

Caput I. Caesar's Appearance and Caesar's Soldiers

On **Idus Martiae**, the **Ides of March**, 44 BCE, the Roman Senate met at the **Curia of Pompey**, a pavilion attached to the **Theatre of Pompey**. The Senate was in caucus, not in session. Though a relaxed day to discuss affairs; nevertheless, Caesar, as was his custom, wore his toga and **laureae coronae perpetuo gestandae**, a **laurel wreath at all times**. He sat in an armchair

Caesar, three years previously in 47 BCE, was the victor against **King Pharnaces II** at the battle of **Zela**¹, situated in the province of **Bithynia et Pontus**. This March Day, two topics, of a fuller roster, focused on securing Rome's ever-expanding frontier. There was the discussion to subdue the **Dacian tribes** north of the **Danube River** and secondly; securing the eastern frontier against the **Parthians** of **Mesopotamia**

The Senate was central to Rome's success. The Senate's authority decreed power to supreme officers who were elected annually and who laid down their power at the end of term. For more than two centuries power-sharing had ensured success. This concept of governance was the balance: of trust and of men. This poise of late was under discussion. **Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus**, known as **Pompey**, had been given a free hand to remove pirates from the **Eastern Mediterranean**. Within a two-year period, Pompey had successfully eliminated piracy. His power had also extended to the mainland of Asia Minor, defeating **Mithridates**, **king of Pontus**, and he consolidated and affirmed Rome's authority in **Syria** and **Palestine**. Pompey in addition to his extraordinary military success; he had wealth and power. The result was his building of the **Theatre** and the **Curia** (a building offering relaxation with light refreshments, set within a formally-laid garden)

Meanwhile, **Caesar** had held two successive five-year terms of office in **Gaul**; from 59 to 49 BCE. He had also extended Rome's boundaries in northwest Europe to the English Channel including; two raids to Britain in 55 and 54 BCE. Rome's legions, after a decade of intense warfare, were bound to Caesar by loyalty and devotion

Caesar had enemies. Some thought he would usurp the constitution for own purposes

January to March blogs focus on Caesar, a selection of pen-portraits that highlight the man and his times

Caesar's Appearance

Fuisse traditur excelsa statura, colore candido, teretibus membris, ore paulo pleniore, nigris vegetisque oculis, valetudine prospera, nisi quod tempore extremo repente animo linqui atque etiam per somnum exterreri solebat. Comitali quoque morbo bis inter res agendas correptus est. Circa corporis curam morosior, ut calvitii vero deformitatem iniquissime ferret saepe obtrectatorum iocis obnoxiam expertus. Ideoque et deficientem capillum revocare a vertice adsueverat et ex omnibus decretis sibi a senatu populoque honoribus non aliud aut recepit aut usurpavit libentius quam ius laureae coronae perpetuo gestandae

Suetonius, Divus Iulius, 45



Caesar's Soldiers

Militem neque a moribus neque a fortuna probabat, sed tantum a viribus, tractabatque pari severitate atque indulgentia. Non enim ubique ac semper, sed cum hostis in proximo esset, coercebat: tum maxime exactor gravissimus disciplinae, ut neque itineris neque proelii tempus denuntiaret, sed paratum et intentum momentis omnibus quo vellet subito educeret. Quod etiam sine causa plerumque faciebat, praecipue pluviiis et festis diebus... Itaque cum exspectatio adventus lubae terribilis esset, convocatis ad contionem militibus: scitote, inquit, paucissimis his diebus regem adfuturum cum decem legionibus, equitum triginta, levis armaturae centum milibus, elephantis trecentis. Proinde desinant quidam quaerere ultra aut opinari, mihique, qui compertum habeo, credant; aut quidem vetustissima nave impositos quocumque vento in quascumque terras iubebo avehi... Nec milites eos pro contione, sed blandiore nomine commilitones appellabat... Diligebat quoque usque adeo, ut audita clade Tituriana barbam capillumque summisserit nec ante dempserit quam vindicasset. Quibus rebus et devotissimos sibi et fortissimos reddidit

Suetonius, Divus Iulius, 65-68

Footnote : For a fuller account of the Battle of Zela, see: August 2022 blog