

50s BC: Main Political Events

All dates are Roman civic calendar (which was about two month off in most of the years).

January 61. Pompey's first *contio* on his return from the east.

Early 61. Prosecution of Clodius for *incestum* (trial by a specially constituted court in early May). Pompey avoids being drawn into the dispute. Clodius is acquitted through bribery.

28-29 September 61. Pompey's triumph.

Sometime in 61. Death of Q. Lutatius Catulus, consul 78. Bid of Asian *publicani* for the revision of their contract.

End of 61/early 60. Cicero seeks alliance with Pompey. Pompey praises the achievement of 63 for the first time (cf. Cic. *Off.* I.78, inserted in the 60 BC edition of the *Catilinarians* at IV.21).

Early 60. Agrarian bill of L. Flavius, aiming to distribute the *Ager Campanus* to Pompey's veterans, fails due to senatorial opposition.

Later in 60. The triple alliance ('first triumvirate') of Pompey, Crassus and Caesar formed. Cicero refuses to join (in December). Caesar and M. Calpurnius Bibulus elected consuls for 59.

59. After his first (moderate) agrarian bill fails to secure senatorial support, Caesar governs ignoring Bibulus' *obnuntiatio* (consulship of 'Julius and Caesar', Suet. *Div. Iul.* 20), helped in that by Pompey as augur. A supplementary agrarian bill divides up the *Ager Campanus*, senators forced to take the oath of abiding by the first (main) agrarian law. Ptolemy XII Auletes is recognized as king of Egypt. Remission of the sums owned by Asian *publicani* to the treasury. *Lex Vatinia* gives Caesar command in Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum (to which the senate adds Gallia Transalpina). Near the middle of the year, Pompey marries Iulia (Caesar's daughter) and Caesar marries Calpurnia (daughter of L. Piso, future consul of 58). A *lex curiata* (for which Caesar as *pontifex maximus* is responsible) provides for Clodius' transition to the plebs by adoption. Gaius Antonius (cos. 63) successfully prosecuted by Caelius for extortion (defended by Cicero). *Lex Iulia repetundarum* (remains the definitive law on extortion in the imperial period).

Late summer 59. Vettius affair: alleged conspiracy to murder Pompey, featuring Brutus the future tyrannicide and others.

10 December 59. Clodius becomes tribune.

58. Caesar's campaigns against the Helvetii and Ariovistus. Cicero forced into exile by Clodius and reaches Thessalonica on 23 May. Clodius' *lex frumentaria* abolishes charges for corn dole. Repeal of the *lex Aelia Fufia* makes religious obstruction of legislation more difficult. *Lex Clodia de collegiis* abolishes the ban of 64. Cato is sent to annex Cyprus and restore exiles to Byzantium. Piso and Gabinius (consuls of the year) get commands with special powers in Macedon and Syria respectively.

August 58. Clodius allegedly attempts Pompey's assassination.

1 January 57. The consul P. Cornelius Lentulus Spinther calls for Cicero's recall.

4 August 57. *Comitia centuriata* recall Cicero from exile.

- 6 September 57. On Cicero's motion Pompey is put in charge of corn supply.
- Late 57/early 56. Attacks on Clodius and on Caesar's agrarian law, in which Cicero plays prominent part. Ptolemy Auletes expelled from Egypt and tries to secure his restoration by the Romans. Political struggle for being the one who restores him.
- Early 56. Caesar asks for additional funding, ten legates *pro praetore* and postponement of his replacement. His demands criticised by Cicero.
- March 56. Cicero's defence of Sestius (quaestor in 63, tribune in 57, in which capacity he helped in Cicero's rehabilitation) *de ui*.
- April 56. Conference of the 'triumvirs' at Luca. Cicero's 'palinode' follows, Caesar's demands accepted.
- Late 56. *De prouinciis consularibus*. Cicero presses for recall of Gabinius and Piso (unsuccessfully) and extension of Caesar's command.
55. Pompey and Crassus consuls for the second time. They get commands in Spain and Syria respectively for five years. Caesar's command in Gaul extended (new discussion of his replacement forbidden by the law of Pompey and Crassus until 1 March 50). Caesar's first crossing to Britain. In mid-November Crassus departs for Syria. Pompey's theatre dedicated (early autumn).
54. Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus and App. Claudius Pulcher (both opponents of the triumvirs) become consuls, Cato becomes praetor. First campaign of Crassus in Mesopotamia. Huge scandal when it is discovered that consuls were bribed by consular candidates for the next year; C. Lucilius Hirrus proposes making Pompey dictator. Caesar's second expedition to Britain. Caesar's building programme in Rome (Basilica Iulia, Saepta Iulia, Forum Iulium) started. Death of his daughter Iulia, Pompey's wife.
53. Crassus defeated and killed at Carrhae (9 June). Remnants of his army led by his quaestor C. Cassius Longinus (future tyrannicide) back to Syria.
52. The year opens without consuls. Milo (one of the candidates) murders Clodius (candidate for praetorship) on the road to Bovillae (18 January). Pompey elected sole consul on the proposal of Bibulus. Trial of Milo (defended by Cicero, condemned on 8 April), who goes into exile to Massilia. The 'law of the ten tribunes' gives Caesar right to stand for consulship *in absentia*. *Lex Pompeia de prouinciis*: provincial governorship to be postponed by five years after the magistracy (which allows, by using earlier magistrates who have not yet served as governors, to replace Caesar earlier than at the end of 49). In August, Q. Metellus Scipio (of the 'optimates') elected second consul. Earlier in the year, Pompey marries his daughter, Cornelia. The rebellion of Vercingetorix in Gaul, the largest military challenge to Caesar through the whole conquest. After some early reverses (notably at Gergovia), Caesar defeats Vercingetorix at Alesia.
51. Cicero becomes governor of Cilicia (to July 50). Cassius defeats Parthian invasion of Syria, is then replaced by Bibulus. Early in the year consul M. Claudius Marcellus¹ attempts to raise the issue of Caesar's Gallic command. The discussion is postponed until after 1 March 50. In September a discussion of the demobilisation of Caesar's army is scheduled for next March.

¹ Don't get confused by the remarkable sequence of M. Claudius M. f. Marcellus (cos. 51), C. Claudius C. f. Marcellus (cos. 50) and C. Claudius M. f. Marcellus (cos. 49), all of them opponents of Caesar.

Autumn 51. Parthian invasion of Syria defeated by Cassius before the arrival of the new proconsul Bibulus (Caesar's colleague back in 59).

Winter 51/50. Two legions taken from Caesar, theoretically to confront the Parthian threat, but in practice retained in Italy. The first seven books of Caesar's *Gallic War* published.

From March 50. Attempts to recall Caesar from Gaul repeatedly thwarted by the sympathetic tribune C. Scribonius Curio.

1 December 50. Curio proposes that both Caesar and Pompey surrender their commands (Senate 370 to 22 in favour, but vetoed by a tribune). Consul C. Marcellus entrusts the state to Pompey.

7 January 49. Caesar is deprived of his command. Tribunes M. Antonius (Antony) and Q. Cassius escape from the city.

11 January 49. Caesar crosses the Rubicon.