going into battle in unnatural silence (again at *B civ.* 2.79), omitting the war cry because it is a sheer waste of energy against fellow (disciplined) Romans. In truth, when Romans faced each other they did raise a war cry (e.g. *Caes. B civ.* 3.92, [*Caes.*] *B Hisp.* 31). Nevertheless, Appian is correct in highlighting the fact that experienced veterans could withstand both the physical and moral shock of close-quarter combat far better than inexperienced citizen soldiers. After all, experience of success in the field was the best foundation of calm confidence and good morale, while the great majority of Pansa's recruits had less than four months' service and were now in action for the first time. Weapon skills, discipline and administration were all inevitably below par. Confidence, experience and training were (and still are) the principal factors determining the effectiveness of units in battle.



Aerial view of Tortona, looking north-east. Sited on the right bank of the Scrivia (seen here flowing from bottom right to top left), a tributary of the Po (Padus), between the plain of Marengo (well known for its Napoleonic battle) and the foothills of the Ligurian Apennines, Tortona occupies the site of Dertona. The oldest Roman colony in the westernmost valley of the Padus, Dertona was founded in 148 BC on the Via Postumia, the consular road linking Aquileia with Genua (Genoa). It was here that Decimus Brutus encamped and wrote complaining of Octavian to Cicero during his pursuit of Mark Antony. (Michiel1972/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

For the present-day scholar, such battle descriptions are hardly novel and certainly not surprising. The face of battle is an ugly one, and Forum Gallorum had proved to be no exception. If most of Pansa's recruits had thought the war against Mark Antony was something heroically patriotic, then the very first brush with reality, which was without question so unlike what they had envisaged, had a sobering effect upon them. Probably, like recruits of any age and any army, they knew nothing of war in general and battle in particular.

The risks of battle are central to the soldier's profession, and, to a thoughtful, knowledgeable soldier, it was neither time for triumphalism nor warlike talk. 'Some may be rejoicing at the moment, because the Caesarian leaders and veterans appear to have perished, but they will soon be sorry when they contemplate the desolation of Italy. For the flower of our soldiers, present and to come, has perished' (*ad fam.* 10.33.1), wrote the pessimistic Pollio from his proconsular palace in Hispania Ulterior to Cicero in Rome. For Pollio civil war is a consummate terror that must be avoided. Any alternative to war is better than war, civil or foreign, as long as it keeps the peace. Despite the differences of time and language, Pollio's observation rings true across the globe and across the centuries, not merely his own, and remains so in ours today. A generation that has not known war is less likely to fear it. Terror of war is learned most surely through experience.

Pollio, who in his life had yet to see a decade without hostilities, was not alone in his way of thinking about civil war and the absence of an extended period of peace. His colleague Plancus expressed similar sentiments when he wrote to Cicero from his camp on the Isara (Isère), making it pretty clear that the Caesarian soldiery 'wanted peace, that they would fight nobody now that two excellent consuls had been killed and so many Romans lost to the fatherland' (*ad fam.* 10.21.4). By Caesar's day legionary soldiers like those of Caesar's celebrated *legio X Equestris* had served together long enough to develop a sense of common identity and pride, each individual having some feeling of spiritual unity with the soldiers grouped around him. They were a particularly hard-boiled group of men, but they were flesh and blood

An exposed excavated section of the Via Domitia, Narbonne. Founded in 118 BC and named Colonia Narbo Martius (the cognomen is significant), colloquially Narbo, this Roman colony was situated on the Via Domitia, the major route crossing Gallia Transalpina and connecting Italia with Hispania. The time-tested Roman method of control was to build a road straight through newly conquered territory and then plant a string of colonies, either of civilian settlers or of military veterans, along its route. The settlers would be allocated plots from lands confiscated from the defeated locals. After his successful Munda campaign against the two sons of Pompey in 45 BC, Caesar installed the veterans of his favourite unit, *legio X Equestris*, at Narbo. (Ptitgoneux/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)



too, fully mortal, and therefore vulnerable. After all, a decade or so of hard service had taken its toll: they were not as fresh, flexible or fervent as they had been in Gaul when they had campaigned under Caesar's eye.

Brigadier General S.L.A. Marshall (1900–77), in his seminal (albeit controversial) work *Men against Fire*, emphasizes the importance of what is one of the simplest truths of battle, past, present or future: 'One of the effects of the shock of engagement is that it shakes the weakest files out of the organization. But as for the veterans who remain, they do not grow more callous to danger as they meet it increasingly nor do they ever become more eager for the contest. As they grow in knowledge, the nerve may become steadier in that they are less susceptible to wild imaginings.'⁶

The camaraderie at the heart of a legion may be considered an illustration of what sociologists call a 'primary group', and vital to explaining the steadfastness displayed by soldiers. In the extreme conditions of close-quarter combat, a soldier's survival depends on the physical, the technical and also the moral support he receives from the men who fight alongside him. Although we should be careful to avoid idealizing the relations between the soldiers, it remains that the bonds created within the primary group explain to a certain degree why and how the soldiers brave the paroxysmal violence of battle.

Yet the butchery at Forum Gallorum and Mutina had been horrendous and would have produced a bitter reaction among the former soldiers of Caesar who believed in the solidarity of old comrades. After such wreckage, and since seasoned soldiers do not conquer the fear of wounds and death, Caesar's legions, each a complex blend of rivalry, camaraderie, and allegiance, would never be keen to fight each other again. From their point of view, the fallen of the two battles on *both sides* fell in a political quarrel which should have been avoided.

THE HOLLOW VICTORY

Although Forum Gallorum ended without a decisive victory for either of the two parties, at the end of the day, Mark Antony's bold plan had been foiled and Hirtius' forces had reversed the disastrous outcome of their initial clash, thanks to the decisive intervention of the Caesarian veterans now serving Octavian – the celebrated 'heavenly inspired' legions exalted by Cicero (*Phil.* 5.7). The fighting, however, was extremely fierce and bloody. In the first phase, according to Appian (*B civ.* 3.70), more than half of Pansa's forces and Octavian's entire praetorian cohort were destroyed by the Antonian veterans; the latter were then decimated in turn, losing half of their forces before finding safety in their camps around Mutina. The losses to Hirtius' veterans in the second phase were, however, light.

The first news of the battle that reached a waiting Rome was uncertain, provoking doubts and consternation among the senators grouped around Cicero. The letter sent to the Senate by Hirtius with the news of the triumphant victory and the personal account hastily written up by Galba and addressed to Cicero, raised morale and aroused euphoria among Mark Antony's senatorial enemies. After a few days, on 20 April, Cicero delivered in the Senate the 14th *Philippic*, which, in hindsight, was delivered at a juncture when he mistakenly believed that the struggle against Mark Antony

6 S.L.A. Marshall, *Men against Fire* (Norman, 2000 [1947]), p. 123.



The ruins of a Roman aqueduct, Fréjus, ancient Forum Iulii. Caesar wanted to supplant Massilia, which had supported Pompey, and he founded the colony of Forum Iulii. The exact date of the founding is uncertain, but it was certainly before 43 BC, since it appears in the correspondence between Plancus and Cicero and 49 BC is most likely. It was here that the armies of Mark Antony and Lepidus fraternized, leading to the two Caesarian warlords coming to terms. After Actium, it became a colony for the veterans of *legio VIII* – which had fought at Mutina under Octavian – adding the suffix Octavianorum Colonia. (Greudin/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)

was all but won. In this speech he exalted the victory, called even for 50 days of public thanksgiving (*supplicatio*) – longer than any decreed before – and praised above all the two consuls Hirtius and Pansa, while somewhat minimizing the contribution of Octavian (Cic. *Phil.* 14.11, 29, 36–8, cf. App. *B civ.* 3.74). On that elusive peak ends the collection of *Philippics* so far as extant.

During the same senatorial session, Cicero gave the news of Pansa's injury, but the latter's life did not seem to be in danger (*Phil.* 14.26). On the morning of 23 April, however, the consul died in circumstances that have never fully been explained. His

Greek physician Glykon was briefly arrested on suspicion of poisoning his patient (Sue. *DA* 11.1). The rumour spread, later recorded by some ancient authorities, that Octavian had been directly responsible for the sudden death of the consul, whose wound had not seemed too serious. Tacitus, for instance, with his usual brand of innuendo, implies this was not only so for one consul but both of them: 'Soon both consuls, Caius Vibius Pansa and Aulus Hirtius, had met their deaths – by enemy action; or perhaps in one case by deliberate poisoning of his wound [viz. Pansa], and in the other at the hand of his own troops [viz. Hirtius], instigated by Octavianus' (Tac. *Ann.* 1.10.1).

This was a salacious piece of headquarters gossip perhaps, which has no foundation in fact, and the honourable Marcus Brutus at least refused to believe that Glykon could have been guilty (Cic. *ad Brut.* 14.2). Yet this was the precise moment for the Liberators and their supporters to restore the Republic. However, they bungled the whole affair. Besides, the death of the moderate consuls, who formed some sort of buffer between young Caesar and the Liberators, precipitated disaster.

The second battle was clearly a senatorial victory in the sense that its forces achieved its aim of breaking the blockade of Mutina. But it was not the Antonian humiliation that it is sometimes made out to have been. True, the enemy had been forced to withdraw with their tails firmly between their legs. Furthermore, Decimus Brutus had been relieved – but at a cost, for Appian notes that, after the lifting of the siege, Brutus' soldiers suffered 'from poor health, having over-eaten after their famine and contracted dysentery' (*B civ.* 3.81, cf. 97). In fact, Decimus Brutus started west in pursuit of the Antonians only on 24 April (Cic. *ad fam.* 11.13.1–2), reaching Regium Lepidi, 17 Roman miles from Mutina, the following day. He was to remain encamped there with his siege-weakened army until 29 April (*ibid.* 11.9).

Worse still, Mark Antony personally escaped capture, and again some suspected the intervention of the conniving hand of the young Caesar. True or not, Decimus Brutus had urged Octavian to turn south and cross the Apennines into Etruria, a move anticipated to cut off Publius Ventidius and prevent him from marching north-westwards to join Mark Antony. Ventidius, an important but often neglected player in the war of Mutina, was coming up in the rear of the senatorial forces with three veteran legions re-enlisted in his native Picenum. But Caesar's heir refused to co-operate, alleging that *his* men would not serve under one of Caesar's assassins. The

political instinct of Decimus Brutus was right, for he anxiously wrote from his camp at Dertona to Cicero in Rome: ‘But there are no giving orders to Caesar, nor *by* Caesar to his army – both very bad things’ (*ad fam.* 11.10.4). And so Ventidius slipped through.

Cicero’s remarks in many texts that survive leave no doubt that Octavian was the linchpin of his strategy for dealing with Mark Antony. Thus, for Cicero at least, Octavian had now fulfilled his purpose. Unrealistically but inevitably, Decimus Brutus was appointed commander of all the senatorial forces at Mutina. He was also awarded the prestigious military triumph; the justification was that, since Mark Antony and company were outlaws, not citizens, it was permissible to triumph over them. On the other hand, Octavian, who was not recognized at all by the Senate, was simply thanked for his assistance and effectively dismissed from his command (Dio 46.40.1, cf. App. *B civ.* 3.76). Cicero was of course happy to support Decimus Brutus’ triumph (Cic. *ad Brut.* 1.3.4, 5.1), but in the end Brutus never celebrated it, as he never returned to Rome.

Even so, this evident slight by the Senate was to have serious repercussions. Octavian, who obviously refused any form of rapprochement with Decimus Brutus, now had the legitimate excuse he needed and, with the convenient passing of the two consuls – ‘good consuls but no more than good’ (Cic. *ad Brut.* 10.1) – and backed by the soldiers of his adoptive father, Octavian was able to assume command of *all* the Caesarian legions as well as retaining one of the four recruited by Pansa (Cic. *ad fam.* 11.20.4).

The soldiers, for their part, feared that Mark Antony’s provisions for the veterans would be dropped. Already the bounties promised to Octavian’s troops had been decreased on the plea that the absence of revenues from the troubled eastern provinces made full pay impossible. Moreover, the colony for veterans which the Senate had instructed the proconsuls Lepidus and Plancus to establish at Lugdunum (Lyon) was endangered by their defection to Mark Antony. Though the bounties promised by the Senate had been decreased, Octavian himself was still paying the soldiers out of his own war



Fiume Reno, passing just west of Bologna at Casalecchio di Reno. This was the *Rhenus* of antiquity, and it was on an islet formed by the waters of said river that most modern commentators – following Plutarch (*Cic.* 46.3) and Dio Cassius (46.54.3) – place the infamous three-day meeting between Mark Antony, Octavian and Lepidus. Their armed get-together resulted in the three Caesarian warlords agreeing on the terms of the triumvirate, which included the tripartite division of the empire and a purge of their personal enemies. (Luca83/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

chest, and they sent an armed deputation to Rome to demand their benefits and the consulship and a triumph for their young warlord. The Senate flatly refused the proposals, but they did offer the sop of a praetorship. When the senators took this decision it was not immediately clear whether they were making a mistake, or being realistic in believing that Octavian would submissively become a praetor (were the senators dozing or over-confident?). Yet it was a refusal they were soon to regret. Suetonius has a centurion from Octavian's army brushing aside his cloak and tapping the hilt of his *gladius*. 'If you do not make him consul', he warned, 'then this will [*hic faciet, si vos non faceritis*]' (Sue. *DA* 26.1). Whether or not we choose to believe this picturesque anecdote, the sword was indeed to decide.

The military adventurer took the rejection as a challenge, and deserted the republican cause. Leaving Decimus Brutus to shift for himself, Octavian about-faced and for the second time in ten months set out to march on Rome. This time, however, he came along with vengeance in mind. He crossed the Rubicon with his five legions – eight, according to Appian (*B civ.* 3.88, 90) – and pushed on with picked troops, moving with the rapidity of his adoptive father Caesar. Two veteran units from Africa, *legiones* XXVI and XXVIII (ibid. 3.85, 91, cf. [Caes.] *B Afr.* 60.1), disembarked at Ostia. Along with the legion of recruits which Pansa had left in Rome, namely *legio V urbana*, they were deployed on the Janiculum and the capital was put in a posture of defence. Octavian swept down the Via Flaminia and entered the city unopposed. The three legions of the Senate went over without hesitation. One praetor took an honourable exit. This was the only bloodshed. In the bubbling stew of Rome's rumour, word that *legio* IIII and *legio Martia* were about to desert Octavian gave momentary hope to the Senate in this hour of extreme military need, but soon proved to be false (App. *B civ.* 3.93). The senators advanced to make their peace with the cold young Caesar. Among them was Cicero, 'the last of his friends to greet him' (ibid. 3.92).

Cicero, showing 'strength' in an attempt to disguise weakness, became weaker still. Fleeting he thought that he had tamed his tormentor. In reality, not only was the 'internal enemy' underestimated – biding his time, and of course far from tamed – Cicero was striding towards his doom. As a frustrated and fatigued Cicero had ominously written to Decimus Brutus back in early June, 'I am a spent force. The Senate was my right arm, and it has lost its cunning' (*ad fam.* 11.14.1). Cicero's words carry an echo of the moral of Aesop's fable about the man who nurtured a snake and then complained when it bit him. For the prime cause of Cicero's foreboding was his protégé, the 'divine youth whom providence has sent to save the state' (Cic. *Phil.* 5.43).

A high degree of flexibility was a desired characteristic in a time of civil war with its abrupt swings and about-faces. As Cicero's beloved Republic slid from under him, the 'divine youth' turned to the army and invited them, as citizens, to take sides in a political issue. They responded positively. Thus, his unopposed entry into Rome allowed him to snatch one of the vacant consulships – the other went to an obscure kinsman, Quintus Pedius – though he was far below the statutory age. From the very beginning, Octavian's sense for political reality was unerring, his ambition implacable. As for the Senate, it had snatched diplomatic defeat out of the jaws of military victory. Octavian, as commander of a loyal army, consul, Caesar, and avenger of his 'father', was a potent force, far removed from Cicero's recent 'boy' protégé. Octavian now prepared to face Mark Antony as an equal.

THE AFTERMATH

In 59 BC the whole empire had perhaps 15 legions in arms; after the dispersal of much of Mark Antony's army at Mutina there were over 60, with some 40-plus legions now serving in the western provinces (Brunt 1987 [1971]: 449, 482–4): ten under Decimus Brutus, five (or eight) under Octavian, seven under Marcus Aemilius Lepidus (*cos.* 46 BC), three under Caius Asinius Pollio, five under Lucius Munatius Plancus, four (including Publius Ventidius' three) under Mark Antony, three in Africa, one in Sardinia, and *legio V urbana* in Rome. Such vast armies (over a quarter of a million men) inevitably dictated policies. Octavian failed to join Decimus Brutus to destroy Mark Antony's 'petty little band of unarmed foot soldiers' (Cic. *ad fam.* 11.10.3). Partly he was reluctant to co-operate with one of Caesar's murderers; partly he was suffering from the speculation that he had caused the deaths of Hirtius and Pansa to hold all the power himself.

Obviously, the death of the consuls at Mutina left a vacuum at the summit of the administration at Rome, which in the short term gave more scope to those like Cicero who were pursuing the interests of the conspirators and wished to maintain the struggle against Mark Antony. In this respect Cicero did have in view one paramount objective, which was that Mark Antony should be destroyed before he had an opportunity to regroup. 'The case stands thus: the man who crushes Antonius will have finished the war' (*ad fam.* 11.12.2), Cicero told Decimus Brutus, and 'my wish and hope is

Les massacres du Triumvirate (Paris, Musée du Louvre, RF 1939–28), oil on canvas by Antoine Caron (1521–99). Painted in 1566, the canvas is an allegory, which symbolizes the butchering and burning of Huguenots worshipping at Vassy (1 March 1562), an atrocity that sparked the French wars of religion (1562–98). The previous year (6 April 1561) the constable of France, Anne de Montmorency, had been joined by Jacques d'Alban de Saint-André and François de Guise in a triumvirate at the head of the Catholic League. The artist also wanted the viewer to be reminded of the killings carried out in the name of the triumvirate of Mark Antony, Octavian and Lepidus. Though Caron never visited the Rome of his day, he did populate his painting with ancient and contemporary Roman monuments and sculptures. (Yorck Project/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)



that Antonius is really down and out' (ibid. 11.18.2). However, Cicero's prediction of Mark Antony's termination, and, accordingly, a return to the old order of things, did not exactly come true. Truly had the war of Mutina been a hollow victory.

A PURSUIT DOOMED FROM THE START

A series of letters to Cicero from Decimus Brutus documents his vain pursuit of Mark Antony into Gallia Transalpina. On 29 April he was ready to quit his camp at Regium Lepidi, arriving at Parma on the same or next day (Cic. *ad fam.* 11.13b). With the aim of driving Mark Antony out of the Italian peninsula and cutting him off from Publius Ventidius, he was hoping for help from Lepidus, Pollio, and Plancus. He had no illusions about Lepidus' reliability but seems to have expected him to abandon his former alliance with Mark Antony after the latter's defeat. For this reason he wanted Cicero to write to Lepidus dissuading him from linking with Mark Antony (ibid. 11.9.1–2). On 4 May he was at Dertona (Tortona), the northern junction of the Via Postumia and the Via Aemilia Scauri, but on the previous day Mark Antony had linked up with Ventidius and his three veteran legions at Vada Sabatia (Vado Ligure) on the Ligurian coast; Decimus Brutus expected that he would either make for Lepidus or use the Ligurian Apennines as a base for raiding. Two days later on his way to the Alps he knew that Mark Antony was going to join Lepidus (ibid. 11.11.1). A week later he was at Pollentia (Pollenzo), hoping that Mark Antony would strike north: there was an intelligence report (erroneous, as it turns out) that Mark Antony had asked his soldiers to follow him across the Alps since he had an agreement with Lepidus, but Ventidius' reinforcements (who outnumbered Mark Antony's forces in spite of the latter's desperate measures of conscription) had booed the suggestion (ibid. 11.13.3). In fact, Mark Antony and Ventidius did not turn inland but proceeded with their journey along the narrow Ligurian road (the future Via Iulia Augusta, the coastal route to Massilia) between the mountains and the sea. Decimus Brutus gave up the pursuit, and Mark Antony was able to enter Gallia Transalpina unmolested.

It is always important in a civil war to show supreme confidence, since any sign of caution will readily be interpreted as weakness and so make people wonder whether to switch sides. Mark Antony may have seen better days, and his hasty retreat out of Gallia Cisalpina was surely a roll of the dice, but, having successfully crossed over the mountains into Gallia Transalpina, he confidently met up with its proconsul Lepidus at Forum Iulii (Fréjus). The pair opened communications and their soldiers mingled and mixed, with the result that on 30 May Lepidus' men went over to Mark Antony and he himself was obliged to follow immediately (App. *B civ.* 3.83–4, cf. Plut. *Ant.* 18). Velleius Paterculus had this to say, 'Lepidus rejected Mark Antony's first overtures... but Mark Antony showed himself to the soldiers of Lepidus. And since Lepidus was the worst of all generals, and Mark Antony was by far his superior – while he was sober – the soldiers of Lepidus broke open their wall and took Mark Antony into the camp' (Vell. 2.63.1).

The obverse of an *aureus* commemorating the triumvirate, struck in 42 BC. This example bears a portrait of Marcus Aemilius Lepidus. The inscription reads M(arcus) • LEPIDVS • III VIR • R • P • C (... *triumvir rei publicae constituendae*). He owed his membership of the triumvirate to the seven legions he commanded and to his recent union with Mark Antony. To Cicero's charge of betrayal of the Republic by reversing the course of freedom won at Mutina, Decimus Brutus, in a letter to the orator, added the label of indecision to Lepidus, calling him a weathercock, *homo ventosissimus* (Cic. *ad fam.* 11.9.1). Yet he still managed to equal as *bis consul* and *pontifex maximus* the great ancestor, his great-grandfather – and surpassed him with two triumphs. (Sailko/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)



The campaign after Mutina





Silver *tetradrachm* struck around 36 BC in the Syrian seaport of Seleukeia-in-Pieria (today the village of Çevlik in Turkey), with Mark Antony on the obverse. The Greek inscription (without punctuation) reads: [ΑΝΤΩΝΙΟC/ΑΥΤ]ΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ/ΤΡΙΤΟΝ/ΤΡΙΩΝ/ΑΝΔ[ΡΩΝ]. This coin portrait of Mark Antony shows well his thickset neck and square-jawed, fleshy face. The use of personal portraiture on Roman coins was a relatively new departure, first utilized by Mark Antony's old chief, Caesar. To the dynasts of the failing Republic the propaganda value of coinage was a 'soft weapon' they could not afford to ignore. Here Mark Antony, now master of the lion's share of the Roman empire, styles himself αὐτοκράτωρ τρίτον τρίων ἀνδρῶν (literary, 'one third of three autocratic men'), that is, triumvir. (Gulustan/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)

Lepidus had gone to sleep commander of an army and woken to find that his soldiers had made all the decisions for him. It was this event, more than any other, which decided the outcome of the whole war, for in war it is generally small events that tip the scales of fortune.

The news that the two Caesarian heavyweights had carried out their peaceful coup and joined forces caused consternation in Rome, where the war had seemed as good as won. Cicero saw Lepidus' merger with Mark Antony as a betrayal that had snatched imminent victory from the Senate and reignited the Caesarian cause. His frustration and anger poured forth in a torrent of abuse against the man whom he had so recently praised. The effect of this bitter attack has lasted long beyond Cicero's lifetime. Meanwhile, in Gallia Comata, Cicero's family friend Plancus professed

loyalty and was eventually joined by Decimus Brutus. Like Decimus Brutus, Plancus had fought for Caesar in both the Gallic and the civil wars, thereby earning his major command in northern Gaul, with three legions, and designation as consul for the year 42 BC (*PIR*² M 728).

Back in February (if not before), the Senate had summoned Plancus from Gallia Comata (along with Lepidus from Gallia Transalpina) to help fight Mark Antony in Gallia Cisalpina (Dio 46.29.6, 50.2, Cic. *ad fam.* 10.33.1, cf. *Phil.* 13.16, 44). Plancus nevertheless dragged his feet, fearful of the reaction of his army, especially the veteran *legio X Equestris*, which he himself had recalled to the standards (*not* Lepidus, as many modern commentators wrongly believe) but had once been commanded by Mark Antony (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.11.2, cf. App. *B civ.* 3.83).⁷ In his correspondence to Cicero, Plancus says that he crossed the Rhodanus (Rhône) on 26 April (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.9.3) probably at Lugdunum, and as of 18 May he was no farther south than the Isara (Isère), where he had constructed a bridge protected by two forts at either end (ibid. 10.18.4). On 29 May he was within c.60km of Lepidus' army when Mark Antony joined Lepidus and then moved against Plancus. Plancus scuttled back to the Isara, which he crossed six days later, on 4 June. Shortly afterwards, Decimus led his own army across the Alps and bivouacked with Plancus on the Isara.

Two striking facts about Plancus' behaviour are that it took him more than three times as long to march the couple of hundred or so kilometres south from the Isara as it did to march back, and that for all his marching, he never came within a spear's throw of either Lepidus or Mark Antony. Cicero cannot have been oblivious of the gap between Plancus' professions and his performance, and that his friend's allegiance to the cause of the Republic might be up in the air. Mark Antony was boasting publicly that Plancus was in league with him (Cic. *Phil.* 13.43) and, according to Appian, he voiced confidence that 'Lepidus and Plancus will ally themselves firmly with him' (*B civ.* 3.72, cf. 46). At the end of April, and again at the beginning of May, Decimus Brutus raised warnings about this very possibility (Cic. *ad fam.* 11.9.2, 11.1), and still later, Pollio would remind Cicero of the friendship between Mark Antony and Plancus (ibid. 10.33.2). Cicero's letters to Plancus

⁷ For this, see Shackleton Bailey 2004 [1977]: 525.

become more frequent in this period. Five of them, or a third of the total, were written in the month of May, and their tone is more inveigling than before.

So the armies remained inactive until August, when Pollio did the unexpected, coming up with two legions from Hispania Ulterior. Pollio was bound by his personal friendship to Mark Antony; and he now reconciled Plancus and Mark Antony. So Plancus joined the company of the 'red-hot rebels' and 'traitors', as he had so recently termed them in a letter written to Cicero (Cic. *ad fam.* 10.23.3, 5). The polished and graceful Plancus, who had served as a Caesarian legate, was the reverse of a bellicose character.

A careful calculation of his own interests and assiduous care for his own safety would carry him through well-timed treacheries to a peaceful old age under Augustus – doing well out of the new regime, he was interred in a monumental circular mausoleum, which stands to this day on the outskirts of Gaeta (ancient Caieta) on the Tyrrhenian coast of Lazio (Latium). Pollio, by comparison, was a scholar, wit and an *honest* man, a friend of Caesar and with him when he crossed the Rubicon.



Marble bust (Lyon, Musée gallo-romain de Lyon-Fourvière, inv. 2006-0-307) of Lucius Munatius Plancus (cos. 42 BC), one of the most distinguished, astute, and unprincipled survivors of the civil wars, dictatorship and triumviral rule. He was the last survivor of Caesar's Gallic War legates, and the most elegant among the correspondents of Cicero. Along with Talleyrand, Plancus must be one of history's classic examples of politicians who have managed to stay alive during very dangerous circumstances by constantly shifting their political allegiances. Velleius Paterculus, who valued loyalty, called him 'diseased with desertion' (2.83.1, cf. 76.1). He professed loyalty to Cicero and the Senate during the war of Mutina, but remained in communication with Mark Antony and ultimately joined him. (Rama/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-2.0)



The battle site of Philippi, looking west from the summit of the acropolis (311 m), with a Byzantine tower at the foreground. The terrain at Philippi presented difficulties that Brutus and Cassius turned to their defensive advantage. Each pitched a camp on a separate hill – good ground to hold. Brutus' camp (below right) occupied a spur of the mountain extending north-east of the acropolis precipitous enough in the rear to impede an enemy's approach. Cassius' camp (below left) was flanked by marshland that spanned almost the entire width of the plain between Philippi and Mount Pangaeion that would be equally treacherous to cross. Between the two camps were a ditch, rampart and palisade, with a gate in the middle through which the Via Egnatia ran, which is the road at the foot of the acropolis. (Marsyas/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

The unfortunate Decimus Brutus, duped by Plancus and deserted by his soldiers, fled east towards Macedonia with the intention of joining Brutus and Cassius, the unquestionable leaders of the resistance to the Caesarian regime. Fate was unkind to Decimus Brutus. When death did strike him down he was not fighting for the cause of liberty. In fact he was hunted down and murdered by an Alpine chieftain on Mark Antony's orders (App. *B civ.* 3.97-8, Dio 45.53). 'Thus he met his just deserts and paid the penalty of his treason to Caius Caesar', wrote Velleius Paterculus (2.64.2) 73 years later. Mark Antony, on the run only a month or so previously, had emerged stronger than ever.

In a downcast moment after the union between Mark Antony and Lepidus, and the failure of Decimus Brutus and Plancus, Cicero wrote to Marcus Brutus: 'The fact is, Brutus, we are made a mockery by the caprices of the soldiers and the insolence of generals. Everybody demands as much political power as he has force behind him. Reason, moderation, law, tradition, duty count for nothing [*non ratio, non modus, non lex, non mos, non officium valet*] – likewise the judgement and views of the citizen body and respect for the opinion of those who come after us' (Cic. *ad Brut.* 18.3).

It was June 43 BC. The only remaining hope for the despondent Cicero and the Senate of success in the provinces of the west lay with the 19-year-old Octavian. It was a slim chance indeed, which relied upon an outcome whereby Mark Antony and Octavian would weaken each other and hold each other in check until the Republic could possess itself of an effective, loyal army of its own.

THE GANG OF THREE

The young Caesar realized that the only way to eliminate the murderers of his adopted father was to form a political alliance with his hitherto enemy, Mark Antony. Quintus Pedius, Octavian co-consul, passed a law, the *lex Pedia*, which lifted the condemnation of Mark Antony and his followers, revoked the amnesty of Caesar's assassins, and affirmed Octavian as Caesar's legitimate son and heir (Dio 46.95.5, App. *B civ.* 3.95).

In late October 43 BC, Octavian and Mark Antony met near Bononia: both brought their battle-scarred legions with them. There was a third man, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, son of the long-dead Marcus Aemilius Lepidus of the insurrection against the Sullan regime in 78 BC. Lepidus junior had been *magister equitum* under Caesar from 46 to 44 BC and consul with Caesar in 46 BC, which had been a most blatant departure from constitutional traditions, the election for the first time since 343 BC of two patrician consuls (Dio 43.1.1–3, 33.1). For three days (Appian says two) the three Caesarian warlords isolated themselves on a small island on a river close to Bononia while their soldiers waited on the banks, eager for an agreement. Mark Antony and Octavian acknowledged the need for a compromise that would ensure the loyalty of the troops, avoid suicidal strife among the Caesarians, and combine their legions against the conspirators. Lepidus acted as mediator. To the joy of both armies the result was a signed, sealed compact creating a triumvirate (Dio 46.55.3, 47.2.1–2, App. *B civ.* 4.2–3, 7).

The terms 'triumvirate' and 'triumvirs' are modern inventions. In Latin, Mark Antony, Octavian and Lepidus were titled *tresviri rei publicae constituendae*, 'three men with responsibility for settling the state', namely an

officially sanctioned board of three men to exist for five years for the express purpose of bringing order to a state torn by civil strife. They were each given the *imperium* of a consul, the right to make or annul laws and appoint magistrates without consulting the Senate or the people. Fittingly, they promptly sealed and signed their paralegal covenant with blood. The triumvirs, pronouncing their dead chief's policy of *clementia*, clemency, a failure, awarded themselves the authority to root out their opponents all at once; they now abolished the private rights of citizenship, thus allowing them to execute citizens without the right of appeal to the popular assemblies. A contemporary of Augustus, Livy, put it this way: 'Caius Caesar made terms with Antonius and Lepidus providing that... each should proscribe his personal enemies... among them Lucius (Aemilius Lepidus) Paullus [cos. 50 BC], the brother of Lepidus, Lucius (Iulius) Caesar [cos. 64 BC], the uncle [on the mother's side] of Antonius [Mark Antony], and Marcus Cicero [cos. 63 BC]' (Livy *Epitome* 120).

So began the proscriptions, and once again Roman slaughtered Roman, bodies were tossed in the Tiber, and heads were nailed up above the *rostra* in the Forum.

We have labelled these three men as 'warlords', and we do so because theirs was a period when men of dubious legality ruled by their own authority and no other. The currency of the warlord remains to this day one of force and its handmaiden, fear. Fear is a very economical way of ruling: a great deal of fear can be produced with very little force. The warlord ignores the law of the land to impose his own version of justice. In other words, the warlord is the cult of the personality, crafted by propaganda and metamorphosed into military force. As a consequence, warlordism, if we may so term it, can be described as a situation where a number of individual military commanders exercise autonomous political power by virtue of the actual or threatened use of the military force under their personal control. This was clearly the case with this unpleasant trio.



The acropolis of Philippi with Mount Pangaeion beyond, as seen from the traditional location of the camp of Cassius, about 2.5km west of Philippi. Mark Antony attempted to outflank Cassius by cutting a path through the marshland and, though thwarted, brought on a general engagement. Brutus' forces overran the opposing lines and captured the main triumviral camp; Mark Antony in turn broke through Cassius' defences, routed his troops and took his camp. Mark Antony assumed the dominant role in avenging Caesar's legacy at the first engagement of Philippi and the triumviral legions responded positively to him as they had once done to Caesar. (Marsyas/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

Parian marble bust (Athens, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 547) from Smyrna of a Roman woman, likely the famously virtuous Octavia minore (66–11 BC), sister to Augustus and fourth wife of Mark Antony. In late 40 BC, recently widowed, she would marry Mark Antony to seal the peace arranged at Brundisium between her brother and her new husband. She would have two daughters by Mark Antony before he left her for Cleopatra. In her goodness and steadfast support of her wayward husband, she brought up in his house in Rome not only her own children, but also his two sons by his previous marriage to Fulvia. Mark Antony did not divorce Octavia until 32 BC when the Roman world split into two warring camps. (Giovanni Dall'Orto/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)



The consuls of Rome had considerable power but no permanence. These three men, however, were absolute rulers who did not need to heed such government as then existed. But they were absolute rulers only because they had *private* armies, which therefore allowed them to flourish in and contributed to the weakness of that senatorial government. Octavian's version of these events is preserved in the brief *Res Gestae*, his own account of his achievements:

At the age of 19 on my own responsibility and at my own expense, I raised an army [*exercitum privato*], with which I successfully championed the liberty of the Republic when it was oppressed by the tyranny of a faction [*dominatione factionis*]. On that account the Senate passed decrees in my honour enrolling me in its order in the consulship of Caius Pansa and Aulus Hirtius, assigning me the right to give my opinion among the *consulares* and giving me *imperium*. It ordered me as a *propraetor* to provide in concert with the consuls that the Republic should come to no harm. In the same year, when both consuls had fallen in battle, the people appointed me consul and triumvir for the organization of the Republic (RG 1.1–4).

Like 'democracy' today, 'liberty' could mean anything you wanted it to mean, and nobody was ever against it, except here of course, the 'faction' (read Mark Antony), which is emasculated and reduced to a mere inconvenience in the eyes of the author.

This is not the right place to give a detailed summary of the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, but a few essential considerations are obligatory. This is a document that values a discourse on the achievements of the divine person responsible more than an irony-laced polemic on man's capricious nature. The 'betrayal' of liberty is therefore used as a denouncement of the defeated faction; with their similar rhetorical attachment to liberty, Pompey and Caesar had done the same (Dio 41.57.1–2), as had Sulla before them (App. *B civ.* 1.57). As you would expect, the author chooses not to explain the situation fully, preferring to show the world his soft velvet glove. Similarly, nothing is said in detail about the second march on Rome, which *forced* the Senate to agree to his irregular election to the consulship, and his subsequent compact with Mark Antony and Lepidus, under which he resigned the consulship and became a triumvir along with them. Again, the bare facts are recorded without explanation.

The *Res Gestae* is often as informative in its omissions as in the language and style of presentation, and for this reason alone makes it the single most important piece of ancient evidence of the ideology of Augustus.

The composite sources of a ruler's authority, he knew, can be elaborated by dissimulation, the shrewd use of pressure, guile, and duplicity. Augustus excelled in the methodology of government and related arts. He particularly excelled in the arts of propaganda and public relations, the organized effort to influence opinion, directly and indirectly, by word and by deed. He derived strength even from the equivocal nature of his words and public acts. His ambiguity has led different men to very different conclusions about him. Still, his long-term aim was the increase of his own authority, prestige, and power in *his* Rome.

On 1 January 42 BC, the Senate officially recognized Caesar as god of the Roman state and commissioned a new temple of Divus Iulius to be built at the site of his funeral pyre in the Forum (Dio 47.18.3). Octavian now found himself *Divi Iulii filius*, 'son of the god' and derived the greatest benefit from inheriting Caesar's halo, and received further justification, if any was needed, for pursuing the murderers of his adoptive father; but Mark Antony and Lepidus were also strengthened by their former ties to the divinity. Towards the end of the year, Brutus and Cassius met with a crushing defeat at a double engagement near the Macedonian town of Philippi (Philíppoi) on the Via Egnatia (3 and 23 October).⁸ Once again, we have Octavian's perspective on the battle of Philippi preserved in the *Res Gestae*: 'I drove into exile the murderers of my (adoptive) father, avenging their crime through tribunals established by law; and afterwards, when they made war on the Republic, I twice defeated them in battle' (RG 2.1).

If the truth be told, the first engagement was in fact indecisive; while on one wing Mark Antony defeated Cassius' forces, on the other, Brutus routed Octavian's and stormed into his camp. Cassius, ignorant of this success, despaired and ordered his personal slave to run him through with a sword (by coincidence, it was his birthday), leaving the overall command to Brutus, who was a less competent commander. This action therefore paved the way for the triumvirs' complete victory in the second engagement. Naturally, the author obscures the fact that the real victor was Mark Antony, who was to win that day 'the reputation for invincibility' (App. *B civ.* 5.58). The line by Plautus applies well to Octavian: 'He who would eat the nut must crack the shell' (*Curculio* 1.1.55). A man is not justified in demanding a share of the profit, who has not taken his share of the toil.

Throughout history strongmen have rewritten the past to suit their ends, twisting and tweaking history to further their political goals (and still do to this day). George Orwell once penned a political slogan regarding the importance of the past: 'Who controls the past controls the future: who



The obverse of an *aureus* (Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, inv. MCA- NUM-30042) proclaiming AVGUSTVS • DIVI • F, (Augustus, son of the deified). Dated to 9–8 BC, it bears a profile of the supreme ruler as a young man crowned with a circlet. When Roman emperors used their coins for political propaganda, sometimes their versions prevailed over the hostile press and decisively influence posterity. Augustus, with all the prestige of Caesar's heir and of his own highly successful record, provides a classic instance of this situation. (© Esther Carré)

⁸ Modern commentators offer various dates for the two battles of Philippi: the date for the second engagement is enumerated by the *Fasti Praenestini*, an Augustan calendar now housed in the Museo Nazionale Romano di Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome. The entry in the calendar reads: [H X c(omitilis) Caes]r Augustus vicit Phil(ippis) posteriore proelio / Bruto occiso (AE 1922.96). In addition, a recent topographical autopsy of the battles has challenged the traditional interpretation of Philippi and suggested an alternative location for the two camps of Brutus and Cassius, namely two hills in the south-eastern section of the plain, near the modern village of Amygdaléonas on the ancient route of the Via Egnatia (Butera & Sears: 2017).

Remaining fragments of the *Fasti Praenestini* (Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano di Palazzo Massimo alle Terme). When pieced together these fragments record the months of January, March, April, and December almost in their entirety, while recording bits and pieces of the months of February, August, September, October, and November. Around AD 6, Marcus Verrius Flaccus erected the calendar in the forum of his hometown of Praeneste. A freedman who became a learned scholar and grammarian, Augustus entrusted the education of his two grandsons to him. The frequent mentions of Augustus in the entries of the *Fasti Praenestini*, in addition to Verrius Flaccus' personal relationship with Augustus as related by Suetonius (*Gram.* 17), have led some scholars to interpret the creation of the *Fasti Praenestini* as an act of propaganda supporting the new Augustan regime. (Marie-Lan Nguyen/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-2.5)



controls the present controls the past'.⁹ That Octavian was otherwise occupied during the first engagement was even admitted by the apologetic Velleius Paterculus (2.70.1) and, according to the elder Pliny (*NH* 7.148), even the robust Marcus Agrippa did not deem to deny that his frail comrade-in-arms had lurked in a neighbouring bog for three days, completely out of touch with his army. Controlling the memory was at the heart of the Augustan regime in Rome, but perhaps the story was too widely known to be officially hushed up.

At any rate, vengeance followed victory. For after the second engagement the son of the divine Caesar reaped his bloody and awful revenge. When one of the senatorial prisoners begged humbly for a proper burial, Octavian told him it was a matter for the carrion birds. When a father and son pleaded for their lives, he apparently told them to cast lots to determine which of the two should be spared; the father sacrificed his life for the son, and the son then took his own life. It was even said that Octavian had the corpse of Brutus decapitated, sending the grisly trophy to Rome 'to be cast at the feet of Caesar's statue' (Sue. *DA* 13.1). Some may doubt these post-Philippi stories, probably because they sit ill with the picture of the cold and calculating man who was to rule Rome for four and a half decades.

In the aftermath of Philippi, Octavian may have acted more like a vicious, blood-soaked Aventine gangster than a victorious, booty-laden Roman general, but the young warlord himself certainly preferred to be feared rather than loved. Interestingly, in the seemingly paradoxical summation of the habitually pro-Augustan Velleius Paterculus, 'Cassius was the much better

⁹ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London, 1949), part II, ch. 3, part III, ch. 2.



general, as Brutus was the better man. Of the two, I would rather have Brutus as a friend, but would stand more in fear of Cassius as an enemy'. Brutus, he continues, had 'kept his soul free from corruption until this day' – the Ides of March – when 'the rashness of a single act' robbed him of his virtue (Vell. 2.62.1). Mark Antony emulated Alexander's gesture towards Dareios by covering Brutus' body with his scarlet cloak. He then had the body reverently cremated and his remains sent to Servilia, Brutus' mother and Caesar's former mistress (Plut. *Brut.* 53.4).

The Republic went down at Philippi – as Tacitus rightly declares, the result 'left no republican forces in the field [*nulla iam publica arma*]' (*Ann.* 1.2.1) – and the survivors¹⁰ of the vanquished cause took refuge with Sextus Pompeius Magnus Pius, the sole-surviving son of the great Pompey, whom the Senate had earlier assigned an extraordinary command over the fleets and sea coasts of the Roman dominions for the war against Mark Antony (App. *B civ.* 4.94). Since then he had taken control of Sicily and Sardinia, increased his naval strength, and now commanded a bigger navy than the triumvirs. He had been condemned and outlawed *in absentia* under the stipulations of the *lex Pedia*. The contest of Pompey against Caesar was set up for a replay between their sons.

¹⁰ Among those who survived the carnage of Philippi was a twenty-two-year-old *tribunus militum* in one of Brutus' legions (*Satire* 1.6.45–8). Quintus Horatius Flaccus. An auctioneer's son from Venusia, Apulia, he was an unwarlike young man with protruding ears and poetic ambitions who would be famous as the great Augustan poet Horace. This literary lion confesses, or so he would have the reader believe, that he 'knew defeat and speedy flight / at Philippi, my little shield abandoned (*Ode* 11.7.9–10 Kaimowitz). Horace is likely best known today as the author of the phrase *carpe diem*, 'seize [or, more literally, 'pluck'] the day' (ibid. 1.11.8), which has become a part of the small change of culture. Even people without any knowledge of Latin (beyond *etcetera*, *status quo*, *ipso facto* and *vice versa*) know those two words.

Giovanni Battista (Giambattista) Tiepolo, 'The Banquet of Antony and Cleopatra', 1743–44 (Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, inv. no. 103-4). Framed in an 18th-century Venetian setting, the painting depicts the legendary banquet scene – as described by the elder Pliny (*NH* 9.119), who does not name her, but dismisses her as an 'impertinent royal tart' – when Cleopatra dissolves one of her pearl earrings in a cup of *acetum* (vinegar) in order to win a bet she had with Mark Antony over who could throw (and consume) the most extravagant feast. This is Cleopatra VII Thea Neotera Philopator – who was more intelligent and less beautiful than Hollywood would have us believe – at her most different, decadent and dangerous, outdoing the formidable and famous Roman nobleman and general. (Yorck Project/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)

For now, however, the time-served veterans were released, while the remainder were merged into 11 legions, three of which accompanied Octavian back to Italy. The other eight legions went to Mark Antony, including his favourite formation, *legio V Alaudae*. In fact, the victory over Brutus and Cassius soon led to a duumvirate, for the empire was carved up between the two victors. Lepidus (*cos.* II) was fobbed off with ‘that picked bone’, Punic Africa, while Mark Antony took the eastern provinces and the part of Gaul north of the Alps, and Octavian was left with the western provinces and Italy, thereby giving him the thorny problem of settling the discharged veterans. This meant confiscating land in Italy, and the celebrated Augustan poet Virgil was supposed to have lost his paternal home and estate in this way. Certainly the author’s *Eclogues*, especially the first and the ninth, leave a moving and haunting imprint of a small farmer’s suffering at this troubled time. By a strange coincidence, his fellow poets Horace and Propertius also saw their family’s land violently expropriated and handed over to retired soldiers. Horace, originally from Venusia, referred with a sardonic mixture of sourness and humour to the presence of ‘great centurions’ who had installed themselves in his town (*Satire* I.6.71–5). Theirs was the civil war generation, which had longed for unfamiliar peace and would prize the blessings the Augustan version of it brought.

THE DEATH OF CICERO

Taking a step back, we return to Cicero. The post-Caesarian letters of Cicero cover a span of about 16 months in which he found an opportunity to take centre stage as he rallied the Senate to assert its authority against Caesar’s creature, Mark Antony. Even though the effort ultimately miscarried – Cicero and almost all his correspondents were killed – it was one of the two great sustained performances of his career. Cicero himself compared the struggle against Mark Antony to his struggle against Catiline (Lucius Sergius Catalina) 20 years earlier when he was consul (*Phil.* 4.15, 12.24).

Cicero, who had weathered so many crises, must have sensed that his end might be near. In his last surviving letter, written to Brutus sometime on 27 July 43 BC, he was downcast and gloomy. He admitted for the first time that the solemn oath he had taken in the Senate a year earlier guaranteeing the good behaviour of ‘the young man, boy almost’ (*ad Brut.* 26.2), was meaningless now. Power was steadily shifting to Caesar’s adoptive son, who set out to avenge Caesar’s death and proscribe a list of those conspirators who would be put to death.

On 7 December 43 BC (Tac. *Dial.* 17.2, for the date), a newly severed head was added to those already oozing gore above the *rostra*. The proscription had claimed its latest victim, Marcus Tullius Cicero. Alongside Cicero’s head, terrified onlookers in the Forum that day also saw a hand: ‘Cicero was among the first, and after he had been slaughtered, Mark Antony gave orders that his head and his right hand, with which Cicero had penned his invectives against him, should be cut off. When these were brought to him he gazed at them in triumph and burst into peals of laughter. Then, after he had taken his fill, he had them nailed above the *rostra* in the Forum...’ (Plut. *Ant.* 20.3–4, cf. *Cic.* 48.6).

The motive Plutarch gives should not surprise us, for we all know that Mark Antony insisted on Cicero's death as revenge for the orator's savage attacks in the vitriolic orations that later came to be known as the *Philippics* (Cic. *ad Brut.* 2.4, 4.2). Yet for all that, even Cicero's detractors usually admit that no other corpse could so persuasively have embodied the dismemberment of the Roman Republic and the silencing of dissent to the new world order. It was all over. Along with its nervous and corrupt Senate, which had been unable to keep order in the streets, control the generals or agree on major reforms, the Republic had run its course. 'When Cicero was beheaded, the voice of the people was severed', Velleius Paterculus (2.66.2) was to lament. He was right. A scrupulous guardian of the Republic's welfare, Cicero eventually died doing his duty unflinchingly. Cicero was neither a charlatan nor a coward.

Eleven months earlier, Cicero had written, 'if I must lay down my life in my present care and direction of public affairs, I shall consider myself very fortunate in my destiny' (*ad fam.* 9.24.5). Yet one inclined to give more thought to the wounding effect of his words, might in the circumstances have at least pruned its polemical extravagances. Cicero was too much enamoured of his own sharp words to do that. And so he paid the ultimate price. The later dark observation of humanity made by the political thinker and Florentine statesman, Niccolò Machiavelli, polar opposite of Cicero when it comes to morality and duty, that 'all armed prophets have conquered, and the unarmed ones have been destroyed' (*The Prince*, chap. 6) is unquestionably true. As the famous and notorious Florentine understood all too well, the aim of power is to retain power. Machiavelli himself never had much power except his power of observation. *The Prince* was dedicated to a Medici prince. Machiavelli expediently forgot that he had written his earlier *Discourses* as an ardent republican, turning 180 degrees to praise the ruthless, efficient, amoral autocrat.



Mausoleum of Lucius Munatius Plancus, just outside Gaeta, Lazio. Plancus, along with Augustus, is one of the very few big Roman names whose tomb has survived and is identifiable, although his remains have long since vanished. His mausoleum, a massive cylinder tomb now much restored (and consecrated to the Blessed Virgin Mary) sits on a hill overlooking the Tyrrhenian Sea. The epitaph (*ILS* 886 = *CIL* x 6087) is about as little as Plancus could positively tell us. In fact, given the fact the vivid life of the man, 'coy' is a fair assessment of it. The many people he betrayed during the long course of his successful career would have had far stronger words to say than those inscribed in the epitaph. (Aldo Ardeti/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

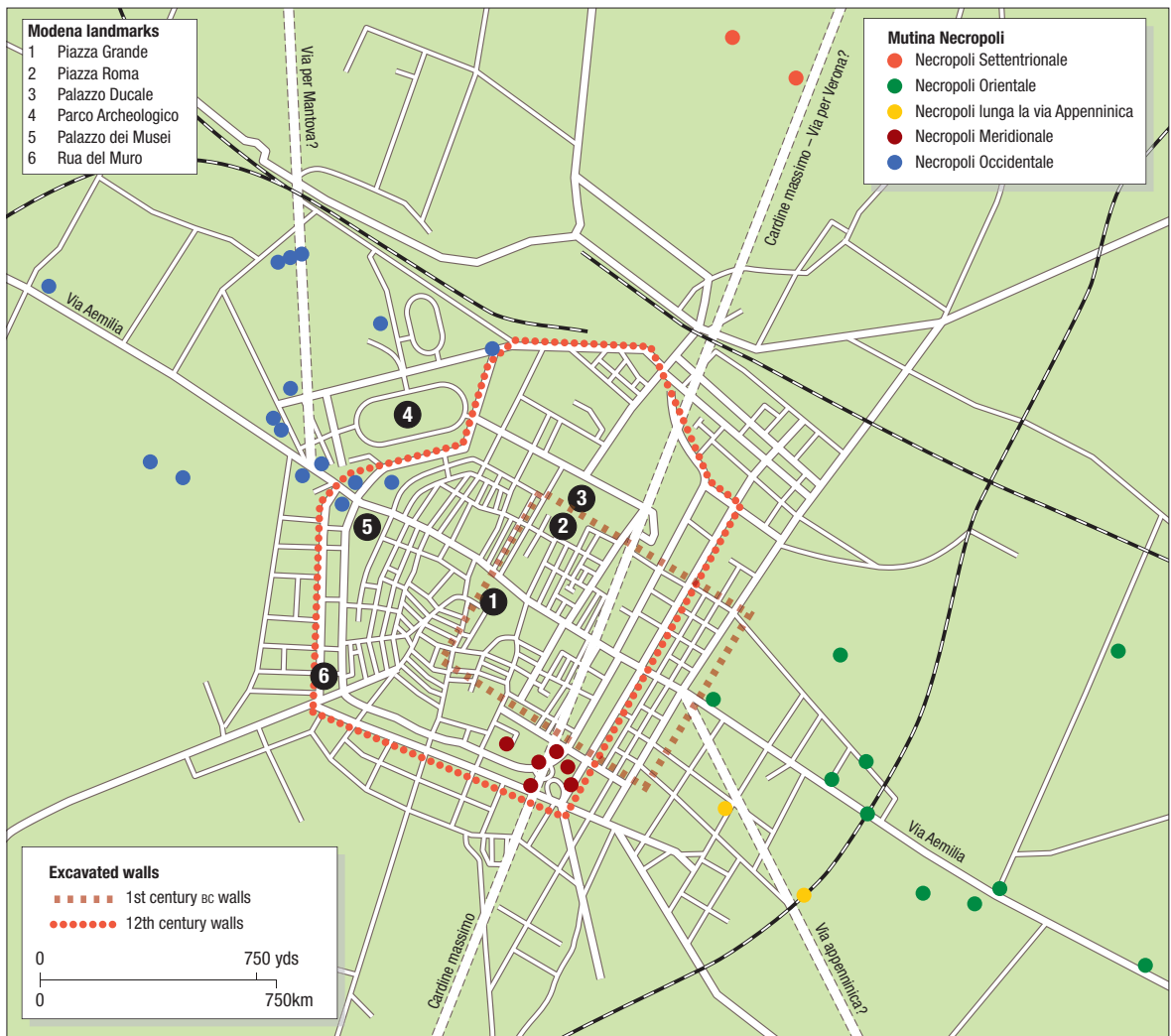
MODENA TODAY

Modena is better known for its slick fast cars, Lamborghini, Maserati and Ferrari, its sharp fruity condiment, balsamic vinegar, and such local luminaries as Mary di Modena, mother of the Old Pretender, and Luciano Pavarotti, King of the High Cs. The discerning military buff will know Modena as the birthplace of Raimondo Montecuccoli, lieutenant general and field marshal of the army of the Austrian Habsburgs. Deservedly so, for he was the victor over the Ottomans at the battle of Saint Gotthard in 1664, a master of manoeuvre warfare who outmanoeuvred his great rival Henri de Turenne on the Neckar and the Rhine in 1673. Montecuccoli was an able administrator too, with claims to be one of the founders of the Habsburg standing army. Nowadays, however, he is known best as a military intellectual, with perhaps his most famous aphorism being: ‘to wage war, three things are needed – money, money, and money’. In sum, he knew all too well that an endless stream of money equals victory.

Modena's medieval and modern overlay, not to mention the substantial accumulation of alluvial sediment, makes the Roman town of Mutina extremely difficult to dig. However, during the three seasons of excavations (2005–07) in the northern quarter of the medieval town, the humble pick and shovel revealed a sizable stretch of the republican period fortification walls of Mutina. The trenches were dug in Piazza Roma fronting the Palazzo Ducale di Modena. A grand baroque edifice begun in 1634 on the site of the old Este castle, it housed the court of the Este dukes of Modena for more than two centuries. At present it is the home of the oldest military institution in the world, the Accademia militare di Modena. The republican walls were built in *opus quadratum*, masonry of large stone parallelepipedal blocks in horizontal rows. (Palickap/ Wikimedia Commons/ CC-BY-SA-4.0)



Mutina in relation to Modena



ORIGINS

As consul in 187 BC Marcus Aemilius Lepidus defeated various tribes in Liguria and commissioned the construction of the Via Aemilia (Livy 39.2), the consular highway that would run straight as an arrow between the Roman colonies of Ariminum (Rimini) and Placentia (Piacenza), where it would connect with the Via Postumia from Aquileia.

In 183 BC Lepidus was the chief colonial commissioner for the establishment of the colonies of Mutina and Parma along the new road. He was most likely the *patronus* for the families settling these colonies, thus establishing a strong tie with this region, which would last for several generations (Livy 39.55.6–8).

Mutina was established on territory taken from the Gaulish Boii, territory that had previously belonged to the Etruscans. The settlers from the first enjoyed the full rights of Roman citizens, and their large number, 2,000 all told, and the small allotments of 5–8 *iugera*, emphasized the military



The funerary altar of Vetilia Egloge *in situ*, the necropolis on Via Emilia Est, Modena. This monumental 1st-century AD altar was uncovered in remarkably good condition during the 2007 excavations at the periphery of the site of the Roman town of Mutina. Made of stacked blocks of limestone, the altar stands over four metres tall. The inscription (AE 2008: 535) informs us that Vetilia Egloge was a freedwoman married to a member, *decimvir*, of the town council of Mutina. Note the depth of the excavated area, which gives a good impression of how deep lie the remains of Mutina. (lcco80/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)

need of the settlement. Important both for strategic and economic reasons, Mutina was to be described by Cicero as a '*firmissimam et splendidissimam populi Romani coloniam*' (Phil. 5.9), and these praises are confirmed by Appian, who calls it a 'rich city' (B civ. 3.49). Concerning its initial layout, Mutina would have conformed to the orthodox configuration of a Roman colonial gridiron town, planned and laid out in the context and need of an orderly military-cum-urban establishment. Founded then as a *castrum* (fortified post), the town's defensive walls formed a rectangle with the Via Aemilia functioning as the *decumanus maximus* (viz. the main east-west-oriented road) of the colony.

ARCHAEOLOGY

On the north-eastern outskirts of the medieval town sits the Parco Archeologico Novi Ark, a venue that exhibits archaeological discoveries from Mutina (complete with bilingual information boards) dating between the 1st century BC and the 5th century AD. These include a section of a necropolis with numerous tombs and funerary monuments, two rural buildings, and three large waste dumps containing discarded amphorae and other archaeological materials. The latter included hundreds of oil lamps bearing their maker's name, evidence of mass production in this unsophisticated but

indispensable household commodity. Further evidence of Roman industry just beyond the walls of Mutina came in the form of a brick-lined rectangular pool, which was probably employed for dipping sheep prior to their shearing.

One of the most important finds within the Parco Archeologico is a 180m-long and 5m-wide stretch of a Roman cobblestone street showing evidence of heavy usage in the form of wagon ruts. The road was discovered some five metres below the surface, so the archaeologists meticulously reassembled it at the present ground level. Last but not least, 14 lead acorn-shaped sling bullets were unearthed, which were in all probability fired in anger during the siege of Mutina.

In the city centre at the Palazzo dei Musei on viale Vittorio Veneto 5, is the Museo Civico Archeologico et Etnologico. Here you will find an important section devoted to Mutina.

FURTHER READING

PRIMARY SOURCES

Cicero is our main man here, principally because the period from the Ides of March 44 BC to July 43 BC is especially richly documented in his contemporary works. The correspondence with his best friend Atticus (d. 32 BC) recommences the month after Caesar's assassination and continues until November 44 BC (Atticus perhaps destroyed from



'Monumento al Tortellino', Piazza Aldo Moro, Castelfranco Emilia. Today this small provincial town is famous for its creation of tortellini. A strong local tradition has it that this navel-shaped pasta was born on the night Lucrezia Borgia halted her journey at a wayside inn in Castelfranco Emilia, halfway between the gastronomic giants of Bologna and Modena. During the night the innkeeper became so obsessed by Lucrezia's worshipful beauty that he could not resist the urge to sneak a peek into her room through the keyhole. The chamber was barely illuminated by a few candles, so he got only a partial glimpse of her. However, struck by what he saw, he dashed down to his kitchen, rolled out a sheet of fresh egg pasta and invented a shape inspired by her navel. And so was born the tortellino. Another popular tradition, distinct but similar in theme, has Venus as the innocent victim of the voyeur. (Sailko/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

caution any letters written after that date). There are also many post-Caesarian letters (worlds apart from the language of one of Cicero's speeches), to and from the conspirators and others who were important in the political and military manoeuvring that was to follow. Cicero's wartime correspondence is not, of course, the only source for the history of this volatile period. In the 14 orations against Mark Antony, jestingly called *Philippics*, after Demosthenes' speeches delivered in opposition to the great threat of tyranny posed to Athens by Philip II of Macedon, we have the largest item of political oratory that Cicero ever committed to writing. Whereas the vilification of Mark Antony plays only a minor part in Cicero's letters, it takes up a great deal of space in the *Philippics*. Although Cicero's writings are very old, they are never out of date or out of style.

The other important source for us is the *Parallel Lives* of Plutarch (Ploutarchos), a collection of 46 biographies of great figures of ancient history, arranged in pairs, eminent Greek and Roman of the Republic, with a brief 'comparison' between each pair. The purpose of the parallel was to ask such questions as 'Who was the greater general – Greek Alexander or the Roman Iulius Caesar?', Plutarch doing so by combining pure facts with sensationalized titbits to spice up his biographies for both entertainment and educational purposes. The life of Mark Antony was matched with that of Demetrios Poliorketes, the king of Macedon who was equally renowned as a general and a philanderer. Plutarch's reason for pairing them was that they illustrated the precept that from great minds both great virtues and great vices do proceed: 'They were both given over to women and wine, both valiant and liberal, both sumptuous and high-minded; fortune served them both alike, not only in the course of their lives, in attempting great matters, sometimes with good, sometimes with ill success, in getting and losing things of great consequence.'

In the ‘comparison’, they are both praised for their ‘liberality and bounty’, condemned for their ‘concupiscence’ and ‘lascivious parts’. On balance, the Roman is preferred to the Greek because ‘Antonius by his incontinence did not hurt but himself [whereas] Demetrios did hurt unto all others’. Even so, Plutarch is consistently more hostile towards Mark Antony than towards most of his heroes, possibly because of the harsh treatment suffered by his great-grandfather (see *Ant.* 68). The other *Lives* of interest are those on Cicero and Marcus Brutus.

Among the other ancient authors, Appian (Appianus) of Alexandria, Cassius Dio (Dio Cassius Cocceianus), and Suetonius (Caius Suetonius Tranquillus) are helpful. From the point of view of military affairs, out of these three, Appian probably contributes the most, particularly on Mark Antony. Appian, writing in the mid-2nd century AD, extensively used the acute first-hand account of Caius Asinius Pollio (d. AD 4), which covered the tumultuous period from 60 BC to 42 BC. Neither antagonist nor apologist, the independently minded Pollio wrote a history that was probably the most important (now regrettably lost) source on Mark Antony’s career independent of the official tradition imposed by Augustus. This official view of Mark Antony was probably best voiced by Seneca (d. AD 65), a dedicated student of Cicero and an adviser to the emperor Nero: ‘A great man, a man of distinguished ability; but what ruined him and drove him into foreign habits and un-Roman vices, if it was not drunkenness and – no less potent than wine – love of Cleopatra?’ (*Epistulae Morales* 83.25). Mark Antony suffered a thorough ‘hatchet job’ at the hands of the imperial writers, and the image of a once-great Roman man ‘gone soft’ in splendid Alexandrian isolation, unaware of the radical changes in the art of Roman politics that were about to sweep him away, still holds considerable appeal.

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GLOSSARY

<i>Alaudae</i>	'Larks' – legion levied in Gallia Cisalpina
<i>Augusta</i>	'Augustan' – legion reconstituted by Augustus
<i>aureus</i> (pl. <i>aurei</i>)	Roman gold coin valued at 25 silver <i>denarii</i> (qv)
Buggenum	Dutch site where the bronze helmet that became a type series was discovered
<i>consul suffectus</i>	Consul appointed to complete the year of a consul who resigned, died, or was incapacitated
<i>consularis</i> (pl. <i>consulares</i>)	'Consular' – senator who had previously held the consulship
<i>denarius</i> (pl. <i>denarii</i>)	Roman silver coin 4 grams in weight and valued at 16 <i>asses</i> /4 <i>sesterces</i>
<i>Equestris</i>	'Mounted'
<i>Germanica</i>	'Germanic' – served on the Rhine
<i>gladius</i> (pl. <i>gladii</i>)	Cut-and-thrust sword carried by legionaries
<i>iugerum</i> (pl. <i>iugera</i>)	Roman unit of area equal to a rectangle 240 Roman feet by 120 Roman feet (0.25ha/0.623 acres)
<i>lorica hamata</i>	A type of body armour made with iron rings
<i>Macedonica</i>	'Macedonian' – served in Macedonia
<i>Martia</i>	'Sacred to Mars'
<i>Magister equitum</i>	'Master of the horse' – Roman magistrate appointed as lieutenant to a dictator
Montefortino	Cemetery site chosen as the eponym for a type of bronze helmet most popular in Italy from 3rd to 1st centuries bc
<i>nobilis</i> (pl. <i>nobiles</i>)	Descendant of a consular family
<i>patera</i> (pl. <i>paterae</i>)	Bronze mess tin used by legionaries
<i>pilum</i> (pl. <i>pila</i>)	Principal throwing weapon of legionaries
proconsul	Consul whose command was prolonged
propraetor	Praetor whose command was prolonged
<i>pugio</i> (pl. <i>pugiones</i>)	Short dagger, cut-down version of <i>gladius</i> (qv), carried by legionaries
<i>Sabina</i>	'Sabine' – levied in Sabine territory
<i>scutum</i> (pl. <i>scuta</i>)	Oval body shield carried by legionaries
<i>stadion</i> (pl. <i>stadia</i>)	Greek measure of length, the Athenian unit being equal to about 185 metres, thus 5.4 <i>stadia</i> being equivalent to a kilometre
<i>Sorana</i>	'Soran' – levied in the Latium town of Sora
<i>tetradrachm</i>	Greek silver coin valued at 4 <i>drachmae</i>
<i>urbana</i>	'urban' – <i>legio urbana</i> levied for the defence of Rome

ABBREVIATIONS

AE	R. Cagnat et al. (eds.), <i>L'Année épigraphique</i> (Paris, 1893–)
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
App.	Appian
	<i>B civ.</i> <i>Bellum civilia</i>
cos.	<i>consul</i>
cos. suff.	<i>consul suffectus</i>
Caes.	Caesar
	<i>B civ.</i> <i>Bellum civile</i>
	<i>B Gall.</i> <i>Bellum Gallicum</i>
[Caes.]	Pseudo-Caesar
	<i>B Afr.</i> <i>Bellum Africum</i>
	<i>B Alex.</i> <i>Bellum Alexandrinum</i>
	<i>B Hisp.</i> <i>Bellum Hispaniense</i>
Cic.	Cicero
	<i>ad Att.</i> <i>Epistulae ad Atticum</i>
	<i>ad Brut.</i> <i>Epistulae ad Brutum</i>
	<i>ad fam.</i> <i>Epistulae ad familiares</i>
	<i>Phil.</i> <i>Philippic</i>
	<i>Tusc.</i> <i>Tusculanae Disputationes</i>
CIL	T. Mommsen et al. (eds.), <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (Berlin, 1862–)
CUP	Cambridge University Press
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
Dio	Cassius Dio
Diod.	Diodorus Siculus
Front.	Frontinus
	<i>Strat.</i> <i>Strategemata</i>
ILS	H. Dessau (ed.), <i>Inscriptiones Latinae selectae</i> (Berlin, 1892–1916)
Inscr. Ital.	<i>Academicae Italicae consociatae ediderunt Inscriptiones Italiae</i> (Rome, 1931–)
OUP	Oxford University Press
JRMES	<i>Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies</i>
PIR ²	E. Groag, A. Stein et al. (eds.), <i>Prosopographia Imperii Romani</i> (Berlin & Leipzig, 1933–)
Pl.	Pliny (the elder)
	<i>NH</i> <i>Naturalis Historia</i>
Plut.	Plutarch
	<i>Ant.</i> <i>Marcus Antonius</i>
	<i>Brut.</i> <i>Marcus Brutus</i>
	<i>Cic.</i> <i>Cicero</i>

<i>pr.</i>	<i>praetor</i>	
<i>QJS</i>	<i>Quarterly Journal of Speech</i>	
<i>RG</i>	<i>Res Gestae Divi Augusti</i>	
<i>RFIC</i>	<i>Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica</i>	
<i>SIFC</i>	<i>Studi italiani di filologia classica</i>	
<i>Sue.</i>	Suetonius	
	<i>DA</i>	<i>Divus Augustus</i>
	<i>DI</i>	<i>Divus Iulius</i>
	<i>Gram.</i>	<i>Grammatical Problems</i>
<i>Tac.</i>	Tacitus	
	<i>Ann.</i>	<i>Annales</i>
	<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogus</i>
<i>Vell.</i>	Velleius Paterculus	
<i>Xen.</i>	Xenophon	
	<i>Hipp.</i>	<i>Hipparchikos</i>
	<i>Mem.</i>	<i>Memorabilia</i>

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