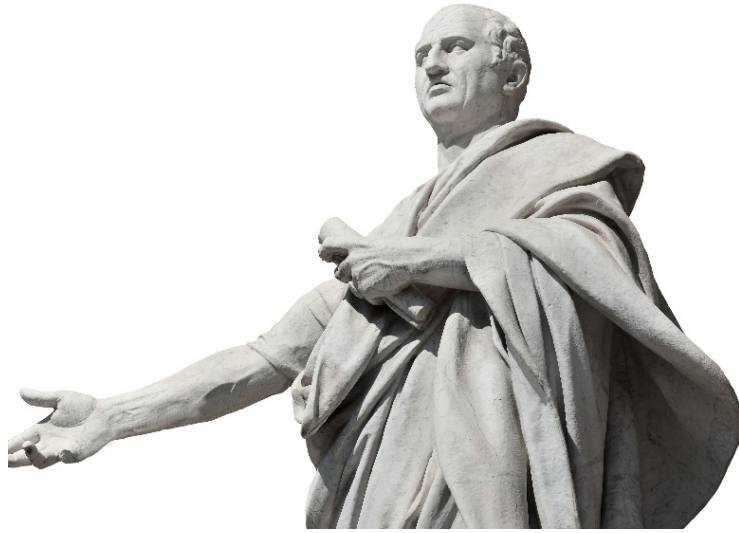


# BELLARIA LXXVI



## FROM THE IDES OF MARCH TO THE DEATH OF CICERO: 44-43 BC

### Introduction

On the Ides (15th) of March 44 BC, Julius Caesar was assassinated as a dictator by a group of Senators led by Brutus and Cassius, with a view to restoring traditional republican government. Cicero played no part in the conspiracy, because he was not trusted to be able to keep it secret, but he was naturally in favour of it—and for the first time in his life, unambiguously took up the cause, as he saw it, of freedom against tyranny.

This period is one of the most richly-sourced episodes in ancient history. The result is that it is also one of the most complicated. The basic issue from the Ciceronian point of view was: would Antony and Caesar's heir Octavian, both in principle Caesarians and therefore in principle tyrants, make common cause—in which case that was the end of freedom—or would they fight it out for leadership of the Roman world between themselves, when it might be possible to turn that into a battle between freedom and tyranny. Here a crucial issue was—whose side would Caesar's soldiers choose? They were fanatical in support of their now dead leader. Hirtius and Pansa, consuls elect in 44 BC and consuls in 43 BC, were supporters of Cicero's approach.

One tactical point is worth making: if you were hostile to the regime in Rome, it was in the provinces that you would be most likely to raise an army to fight it. So keeping your enemies close to you i.e. in Italy was something of a priority for the regime.

§§ This far-sighted letter from Decimus Brutus (a distant relative of Marcus), governor-elect of Cisalpine Gaul but not at the assassination, was probably written after the serious disturbances at Caesar's funeral, when the mob burned down the Senate-house and attacked the homes of the conspirators (henceforth 'Liberators'). This left Antony very much in control of things.

MARCH 22? 44 BC

TO M. BRUTUS AND CASSIUS

*From Decimus Brutus in Rome*

[*ad fam.* 11.1]



Brutus and Cassius

### Our position is not strong

I write to let you know our position. Yesterday evening Hirtius [consul elect for 43 BC] called on me, and told me about the disposition of Antony. It is of course as bad and untrustworthy as possible. For he said that he could not give me my province, and did not think that it was safe for any of us to remain in Rome, considering the extreme irritation of the soldiery and the common people. I think you are aware that both these allegations are false, and that the truth is what Hirtius affirmed, namely, that Antony is afraid that, if we got even a moderate assistance in support of our position, these people would have no part left for them to play in the state.

*quo in statu simus, cognoscite: heri uespero apud me Hirtius fuit; qua mente esset Antonius, demonstravit, pessima scilicet et infidelissima; nam se neque mihi provinciam dare posse aiebat neque arbitrari tuto in urbe esse quemquam nostrum: adeo esse militum concitatos animos et plebis; quod utrumque esse falsum puto uos animaduertere atque illud esse uerum, quod Hirtius demonstrabat, timere eum, ne, si mediocre auxilium dignitatis nostrae habuissemus, nullae partes his in re publica relinquerentur.*

Being in these straits I determined to demand a free *legatio* [post as legate to a provincial governor] for myself and the rest of us, in order to obtain a decent excuse for leaving the city. He promised that he would procure it, but I don't feel sure that he will do so; for people are so unreasonable and the mood against us is so strong. Even if they granted our request, I yet think that before long we should be declared public enemies and forbidden water and fire.

*cum in his angustiis uersarer, placitum est mihi, ut postularem legationem liberam mihi reliquisque nostris, ut aliqua causa proficiscendi honesta quaeretur. Hoc se impetraturum pollicitus est, nec tamen impetraturum confido: tanta est hominum insolentia et nostri insectatio; ac, si dederint, quod*

*petimus, tamen paullo post futurum puto ut hostes iudicemur aut aqua et igni nobis interdicator.*



*Rhodes*

### Best to leave Italy and await events

What, then, you say, is your advice? We must yield to fortune: we must quit Italy I think, and retire to Rhodes or some place or other in the world. If any improvement occurs we will return to Rome. If things go only fairly well we will live in exile; if the worst comes to the worst, we will have recourse to extreme measures in our support. Perhaps it will here occur to one of you—why should we wait for the worst, rather than make some attempt at once? Because we have nowhere to base ourselves except for Sextus Pompeius [son of Pompey the Great, with army in Spain] and Caecilius Bassus, who I think are likely to be still more determined when the news gets through about Caesar. It will be soon enough for us to join them when we know their strength.

*'quid ergo est,' inquis, 'tui consili?' dandus est locus fortunae: cedendum ex Italia, migrandum Rhodum aut aliquo terrarum arbitror. si melior casus fuerit, reuertemur Romam; si mediocris, in exilio uiuemus; si pessimus, ad nouissima auxilia descendemus. succurret fortasse hoc loco alicui uestrum, cur nouissimum tempus expectemus potius, quam nunc aliquid moliamur. quia, ubi consistamus, non habemus praeter Sex. Pompeium et Bassum Caecilium, qui mihi uidentur hoc nuntio de Caesare allato firmiores futuri; satis tempore ad eos accedemus, ubi, quid ualeant, scierimus.*

### Let me have your reply quickly

I shall give any undertaking you wish to you Cassius and yourself: for Hirtius demands that I do this. I beg you to answer this letter as promptly as possible—for I have no doubt that Hirtius will inform me on these points before ten o'clock—and tell me where we can meet and where you wish me to come. After my last conversation with Hirtius I decided to ask that we should be allowed to remain at Rome under the protection of a state guard. I don't think they will concede that; for we shall be casting a grave slur upon them. However, I thought I must not omit to make any demand which I considered equitable.

*pro Cassio et te, si quid me uelitis recipere, recipiam; postulat enim hoc Hirtius ut faciam. Rogo uos quam primum mihi rescribatis—nam non dubito, quin de his rebus ante horam quartam Hirtius certiore me sit facturus—quem in locum conuenire possimus, quo me uelitis uenire, rescribite. post nouissimum Hirtii sermonem placitum est mihi postulare, ut liceret nobis Romae esse publico praesidio: quod illos nobis concessuros non puto; magnam enim inuidiam iis faciemus. nihil tamen non postulandum putauit, quod aequum esse statuerem.*

§§ On April 19, Cicero wrote to Atticus, lamenting that they had allowed Antony to take control of things. Apparently *en passant* he mentioned the arrival of an 18 year-old boy...

### Octavius' arrival



Naples

**APRIL 19 44 BC**  
TO ATTICUS  
*From Cumae*  
[*ad Att.* 14.10]

Octavius arrived in Naples on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Balbus met him there on the following day and was with me later the same day at my house in Cumae. He tells me Octavius is going to accept the inheritance [he was Caesar's heir]. But as you say, he fears a mighty tussle with Antony...

*Octavius Neapolim uenit xiiii Kal. ibi eum Balbus mane postridie eodemque die mecum in Cumano, illum hereditatem aditurum. sed, ut scribis, rixam timet magnam cum Antonio.*

§§ On April 22, Cicero wrote to Atticus, disappointed about events in Rome and unsure about Octavius:

**APRIL 22 44 BC**  
TO ATTICUS  
*From Puteoli*  
[*ad Att.* 14.12]

## I have my doubts about Octavius

Ah, my dear Atticus, I fear the Ides of March have brought us nothing except exultation and the satisfaction of our anger and resentment. What news reaches me from Rome! What things are going on here under my eyes! Yes, it was a fine piece of work, but inconclusive after all!

*...O mi Attice, uereor ne nobis Idus Martiae nihil dederint praeter laetitiam et odii poenam ac doloris. quae mihi istim adferuntur! quae hic uideo! ὦ πράξεως καλῆς μὲν, ἀτελοῦς δέ...*

...Octavius here treats me with great respect and friendliness. His own people addressed him as 'Caesar', but Philippus [Octavius' step-father] did not, so I did not do so either. I declare that it is impossible for him to be a good citizen. He is surrounded by such a number of people, who even threaten our friends with death and say the present state of things is unendurable. But what do you think of it, when a boy like that goes to Rome, where our Liberators [i.e. those who killed Julius Caesar as a tyrant] cannot be in safety? They indeed will always be illustrious, and even happy, from the consciousness of their great deed; but for us, if I am not mistaken, humiliation lies ahead.

*... nobiscum hic perhonorifice et peramice Octavius. quem quidem sui Caesarem salutabant, Philippus non, itaque ne nos quidem; quem nego posse esse bonum ciuem. ita multi circumstant qui quidem nostris mortem minitantur. negant haec ferri posse. quid censes cum Romam puer uenerit ubi nostri liberatores tuti esse non possunt? qui quidem semper erunt clari, conscientia uero facti sui etiam beati; sed nos, nisi me fallit, iacebimus.*



Octavius

§§ Octavius immediately called himself Caius Julius Caesar Octavianus, but Cicero called him (according to whim) Octavius, and then Octavianus or 'young Caesar', while others called him Caesar.

Octavius quickly gathered support among Caesar's soldiers and the Roman people generally and used money that Caesar had intended for a war against Parthia to raise yet more troops. Cicero, feeling Octavius might be persuaded to take on Antony, began his series of *Philippics*, attacking Antony in the Senate. In November Octavian bribed two of Antony's legion to defect to him.

On October 31 a dramatic development: Octavius wrote to Cicero, offering to join the Senatorial side against Antony. Cicero was cautious about the prospects:

NOVEMBER 3 44 BC

TO ATTICUS

*From Puteoli*

[*ad Att.* 16.8]



An Augustan *denarius*

On the evening of the 1st I got a letter from Octavian. He is entering upon a serious undertaking. He has won over to his views all [Antony's] veterans at Casilinum and Calatia. And no wonder: he gives a bounty of 50 *denarii* apiece. Clearly, his view is a war with Antony under his leadership. So I perceive that before many days are over we shall be in arms. But whom are we to follow? Consider his name, consider his age!

*Kal. uesperi litterae mihi ab Octauiano. magna molitur. ueteranos qui sunt Casilini et Calatiae perduxit ad suam sententiam. nec mirum, quingenos denarios dat. cogitat reliquas colonias obire. plane hoc spectat ut se duce bellum geratur cum Antonio. itaque uideo paucis diebus nos in armis fore. quem autem sequamur? uide nomen, uide aetatem.*



NOVEMBER 4 44 BC

TO ATTICUS

*From Puteoli*

[*ad Att.* 16.8]

Two letters!

Two letters on the same day from Octavian! His present view is that I should come to Rome at once: and that he wishes to act through the Senate. I told him that a meeting of the Senate was impossible before the 1st of January: and I believe it is really so. But he adds also: 'And by your advice'. In short, he insists: while I suspend judgment. I don't trust his youth. I am in the dark as to his disposition. I am not willing to do anything without your friend Pansa.

*binae uno die mihi litterae ab Octauiano, nunc quidem ut Romam statim ueniam; uelle se rem agere per senatum. cui ego non posse senatum ante K. Ianuar., quod quidem ita credo. ille autem addit 'consilio tuo.' quid multa? ille urget, ego autem σκήπτομαι. non confido aetati, ignoro quo animo. nil sine Pansa tuo uolo.*

I am afraid of Antony succeeding, and I don't like going far from the sea: and at the same time I fear some star [oratorical] performance without my being there. Varro, for his part, doesn't like the youth's plan. I don't agree with him. He has forces on which he can depend and can have [Decimus] Brutus [governor of Cisalpine Gaul], and he is working quite openly, organizing his men in companies at Capua and paying them their bounty-money. War seems to be ever coming nearer and nearer.

*uereor ne ualeat Antonius nec a mari discedere libet et metuo ne quae quae ἀριστεία me absente. Varroni quidem displicet consilium pueri, mihi non. firmas copias habet, Brutum habere potest, et rem gerit palam. centuriat Capuae, dinumerat. iam iamque uideo bellum.*

§§ But Cicero was still not at all sure that Octavius was fully onside, as this report of a speech he made to an assembly in Rome confirmed:

#### AFTER NOVEMBER 12 44 BC

TO ATTICUS

*From Arpinum*

[*ad Att.* 16.15]

I return to public affairs. I have received—heaven knows—many a prudent word from you under the head of politics, but never anything wiser than your last letter: 'Though that youth is powerful and has blunted Antony, yet, after all, we must wait to see the end.' Why, what a speech! It has been sent to me. He swears by the words 'So may I attain to the honours of my father'! And at the same time he held out his right hand in the direction of his statue. Not with saviours like that, thank you!

*redeo ad rem publicam. multa me hercule a te saepe in πολιτικῶς genere prudenter sed his litteris nihil prudentius: 'quamquam enim postea in praesentia belle iste puer retundit Antonium, tamen exitum expectare debemus.' at quae contio! nam est missa mihi. iurat ita sibi parentis honores consequi liceat et simul dextram intendit ad statuam. μηδὲ σωθείην ὑπὸ γε τοιούτῳ!*

§§ But Octavius' troops refused to fight Antony, who was also marching on Rome. So Octavius retreated. Antony arrived in Rome, but more of his troops deserted, refusing to fight Octavius, so Antony too retreated, made for Cisalpine Gaul to take on the pro-Liberator governor Decimus Brutus instead.

The Senate met—Cicero addressed his third *Philippic* to them—and agreed to back Octavius against Antony. Cicero addressed his fourth *Philippic* to the Roman people in the forum, likening Antony to Spartacus and (inevitably) Catiline! A re-energised Cicero was now leading the way against Antony.



Battle of Mutina

And it all started very well. On April 14 43 BC at Mutina (Modena), Decimus, together with the senatorial army led by the consuls Hirtius and Pansa, joined by Octavius' army, engaged with Antony and defeated him. Cicero was exultant and wrote to Marcus Brutus in Macedonia, full of confidence that he had Octavius ['the youthful Caesar'] firmly under control:

**APRIL 21 43 BC**  
TO BRUTUS  
*From Rome*  
[*ad Brut.* 9/1.3]

### Let us hope we can keep Octavius onside

Our cause seems in a better position: for I feel sure that you have had letters telling you what has happened. The consuls have shown themselves to be the sort of men I have often described them in my letters. In the youthful Caesar indeed there is a surprising natural strain of virtue. Pray heaven we may succeed in guiding and holding him in the flush of honours and popularity as easily as we have held him up to this time! That is certainly a more difficult thing, but nevertheless I do not despair. For the young man has been convinced, and chiefly by my arguments, that our survival is his work, and that at least, if he had not diverted Antony from the city, all would have been lost.

*nostrae res meliore loco uidebantur; scripta enim ad te certo scio quae gesta sunt. qualis tibi saepe scripsi consules, tales exstiterunt. Caesaris uero pueri mirifica indoles uirtutis est. utinam tam facile eum florentem et honoribus et gratia regere ac tenere possimus quam facile adhuc tenuimus! est omnino illud difficilius sed tamen non diffidimus. persuasum est enim adolescenti et maxime per me eius opera nos esse saluos. et certe, nisi is Antonium ab urbe auertisset, perissent omnia.*

### I have enjoyed great acclaim

Three or four days indeed before this glorious news, the city, struck by a sudden panic [that Antony had won], was for pouring out with wives and children to seek you. The same city on the 20th of April, with its fears all dispelled, would rather that you came here than go to you. On that day in very truth I reaped the most abundant



harvest of my great labours and my many sleepless nights—that is, at least, if there is a harvest in genuine and well-grounded glory. For I was surrounded by a concourse of people as great as our city can contain, by whom I was escorted to the Capitol and placed upon the Rostra amidst the loudest cheers and applause ...

*triduo uero aut quadriduo ante hanc rem pulcherrimam timore quodam percussa ciuitas tota ad te se cum coniugibus et liberis effundebat eadem recreata a. d. xii kal. Maias te huc uenire quam se ad te ire malebat. quo quidem die magnorum meorum laborum multarumque uigiliarum fructum cepi maximum, si modo est aliquis fructus ex solida ueraque gloria. nam tantae multitudinis quantam capit urbs nostra concursus est ad me factus; a qua usque in Capitolium deductus maximo clamore atque plausu in rostris conlocatus sum ...*

### **We must show no mercy to Antony and our enemies**

I would like you to be scrupulous in informing me about your actions and plans and to bear this in mind, that your generosity does not bear the appearance of weakness. This is the sentiment of the Senate, and of the people, that no enemies ever more richly deserved condign punishment than those citizens who have taken up arms against their country in this war. Indeed in every speech I make in the Senate I call for vengeance upon them and attack them amidst the applause of all loyal citizens. What your view of this is I must leave you to judge for yourself ...

*me uelim de tuis rebus consiliisque facias diligentissime certiore illudque consideres ne tua liberalitas dissolutior uideatur. sic sentit senatus, sic populus Romanus, nullos umquam hostis digniores omni supplicio fuisse quam eos ciuis qui hoc bello contra patriam arma ceperunt; quos quidem ego omnibus sententiis ulciscor et persequor: omnibus bonis approbantibus. tu quid de hac re sentias, tui iudici est...*

§§ But the two consuls (Pansa and Hirtius) had died in battle, leaving a power-vacuum, and Pansa's troops went over to Octavius, leaving him in a powerful military position. Antony and his troops had fled, but were not actively pursued. The Senate, confident it had 'won', refused to play ball and did not make efforts to engage properly with Octavius.

In this letter, Decimus Brutus reports what he heard from Segulius Labeo about a meeting with Octavius. Cicero could never resist a quip: one wonders how much harm this did him and his cause:

**MAY 24 43 BC**

TO CICERO

From Decimus Brutus

[*ad fam.* 11.20]

What I don't do for myself, my love for you and your kindnesses to me force me to do—to fear. For though I have often heard the story before, and never thought lightly of it, quite recently Segulius Labeo—and it was exactly like him—told me that he has been in Octavius' company, and that there was a great deal of talk about you; that Octavius himself had no complaint to make against you, except for an

epigram which he said that you uttered: that the young man must be lauded, applauded—and over-boarded. He said that being thrown overboard was not on his to do list.

*quod pro me non facio, id pro te facere amor meus in te tuaque officia cogunt, ut timeam; saepe enim mihi cum esset dictum neque a me contemptum, nouissime Labeo Segulius—homo sui simillimus—narrat mihi apud Caesarem se fuisse multumque sermonem de te habitum esse; ipsum Caesarem nihil sane de te questum, nisi dictum quod diceret te dixisse, laudandum adolescentem, ornandum, tollendum; se non esse commissurum, ut tolli posset.*

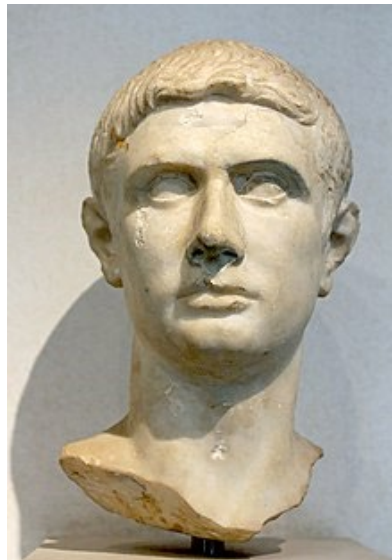
§§ In this devastating letter Marcus Brutus let Atticus know exactly what he thought of Cicero's desire to hand everything to Octavius on a plate:

**JUNE 43 BC**

TO ATTICUS

*From Brutus in Macedonia*

[*ad Brutum* 1.25/17]



Marcus Junius Brutus

... We are over-fearful of death, exile, and poverty: I think that these things are the worst of evils in Cicero's eyes, and that, while he has people from whom he gets what he wants, and by whom he is made much of, and flattered, he has no aversion to servitude, as long as it is a dignified servitude—if there can be any dignity in what is the ultimate and most wretched degradation.

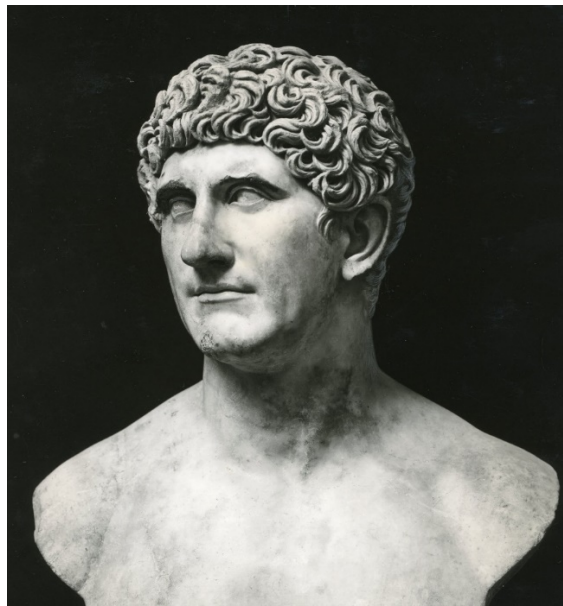
*nimum timemus mortem et exsilium et paupertatem. haec nimirum uidentur Ciceroni ultima esse in malis et, dum habeat a quibus impetret quae uelit, et a quibus colatur ac laudetur, seruitutem, honorificam modo, non aspernatur, si quicquam in extrema ac miserrima contumelia potest honorificum esse.*

**How can Cicero be 'father' to Octavius?**

So, although Octavius may call Cicero 'father', consult him in everything, praise and thank him, nevertheless the truth will come out that words do not agree with deeds. For what can be more contrary to common sense than to count a man as a

'father', when he is not even counted as a free man? Yet this is Cicero's goal and purpose, this is the result that this best of men pursues—that Octavius be well-disposed to him! For my part, I set no store by those accomplishments in which I know Cicero to be supremely gifted: for what do they do for him, all those extensive writings in defence of national freedom, on dignity, death, exile and poverty?

*licet ergo patrem appellet Octavius Ciceronem, referat omnia, laudet, gratias agat, tamen illud apparebit uerba rebus esse contraria. quid enim tam alienum ab humanis sensibus est quam eum patris habere loco qui ne liberi quidem hominis numero sit? atqui contendit, id agit, ad eum exitum properat uir optimus ut sit illi Octavius propitius. ego uero iam iis artibus nihil tribuo quibus Ciceronem scio instructissimum esse. quid enim illi prosunt quae pro libertate patriae, de dignitate, quae de morte, exsilio, paupertate scripsit copiosissime?*



Mark Antony

### Octavius is a bad as Antony

What a much truer view Philippus [Octavius' step-father] seems to have of those things, when he refused all compliments to his own stepson, than Cicero has, who pays them to one who has no connection with him! Let him cease, then, from absolutely insulting our misfortunes by his boastful language; for what does it do for us that Antony has been defeated, if the only result of his defeat is to leave his place open to another?

*quanto autem magis illa callere uidetur Philippus qui priuigno minus tribuerit quam Cicero qui alieno tribuat! desinat igitur gloriando etiam insectari dolores nostros. quid enim nostra uictum esse Antonium, si uictus est ut alii uacaret quod ille obtinuit?*

### I am not going to cringe as Cicero does

However, even now there is a note of uncertainty in your letter. Long live Cicero—as he may well do—to cringe and serve, if he is not ashamed to think of his age nor his honour, nor his great past. For myself, at any rate, there is no condition of servitude, however favourable, which will deter me from waging war on the principle: that is, on royalty, unconstitutional magistracies, absolutism, and power that aims at being

above the laws. Though Antony may be a good man, as you say in your letter—which, however, has never been my opinion — yet the law of our ancestors was that no one, not even a father, should be an absolute master.

*tametsi tuae litterae dubia etiam nunc significant. uiuat hercule Cicero, qui potest, supplex et obnoxius, si neque aetatis neque honorum neque rerum gestarum pudet; ego certe quin cum ipsa re bellum geram, hoc est cum regno et imperiis extraordinariis et dominatione et potentia quae supra leges se esse uelit, nulla erit tam bona condicio seruiendi qua deterrear, quamuis sit uir bonus, ut scribis, Antonius—quod ego numquam existimaui—sed dominum ne parentem quidem maiores nostri uoluerunt esse.*

### I can judge only as I find

Unless I had been as deeply attached to you as Cicero believes that Octavius is devoted to him, I should not have written this to you. I am grieved to think that as you read this you are getting angry—for you are most affectionate to all your friends, and especially to Cicero: but assure yourself of this, that my personal goodwill to Cicero is in no way modified, though my opinion is largely so, for you cannot ask a man to judge except from what seems to him to be truth in each case.

*te nisi tantum amarem quantum Ciceroni persuasum est diligere ab Octauio, haec ad te non scripsissem. dolet mihi quod tu nunc stomacharis amantissimus cum tuorum omnium tum Ciceronis; sed persuade tibi de uoluntate propria mea nihil esse remissum, de iudicio largiter. neque enim impetrari potest quin quale quidque uideatur ei talem quisque de illo opinionem habeat.*

§§ Slowly, with the Senate recalcitrant and the armies still behaving like the personal armies of the generals concerned, everything that Cicero had built fell apart. Antony added to his legions; Brutus, despite Cicero's pleas, did not see any current advantage in marching on Rome.

Here Cicero tries to explain to Brutus his pro-Octavius policy after the battle of Mutina:

**JULY 43 BC**

TO BRUTUS in Macedonia

*From Rome*

[*ad Brut.* 23/1.15]

### Octavius was at the centre of my policy

As soon as I reached Rome I at once threw myself in opposition to Antony's treason and insane policy: and having roused his wrath against me, I began entering upon a policy truly Brutus-like—for this is the distinctive mark of your family—that of freeing my country. The rest of the story is too long to tell, and must be passed over by me, for it is about myself. I will only say this much: that this young Caesar, thanks to whom we are still alive, if we would confess the truth, was a stream from the fountain-head of my policy.

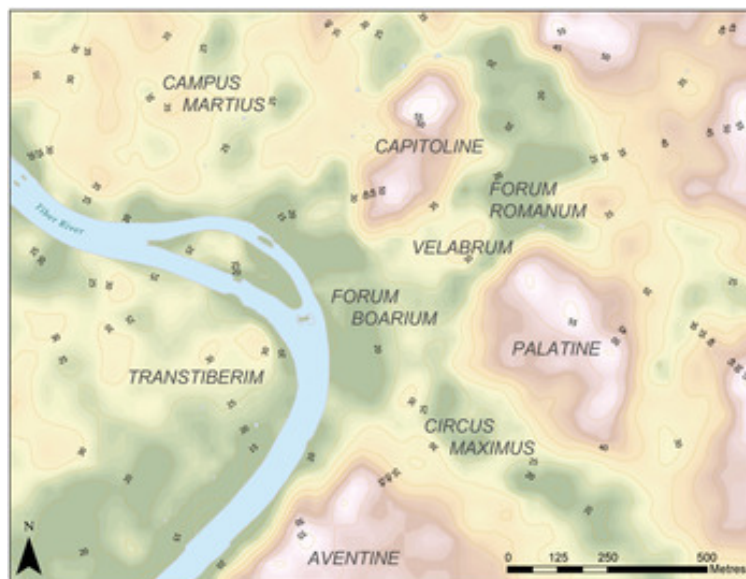
*Romam ut ueni, statim me obtuli Antoni sceleri atque dementiae. quem cum in me incitauissem, consilia imre coepi Brutina plane (uestri enim haec sunt propria sanguinis) rei publicae liberandae. longa sunt, quae restant, praetereunda; sunt enim de me; tantum dico, Caesarem hunc adulescentem, per quem adhuc sumus si uerum fateri uolumus, fluxisse ex fonte consiliorum meorum.*

### It was right to honour Octavius

To him I voted honours, none indeed, Brutus, that were not his due, none that were not inevitable. For directly we began the recovery of liberty, when the superb valour of Decimus Brutus had not yet become visible to be recognizable, and when our sole protection depended on the boy who had shaken Antony from our shoulders, what honour was there that he did not deserve to have decreed to him? However, all I then proposed for him was a complimentary vote of thanks, and that too expressed with moderation. I also proposed a decree conferring *imperium* on him, which, although it seemed too great a compliment for one of his age, was yet necessary for one commanding an army—for what is an army without a commander with *imperium*?

*huic habita a me honores nulli quidem, Brute, nisi debiti, nulli nisi necessarii. ut enim primum libertatem reuocare coepimus, cum se nondum ne Decimi quidem Bruti diuina uirtus ita commouisset ut iam id scire possemus, atque omne praesidium esset in puero qui a ceruicibus nostris auertisset Antonium, quis honos ei non fuit decernendus? quamquam ego illi tum uerborum laudem tribui eamque modicam, decreui etiam imperium; quod quamquam uidebatur illi aetati honorificum, tamen erat exercitum babenti necessarium. quid enim est sine imperio exercitus?*

### It was proper to demonstrate our gratitude



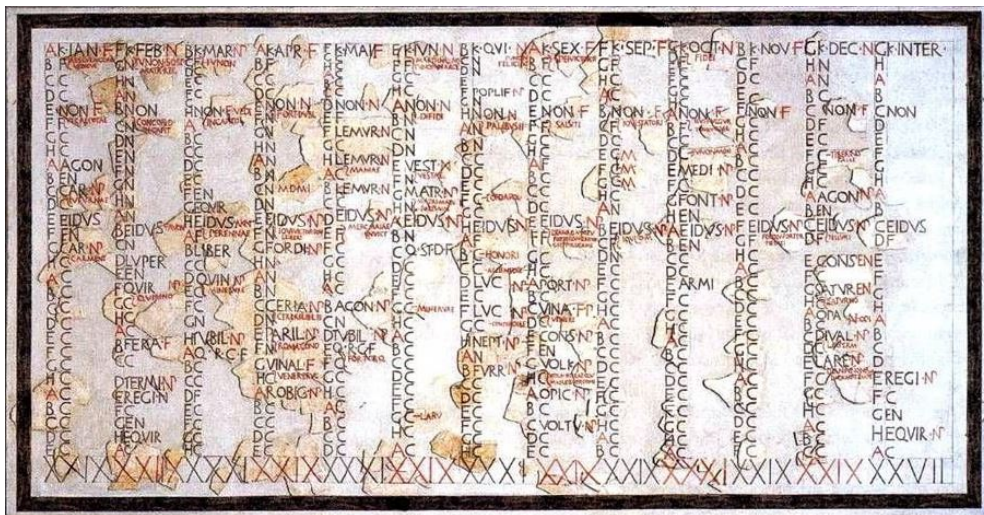
Velabrum

Philippus proposed a statue; Servius at first proposed a licence to stand for office before the regular time. Servilius afterwards proposed that the time should be still further curtailed. At that time nothing was thought too good for him. But somehow men are more easily found who are liberal at a time of alarm, than grateful when

victory has been won. For when that most joyful day of Decimus Brutus's relief from blockade had dawned on the Republic and happened also to be his birthday, I proposed that the name of Brutus should be entered in the *fasti* under that date. And in that I followed the example of our ancestors, who paid this honour to the woman Laurentia, at whose altar in the Velabrum you pontiffs are accustomed to offer sacrifice.

*statuam Philippus decreuit, celeritatem petitionis primo Seruius, post maiorem etiam Seruilius. nihil tum nimium uidebatur. sed nescio quo modo facilius in timore benigni quam in uictoria grati reperiuntur. ego enim, D. Bruto liberato cum laetissimus ille ciuitati dies inluxisset idemque casu Bruti natalis esset, decreui ut in fastis ad eum diem Bruti nomen adscriberetur, in eoque sum maiorum exemplum secutus qui hunc honorem mulieri Larentiae tribuerunt, cuius uos pontifices ad aram in Velabro sacrificium facere soletis.*

### The honours were for posterity to remember



Roman *fasti*

And when I proposed this honour to Brutus I wished that there should be in the *fasti* an eternal memorial of a most welcome victory: and yet on that very day I discovered that the ill-disposed in the Senate were somewhat in a majority over the grateful. In the course of those same days I lavished honours—if you like that word—upon the dead Hirtius, Pansa, and even Aquila. And who has any fault to find with that, unless he be one who, no sooner an alarm is over, forgets the past danger? There was added to this grateful memorial of a benefit received some consideration of what would be for the good of posterity also; for I wished that there should exist some perpetual record of the popular execration of our most ruthless enemies.

*quod ego cum dabam Bruto, notam esse in fastis gratissimae uictoriae sempiternam uolebam. atque illo die cognoui paulo pluris in senatu maleuolos esse quam gratos. per eos ipsos dies effudi, si ita uis, honores in mortuos, Hirtium et Pansam, Aquilam etiam. quod quis reprehendet, nisi qui deposito metu praeteriti periculi fuerit oblitus? accedebat ad benefici memoriam gratam ratio illa quae etiam posteris esset salutaris. exstare enim uolebam in crudelissimos hostis monumenta odi publici sempiterna.*

§§ Brutus replied with both barrels:

JULY 43 BC

TO CICERO

*From Brutus*

[*ad Brutum* 24/1.16]

### Thank you for your compliments

I have read an extract from your letter to Octavius which was sent me by Atticus. Your zeal and care for my safety gave me no novel pleasure; for it is not merely a matter of habit, but of daily habit, to be told of you that you have said or done something in defence of my position which displayed your fidelity and complimentary opinion of me.

*particulam litterularum tuarum, quas misisti Octauio, legi missam ab Attico mihi. studium tuum curaque de salute mea nulla me noua uoluptate adfecit. non solum enim usitatum sed etiam cotidianum est aliquid audire de te, quod pro nostra dignitate fideliter atque honorifice dixeris aut feceris.*

### You have changed one despot for another



An enslaved subject

But that same extract of your letter to Octavius about us caused me a distress as great as my heart is capable of feeling. For you to thank him in the name of the Republic in such terms, so imploringly, so humbly—I hardly know how to write. I am ashamed to think of our situation, of what fortune has done to us, yet I must write it—you commend our welfare to him! Could any death be worse disaster? You, in fact, declare no abolition of despotism, only a change of despot! Recall your words and dare to say that those prayers are not the pleadings of an enslaved subject to a king.

*at dolore quantum maximum capere animo possum eadem illa pars epistulae scripta ad Octauium de nobis adfecit. sic enim illi gratias agis de re publica, tam suppliciter ac demisse—quid scribam? pudet condicionis ac fortunae sed tamen scribendum est: commendas nostram salutem illi, quae morte qua non perniciosior? ut prorsus prae te feras non sublatam dominationem sed dominum commutatum esse. uerba tua recognosce et aude negare seruientis aduersus regem istas esse preces.*

## Do we Romans have to *beg* for our safety?



Begging for mercy

The one and only thing—you say—that is demanded and expected of him is that he consent to the safety of those citizens, of whom the loyalists and the people have a good opinion. What? If he doesn't consent, shall we not be safe? And yet it is better not to be than to be by his favour. Upon my honour I do not think that all the gods are so hostile to the safety of the Roman people, that we need entreat Octavius for the safety of any citizen, not to say for the liberators of the world—for there is a certain advantage in using strong language, and at any rate there is a propriety in doing so to people who do not know what every man ought to fear or to aim at.

*unum ais esse quod ab eo postuletur et exspectetur, ut eos ciuis de quibus uiri boni populusque Romanus bene existimet saluos uelit. quid si nolit? non erimus? atqui non esse quam esse per illum praestat. ego medius fidius non existimo tam omnis deos auersos esse a salute populi Romani ut Octauius orandus sit pro salute cuiusquam ciuis, non dicam pro liberatoribus orbis terrarum; iuuat enim magnifice loqui et certe decet aduersus ignorantis quid pro quoque timendum aut a quoque petendum sit.*

### Does my life depend on that boy?

Can you confess, Cicero, that Octavius has this power, and are you his friend? Or, if you regard me with affection, do you wish me to appear at Rome, when in order to do so safely I have had to be recommended to that boy? Why do you thank him, if you think he has to be *asked* to allow and suffer us to keep our lives? Is it to be regarded as a favour that he has preferred to be himself rather than a second Antony, to whom we had to make petitions like that? Does anyone address to the destroyer of another's tyranny, and not rather to its successor, a prayer that those who have done the most splendid services to their country may be allowed their lives?

*hoc tu, Cicero, posse fateris Octauium et illi amicus es? aut, si me carum habes, uis Romae uidere, cum ut ibi esse possem commendandus puero illi fuerim? cui quid agis gratias, si ut nos saluos esse uelit et patiatur rogandum putas? an hoc pro beneficio habendum est, quod se quam Antonium esse maluerit a quo ista petenda*



*essent? uindici quidem alienae dominationis, non uicario, ecquis supplicat ut optime meritis de re publica liceat esse saluis?*

It was such desire to control that drove on Julius Caesar



Julius Caesar

This is mere weakness and a counsel of despair. And the fault is not yours more than everyone else's. It was this that egged on Caesar to desire royalty, and induced Antony after his death to aim at occupying the place of the dead man, and has at the present moment put that boy of yours on such a pedestal, as to make you think that he must be absolutely entreated to grant life to such men as us, and that we shall even now be able to enjoy a bare safety from the pity of one man, and by nothing else whatever.

*ista uero imbecillitas et desperatio, cuius culpa non magis in te residet quam in omnibus aliis, et Caesarem in cupiditatem regni impulit et Antonio post interitum illius persuasit ut interfecti locum occupare conaretur et nunc puerum istum extulit, ut tu iudicares precibus esse impetrandam salutem talibus uiris misericordiaque unius uix etiam nunc uiri tutos fore nos, haud ulla alia re.*

We should have remembered we are Romans



But if we had remembered that we were Romans, these dregs of mankind would not have conceived the ambition of playing the tyrant with more boldness than we should have forbidden it: nor would Antony have had his ambition more roused

by Caesar's royalty, than his fears excited by Caesar's death. For yourself, a consular and the avenger of such abominable crimes [i.e. Catiline]—and I fear that by their suppression the mischief was only postponed by you for a short time—how can you contemplate your own achievements, and at the same time countenance, or at any rate endure these things with such abject humbleness, as to have the air of countenancing them?

*quod si Romanos nos esse meminissemus, non audacius dominari cuperent postremi homines quam id nos prohiberemus, neque magis irritatus esset Antonius regno Caesaris quam ob eiusdem mortem deterritus. tu quidem consularis et tantorum scelerum uindex—quibus oppressis uereor ne in breue tempus dilata sit abs te perniciēs—qui potes intueri quae gesseris, simul et ista uel probare uel ita demisse ac facile pati ut probantis speciem habeas?*

### Did you not wish the republic to be free?

Again, what was your private and personal quarrel with Antony? Why, it was just because he made this very claim—that our safety should be asked as a favour from him; that we should hold our civil rights on sufferance—we from whom he had himself received his freedom; that he should be absolute in the Republic—it was for these reasons that you thought we must take up arms to prevent his playing the tyrant. Was the object of doing so that, when he had been prevented, we should have to petition another man to allow himself to be put in his place? Or was it that the Republic should be its own master and at its own disposal? Surely: unless we are to suppose that our objection was not to slavery but to the terms of our slavery!

*quod autem tibi cum Antonio priuatim odium? nempe quia postulabat haec, salutem ab se peti, precariam nos incolumitatem habere a quibus ipse libertatem accepisset, esse arbitrium suum de re publica, quaerenda esse arma putasti quibus dominari prohiberetur, scilicet ut illo prohibito rogaremus alterum qui se in eius locum reponi pateretur, an ut esset sui iuris ac mancipi res publica? nisi forte non de seruitute sed de condicione seruiendi recusatum est a nobis...*

### I shall never yield to such servitude



...I was neither properly a full citizen while Caesar was alive, except when I had resolved upon doing that deed; nor can I ever be anywhere an exile, so long as I

abhor servitude and submission to insult worse than every other evil. To ask a man who has adopted a tyrant's name as his own for the safety of the avengers and destroyers of the tyranny—is not this to fall back into the very dungeon from which you have just escaped? Why, in Greek states when tyrants are put down their sons are included under the same punishment.

Am I to desire to see a state, or to regard it as a state at all, which is incapable of recovering even a freedom handed down by its ancestors and rooted in its very being, and which is more afraid of the name of a slain tyrant in the person of a mere boy, than confident in itself, though it has seen the very man who possessed the most over-weening power removed by the valour of a few?...

*neque incolumis Caesare uiuo fui, nisi postea quam illud consciui facinus, neque usquam exsul esse possum, dum seruire et pati contumelias peius odero malis omnibus aliis. nonne hoc est in easdem tenebras recidisse, <si> ab eo qui tyranni nomen adsciuit sibi, cum in Graecis ciuitatibus liberi tyrannorum oppressis illis eodem supplicio adficiantur, petitur ut uindices atque oppressores dominationis salui sint?*

*hanc ego ciuitatem uidere uelim aut putem ullam, quae ne traditam quidem atque inculcatam libertatem recipere possit plusque timeat in puero nomen sublatis regis quam confidat sibi, cum illum ipsum qui maximas opes habuerit paucorum uirtute sublatus uideat?...*

§§ In his last surviving letter, Cicero tried again (via the intervention of Brutus' mother) to get Brutus to see things his way:

**JULY 27 43 BC**

TO BRUTUS

*From Rome*

[*ad Brut.* 26/1.18]

### Your mother summoned me to discuss the situation

After I had often urged you by letter to come as soon as possible to the aid of the state, and to bring your army into Italy, and when I thought that those close to you had no doubt on that subject, I was asked by that most prudent and careful lady your mother—whose every thought and care are directed and devoted to you—to call on her on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, which, as in duty bound, I at once did. Well, she opened the subject and asked me my opinion, whether we should ask you to come to Italy, and whether we thought that to your advantage, or whether it were better that you should put it off and stay where you were.

*cum saepe te litteris hortatus essem ut quam primum rei publicae subuenires in Italiamque exercitum adduceres neque id arbitrarer dubitare tuos necessarios, rogatus sum a prudentissima et diligentissima femina, matre tua, cuius omnes curae ad te referuntur et in te consumuntur ut uenirem ad se a. d. VIII Kal. Sextilis. quod ego, ut debui, sine mora feci. at illa rettulit quaesiuitque quidnam mihi uideretur, arcesseremusne te atque id tibi conducere putaremus an tardare et commorari te melius esset.*

## The republic is on its knees

I answered—as was my real opinion—that it was of the highest advantage to your position and reputation to bring help at the first possible moment to the tottering and almost prostrate Republic. For what disaster do you think is lacking in a war, in which the victorious armies refuse to pursue a flying enemy, and in which an officer with *imperium* in full possession of his rights, enjoying the most splendid honours and the most ample fortune, with wife and children, with you and Cassius related to him by marriage [Lepidus], has yet proclaimed war on the Republic? Why should I not add ‘in the face of a unanimous Senate and people’, were it not that such fatal mischief abides within our very walls?

*respondi id quod sentiebam, et dignitati et existimationi tuae maxime conducere te primo quoque tempore ferre praesidium labenti et inclinatae paene rei publicae. quid enim abesse censes mali in eo bello, in quo uictores exercitus fugientem hostem persequi noluerint et in quo incolumis imperator honoribus amplissimis fortunisque maximis, coniuge, liberis, uobis adfinibus ornatus bellum rei publicae indixerit? quid dicam in tanto senatus populique consensu, cum tantum resideat intra muros mali?*

### I have been unable to ensure Octavius' loyalty to the republic

But the bitterest sorrow which is affecting me as I write this is that, whereas the Republic accepted me as a surety for that youth, or, I might almost say, that boy, I seem scarcely able to make my promise good. Truly, a guarantee for another's feeling and sentiment, especially in affairs of the greatest importance, is more onerous and difficult than one for money. For money can be paid, and a loss of property is bearable. But how are you to make good what you have guaranteed to the state, unless he for whom you undertook the obligation is willing that it should be fulfilled?

*maximo autem, cum haec scribebam, adficiebar dolore quod, cum me pro adulescentulo ac paene puero res publica accepisset uadem, uix uidebar quod promiseram praestare posse. est autem grauior et difficilior animi et sententiae maximis praesertim in rebus pro altero quam pecuniae obligatio. haec enim solui potest et est rei familiaris iactura tolerabilis; rei publicae quod spoponderis, quem ad modum soluas, nisi is dependi facile patitur pro quo spoponderis?*

### I am doing all I can to keep Octavius on board

However, I shall retain even him, I hope, in spite of many adverse influences. For he seems to have a character of his own, though he is at the pliable time of life, and there are many prepared to corrupt him, who hope that, by holding out before him the glamour of false honour, the sight of a naturally good intelligence may be blinded. Accordingly, to my other labours has been added the task of applying every engine to the keeping of a hold upon the young man, that I may not incur a reputation for rashness.

*quamquam et hunc, ut spero, tenebo multis repugnantibus. uidetur enim esse indoles, sed flexibilis aetas multique ad deprauandum parati; qui splendore falsi honoris obiecto aciem boni ingeni praestringi posse confidunt. itaque ad reliquos hic quoque labor mihi accessit ut omnis adhibeam machinas ad tenendum adulescentem ne famam subeam temeritatis.*

### On top of everything else, we are short of cash

However, where is the rashness? I bound the man, for whom I gave the guarantee, more tightly than I did myself; nor can the state regret my having given a guarantee for one who in the actual campaign was rendered more resolute by my promise, as well as from his own disposition.

But, unless I am mistaken, the greatest difficulty in the Republic is the want of money. For the loyalists grow daily more callous to the call for property tax. All that was collected by the one per cent. income tax, owing to the shameless returns made by the wealthy, is exhausted by the bounties given to two legions: whereas endless expenses are hanging over us, both for the armies now protecting us, and for yours—for our friend Cassius seems able to come home very well provided. But of this and many other things I desire to talk to you when we meet, and that as soon as possible.

*quamquam quae temeritas est? magis enim illum pro quo spopondi quam me ipsum obligavi; nec uero paenitere potest rem publicam me pro eo spopondisse, qui fuit in rebus gerendis cum suo ingenio tum mea promissione constantior.*

*maximus autem, nisi me forte fallit, in re publica nodus est inopia rei pecuniariae. obdurescunt enim magis cotidie boni uiri ad uocem tributi; quod ex centesima conlatum impudenti censu locupletium in duarum legionum praemiis omne consumitur. impendent autem infiniti sumptus cum in hos exercitus quibus nunc defendimur tum uero in tuum. nam Cassius noster uidetur posse satis ornatus uenire. sed et haec et multa alia coram cupio idque quam primum.*

§§ And so Cicero's correspondence closed.

In August Octavius marched on Rome, was appointed consul (at the age of 20), had the Liberators declared criminals and set about reaching an agreement with Antony to settle their differences. To raise funds they settled on proscriptions. Up to perhaps 300 Senators and 2,000 *equites* were condemned to execution and confiscation of property, including (despite Octavius' pleas) Cicero. He made an attempt to escape by sea, but was caught on the beach in his litter.



He was reading Euripides' *Medea* at the time. He told his slaves to put down the litter and, according to Aufidius Bassus, offered his neck to his executioner with the following words: *ego uero consisto. accede, ueterane, et, si hoc saltim potes recte facere, incide cervicem*. 'I'm certainly not moving from here. Come here, soldier, and if you can do this, if nothing else, rightly, slit my throat.'

**Next week:** Cicero's philosophy.