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THE ACTIVITIES OF ASINIUS POLLIO IN 40 BC: VENETIA, SALONA, AND BRUNDISIUM*

Abstract. – The article examines the activities of Gaius Asinius Pollio from the Perusine War to the conclusion of the Treaty of Brundisium in 40 BC, with particular attention to his role in Venetia, his alliance with Domitius Ahenobarbus, and his activities on the eastern Adriatic coast and at Salona. Pollio's position during this period has been interpreted in different ways in modern scholarship, chiefly because of the questions of whether he was aligned with Antony or Octavian and which province he governed after the agreement at Brundisium. Rather than treating these issues separately, the article seeks to reconstruct the sequence of events on the basis of the complete narrative preserved in the ancient sources, while critically reassessing several assumptions in modern scholarship. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between the accounts of Appian and Velleius Paterculus concerning Pollio's activities in Venetia, as well as to the date and circumstances of his arrival on the eastern Adriatic coast. The analysis indicates that during the spring and summer of 40 BC Pollio acted as one of Antony's commanders, first in north-eastern Italy and subsequently in the eastern Adriatic region. His alliance with Domitius Ahenobarbus gave Antony access to the Adriatic lines of communication, while the intervention at Salona represented a continuation of Pollio's efforts to consolidate Antony's position. This reconstruction calls into question the assumption that Pollio had gone over to Octavian before the agreement at Brundisium and offers a different picture of his activities in the period preceding the division of the Roman provinces among the triumvirs.

Key words. – Caius Asinius Pollio, Illyricum, second triumvirate, Treaty of Brundisium, Venetia, Salona, Domitius Ahenobarbus.

* This article draws on chapters from the unpublished doctoral dissertations of both authors. The section on Venetia appears in the dissertation *Oktavijanova kampanja u Iliriku 35. pr. Kr. [Octavian's campaign in Illyricum in 35 BC]* (Brezak 2026, 31–50.), while the section on Salona was treated in the dissertation entitled *Oktavijanova kampanja protiv Delmata 34.–33. pr. Kr. [Octavian's campaign against the Delmatae 34–33 BC]* (Bilić-Dujmušić 2004, 356–379).

This article will attempt to guide the reader through the minefield sown by the activities of Gaius Asinius Pollio across the broad expanse of Venetia, Salona and Brundisium in the years 41–39 BC. Historians of the late Republic have often kept their distance from this subject, since engaging with it means an uncomfortable brush with two giants from different periods. The first is Asinius Pollio himself: witness to and maker of history, historian, successful military commander and triumphator, patron of the arts without whom there would have been neither Virgil nor Horace, founder of the first public library in Rome, a man whom not even his political opponents could reproach, a *homo novus* who 'earned every honour which even the noblest can earn only by sweat and toil',[1] a man who embodied Rome at its most honourable. He was a figure whose stature transcended his own age, yet who is not today known to every schoolchild because the turbulent times in which he lived directed attention chiefly towards some of his other distinguished contemporaries, leaving us to rummage through the scraps of evidence for Pollio's activities from their shadow and try to piece them together into some sort of mosaic.

The second is 'His Majesty' Sir Ronald Syme,[2] the New Zealander and Oxford professor, 'the greatest historian of ancient Rome since Theodor Mommsen and the most brilliant exponent of the history of the Roman Empire since Edward Gibbon'.[3] He was the author of *The Roman Revolution*, virtually the Bible of historians of the late Republic and early Principate. Published in 1939, the book completely transformed perceptions of the Augustan age – and did so in the midst of Mussolini's lavish celebration of the bimillennium of the birth of the 'saviour of Rome' – by portraying Augustus as a pragmatic, ruthless and duplicitous politician. Although the works of Syme relevant here were written in the first half of the twentieth century, he was quite simply so good that even in the twenty-first century few have dared to go against him. Fortunately, unlike other colleagues who have touched upon this subject, we shall not have to do so here. All of Syme's conclusions, insofar as he reached them, fit perfectly with the picture that will be presented in this article.[4]

Of course, agreeing with Syme does not mean that we shall hide behind his authority and uncritically treat every one of his claims as the only one that matters. Syme's arguments on many points of importance to

[1] Vell. Pat. 2.128.3.

[2] R. Syme has popularly been called the *Emperor of Roman History* ever since G.W. Bowersock used the phrase as the title of an article for *The New York Review*, accompanied by a caricature showing him in a laurel-bedecked bowler hat (see Bowersock 1980).

[3] Bowersock 1991, 119.

[4] The reader will notice only that, unlike Syme, we place greater trust in the scholiasts on Virgil and Horace. This does not, however, bring us into conflict with Syme's fundamental theses (Syme 1937, 39–48.), since his argument is directed towards demonstrating other points (to which we shall return later).

us are genuinely persuasive, yet over time several disputed issues have nevertheless emerged in the scholarship that skilfully challenge his views. These points, which likewise deserve mention, reveal both the direction of the debate and the scholarly tendencies within it, since researchers themselves take up positions in opposing trenches according to the theses they defend. This is hardly surprising, for the story of Asinius Pollio during the period considered here is, above all, one of considerable complexity.

The Problem

From the outbreak of the Perusine War (41 BC), through its conclusion and the forging of the Treaty of Brundisium (40 BC), and on to Pollio's proconsulship (39 BC) and his triumph *ex Parthineis* (39 or 38 BC), events moved at great speed, while the protagonist of this article has at times not been assigned an appropriate role in modern scholarship. In fact, it might be more accurate to say that his role in the various aspects connected with the events listed above has been questioned out of all proportion. This is due primarily to diverse and sometimes insufficiently grounded interpretations of certain sources.[5] One can observe in the literature that the division among scholars, and the emergence of numerous mutually exclusive historiographical solutions, has largely been caused by the more or less subjective decision as to whether the addressee of Virgil's eighth *Eclogue* was Asinius Pollio or Octavian,[6] while the subsequent arguments of individual authors depend on the position adopted. Choosing either of these options gives rise to new dilemmas: at the time of and after the conclusion of the agreement at Brundisium (autumn 40 BC), was Pollio Antony's man or Octavian's, and was he – and if so, exactly when – governor of Antony's province of Macedonia or Octavian's Illyricum?[7] Three, as we might put it, fundamental lines of argument have emerged: 1) that of Ronald Syme; 2) that of Jacques André; and 3) that of Albert Brian Bosworth. Syme's position on these questions is unequivocal: the addressee of the eighth *Eclogue* is Asinius Pollio, who was also

[5] We shall not be concerned here with the debate over the influence of Pollio's lost work on later authors (for which see Morgan 2000.), nor shall we speculate on what Pollio thought or intended to say. We simply have no evidence for this, nor would conclusions on such matters contribute in any way to our subject.

[6] The matter has been discussed at considerable length in scholarship, and several works may be singled out. For Asinius Pollio as the addressee: Syme 1937, 39; Berkowitz 1972, 21–38; Tarrant 1978, 197–199; Farrell 1991, 204–211; Thibodeau 2006, 618–623. For Octavian as the addressee: Bowersock 1971, 73–80; Bowersock 1978, 201–202; Clausen 1972, 201–206; Mankin 1988, 63–76. Clauss 2002, 165–173 reaches no final conclusion, but instead seeks to clarify the geographical terms mentioned by Virgil in the eighth *Eclogue*.

[7] For more detailed discussions of these debates, see Woodman 1983, 192–196; Lutton 2012, chapters 6 and 7.

Antony's man and governed the province of Macedonia on his behalf.[8] Bosworth takes the diametrically opposite view: the addressee of Virgil's *Eclogue* is Octavian, Pollio was Octavian's man from the agreement at Brundisium onwards, and he assumed control of Illyricum as Octavian's province.[9] Chronologically, André formulated his view after Syme but before Bosworth. He, by contrast, considers that Pollio acted in agreement with both triumvirs, and could therefore carry out an assignment in Octavian's Illyricum and subsequently in Antony's Macedonia.[10] For André, the boundary at Scodra did not constitute an administrative obstacle to crossing from Octavian's sphere into Antony's.

From the questions of who Virgil's addressee was, in whose service Asinius Pollio stood, and which province he governed after the Treaty of Brundisium, the controversy expanded and generated numerous further discussions seeking to clarify Pollio's actions – which might at the same time answer these questions – from the Perusine War to the conclusion of the agreement at Brundisium and his departure for proconsular office. It is difficult to enumerate them all, but several points can nevertheless be singled out. There is, for example, discussion of Pollio's excessively passive role in the Perusine War and his too ready surrender of Calenus' eleven legions to Octavian,[11] and of the consequent loss of Antony's favour, which Pollio sought to regain by winning over Domitius Ahenobarbus for him.[12] Bosworth, moreover, considers that Pollio was not an important figure for Antony, but merely an acceptable solution because it was Octavian's soldiers, rather than Antony personally, who chose Pollio as negotiator at Brundisium.[13] From Susan Lutton's discussion one might infer that Appian further diminishes Pollio's importance by failing, in his account of events after Brundisium, to mention what happened to him, unlike the information he provides on other commanders of Antony, Ventidius Bassus or Munatius Plancus.[14] Pollio's capture of Salona, or rather the war against the Delmatae, mentioned only by Florus and by the scholiasts on

[8] Syme 1937, 41–43; 47–48.

[9] Bosworth 1972, 468–473. Bosworth's principal premise rests precisely on demonstrating Pollio's rapprochement with Octavian and his consequent distancing from Antony.

[10] André 1949, 22–23.

[11] Bosworth 1972, 471. Following the death of Antony's governor of Transalpine Gaul, Fufius Calenus, his – or rather Antony's – eleven legions came under Octavian's command in 40 BC. This considerably strengthened Octavian's own position while at the same time halving Antony's 'western' forces (App. *BCiv.* 5.51; Dio 48.20.3.).

[12] Lutton 2012, 142.

[13] Bosworth 1972, 472.

[14] Lutton 2012, 136.

Virgil and Horace,[15] has for the most part been tied to the debate over whether Pollio was at that time on Octavian's or Antony's side. According to Bosworth, since Salona was in Illyricum and Illyricum belonged to Octavian, Pollio's Dalmatian triumph[16] merely confirms that he was Octavian's governor.[17] Syme, on the other hand, does not reject the possibility that Pollio, as Antony's man, captured Salona, but he is distrustful of the information provided by the scholiasts, which he considers 'contradictory as well as demonstrably erroneous'.[18] Woodman inclines towards André's solution, according to which Pollio, at the head of a roving commission, would have dealt with problems in both provinces, including Salona, in the service of both triumvirs.[19] Danijel Džino also takes into account, for the story of Salona, a medieval source, Thomas the Archdeacon, who writes that Pollio destroyed Salona's walls after a prolonged siege and attacks by cavalry and navy.[20] The entire discussion of this issue remains confined to the Parthini, Dalmatia and Salona, while the Delmatae, as Pollio's opponents, are not discussed.

What prevents us on this occasion from providing, or reconciling, answers to the many questions is not a lack of sources, nor even contradictions between them. The problem lies, in our view, in an excessively narrow consideration of the overall context, and consequently in the difficulty of assessing the quality of the information the sources provide. In order to disentangle all of this and offer more concrete – or more satisfactory – solutions, we believe the material must be approached differently. The dilemmas presented above cannot, in fact, be considered separately and resolved one by one, because this fragments processes that necessarily need to be viewed together. We shall therefore change our approach and begin from the foundations, then build up the story layer by layer through a narrative attested in the sources. We shall offer a reassessment of the source material and, with a touch of Syme's cynicism, allow the existing theses – "so firmly fortified by time, numbers and authority that cannot be taken by a frontal assault – to collapse from within."[21]

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[15] Flor. *Epit*. 2.25; Acro *ad Hor. Carm*. 2.1.15; Porphyrio *Comm. in Hor. Carm.* 2.1.15–17; Serv. *Ecl*. 3.88; 4.1; 8.12.

[16] Mentioned in Hor. *Carm*. 2.1.13–16.

[17] Bosworth 1972, 468–472.

[18] Syme 1937, 43.

[19] Woodman 1983, 194.

[20] More precisely, this concerns a source used by Thomas the Archdeacon which has not survived (Džino 2011, 158–166.). We may merely note that attacking city walls with cavalry and warships is not exactly a recommended tactic, and that this information was probably either inferred by Thomas the Archdeacon himself or taken over from a local tradition concerning an event that had occurred 1,300 years earlier.

[21] Syme 1937, 40. Purely by way of demonstration, we reproduce the type of discussion that we shall not employ here (Lutton 2012, 151–152.): „Embedded in the argument is

To prepare the ground for the discussion, we shall begin with two preliminary sections. In the first, we shall start with Asinius Pollio himself and sketch, in broad outline, who he actually was, since this may ultimately prove to be one of the key arguments.[22] In the second, by way of the historical context, we shall consider an episode from the conflicts among the members of the Second Triumvirate – the Perusine War – because this war and its consequences (the Treaty of Brundisium) constitute the historical framework within which we must try to place the information provided by the sources. Two main sections will then follow. By way of a synopsis, we may indicate that in the first we shall attempt to define Pollio's role in the Perusine War and its immediate aftermath, particularly with regard to his assignments in Venetia, his departure for the eastern Adriatic coast, and his alliance with Domitius Ahenobarbus – in that order. The sources suggest that Pollio was, in fact, a man in whom Antony placed particular trust, entrusted with special assignments in northeastern Italy. Having completed the tasks assigned to him in Venetia, he appears to have attempted something similar on the opposite shore of the Adriatic, in Illyricum, or more precisely at Salona. His presence in Illyricum will be considered in the second and final part of this discussion. We shall offer a different line of reasoning suggesting that Syme's scepticism towards the scholiasts may not rest on such firm foundations after all. The analysis has shown, for example, that the statement by the Virgilian scholiast Servius Maurus that Pollio captured Salona before his consulship, but in the year in which he was consul,[23] is logically sustainable. The results of the analysis in the main sections of the article may therefore open the way to reconsidering theories that have hitherto become established and to forming a different picture of Asinius Pollio.

Pollio's actual province. If Pollio is considered the proconsul of Macedonia, as argued by Syme and accepted by Bowersock, then the geography in the *Eclogue* must be dismissed as either poetic licence, for which there is argument, or it opens to the suggestion it is a reference to Octavian's campaigns in Illyricum and that the addressee is not Pollio. But if Pollio's province is within Illyricum there is no need to re-cast Vergil's writing and the addressee is Pollio." We do not, of course, single out Susan Lutton's discussion because it is lacking in quality, but because her treatment clearly shows how particular historiographical assumptions guide the interpretation of the sources and shape the further course of the argument. Accordingly, rather than resolving the problems here by beginning from pre-existing assumptions about Pollio's province or the addressee of the *Eclogue*, we shall attempt to reconstruct the sequence of events strictly on the basis of the complete narrative of the sources. We believe that the answers will thereby emerge of their own accord and that it will also become possible to assess to what extent the doubts that have become the subject of debate are well founded, if indeed they are at all.

[22] Pollio's biography is presented here only in its basic outlines. Nothing more is required at this initial stage of the argument. For a detailed and accomplished study of Pollio's life as a whole, see Lutton 2012.

[23] Serv. *Ecl*. 3.88.

Gaius Asinius Pollio: *vir omnium horarum*[24]

He was born in 76 BC[25] as a descendant of the plebeian *gens Asinia*, originating from Teate (*Theate Marrucinorum*, modern-day Chieti) in central Italy, some fifteen kilometres from the Adriatic coast. He had no illustrious ancestors, apart from a certain Herius Asinius (perhaps his grandfather), who in 90 BC is mentioned among the commanders of the anti-Roman coalition in the Social War,[26] which defeated three Roman armies and killed the Roman commanders Publius Rutilius (*cos*. 90 BC), Quintus Caepio (*cos. suff*. 90 BC), and Lucius Porcius Cato (*cos*. 89 BC).[27] This Herius Asinius appears to have been a successful commander, since Livy described his death in somewhat greater detail,[28] probably in connection with the military operations of Gnaeus Pompeius (the father of Pompey the Great), who is said to have subdued the Marsi, Marrucini and Vestini.[29]

Pollio's father lived in Rome as an eques and possessed sufficient means to give his son a careful upbringing. This paid off handsomely as early as 54 BC, when the young, twenty-two-year-old Asinius shrewdly and energetically prosecuted Gaius Cato on the charge of having incited the comitia to revolt.[30] Cato was acquitted thanks to Pompey's influence, but Pollio had made a name for himself and earned a place in the history of oratory. Soon afterwards the civil war broke out and Pollio joined Caesar, partly, as he himself put it, because of his friendship with Caesar and partly because he had enemies on both sides and therefore felt safer by entering one of the camps.[31] The eloquent young man had evidently already been one of Caesar's intimates, for during the famous crossing of the Rubicon he was the only person immediately beside the commander-in-chief. The immortal words *alea iacta est* were not at all what we now take them to have been: the grand words of a great man who knows that he is embarking upon a momentous undertaking and, with his very first step, leaves a message to posterity. They were simply an expression of anxiety, spoken into the ear of the only person close enough to hear Caesar utter them: Asinius Pollio himself, who alone sat with Caesar in the two-horse carriage in which they crossed the river and set out into the un-

[24] Quint. *Inst*. 6.3.110.

[25] This follows from the information that, at the age of twenty-two, he took part in legal proceedings against Gaius Cato (Tac. *Dial*. 34.7.).

[26] App. *BCiv.* 1.40; Vell. Pat. 2.16.1.

[27] Eutrop. 5.3.

[28] Liv. *Per*. 73.

[29] App. *BCiv.* 1.52.

[30] Cic. *ad Att*. 4.15; Dio 39.27.3; Liv. *Per.* 105; Quint. *Inst.* 12.6.1; Tac. *Dial.* 34.7.

[31] Cic. *ad fam*. 10.31. Asinius Pollio wrote this letter in March 43 BC, explaining to Cicero the motives behind his earlier actions.

certainties of civil war. The immortal catchphrase of all those who gamble with fate survived and acquired such fame only because Asinius Pollio included the episode in his *History*, from which Appian and Plutarch subsequently took it.[32]

After the operations in Italy had ended, he was sent to Sicily as Curio's legate, where he achieved his first military success without a battle, but by talking: he managed to persuade Cato to leave the island without resistance.[33] He then accompanied Curio into the African catastrophe and, after the defeat at the Bagradas and Curio's death, succeeded in bringing the remnants of the army to Utica. Their fleet, however, fled before embarking the troops, so Pollio sailed around in a small boat hiring merchant vessels for transport – not entirely successfully, since part of the army was left behind at Utica and surrendered to the Pompeian Varus.[34] We next find him as one of Caesar's commanders at the Battle of Pharsalus,[35] although it is difficult to say when he rejoined Caesar and to what extent he had participated in the earlier events around Oricum and Dyrrhachium. After Pharsalus he returned to Rome, where he probably became tribune of the plebs for 47 BC and supported Antony during the disturbances provoked by Antony's personal enemy Dolabella through his proposal to abolish all debts.[36] The following year Caesar took him to Africa, where on one occasion he managed to halt the army's flight before the Numidian cavalry,[37] and then to Hispania, where he participated in the Battle of Munda.[38] In 45 BC Caesar personally appointed fourteen praetors without holding elections and assigned them provinces, among them Asinius Pollio – then thirty-one years old and some eight years younger than the prescribed age for praetors – whom he sent to Hispania. There he became engaged in fighting against the remnants of the Pompeian forces led by Sextus Pompeius, which continued until Caesar's death and was subsequently brought to an end through Lepidus' mediation and an agreement under which Sextus withdrew to Sicily while Pollio remained in the province with three legions.[39] Now that he commanded an army and an important province, he could hardly remain aloof from the conflicts that followed, however much he appears to have wished to do so.[40] In the end, he

[32] App. *BCiv.* 2.35; Plut. *Caes*. 32.

[33] App. *BCiv.* 2.40; Plut. *Cato Min.* 53. Cf. Caes. *BCiv.* 1.30 and Dio 41.41.1, who attribute this success to Curio as commander-in-chief. The first two authors probably took the information from Pollio himself.

[34] App. *BCiv.* 2.45–46.

[35] App. *BCiv.* 2.82; Plut. *Pomp.* 72; Suet. *Div. Iul*. 30.

[36] Plut. *Ant*. 9.

[37] Plut. *Caes*. 52.

[38] Cic. *ad Att*. 12.38; Suet. *Div. Iul*. 55.

[39] App. *BCiv*. 4.84; Cic. *ad fam*. 10.32; Dio 43.47; 45.10; Vell. Pat. 2.73.2.

[40] Cic. *ad fam*. 10.31–33.

nevertheless decided to support Antony and joined him with two legions. He also won over Munatius Plancus, governor of Gaul, who had three legions, to Antony's side.[41] After the formation of the Triumvirate, Antony assigned him seven legions and authority in Transpadana.[42]

The Perusine War found him in this position (for which see in greater detail below). After the Treaty of Brundisium had been concluded, Pollio was sent to Antony's Macedonia to pacify the Parthini, who had fought on Brutus' side and were still threatening the province.[43] On his return to Rome, he was rewarded for this with a triumph in 39 or 38 BC.[44] He then withdrew into private life and appears never again to have left Italy. He refused Octavian's invitation to join him in the war against Cleopatra and Mark Antony, partly because of the debt he felt he owed Antony.[45] He devoted himself to patronage and historiography. With the spoils of war he had acquired, he built the first public library in Rome.[46] During his time in Cisalpine Gaul, he came into contact with the young poet Publius Vergilius Maro, whose estate near Mantua he saved from seizure by military veterans and whose patron and promoter he subsequently became.[47] Virgil is said to have composed, at Pollio's prompting, the pastoral poems (*Eclogues*) that placed him in the front rank of Roman poetry, before later attaining with the *Aeneid* a fame *which few poets achieve even after death*.[48]

Asinius Pollio died in AD 5, in his eightieth year.[49]

Historical context: *compulsus eo, quo minime volebam*[50]

The final vengeance for the Ides of March came in 42 BC at the Battle of Philippi, when the emboldened Republican side, led by Caesar's assassins, for the last time in history led Roman citizens onto the battlefield. Their defeat, together with the proscriptions that had just been carried out, delivered the entire Roman state into the hands of the victors, without any opposition worthy of the name. Caesar's political supporters and associates thus became the holders of all power. Yet only a few months later

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[41] App. *BCiv.* 3.97; Liv. *Per*. 120; Vell. Pat. 2.63.3.

[42] Serv. *Ecl.* 2.1; 6.6; 9.11. See below.

[43] App. *BCiv.* 5.75; Dio 48.41.7.

[44] Degrassi 1947, 87; 343.

[45] Vell. Pat. 2.86.3; Val. Max. 8.13.

[46] Plin. *Nat. hist*. 7.115.

[47] Serv. *Ecl*. 6.6; 9.11; Suet. *Poet*. 19.

[48] Mart. 1.1.6.

[49] Hieron Ad Euseb. *Chron. A. Abr.* 2020; Tac. *Dial*. 17.7.

[50] Cic. *ad fam*. 10.31. The words of Asinius Pollio in a letter to Cicero from Corduba, 16 March 43 BC.

fresh tensions arose among them, and Italy once again became the scene of another civil war.

After the Battle of Philippi, Mark Antony went east in order to consolidate the unsettled provinces there,[51] while Octavian was to concern himself in Italy with settling the veterans. Under the arrangement then in force, Antony governed the eastern provinces and Transalpine Gaul, Octavian Hispania, Sardinia and Africa,[52] while Cisalpine Gaul was absorbed into Italy and ceased to exist as a province.[53] Sicily remained outside the agreement because it was then held by Sextus Pompeius, whose strength was growing relentlessly as victims of the proscriptions and runaway slaves joined him day by day. He now also received a fresh infusion from the remnants of the defeated Caesarian assassins' army and fleet. His army threatened the coasts of Italy, while his fleet effectively severed commercial communications,[54] so that Rome suffered shortages and a sharp rise in prices. Besides Sextus, there was another renegade Republican, Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, who established a kind of 'floating republic' in the Ionian Sea with two legions and seventy ships.[55] But there was no longer a Republican party, nor any living charismatic leader capable of leading one.

Antony's supporters soon realised that Antony had made a mistake in leaving the settlement of the veterans to Octavian, since the task was winning Octavian popularity with the army.[56] The first to begin causing trouble was Lucius Antonius, the triumvir's brother. He was consul in 41 BC and celebrated a triumph over certain Alpine peoples (*ex Alpibus*),[57] which seems to have gone to his head, for he began loudly proclaiming himself a Republican and an opponent of the Triumvirate.[58] This naturally brought him into conflict with Octavian.[59] He found his principal collaborator in Antony's associate Manius – whom Appian calls 'the administrator

[51] And in order to collect the taxes with which to pay the legionaries whom Octavian was settling throughout Italy (App. *BCiv*. 5.3.).

[52] He ceded Africa to Lepidus in 41 BC because it had become clear that Lepidus had not collaborated with Sextus and could therefore be trusted (App. *BCiv*. 5.12; Dio 48.1.3.).

[53] App. *BCiv*. 5.3; Dio 48.12.5. For a more detailed discussion of Cisalpine Gaul from the Social War to the abolition of the province, see Ewins 1955, 73–98.

[54] App. *BCiv*. 5.18; Dio 48.17.3–4.

[55] App. *BCiv*. 5.26;

[56] Although Italy was *de iure* under the joint administration of the triumvirs, *de facto* it came under the control of Octavian, who was actually present there. Antony was in the East at the time (Plut. *Ant.* 38; Dio 49.26.3).

[57] Degrassi 1947, 87; 343.

[58] More precisely, he presented himself as an opponent of the confiscation of Italian land for the benefit of the legionaries and to the detriment of the people (App. *BCiv*. 5.13–19).

[59] App. *BCiv*. 5.19; Dio 48.6.1–2.

in Antony's absence' (ἐπιτροπεύω)[60] – and in Antony's wife (and until recently Octavian's mother-in-law), Fulvia.[61] The three of them formed the core of a conspiracy against Octavian, presenting their activities as a struggle in defence of Antony's interests, although Octavian possessed Antony's authorisation to settle the veterans.[62] Fulvia's reasons for the conflict were, admittedly, rather more mundane: Manius convinced her that peace and concord with Octavian would ensure that Antony remained with Cleopatra, whereas unrest would guarantee his return to Italy.[63] Octavian was, naturally, unpleasantly surprised by the agitation of Lucius and Fulvia and assumed that they were acting on their own initiative. Antony's own opinion, however, could not be obtained because winter conditions had disrupted all communications with Egypt.[64] Octavian decided to proceed with moderation and without excessive force; once communications reopened, he would settle everything with Antony. Even Antony's commanders Asinius Pollio, Ventidius Bassus and Munatius Plancus, who had been left with legions in and around Italy, were fairly convinced that Antony did not stand behind the actions of Lucius and Fulvia.[65]

On one occasion, when Octavian's cavalry rushed towards the Bruttian coast, which was under attack by Sextus Pompeius' men, Lucius seized the opportunity and raised an outcry that the cavalry had been sent against him and Antony's sons. He assembled a bodyguard of Antony's veterans and called the commanders of Antony's legions to arms.[66] At the beginning of autumn the commanders arranged a meeting at Teanum Sidicinum, but the agreed terms of the truce never came into effect.[67] A final, somewhat desperate attempt at reconciliation was initiated by the legionaries themselves, but Lucius, whether from fear or contempt for the 'Senate in soldiers' boots',[68] failed to appear at the agreed meeting at Gabii. The final appeal for peace thus failed, and nothing remained but to fight.

The war itself, however, ended relatively quickly.[69] Once hostilities broke out, Octavian sent one legion to Brundisium to block any possible reinforcements from the East and urgently recalled Salvidienus Rufus, who was on his way to Hispania with six legions. He entrusted the defen-

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[60] App. *BCiv*. 5.14.

[61] Dio 48.5.2–3. Because of his conflict with Fulvia, Octavian divorced her daughter Claudia.

[62] App. *BCiv*. 5.14.

[63] App. *BCiv*. 5.19.

[64] App. *BCiv*. 5.52; Plut. *Ant*. 30. Antony spent the winter in Alexandria.

[65] App. *BCiv*. 5.33.

[66] App. *BCiv*. 5.19.

[67] App. *BCiv*. 5.20.

[68] Dio 48.12.3: βουλὴν καλιγᾶταν (= *senatus caligatus*).

[69] For the Perusine War in greater detail, see App. *BCiv.* 5.19–50; Dio 48.4–15; Charlesworth 1934, 25–30; Gabba 1971, 139–160; Pelling 1996, 14–17.

ce of Rome to the third triumvir, Lepidus, but, as Charlesworth put it, Lepidus 'signally failed'[70] in this task, since Lucius entered the city with almost no resistance and briefly brought it under his control.[71] Learning that Octavian was now marching on Rome, Lucius headed north towards Etruria in order to join Pollio's and Ventidius' legions, but the arrival of Salvidienus' and Agrippa's forces forced him to abandon the attempt. He was compelled to take refuge in Perusia and wait there for reinforcements. Owing to its strong walls and hilltop position, Perusia was impervious to assault, so when Octavian reached the city he constructed a line of circumvallation. At the same time, he dispatched part of his forces to watch the movements of Antony's commanders and prevent them from coming to the aid of the beleaguered Lucius. The position of these commanders was an uncomfortable one, since none of them knew Antony's real intentions. In the end, unable to outmanoeuvre Salvidienus and Agrippa, they withdrew and left the besieged Perusia to Octavian's mercy.

The city was subjected to a relentless siege, an *epic* famine set in (*Perusina fames*),[72] and on 1 January 40 BC the desperate defenders mounted a major but unsuccessful sortie. Several similar attempts followed, but by the end of February Lucius was finally forced to capitulate. The fall of Perusia was followed by looting and massacre, and the city was completely destroyed. Even so, Octavian carefully calibrated his treatment of Lucius so as not to give his brother grounds for retaliation. Among Antony's commanders, Pollio withdrew towards Venetia, Ventidius towards Ravenna, and Plancus towards Brundisium, although Agrippa seized two of Plancus' legions. Corridors were left open for their retreat, and at Brundisium Plancus and Fulvia boarded a ship for Athens and sailed to meet the approaching Antony.[73]

The destruction of the heart of the rebellion did not bring hostilities to an end. Antony's commanders were retreating, but they still had an impressive force of twenty-two legions under their command in the vicinity of Italy.[74] Octavian's position, however, was strengthened overnight by the intervention of fortune, when Fufius Calenus, Antony's governor of Transalpine Gaul and commander of eleven legions, died unexpectedly. Acting quickly, Octavian seized Calenus' legions and thereby halved Antony's forces. Because winter conditions had made communications diffi-

[70] Charlesworth 1934, 29.

[71] Dio 48.13.3–4.

[72] This is how Luc. *Phars*. 1.41 refers to it in his epic.

[73] By the spring of 40 BC Antony was already on his way to Italy, since news of the conflict had finally reached him.

[74] Of these legions, eleven were in Gaul under Fufius Calenus, seven under Asinius Pollio in Cisalpine Gaul, and four under Ventidius Bassus in Italy (App. *BCiv*. 5.24; 50; Vell. Pat. 2.76.2.).

cult, news of the Perusine War and of Calenus' legions falling into Octavian's hands reached Mark Antony only in the spring of 40 BC, when the war was already over and he had made his way from Alexandria to Asia. As soon as he received the news, he turned towards Brundisium rather than Syria and the Parthians. On the way to Italy he encountered the fugitive Fulvia, and shortly afterwards he also met Asinius Pollio. They gave him their side of the story, prompting him to secure his own position by entering into an unnatural alliance with two recent enemies, Sextus Pompeius and Domitius Ahenobarbus. Although he had doubts about Octavian's true intentions, Antony nevertheless retained a grain of suspicion that the rumours had been exaggerated and maintained a conciliatory attitude towards his colleague.[75] That attitude, however, evaporated after the incident outside Brundisium, when Antony was prevented from entering the city.

Octavian had in fact been expecting Antony's arrival,[76] and, likewise seeking to secure his position, made two moves. First, he entered into a dynastic alliance with Sextus Pompeius – before the alliance between Sextus and Antony was concluded – by marrying Scribonia, the aunt of Sextus' wife,[77] and then strengthened Brundisium's defences by sending an additional five cohorts there. The people of Brundisium were grateful to him, since they were hostile to Antony and Domitius. They barred them from entering the city: Domitius because he had ravaged their fields the year before, and Antony because he had brought Domitius, their enemy, beneath the city walls.[78] Antony, understandably, now interpreted this unequivocally as an act of open hostility and decided to corner Octavian and defeat him outright. At his signal, simultaneous attacks began: Antony attacked the coast around Brundisium, Sextus Pompeius invaded Bruttium from Sicily, and Sextus' henchman Menas seized Sardinia from Octavian. Although the circumstances looked unpromising, Octavian's forces nevertheless managed to stabilise the situation and reverse the momentum. Sextus Pompeius was forced to withdraw from Thurii, Agrippa captured Sipontum, while outside Brundisium a stalemate developed in which Octavian could not get at Antony and Antony could not get at Brundisium.

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[75] App. *BCiv*. 5.52.

[76] Although he did not know whether Antony was coming as an enemy or an ally.

[77] App. *BCiv.* 5.53. Although the *communis opinio* is that Octavian married Scribonia out of fear of Mark Antony, there is also an interesting interpretation to the contrary: by marrying her, Octavian was sending Antony the message that he was not acting out of necessity, but demonstrating political strength and flexibility, to the point that he had no difficulty forming an alliance even with an enemy. See further Berdowski 2020, 601–616.

[78] App. *BCiv.* 5.26; 56.

And, as sometimes happens, Fortuna now took over. The legionaries on either side of the barricades had been comrades-in-arms in the campaign against Caesar's assassins and were not particularly taken with the prospect of settling matters among themselves. After a little harmless provocation and mutual reproach, swords went back into their scabbards, and the wave of reconciliation, through the mediation of a mutual friend, Lucius Cocceius Nerva, spilled over into triumviral diplomacy as well: Asinius Pollio as Antony's intermediary and Maecenas as Octavian's secured a reconciliation – also known as the Treaty of Brundisium – sealed by the marriage of Mark Antony to Octavian's sister Octavia. Mutual suspicions were dispelled. Antony was informed that Octavian had not ordered the blockade of Brundisium; it had been initiated by the citizens themselves, who hated Domitius because he had plundered them the year before. Antony justified his alliance with Sextus and Domitius by explaining that he had received reports that Octavian intended to attack him upon his return to Italy. Octavian was assured that Antony had not been behind the Perusine War, while Antony was told that Octavian had taken control of Gaul in order to prevent Lucius from misusing Calenus' legions.[79] That the reconciliation was genuinely sincere is also shown by Antony's decision to lay his cards on the table: he denounced Salvidienus, Octavian's oldest friend, and revealed his offer to betray Octavian for Antony's benefit.[80] The cessation of hostilities and normalisation of relations brought Octavian and Mark Antony to the same table, where they proceeded to divide the provinces of the Roman world. Octavian received the western provinces, Antony the eastern, Lepidus retained Africa, while Italy remained under joint control, with equal rights of recruitment. The line of demarcation ran through the city of Scodra.[81]

Finally, we should turn to what Asinius Pollio was doing amid this confusion, since his role between the Perusine War and the Treaty of Brundisium will be discussed in detail on the following pages.

After relations between Octavian and Lucius had deteriorated, but before the outbreak of the Perusine War, we find Pollio blocking the passage through Cisalpina of Salvidienus Rufus, whom Octavian had sent with six legions to assume command in Hispania.[82] Thanks to negotiations between Lucius Antonius and Octavian, initiated by Antony's bewil-

[79] App. *BCiv*. 5.56–63.

[80] App. *BCiv.* 5.66.

[81] App. *BCiv*. 5.65; Dio 48.28.4; 29.1–3; Plut. *Ant*. 30.

[82] App. *BCiv*. 5.20; 24. Cf. Dio 48.10.1, where it is stated that Octavian's soldiers (Salvidienus Rufus is not mentioned) mutinied at Placentia and refused to continue towards Hispania until the local population paid them money. For the sake of clarity, Cisalpina here denotes the geographical area rather than the province, which no longer existed at this time. The same usage will be followed below: when we refer to Cisalpine Gaul, we mean the province, whereas Cisalpina denotes the area of the former province.

dered commanders, these legions were allowed through, but they did not get far, since Octavian recalled them as soon as he realised that the agreement would not be observed. Salvidienus therefore turned back across the Alps, but was now followed closely, though without any clash, by the armies of Asinius Pollio and Ventidius Bassus.[83] These two men of Antony were evidently unsure what they were supposed to do. The entire situation involving Lucius must have appeared extremely suspicious to them, yet they had no way of knowing what Mark Antony thought about it. They therefore decided to play carefully: they did not attack Salvidienus Rufus, but remained close enough to intervene in time should that prove necessary. Lucius saw in this an ideal opportunity to trap Salvidienus and marched to meet him with the six legions he had previously mobilised as consul.[84] Yet by a rash manoeuvre Lucius placed himself in precisely the position he had intended for Salvidienus. The wily tactician Agrippa grasped Lucius' intention and quickly occupied the town of Sutrium, luring Lucius away from Salvidienus and towards himself. Lucius had now walked into a trap between Agrippa's and Salvidienus' armies.[85] He tried to escape the pincers but failed, and withdrew into the city of Perusia, intending to wait there for Pollio and Ventidius. He was immediately surrounded and the city placed under siege, while Octavian's forces hurried to block Pollio and Ventidius from approaching. The two men remained indecisive; they had no liking for this entire war. Eventually, however, they yielded to Fulvia's urgings and, together with Plancus, set out to relieve Perusia. They did so with such little enthusiasm that when Agrippa advanced to meet them, they did not fight at all, but withdrew in three directions: Ventidius towards Ariminum, Pollio towards Ravenna, and Plancus towards Spoletium.[86] Whether from embarrassment or perhaps from concern that they had left the boss's brother in the lurch in this fashion, they tried once more. Agrippa again advanced against them, this time with still stronger forces, and they halted at Fulginiae, some thirty kilometres from Perusia. They could go no farther without walking straight into the jaws of a pincer between Octavian and Agrippa.[87] There they awaited the fall of Perusia, after which they once again dispersed in three directions, two towards southern Italy and Pollio towards Ravenna.[88] Thereafter only two further pieces of information survive concerning Pollio's activities in northern Italy: that with seven legions he accomplished great deeds at Alti-

[83] App. *BCiv*. 5.27; 31.
[84] App. *BCiv.* 5.24.
[85] App. *BCiv.* 5.31.
[86] App. *BCiv.* 5.33.
[87] App. *BCiv.* 5.35.
[88] App. *BCiv*. 5.50.

num and other cities in Venetia,[89] and that he won Domitius Ahenobarbus over to Antony and, together with him, began preparing ports throughout Italy for Antony's landing and supply.[90] His activities then disappear from the sources, and we next encounter him only at Brundisium, where the army delegated him to act as Antony's representative in the negotiations.[91] After the conclusion of the new peace between the triumvirs, Pollio was sent to Macedonia on campaign against the Parthini, for which he was later rewarded with a triumph.[92]

Asinius Pollio in Venetia: *magnae et speciosae res Asinii Pollionis*[93]

After the Perusine War in 40 BC, Asinius Pollio held Venetia for Mark Antony for an extended period and prepared harbours there for his landing and resupply on his arrival from the East, or so Velleius Paterculus and Appian tell us.[94] There are, however, crucial differences between their accounts: Appian writes that Pollio prepared harbours throughout Italy together with Domitius Ahenobarbus,[95] whereas Velleius Paterculus states that, after holding Venetia for some time, Pollio set out towards Antony and on the way entered into an alliance with Domitius, having accomplished with seven legions a number of great deeds around Altinum and other nearby cities.[96] However one attempts to reconcile these contradictory statements, the resulting interpretation fails to produce a sustainable narrative. The differences are irreconcilable – activity throughout Italy in alliance with Domitius as opposed to activity in Venetia before that alliance was concluded – and the only possible course is to decide which account deserves greater confidence and support that choice with argu-

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[89] Vell. Pat. 2.76.2. See below.

[90] App. *BCiv.* 5.50.

[91] App. *BCiv*. 5.64.

[92] App. *BCiv.* 5.75; Dio 48.41.7.

[93] Vell. Pat. 2.76.2.

[94] Vell. Pat. 2.76.2; App. *BCiv*. 5.50. This refers to the already mentioned arrival before Brundisium in the summer of 40 BC.

[95] App. *BCiv*. 5.50: Ἀσίνιος δὲ Ἀηνοβάρβῳ συνετίθετο φιλίαν εἶναι πρὸς Ἀντώνιον: καὶ ἐπέστελλον ἄμφω τάδε τῷ Ἀντωνίῳ καὶ ἀποβάσεις αὐτῷ καὶ ἀγορὰν ὡς αὐτίκα ἥξοντι εὐτρέπιζον ἀνὰ τὴν Ἰταλίαν.

[96] Vell. Pat. 2.76.2: Nam Pollio Asinius cum septem legionibus, diu retenta in potestate Antonii Venetia, magnis speciosisque rebus circa Altinum aliasque eius regionis urbes editis, Antonium petens, vagum adhuc Domitium (…) consiliis suis inlectum ac fide data iunxit Antonio./ „As for Pollio Asinius, after he with his seven legions had long kept Venetia under the control of Antony, and after he had accomplished several brilliant exploits in the vicinity of Altinum and other cities of that region, when he was on his way to join Antony with these legions he won Domitius over to the cause of Antony by his counsel and by the pledge of immunity". (transl. by F. W. Shipley)

ments. Although sometimes characteristically imprecise, in this instance Velleius Paterculus deserves to be trusted.[97]

Let us first explain why the choice does not fall on Appian. His text is problematic, and the passage concerning the preparation of harbours for Antony after the alliance had been concluded,[98] may be interpreted in two ways: 1) the newly allied Asinius Pollio and Domitius Ahenobarbus travelled together from harbour to harbour securing landing places; or 2) both men, as allies, prepared harbours for Antony, but separately and in different locations. Rather than providing an answer, Appian's narrative raises further questions. How, then, are we to explain the formation of their alliance? Did Pollio reach some harbour where Domitius happened to be and win him over to Antony there? Perhaps in one of the harbours he learned that Domitius was nearby, made his way to him, and persuaded him to cooperate? Was Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, a proscribed enemy of the triumvirs, making military preparations on Antony's behalf before he had even learned Antony's position on an alliance between them?[99] Even before he had been convinced that Antony was prepared to honour the promises Asinius Pollio had made to him? Hardly. And not merely because of these political questions, but because of geography as well. After the Battle of Philippi, Domitius established himself in the Ionian Sea,[100] and it is reasonable to assume that his base was on the island of Corcyra. From there he launched raiding expeditions against the Ionian coast of Italy. Among other things, in 41 BC he attacked Brundisium and destroyed or captured what few ships Octavian still possessed.[101] In doing so, he deprived Octavian of any access to the Strait of Otranto and, consequently, to the Adriatic. Appian knew all of this perfectly well but, unfortunately for our purposes, he is excessively concise. Why would Domitius suddenly abandon the Ionian Sea and sail north towards Asinius Pollio?[102] The sea distance between Corcyra and Brundisium exceeds ninety nautical miles, while that between Brundisium and Venetia is 415 nautical miles. Thus, from Corcyra to Venetia there are more than 500 nautical

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[97] For a general analysis of his literary qualities, see Shipley 1924, viii–xvii.

[98] App. *BCiv*. 5.50 gives this sequence: 'Asinius, meanwhile, won Ahenobarbus over as a friend of Antony, (…) and they then prepared for him – as if he were about to arrive immediately – suitable harbours for landing and supplies throughout Italy.'

[99] App. *BCiv*. 5.55 describes the somewhat later encounter between the fleets of Domitius and Antony, in which tension and mistrust are evident until the very last moment.

[100] App. *BCiv*. 5.2; 26; Dio 48.6.4–5.

[101] App. *BCiv*. 5.26. At the conclusion of the agreement at Brundisium, Octavian did not possess a single warship because of the losses inflicted on him by Domitius.

[102] App. *BCiv*. 5.33; 50 states that Asinius Pollio withdrew from the vicinity of Perusia to Ravenna.

miles (around 940 km).[103] It has been estimated that roughly fifty nautical miles could be covered in a day, meaning that the voyage would have taken at least ten days under favourable sailing conditions.[104] If we allow a similar amount of time for the return journey, together with the period spent in the northern Adriatic, Domitius would have been absent from the vicinity of the Ionian Sea and Corcyra for more than a month. Why would he have surrendered such an advantageous position, travelled such a distance – and in the direction of his enemy – left the Strait of Otranto unguarded and thereby trapped himself, given that the Adriatic has no other exit? Why did he not sail instead towards Sicily and Sextus Pompeius?

The answers to these questions will become clearer once the evidence provided by Velleius Paterculus is analysed. Unlike Appian, who presents the events mentioned above as little more than brief notices and does not burden his readers with details he considers unimportant, Velleius, fortunately, chose on this particular occasion to devote a few more words to Pollio. Although the story of Pollio and his activities between the Perusine War and the Treaty of Brundisium undoubtedly contains gaps that cannot easily be filled with absolute certainty, there are records that permit a more complete reconstruction of events. Alongside an analysis of Velleius' text, statements by other ancient authors will help to fill these gaps, as will, in our judgement, the unjustly discredited scholiasts.[105]

Let us proceed in order. In Velleius Paterculus the chronology is unambiguous: Asinius Pollio, with seven legions, held Venetia for Antony for a considerable period, accomplished something significant there, and then set out in Antony's direction accompanied by those seven legions; during that journey he persuaded Domitius Ahenobarbus, by promises, to enter into an alliance.[106] From this it is clear that: 1) Pollio left northern Italy before making contact with Domitius; 2) Domitius did not participate in any preparation of harbours for Antony; and 3) Domitius did not sail to the northern Adriatic. This is therefore, as noted above, a substantially different version from that offered by Appian.[107]

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[103] The distance to Venetia is used here because Velleius Paterculus places Pollio there, but even if Appian's reference to Ravenna is taken into account, the distance still exceeds 450 nautical miles. On navigation along the western Adriatic, see Šešelj 2009, 380–385 and the map on p. 386.

[104] Šešelj 2009, 380 with the accompanying literature in the notes and text.

[105] They appear to be distrusted because Syme 1937, 42–43 said that they should be.

[106] Vell. Pat. 2.76.2.

[107] The following section consists of three parts in which we shall attempt to answer the questions: 1) how long did Pollio remain in Venetia?; 2) why did he leave, and what was he doing there?; 3) why did he go to Salona, and how does Domitius Ahenobarbus fit into all of this?

1) In the phrase *diu retenta in potestate Antonii Venetia*, Velleius Paterculus provides a chronological indication (*diu* – for a long time) for Pollio's retention of Venetia on Antony's behalf, but it is a very broad and imprecise one. Defining the chronological limits of Pollio's retention of Venetia is, however, of vital importance here, because it allows a closer examination of what Pollio was actually doing there. Any attempt to explain *diu* must look forwards (Pollio held Venetia for a long time, until he could no longer do so), rather than backwards (Pollio had held Venetia for a long time – but since when?). The alternative interpretation[108] creates a semantic problem, because *diu* would then fail to correspond to the actual situation. Between the fall of Perusia in late February or early March and the agreement at Brundisium in October, Pollio had time to withdraw to north-eastern Italy, achieve certain successes there, conclude an alliance with Domitius, sail to Salona, conduct military operations during the harvest season (June/July),[109] meet Antony after leaving Salona, and appear before Brundisium in late September 40 BC. On this reckoning, he can have spent less than two months in Venetia (approximately from the first half of March until the end of April), which hardly sounds like *diu*. Unless, of course, this is an exaggeration; Velleius Paterculus is elsewhere distinctly favourable towards Pollio.[110]

The character of the passage under consideration, however, does not suggest that this is an exaggeration. Velleius is quite clear and detailed at this point, so such an error would be unexpected. If other sources are brought into the discussion, a different interpretation appears more likely: in Velleius Paterculus, *diu* refers to Pollio's entire stay in Cisalpina (and Venetia), from 42 or 41 BC onwards, which would indeed amount to 'a log time'.

Pollio's role in 42 BC cannot be clarified with certainty, since the sources do not mention him in this context, but it seems logical that he remained in Italy with the army while Octavian and Antony were campaigning at Philippi.[111] For 41 BC, the situation is much clearer. After the Battle of Philippi, when the settlement of veterans became imperative, the task fell to Octavian.[112] According to some accusations, contrary to the agreement reached at Bononia in 43 BC, he settled veterans throughout the whole of Italy instead of in the designated eighteen cities, none of which

[108] According to which Velleius' 'counting' of Pollio's days in Venetia would begin with his withdrawal after Perusia.

[109] Flor. *Epit*. 2.25; Bilić-Dujmušić 2004, 376–377. See below, in the section on Pollio's presence at Salona.

[110] Vell. Pat. 2.36.2; 73.2; 86.3; 128.3.

[111] See below. For Pollio's presence in Rome and his role in the trial of Lucius Aelius Lamia (late 43 or early 42 BC), see Lutton 2012, 115 ff..

[112] App. *BCiv*. 5.3; 5; 12–16; 20; Dio 48.6.1; Flor. *Epit*. 2.16; Suet. *Aug*. 13.

lay in Cisalpina.[113] It follows that in 41 BC Octavian settled troops in those cities, but ran out of available plots,[114] and therefore had to establish settlements elsewhere in Italy as well.[115] Yet he did not interfere with the settlements in Cisalpina, by then already incorporated into Italy. This is a reasonable assumption, since during the same year we find Asinius Pollio in Cisalpina assigning land to Antony's soldiers,[116] dealing harshly with the people of Patavium,[117] preventing the seizure of Virgil's estate at Mantua,[118] and, once relations between Octavian and Lucius deteriorated, first blocking Salvidienus' army and later shadowing it from a distance.[119]

At this point everything becomes highly suggestive. The sources do not present Octavian's and Pollio's settlement of legionaries as part of a joint undertaking, which makes it clear that Asinius Pollio was carrying out tasks exclusively in Antony's interests; in other words, he was acting on separate orders.[120] It may even be suggested that this had begun in the previous year (42 BC): when Antony departed on campaign against Caesar's assassins, he left Pollio in 'his' Cisalpine Gaul, then still a province, because despite his absence he had no intention of missing an opportunity to strengthen his own political position. Asinius Pollio set about the task, and although Cisalpine Gaul became part of Italy after the Battle of Philippi,[121] he continued in 41 what he had begun in 42, until the outbreak of

[113] App. *BCiv*. 4.3 names Capua, Rhegium, Vibo, Venusia, Beneventum, Nuceria and Ariminum. The agreement at Bononia was reached at a time when Cisalpine Gaul was still a province under Antony's control, and the allocation of land to the legionaries concerned only cities in Italy. For the accusations that the agreement was not being observed, see App. *BCiv*. 5.22. For a more detailed discussion of veteran settlement: Keppie 1983, 58–69.

[114] App. *BCiv*. 5.22. He was accused of settling thirty-four legions instead of the twenty-eight that had been agreed.

[115] And thus brought upon himself the anger of the victims of confiscation, as noted earlier.

[116] Broughton 1952, 372.

[117] Macr. 1.11.22. Pollio's punishment of Patavium should be connected directly with the events of 43 BC, when the city refused to assist Antony in the fighting around Mutina. Indeed, as Cicero points out, they did not merely refuse Antony, but actually fought on the side of the Senate (Cic. *Phil*. 12.10.).

[118] Serv. *Ecl*. 6.6; 9.11; Suet. *Poet*. 19. Servius Maurus states that Pollio fled or withdrew (*fugatoque*/ *fugato*) before Octavian after saving Virgil's estate (it is unclear whether this refers to a withdrawal from Italy or merely from the vicinity of Mantua), but these details are too imprecise (it is possible that the reference is to a somewhat later withdrawal into Cisalpina before the combined forces of Agrippa and Salvidienus, chronologically after the intervention at Mantua). What matters here is the confirmation that Pollio prevented the confiscation of Virgil's estate and that he supervised the distribution of land in Transpadana before being succeeded by Alfenus Varus (*Alfenum Varum legatum substitutum, qui transpadanae provinciae et agris dividendis praeesset*); cf. Verg. *Ecl*. 9.26–29.

[119] App. *BCiv*. 5.20; 31–33;

[120] This is also implied by Serv. *Ecl*. 6.6.

[121] App. *BCiv*. 5.3; Dio 48.12.5.

the Perusine War interrupted his work. There is no reason to doubt that Octavian was fully aware of all this, and it would therefore not be surprising if, precisely for this reason, in the post-Philippi settlement he had demanded, under the flimsy pretext that *Caesar would have wanted it so*,[122] that Cisalpine Gaul be incorporated into Italy. On the one hand, he wished to prevent his more powerful colleague from retaining a province from which Italy could be directly threatened;[123] on the other, if Italy, now including Cisalpina, became territory jointly controlled by the triumvirs, Octavian too could hope to gain access to this highly valuable region, both for recruitment and for votes. Antony did not oppose the idea of uniting Cisalpina with Italy, probably because he had reports of Pollio's effectiveness and therefore had no reason to fear an upheaval in local political support.

It is clear that the Perusine War brought Pollio's diligent execution of Antony's orders to a halt, and his restrained conduct during the war thus begins to appear both logical and justified: he had left more pressing matters unfinished.[124] Leaving Lucius to his fate,[125] he returned to Cisal-

[122] App. *BCiv*. 5.3.

[123] Moreover, had Cisalpine Gaul remained Antony's province, Octavian would have been completely cut off in Italy, and any departure from Italy would have been open to the charge of diminishing the *maiestas populi Romani*; cf. Milivojević 2021, 140 and n. 496.

[124] It is difficult to find convincing arguments for the claim that Pollio fell from Antony's favour because of his 'half-hearted' involvement in the Perusine War (Bosworth 1972, 471; Lutton 2012, 142.). This view is based largely on the assumption that Pollio should have intervened more actively to relieve Lucius Antonius at Perusia. It is not clear, however, why such a move should have been expected of him. An open clash with Agrippa and Salvidienus – that is, a general war with Antony's ally Octavian, without Antony's explicit orders – would have endangered Antony's position and all his gains, particularly if the attempt failed. The same applies to the frequently mentioned eleven Gallic legions of Calenus. There is simply no basis for attributing the failure to seize Calenus' legions before Octavian to Pollio's inactivity or political indecision. The chronology of events shows that at the time of Calenus' death in Gaul Octavian was already on his way towards him, while Pollio was in north-eastern Italy and may even by then have left Italy altogether (see below). The interpretation of Calenus' failure to intervene in the Perusine War is equally problematic. As governor of a province entrusted to him by Antony to administer and defend, Calenus had clearly defined responsibilities. The same was true of Pollio. Both had real and important work to do in their respective provinces (Transalpine and Cisalpine Gaul), and their presence there was necessary. In fact, the war did not concern them, because they had their own orders from Mark Antony.

[125] Pollio's shrewd assessment of Octavian's conduct would hardly be surprising: the young triumvir was certainly not going to allow himself to harm Mark's wife Fulvia (and his own former mother-in-law), Mark's brother Lucius, or their mother Julia. Events soon showed Pollio's judgement to have been correct (App. *BCiv*. 5.50; 52; 54.). It may also be added that Pollio and Calenus did not in fact leave Lucius in the lurch – even though Lucius was in any case merely hiding behind the skirts of his powerful brother – since before the outbreak of the war itself they had hampered the manoeuvres of Octavian's commanders, but within the boundaries of their own provinces. The argument that Ventidius, unlike Pollio, attempted to organise assistance for those besieged at Perusia and therefore later

pina at the first opportunity and resumed the interrupted task at the beginning of 40 BC. More precisely, he returned to Venetia: in 41 BC he had been active around Patavium and Mantua, whereas now he moved somewhat farther north-east, towards Altinum, and from there left Italy after several months.[126]

2) Further considerations may now be added to an argument structured in this way. In order to clarify Pollio's actual reasons for leaving Italy, the phrase mentioned above, *diu retenta in potestate Antonii Venetia*, should be considered together with the following part of Velleius' text: *magnis speciosisque rebus circa Altinum aliasque eius regionis urbes editis, Antonium petens*…[127] It then becomes clear that Pollio had held Venetia for Antony for a considerable period, and that he left it and set out towards Antony after accomplishing something remarkable around Altinum and the other nearby cities.[128] In other words, Pollio left Venetia of his own accord, at the moment when he judged that he had completed what had been required of him. What, then, might this have involved?

In answering this question, it should first be noted that Syme's admittedly passing assertion that Pollio held out in Venetia for some time and conducted certain military operations against Octavian's commanders around Altinum and other cities has no basis in the source.[129] Velleius Paterculus mentions no battle whatsoever, nor is there any indication that Pollio, while in Venetia, was a target of Octavian. The chronology points in the same direction, and it is unforgiving. After the end of the siege of Perusia and the ensuing massacre, Octavian set out from Perusia towards Gaul in order to obtain from Fufius Calenus, who was still alive at the time,

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enjoyed greater standing with Antony than Pollio does not appear particularly plausible. It seems more likely that Ventidius was simply the only one who had no real assignment at the time and therefore found the time to play the role of helper in what was already a hopeless situation for Lucius. The same Lucius whom, with a little cynicism, we are fairly convinced Mark himself would have punished had he happened to be outside Perusia at that moment. Lucius was in fact fortunate that Octavian captured him and dismissed him with honours to Hispania before his brother Mark sailed to Brundisium.

[126] By the time Velleius Paterculus composed his work, north-eastern Italy had already become *Regio X* (*Venetia et Histria*) of Augustan Italy, and all the cities named here fell within it.

[127] „As for Pollio Asinius, after he with his seven legions had long kept Venetia under the control of Antony, and after he had accomplished several brilliant exploits in the vicinity of Altinum and other cities of that region (…)" (transl. by F. W. Shipley)

[128] The perfect passive participle (*editis*) proves crucial here, since it indicates that the action had been completed. It may be translated as 'having accomplished' or 'having performed' (brilliant exploits).

[129] Syme 1937, 41; 46. Had there been any battles, we doubt that the sources would have failed to mention them. We possess too many details about this period for a battle between Octavian, or his men, and Pollio to have passed unrecorded.

the two legions Antony had owed him since the Battle of Philippi.[130] Calenus died while Octavian was travelling towards him, and given the speed with which Octavian appropriated his legions, he was evidently already close to Gaul. From Gaul he proceeded directly to Rome and learned on the way that Antony, having set out for Italy, had already reached Athens.[131] On receiving this news, he turned his attention to assessing Antony's intentions and directed his operations towards southern Italy, not the north.[132] Pollio, therefore, was not even on his mind and had probably already left Italy by then.[133] The same applies to Octavian's two foremost commanders – at that moment the only men under him capable of matching Pollio militarily – Agrippa and Salvidienus. After the Perusine War, Agrippa first appears as praetor at Rome, then in battle against Sextus Pompeius somewhere in southern Italy,[134] and subsequently fighting Antony's forces near Sipontum.[135] Salvidienus, meanwhile, accompanied Octavian in taking over Calenus' legions and then remained behind to govern Gaul. We know that he was there because Appian mentions him as Octavian's commander on the Rhône, and it is also known that he was in Gaul when the Treaty of Brundisium was concluded.[136]

The reasons for Pollio's departure from Venetia should therefore not be viewed as part of a chess game with Octavian's post-Perusine forces, nor in connection with the formation of his alliance with Domitius Ahenobarbus, but as a separate agenda. He left of his own accord (*having accomplished brilliant exploits*), and the reason for his departure correlates with the reasons for his arrival: the principal task Antony had assigned to Pollio, and which Pollio faithfully carried out, consisted in expanding Antony's following and clientele in north-eastern Italy – in other words, in turning Venetia into Antony's political stronghold.[137] Pollio employed a

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[130] App. *BCiv*. 5.3; 12; 20; Dio 48.20.1.

[131] App. *BCiv*. 5.53.

[132] Dio 48.28.1.

[133] Lutton 2012, 141–142 is therefore mistaken in criticising Pollio for failing to take over Calenus' legions before Octavian. She also writes in the same passage that Fufius Calenus died in May (the statement is unsupported by a citation), which, if true, would only strengthen our argument further, since by then Pollio was already on his way towards Illyricum and perhaps even in the province itself.

[134] Dio 48.20.2. The citation refers both to the praetorship and to the battle against Sextus.

[135] App. *BCiv*. 5.57; Dio 48.28.1.

[136] App. *BCiv*. 5.66. Immediately after Brundisium, Octavian learned of his betrayal, urgently summoned him from Gaul to Rome on a fabricated pretext, and had him executed.

[137] The claim that the Perusine War offered Antony's commanders a convenient but squandered opportunity to strike the final blow against Octavian and remove Antony's rival from his path therefore has no foundation. On the one hand, we can see that Pollio's assignment was to use his legions for entirely different purposes, with no intention of en-

tried and tested formula: he distributed fertile and valuable land to veterans and probably used the immense wealth looted from Patavium to fill their pockets still further.[138] In view of the passage of Velleius Paterculus under discussion, he evidently repeated a similar procedure with veterans at Altinum and in its surroundings.[139] Yet he also did something noteworthy there,[140] which may suggest that more was involved than simply settling veterans, and that something of particular local significance took place.

Pollio's *magnae et speciosae res*, his 'great and distinguished deeds', inspired Velleius Paterculus to characterise the result of his presence in Venetia as *diu* ***retenta*** *in potestate Antonii Venetia* – indeed, an Oxford philologist selected this very phrase as one of the illustrative examples.[141] Once again, the word in bold is a perfect passive participle, which compels the conclusion that through his brilliant achievements Pollio had completely and firmly retained Venetia within Antony's sphere and under his control, just as he had undertaken to do – that is, just as he had been ordered. And those brilliant deeds which inspired Velleius' admiration and secured Venetia's loyalty may perhaps be discerned from two sources, Vitruvius and Suetonius.

Vitruvius tells us that Altinum, like Ravenna and Aquileia, stood on somewhat higher ground beside the sea and was surrounded by marshes.[142] Yet the air and water in these areas did not harm their inhabitants, unlike, for example, the Pomptine Marshes in Latium or the marshes beside the city of Salapia in Apulia, where adverse conditions caused the

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tering into conflict (which also explains his 'indecision' during the war). On the other hand, logically speaking, Octavian's defeat would have placed the entire burden of governing the state, with all the problems that entailed, upon Antony. Antony was not so naïve: he knew perfectly well that there was no one among his own men capable of doing Octavian's job. Moreover, in time the Republican side might have regained strength, and without Octavian keeping matters under control (and watching his back), Antony would merely have acquired a new opposition – beginning with Octavian's army. After all, what explanation could have been offered to the 'peace-loving' veterans of Caesar if, within a short space of time, they were to witness the fall of yet another Gaius Julius Caesar?

[138] Patavium was regarded as one of the wealthiest cities in Italy (Strab. 3.5.3; 5.1.7.), and was also famous for its textile industry, particularly carpets and woollen products (Strab. 5.1.12.). Mart. 14.143 even devoted verses to the widely renowned tunics of Patavium. It may also be worth recording the small detail that many years later Asinius Pollio teased the eloquent Livy because a trace of the Patavian dialect could be detected in his speech (Quint. *Inst. Orat.* 8.1.3.). Perhaps in this one may detect a faint remnant of the old animosity Pollio harboured towards the people of Patavium.

[139] Tarvisium, Opitergium and Acelum are all places in the immediate vicinity.

[140] Evidently noteworthy enough to give him grounds for leaving Italy without a direct order from Antony.

[141] Oxford Latin Dictionary 2012, 1810, s.v. *retineo* (6): To oblige to remain, keep (within some sphere, category, etc.).

[142] Vitr. 1.4.11. This is also confirmed by Strab. 5.1.7.

population to be relocated to a new site. At Altinum, Ravenna and Aquileia, channels had been dug linking the sea with these marshes, so that storms, tides and currents constantly mixed seawater with the marsh water; the salt water killed the insects that transmitted infectious diseases. At the same time, stagnation of the water and the evaporation accompanying it were prevented.[143] These observations can readily be connected with recent research by Italian scholars. Their work has shown that the first land-reclamation works in the area were undertaken sometime in the first half of the first century BC, while by the second half of the century Altinum's urban morphology had acquired the unmistakable contours of a Roman city, including a developed system of canals crossing both the entire city and the surrounding marshes.[144] Aerial photography, in addition to clearly revealing the canals, has confirmed the arrangement of the urban structures. Two theatres can be distinguished, with the *via Annia* running between them; a forum with associated tabernae; fortifications; two sanctuaries at opposite ends of the city, one facing the sea and the other the hinterland; a monumental city gate; and parts of residential quarters. Because of its numerous canals, the largest of which (*fossa magna*) is no less than twenty-six metres wide, the Italians affectionately call Altinum *Venezia prima di Venezia*.[145]

On the basis of Velleius' text and this archaeological evidence, Giovanella Cresci Marrone suggests that Pollio – at the time the leading figure in Cisalpina – might, precisely because of the reference to 'great deeds', be credited with carrying out municipalisation and centuriation, as well as founding colonies (for example, *Iulia Concordia*).[146] If we set municipalisation aside,[147] and add Velleius' statement that Pollio was active around Altinum *cum septem legionibus*,[148] the case does indeed begin to acquire firmer foundations. As noted above, Velleius Paterculus does not mention the involvement of seven legions in the context of battles, which strongly suggests a context of peacetime duties. And what do legions do in peacetime, if not public works? Pollio's legions may not have been constructing new major roads at the time,[149] but they could have been

[143] Vitr. 1.4.11–12.

[144] Cresci Marrone 2011b, 99; Rosada 2011, 11–32. For a detailed analysis of the archaeological evidence and the wealth of satellite and ground-penetrating radar imagery, see the volume *Altino Antica. Dai Veneti a Venezia*, listed in the bibliography under Cresci Marrone 2011a; Cresci Marrone 2011b; Tirelli 2011.

[145] Rosada 2011, 18–27.

[146] Cresci Marrone 2011a, 31.

[147] Ewins 1955, 87 demonstrated that Altinum became a municipium under Caesar's administration in 49 BC.

[148] Vell. Pat. 2.76.2.

[149] Which is probably the first association that comes to mind when legions and peacetime duties appear in the same sentence.

building and extending fortifications, digging canals, constructing embankments, draining marshes and demarcating veterans' allotments. It is entirely possible that Pollio established his headquarters at Altinum itself and consequently transformed the city and its surroundings with his legionaries. On this reading, Velleius' narrative, like that of Vitruvius, corresponds with what archaeology has begun to confirm.

If Vitruvius' testimony allows us to glimpse the *magnae et speciosae res*, information from another source, Suetonius, might potentially show that these really were great deeds. Indeed, so great that Augustus was still attempting to mitigate their consequences during his reign. In the central section of his biography of Augustus,[150] where Suetonius describes his reforms and administration, there is a passage on the penalties introduced for electoral bribery in the tribal assemblies.[151] Yet we find Augustus himself bribing voters in two tribes, the *Fabia* and *Scaptia* – he belonged to the former through his adoptive father and to the latter through his biological father. His political career had long since diverged from the traditions of the Octavii, so the payments made to voters in the *Scaptia* should not be connected with the cultivation of traditional family ties as a survival of his origins, but with buying the votes of those who were not favourably disposed towards him. He appears to have feared defeat. It is not entirely clear whether this passage reflects Suetonius' malice, Augustus' hypocrisy, or both, but it seems likely that Augustus punished electoral scheming severely only to demonstrate that the law did not apply to him. With no opposition worthy of the name, he was accountable to no one but himself – a convenient turn of phrase, since bribing the evidently unfavourable voters at every tribal election cost him millions of sesterces from his private treasury. And that sounds like a stratagem in Pollio's style.

Augustus' purchase of votes in both of the tribes to which he belonged, rather than only one of them, is not difficult to explain. If he had to give money to one (*Scaptia*), he had to give it to the other as well (*Fabia*), otherwise envy of those being bribed might have made matters more difficult than usual for him in that tribe too. Our protagonist, Gaius Asinius Pollio, proves to be a hard nut on which his contemporary opponents could break their teeth just as readily as modern historians can. To summa-

[150] For an analysis of Suetonius' biography of Augustus, see Brandão, Leão 2017, 158–185.

[151] Suet. Aug. 40: Comitiorum quoque pristinum ius reduxit ac multiplici poena coercito ambitu, Fabianis et Scaptiensibus tribulibus suis die comitiorum, ne quid a quoquam candidato desiderarent, singula milia nummum a se dividebat/„He also revived the old time election privileges, trying to put a stop to bribery by numerous penalties, and distributing to his fellow members of the Fabian and Scaptian tribes a thousand sesterces a man from his own purse on the day of the elections, to keep them from looking for anything from any of the candidates." (transl. by J. C. Rolfe).

rise: the achievements he left behind in Venetia, especially at Altinum, indicate that he drew the entire region into Antony's orbit and brought it fully under his authority. He created deep and enduring networks of clientage, and it is particularly striking that his most magnificent achievements were accomplished precisely within Octavian's own tribe (*Scaptia*). He significantly improved living conditions throughout the area around Altinum, enhanced its political importance, and at the same time settled thousands of veterans loyal to Antony within that tribe – veterans who, it goes without saying, possessed the right to vote. Because of the benefits acquired by the local population, Antony's following expanded far beyond the veteran substratum. This created an exceptional political asset in the form of a voting organisation that probably numbered in the hundreds of thousands.[152] As was customary, voting preferences were transmitted within families, so that even after an entire generation had passed, when Antony had long been dead, Augustus could not expect an easy victory within his own tribe. Particularly when one also takes into account that Asinius Pollio lived to an advanced age and survived almost until the end of Augustus' reign.[153] Although he withdrew from politics soon after 39 BC, he spent the rest of his life as a prominent cultural patron, and his reputation followed him everywhere and long outlived him.[154] Somehow, Octavian's insistence before the Battle of Actium that *tota Italia* swear allegiance to him seems to have been caused in part by the political affinities of one north-eastern Italian region.[155] One question may be left to future researchers: was *Regio X* created together with Histria, which was favourable to Augustus, in order to neutralise Venetia, which had remained loyal to Antony?

3) One issue still remains to be clarified: the story of Pollio and Domitius joining forces and of the journey to Salona. The principal point from which the reconstruction must begin is Domitius Ahenobarbus. We have already noted the weakness in Appian's narrative, which does not explain why Domitius would have abandoned his well-secured position around the Strait of Otranto, sailed towards his enemy Asinius Pollio at

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[152] There is nothing new in the use of the tribes for electoral manoeuvring in the late Republic. Taylor 1960, 121–123 demonstrated this long ago.

[153] Tac. *Dial*. 17.7; according to Hieron Ad Euseb. *Chron. A. Abr.* 2020 he died in AD 5.

[154] In her commentary on fig. 37, Tirelli 2011, 130–131 offers an interesting conclusion: two colossal statues of anguipeds discovered at Altinum, products of a local workshop and dated to the middle of the first century BC, suggest that 'the presence of these sculptures (of Asia Minor origin) within the political and cultural setting of late Republican Altinum accords well with an intellectual environment dominated by the figure of Asinius Pollio, a renowned lover of works of art, whose passion for Hellenistic sculpture of the Asiatic, Rhodian and Neo-Attic schools is recorded in the sources' (Plin. *Nat. hist.* 36.4.23–25; 33).

[155] On the intimidation of cities loyal to Antony, see Dio 50.6.3. Cf. Suet. *Aug*. 17.

the extreme northern end of the Adriatic, prepared harbours for Antony's arrival, and in the process placed himself in a trap from which there was no escape.[156] Since Domitius had been fairly successful in his struggle against the triumvirs and had effectively blockaded the Adriatic, something must plainly have forced him suddenly to 'change his surroundings' and abandon Otranto. But it was certainly not Asinius Pollio. It makes no sense to suppose that Pollio, from northern Italy, was sending peace proposals and promises in Domitius' direction and thereby winning him over to Antony; we have shown that he was occupied at the time with more important duties. Nor would Domitius, without provocation, have sailed north to Pollio and initiated an agreement, since Pollio posed no threat to his position at Otranto. Nor can Domitius have abandoned Otranto in order to engage Pollio as mediator in negotiations with Antony.[157]

So if Pollio did not set out towards Domitius, and Domitius did not set out towards Pollio, yet the two nevertheless concluded an alliance, how are we to untangle the knot? The solution is in fact simple and logical. Domitius abandoned Otranto and withdrew into the Adriatic, not in order to reach Pollio, but to escape Antony. Like Octavian, he had learned that Antony was sailing from Athens towards Brundisium with a very powerful fleet of two hundred ships,[158] almost three times the strength of his own seventy vessels.[159] He judged it wiser not to stand in the way of the angry and agitated victor of Philippi and withdrew beyond his reach.[160]

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[156] Especially when we know that he had already been in the area around Otranto for some time: even before the Battle of Philippi, Brutus and Cassius had engaged him to prevent the triumvirs from crossing into Macedonia (App. *BCiv*. 4.86.). Somewhat later, allegedly on the same day as the first Battle of Philippi, Domitius and Murcus defeated the fleet of Domitius Calvinus near Brundisium (App. *BCiv*. 4.115–116).

[157] The sources clearly state that Pollio won Domitius over, and Lutton 2012, 140 is therefore mistaken in claiming the opposite.

[158] App. *BCiv*. 5.55; Plut. *Ant*. 30.

[159] App. *BCiv*. 5.26. The possibility that Domitius withdrew towards Sicily and Sextus Pompeius must be excluded here. Syme 1939, 268 argues that Domitius hated Sextus and therefore did not wish to enter into an alliance with him. Welch 2012, 215 proposes a version in which Sextus and Domitius jointly blockaded Italy and were not hostile towards one another, but she does not explain why Domitius did not then go to Sextus. If Syme is correct, it is clear why Domitius did not head towards Sicily. If, on the other hand, Welch is closer to the truth, the answer lies in the statements in App. *BCiv*. 5.52 and Dio 48.15.2, where we see that Sextus, by sending Antony his mother Julia and his own father-in-law Libo, sought to win Antony over to an alliance against Octavian. Antony was then somewhere in Greece, which means that Domitius learned that Sextus was dealing with the enemy and automatically eliminated him from his plans. In either case, Domitius had nowhere else to withdraw but into the Adriatic.

[160] That Domitius withdrew before Antony may be inferred from App. BCiv. 5.55, which states that Antony set out towards Brundisium from Corcyra – in other words, from what had probably been Domitius' base for several years. Their encounter and the conclusion of their pact took place somewhat later.

There should be little doubt as to where he sailed. Certainly not to Italy, that is, to the western coast of the Adriatic. The stigma of a proscribed Caesarian assassin still hung over Domitius, and by this time too many of Antony's and Octavian's legions had assembled along the Adriatic coast of the peninsula for him to expect a warm reception from either side. The only place to which he could withdraw was Illyricum. The precise location is difficult to determine, but one of the larger port cities seems a logical possibility, especially one on an island, beyond the reach of a land army and defensible by naval forces. Issa stands out above all the others: by this time it had ceased to exist as an independent state, but it possessed the capacity to support a substantial naval force and occupied an exceptional strategic position at sea. Indeed, Caesar's abolition of the Issaean polis less than a decade earlier must have generated resentment there, and it is entirely possible that the local Greeks welcomed Domitius enthusiastically.

Unlike Domitius, Asinius Pollio did not abandon his position out of necessity, but of his own accord. Having completed his work in Venetia, he sailed towards Salona.[161] And, we may add, specifically towards Salona which, whichever map one consults, lay in Antony's direction.[162] 'Sailing past the rocks of great Timavus, coasting the shore of the Illyrian sea',[163] Pollio took it upon himself to visit a province which, it seems, had witnessed no Roman presence since Vatinius, at the beginning of 44 BC.[164] Pollio was naturally aware that Domitius Ahenobarbus was now there and could threaten both his own forces and, later, Antony's. Contact was therefore established and diplomacy set to work.[165] By promising him

[161] Serv. *Ecl*. 8.12–13; Verg. *Ecl*. 8.6–7.

[162] That Pollio set out from Venetia towards Antony is attested in Serv. *Ecl*. 8.12 and Vell. Pat. 2.76.2. Such an interpretation, however, partly obscures the actual chronology. We believe that it should be understood with one addition: Pollio set out from Venetia towards Salona and there, at some point, learned that Antony was close to Italy, only then setting out in his direction.

[163] Verg. *Ecl*. 8.6–7. This is a clear allusion to sailing southwards from the north.

[164] Although Brutus was officially appointed governor of Illyricum from 43 BC until the Battle of Philippi in October 42 BC (App. *BCiv*. 4.58; *Ill*. 13.), there is no evidence that he was personally present in the province during this period. Cassius Dio does not mention Illyricum in the division of provinces after the Battle of Philippi (48.1.3; 2.1.), but later mentions it, as Dalmatia, among the provinces allocated after the Treaty of Brundisium (48.28.4.). Although this is not conclusive proof that Illyricum lacked a governor between 42 and 40 BC, the evidence is in itself sufficiently suggestive.

[165] We offer here another possibility which has no support in the sources but appears logical: if Domitius withdrew to Issa (which, after losing its political rights, had been incorporated into the Salonitan *ager*), it would not be surprising if from there he had been able to form some kind of coalition once again, perhaps including the Delmatae, and thereby threaten Salona (cf. Bilić-Dujmušić 2004, 320 in the section on Sulpicius Rufus and the Issaeans). If this line of reasoning is accepted, a further possibility follows from it: Pollio assisted Salona against this coalition and consequently punished the Delmatae

immunity and an end to hostilities, Pollio succeeded in persuading Domitius to enter into negotiations with Antony,[166] shrewdly judging that, in the event of a confrontation with Octavian, Domitius' forces might provide Antony with substantial reinforcements. Antony needed reinforcements at that moment, while Domitius, evidently, needed a homeland. The immediate balance of power on the one hand, and political and personal interests on the other, thus prevailed over years of animosity. The remainder of the story of Pollio's and Domitius' joint activities in Illyricum is told below; to complete this extensive section, however, it is also necessary to explain why Pollio went to Salona in the first place.[167]

Clarifying Pollio's role in Antony's plans for Venetia allows us to offer some reasoned conclusions in what follows: Pollio's arrival at Salona represented a continuation of the political agitation and consolidation of Antony's position around Italy. In this case, it involved creating and preparing a base for Antony on the eastern Adriatic coast. Although such a solution may sound rather simple, it is in fact the final piece of the puzzle, one that could not adequately be fitted into this narrative before the question had been examined in full.

Among Antony's men, then, Pollio enjoyed by far the broadest powers and could act on his own initiative without fear of Antony's reaction. This is clearly evident from the actions described above: he himself decided how far he would involve himself in the Perusine War and when he would leave Venetia. The same applies to his departure for Salona and his alliance with Domitius; he acted without Antony's orders, but always to Antony's advantage. He had the freedom to make decisions independently because Antony trusted his judgement and abilities and gave him a free hand.[168] Having completed his tasks in Venetia, Asinius Pollio therefore set out for the central Adriatic. Yet however capable he was, and however much autonomy he enjoyed, he needed very strong justification indeed to initiate military operations against the Delmatae – that is, to em-

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(Flor. *Epit*. 2.25 uses the word *multaverat*), while promises and guarantees persuaded Domitius that he would be better served by entering into an alliance with Antony than by continuing to wage wars he could not in any case win.

[166] Vell. Pat. 2.76.2 notes that Domitius was wavering (*vagus*).

[167] It is not particularly important here whether, at the time of Pollio's arrival, Domitius was threatening Salona or was stationed on Issa (or elsewhere); what matters is the outcome of Pollio's stay at Salona, as well as the fact that he went there deliberately. See below.

[168] His reputation was known even to his opponents, both Domitius and Octavian's legionaries, who chose him to represent Antony's side in the negotiations at Brundisium (App. *BCiv*. 5.64.). In any case, Antony clearly had no objection to his departure from Italy, his alliance with Domitius, or his political and military involvement in Illyricum. This is evident after Brundisium, when Antony appointed him governor of his most important province, Macedonia – the only link between his dominion and Italy. Had Antony held anything against Pollio, he would not have entrusted him with further duties.

ploy Antony's legions. Since every move he made was the product of careful consideration and an assessment of its long-term consequences, he must have found arguments sufficiently compelling to justify military action without Antony's permission. Two explanations may be proposed for his arrival in Illyricum:

1) Preparation for civil war – events in Italy led Pollio to anticipate that Antony would go to war with Octavian, and he therefore headed for Salona both to win over for Antony the Caesarian clientele that Octavian had inherited,[169] and to deal with the Delmatae, who had for some time been threatening Salona and the central part of Illyricum, something about which he would certainly have been informed.[170] Solving the Delmataean problem offered a double advantage, since it could serve as an effective means of winning the Romans at Salona over to Antony's side while at the same time preparing an alternative route to Italy for Antony. It should not be forgotten that Pollio left Venetia at a time when it was not yet known with what forces, or exactly when, Antony would arrive in Italy, although it was clear that Octavian had become master of Italy and commanded considerably greater forces than Antony. Anticipating that Antony might be prevented from landing in Italy – as indeed happened several months later – Pollio recognised the need to open an additional operational route.[171] The only people capable of threatening that route were the Delmatae. Pollio's victory over them would give Antony an uncontested base in Illyricum, while at the north-eastern entrance to Italy, in Venetia, thousands of settled veterans would be waiting for him, ready to be mobilised again at a signal and thus enable him to match Octavian numerically. Under such circumstances, Antony's army, arriving by sea from Egypt, would have found a supply base at Salona and a naval arsenal on Issa extremely useful.

2) Activity without any thought of civil war – after Venetia, Pollio went to win another of Caesar's loyal political strongholds, Salona, for Antony. The fact that he also relieved it of Delmataean pressure and dro-

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[169] As the first governor of the newly formed province of Illyricum, Caesar achieved his greatest political success precisely at Salona, where he established a powerful base of loyal supporters (see further Milivojević 2021.). The celebrated heroism of the Salonitan *conventus*, loyal to him during the civil war against Pompey (Caes. *BCiv*. 3.9.), resounded throughout the Roman world and later placed Salona on the map as the provincial capital. On the siege of Salona in 49 BC, see Bilić-Dujmušić 2000, 107–149; Bilić-Dujmušić 2022, 35–85.

[170] For almost a century, the Delmatae had posed a constant threat to Salona, Liburnia and the more southerly parts of Illyricum, and such information can hardly have come as a surprise to Pollio.

[171] The use of Illyricum as an alternative route in the event that Brundisium and the Strait of Otranto were blocked was hardly a novel idea. On its strategic importance during the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, see Bilić-Dujmušić 2000.

ve the Delmatae from Klis[172] merely assisted his purpose. From the Salonitan perspective, Pollio acted as a kind of saviour – that is, as the first representative of Rome since Caesar's death to demonstrate that they had not been forgotten and abandoned to their own devices, and to the mercy of the Delmatae. This was a powerful political move directed at Caesar's clientele, which probably had not yet developed a firm view as to whose patronage it now stood under,[173] given that no relevant figure had visited them for years,[174] while the turbulence caused by Caesar's death did not subside until the Treaty of Brundisium. Pollio decided to ensure that the Salonitans raised Antony's standards, placed men loyal to Antony in important positions, and thereby made it clear to the *conventus* that Caesar's

[172] That is, from 'Delmataean' Salona. The idea that more than one settlement known as Salona existed in ancient sources is not new in the historiography. It arose as an attempt to explain the parallel use of the singular and plural forms of the city's name (*Salona*/*Salonae*). There is no doubt that the name Salona referred to the settlement at the mouth of the River Jadro, from which the later capital of the province of Dalmatia gradually developed. It seems, however, that this was not the only place that Greek and Roman writers of this period called by that name, since the strategic characteristics of the Salonitan area allow a different conclusion. The settlement at the mouth of the Jadro was suitable for landing troops and organising logistics, but in itself it did not constitute the key point for controlling the hinterland. Surrounded by commanding heights and connected with the interior by narrow, easily defended routes, it remained a kind of 'mousetrap' until control of the Klis pass had been secured. The true strategic position in the wider area was not the mouth of the Jadro but Klis, as the only natural route into the interior. This suggests that at least two sites may have existed simultaneously which Greek and Latin literature could call Salona: the first, an emporium at the mouth of the Jadro, from which the later *conventus* and colony developed; the second, an indigenous settlement that grew up around a hillfort-type fortification controlling the Klis pass, which the Delmatae eventually brought under their control. The Delmatae must have occupied the most important strategic point in this part of Dalmatia, since without it they could hardly have posed a serious threat first to the Issaean coastal emporia (Polyb. 32.9.) and subsequently to the Roman *conventus* at Salona (Caes. *BCiv*. 3.9.). Pollio's capture of Salona should therefore be associated with the stronghold at Klis, that is, with 'Delmataean' Salona, while the visit to Salona described above should be associated with the settlement at the mouth of the Jadro, that is, with 'Roman' Salona. Failure to take this argument into account otherwise leads to an absurdity: Pollio would appear to have been capturing the city of the Roman *conventus*, perhaps even a colony by that time. For further detail, see Bilić-Dujmušić 2004, 220–224.

[173] It is reasonable to conclude that Octavian inherited Caesar's clientele at Salona, but at the time of Pollio's presence there Octavian was still a relatively unknown figure to them. Everyone had heard of him and knew that he was Caesar's political heir, but events since Caesar's death had prevented Octavian from finding the time for an initial visit to the *conventus* and from 'showing himself' to them. The actual situation at Salona, under constant Delmataean threat, was very different from the formal declaration that Caesar's patronage had passed to his adopted son. To the beleaguered *conventus*, this may have seemed little more than a dead letter, whereas Pollio's appearance and his attack on the Delmatae demonstrated concern and heralded a new period in which they would no longer be marginalised.

[174] See note 164.

true political heir was the magnificent victor of Philippi. He also had a powerful argument behind him: Venetia, as an example of a region enjoying numerous benefits under Antony's aegis.

This point may also be presented somewhat differently: possessing information that the Delmatae were once again threatening Salona, Pollio set out to assist the Romans there. The primary purpose of his journey to the central Adriatic was to drive the Delmatae away from Salona, while the resulting political benefit of the campaign for Antony would have been to win sympathy among Octavian's clientele within the conventus.[175] Yet a schemer of Pollio's calibre knew how to extract an additional advantage: by assisting Octavian's clients, he could assume that Octavian now owed him a considerable favour. Was that favour called in before the Battle of Actium, when Pollio was one of the few prominent Romans who could refuse Octavian without suffering any consequences, at a time when everyone else was obliged to choose a side?

Whichever option one prefers, several conclusions are common to both:

a) Pollio came to the eastern Adriatic coast deliberately, that is, with a specific purpose;

b) Pollio's actions were primarily undertaken for Antony's benefit;

c) at the time of Pollio's arrival, the Delmatae posed a threat to Salona;

d) at Salona, Pollio was most probably dealing with Octavian's clientele;

e) he relieved Octavian's clientele of the Delmataean threat.

Asinius Pollio at Salona: *gregibus armis agris multaverat*[176]

Throughout the story of Pollio, the 'narrative' sources – Appian, Cassius Dio and Velleius Paterculus – make no mention of the Delmatae or Salona. It really does appear that the man had his hands full, and no one would imagine that he had also gone off to involve himself in some local problems in Illyricum – had the poets not said so. Virgil was the first, in the eighth *Eclogue*, in the section devoted to Pollio, to offer verses whose full meaning now eludes our powers of interpretation,[177] speaking of someone passing the rocky shores of the Timavus or sailing along the Illyrian coast, and of the coming of a day when his deeds may be celebrated, while these verses themselves are no more than ivy among the laurels of victory.[178] Since this is a section of the *Eclogues* devoted to

[175] Just as we assume that Pollio also won over Caesar's clientele in Venetia for Antony.
[176] Flor. *Epit*. 2.25.
[177] For attempts at explanation, see Syme 1937, 47–48 and the literature cited in the notes.
[178] Verg. *Ecl*. 8.8–13.

Pollio, it is entirely logical to connect it with Pollio's achievements – and there is nothing new in Virgil celebrating Pollio's deeds in the *Eclogues*.[179] Horace subsequently stated that Pollio celebrated a triumph over the Delmatae.[180] The scholiasts on Virgil and Horace then elaborated upon these verses. The Horatian scholiasts, Acro and Porphyrio, confine themselves in this connection to explaining that Pollio captured the city of Salona from the Delmatae and celebrated a triumph for the victory.[181] Virgil's scholiast Servius Maurus, however, adds to the story of the capture of Salona and the triumph over the Delmatae that in the same year Pollio had a son whom, in honour of this victory, he named Saloninus.[182] The only historian to provide any information on the matter is Florus.[183]

When the different interpretations of these statements[184] are combined into a single reconstruction of events, the result may be, for example, the account offered by Marin Zaninović: 'In order to settle conditions in these regions, Antony and Octavian agreed upon a joint operation on the eastern Adriatic coast. Their intermediary at Brundisium, Gaius Asinius Pollio, undertook this task and was given command of Illyricum within the boundaries previously entrusted to Vatinius. He set out with an army aboard ships from Aquileia along the coast towards Salona, which he appears to have captured, and then proceeded farther south to subdue the Parthini. On his return he again went to war against the Delmatae, although we know nothing more detailed about the course of this conflict. He ravaged the territory of the Delmatae and used the spoils to build Rome's first public library, while giving his son the cognomen *Saloninus* in memory of his successes.'[185] If we recall the opening pages of this article, certain elements of the interpretations advanced by André, Bosworth or Woodman can be recognised in Zaninović's reconstruction. Although the reconstruction is historiographically very interesting in its attempt to combine a number of interpretations into a coherent whole, its principal elements – considered both collectively and individually – the joint operation of Octavian and Antony, Pollio's movement by fleet from Aquileia, his command over Illyricum, and the sequence of operations (Delmatae–Parthini–Delmatae) – are not supported by the written evidence. They are

[179] The scholiast Servius Maurus offers such an interpretation at the appropriate point, but remains inconsistent because in his comment on 8.12 he states that the description refers to Octavian. See below.

[180] Hor. *Carm*. 2.1.13–16.

[181] Acro *ad Hor. Carm*. 2.1.15; Porphyrio *Comm. in Hor. Carm.* 2.1.15–17.

[182] Serv. *Ecl*. 3.88; 4.1; 8.12.

[183] Flor. *Epit*. 2.25.

[184] Together, of course, with the statements of Appian, Dio, Velleius and other authors who touch upon Pollio.

[185] Zaninović 1966, 31–32.

simply not present in the sources, nor is there any evidence that might point towards such a reconstruction.

On the other hand, the question of Pollio, Saloninus and Salona was discussed by Sir Ronald Syme in a study that at the time eclipsed earlier work[186] and for decades served as a cornerstone for scholars studying the subject. Although A. B. Bosworth lucidly 'challenged' Syme in 1972 and offered substantially opposing views,[187] attracting a number of supporters in the process, we have already shown – even without confronting him directly – that his theories are not applicable, since the sources suggest a different scenario. As for Syme, he does not attempt in his article to prove that Pollio never captured Salona,[188] nor does he enter into the debate over the dating of the triumph[189] – he allows either date, since it is in any case irrelevant to the theses he seeks to demonstrate. Let us consider what relevant arguments the article actually contains. If we set aside Syme's engagement with the views of other scholars that are not important for our purposes – whether Pollio established his headquarters at Salona and conducted the war against the Parthini from there, whether he was 'proconsul of Dalmatia', and so forth – his arguments against the validity of the source evidence (1) and against scholarly interpretations of that evidence (2) may be reduced to the following:

1) The connection between Pollio and his son on the one hand and Salona on the other appears only in the scholiasts, who must always be treated with caution. They invariably seek to provide an explanation for everything, and the information they supply may therefore be inaccurate.[190] They do not, for example, mention anywhere that Pollio triumphed over the Parthini, which demonstrates their poor knowledge of history.[191] Appian and Cassius Dio, by contrast, do not mention the capture of Salona, although they are otherwise well informed about this period. There are two errors in the Virgilian scholiast Servius Maurus: Pollio was not commander of a 'German army', nor did he celebrate a triumph before holding the consulship.[192] When writing about Pollio's son, Servius states that Saloninus may have been born at Salona because his mother perhaps

[186] For earlier theses, see Syme 1937, 39–40.

[187] Bosworth 1972, 462–473.

[188] As Lutton 2012, 151 attributes to him.

[189] The year of Pollio's triumph has not survived in the *fasti*, and it is therefore disputed whether the triumph took place in 39 or 38 BC; more broadly, the question is whether only one month or a full thirteen months elapsed between Pollio's triumph and the next one entered in the *fasti*, that of Publius Ventidius over the Parthians, for which only part of the year is preserved: DCCX[V] or DCCX[VI]. See Degrassi 1947, 87; 568; Broughton 1952, 387–388.

[190] Syme 1937, 39–40.

[191] Syme 1937, 43.

[192] Syme 1937, 42.

took refuge there during the Perusine War (41/40 BC), or because his father Pollio might personally have visited the city between the spring and autumn of 40 BC, that is, between the end of the Perusine War and the negotiations at Brundisium. In one passage he writes that Saloninus was born at the time Salona was captured, that is, before Pollio's consulship, while elsewhere he states that he was born in the year of Pollio's consulship. If he existed at all, he did not receive his name from the city. The adjective formed from the city's name is *Salonitanus* or, much more rarely, *Salonas*.[193] The emperor Gallienus likewise had a son called Saloninus. The *Historia Augusta* says that this was because he had been born at Salona.[194] In this case that is plainly incorrect: he received the name from his mother, Cornelia Salonina. *Saloninus* is a derivative of *Salonius*, which may itself derive from an Etruscan name. *Salonii* are attested at Transpadane Vicetia – Aulus Caecina Alienus, who came from that region, had a wife named Salonina.[195] It is therefore a fairly old name that need have no connection with Salona at all.

2) The Pact of Brundisium, which divided the spheres of control between Antony and Octavian, established the boundary at Scodra, making it clear that Dyrrhachium belonged not to Illyricum but to Macedonia. Pollio was therefore sent at the end of 40 BC to govern Antony's province of Macedonia, where he remained until 39 or 38 BC. Salona lay far beyond his province, while communications between Macedonia and Illyricum were very poor. Illyricum belonged to Octavian, and it is therefore unlikely that Antony's man, serving as governor of Macedonia, would have conducted operations there during his proconsulship.[196]

From this it is clear that Syme's intention was not in fact to disprove Pollio's war against the Delmatae or his capture of Salona, but, as he himself states at the beginning of the article,[197] to demonstrate: 1) that Salona did not lie within the province assigned to Pollio after the agreement at Brundisium; and 2) that the child Saloninus was not named after the city. That is all he does. On both points we can agree with him completely. Salona was indeed not in Macedonia. And whether the story of the child who smiled and then died was an invention dating from after Gallienus is not particularly important for our purposes.

What matters is what Syme's article attempts to establish in passing: that Pollio could not have fought against the Delmatae during his proconsulship. On this point we might agree with Syme and even extend his argument: it is unlikely that Pollio fought near Salona after the agree-

[193] Syme 1937, 45.
[194] HA *Gall.* 19.2.
[195] Syme 1937, 44–45.
[196] Syme 1937, 42–43.
[197] Syme 1937, 39.

ment at Brundisium. Immediately afterwards he went to Dyrrhachium and embarked upon the war against the Parthini.[198] His predecessor as governor of Macedonia, Lucius Marcius Censorinus, appears in the triumphal *fasti*,[199] where the year is not preserved, but the day is: the Kalends of January, together with the information that he was consul. He was consul in 39 BC, which would mean that he celebrated his triumph on the very day he entered office as consul.[200] This would place Asinius Pollio in Macedonia before the end of 40 BC, allowing Censorinus enough time to hand over the province, return to Rome, prepare the triumphal ceremony and assume the consulship. We can be somewhat more precise: the agreement at Brundisium was concluded in early October 40 BC,[201] and Pollio departed for Macedonia soon afterwards, probably at the beginning of December. There was not enough time in between to launch an operation in Illyricum.

Whatever year one assigns to Pollio's triumph, the solution certainly does not lie in whether or not he had time to reach Salona. The sources state clearly that he was Antony's man,[202] whom Antony sent to restore order in a part of Antony's own sphere.[203] They also state that the boundary between the two spheres had been clearly drawn, and it is unlikely that a subordinate on either side would have allowed himself to cross it by some three hundred kilometres.[204] Nor is it plausible that Octavian would have asked Antony or Pollio for some favour along the lines of: *since you are already in southern Illyricum, could you tidy up the situation around Salona while you are at it?* This might certainly have been a practical, purely collegial solution, but it could also have been interpreted as evidence of Octavian's inability to keep order in his own house, and that was something Octavian's propaganda foxes, led by Maecenas, would never have allowed. After his triumph Pollio withdrew from political life and refused actively to go over to Octavian's side against Antony,[205] so there can be no question of his fighting the Delmatae at some later date either. In the end, he had better things to do: he was writing history.

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[198] The sources likewise suggest this (App. *BCiv.* 5.75; Dio 48.41.7.).

[199] Degrassi 1947, 87; 343.

[200] The alternative solution, namely that Censorinus fought in Macedonia as consul in 39 BC, cannot be accepted, since this would mean that he succeeded Pollio rather than the reverse – and Pollio's triumph is entered after that of Censorinus.

[201] CIL 10, 5159 records the dedication of a *Signum Concordiae* on 12 October.

[202] App. *BCiv.* 5.31; Vell. Pat. 2.76.2.

[203] Dio 48.41.7.

[204] On the boundary at Scodra, see Brezak 2026, 59–68.

[205] Vell. Pat. 2.86.3. Velleius Paterculus is mistaken in saying that Pollio did not leave Italy after the peace at Brundisium, but the war against the Parthini was probably the sole exception.

Does this mean that Pollio did not, after all, fight the Delmatae and capture Salona? No, it does not. It means only that he most probably did not do so after the peace at Brundisium. That Pollio really did fight the Delmatae and take Salona from them can hardly be doubted. Gaius Asinius Pollio was a towering figure of his own age and beyond it. Generations later, his name was still invoked alongside those of Spurius Carvilius, Gaius Marius and Cicero whenever an example was needed to show how Rome enabled 'outsiders' to surpass even native blue-blooded aristocrats in glory.[206] Gaius Asinius Pollio was more than merely well known: everything about him was known. We may allow that scholiasts writing several centuries later could make mistakes in interpreting information about him because certain details had become conflated, misunderstood, or stripped of the particular circumstances of his age. But it is simply inconceivable that false claims about Asinius Pollio should have been made by his own contemporaries – nota bene by Virgil, his protégé, and by Horace, the close friend of both Virgil and Pollio, who dedicated a book of poems to him. How, after all, could one lie to contemporaries about a man whose life was common knowledge? Poetic licence might perhaps extend to assigning a different meaning to particular facts, but to credit one's patron and fellow Roman with a victory he had never won would amount to outright mockery. Such an attitude on the part of Virgil and Horace towards Pollio cannot reasonably be assumed, nor would it fit the context of the verses in which these references appear.

Well then, if Asinius Pollio fought against the Delmatae, and if this did not happen after the Treaty of Brundisium, when did he do it? Precisely when Servius Maurus tells us that he did: in the year in which he was consul, but before he became consul.[207]

This brings us to the next problem. We need to answer the question: when did Asinius Pollio actually become consul for 40 BC? The *Fasti consvlares* list Asinius Pollio and Gnaeus Domitius Calvinus (for the second time) as the ordinary consuls for that year.[208] Sources dealing with the year regularly date it by this consular pair.[209] Cassius Dio even says that Octavian captured Perusia during their consulship.[210] This, however, is probably simply a way of dating the event to indicate that Perusia did not fall in the same year in which the siege began, but in the following one. It would be very difficult to suppose that this consular pair was actually in office when Perusia fell. Regular consular elections were held at Rome, most commonly in August. In 41 BC the regular elections were

[206] Vell. Pat. 2.128.1–3.
[207] Serv. *Ecl*. 3.88; 4.1.
[208] Degrassi 1947, 504.
[209] Thus, for example, Dio 48 *index*; Josephus *AJ*. 14.5 (§389).
[210] Dio 48.15.1.

evidently not held, since the consul then in office, Lucius Antonius, was by that time already besieged in Perusia, while Asinius Pollio was among the commanders attempting to break Octavian's blockade. Octavian was then master of Rome, and there was simply no conceivable way for Asinius Pollio, at that moment Octavian's enemy, even to stand for the consulship, let alone be elected. Since Pollio is recorded as an ordinary rather than a suffect consul, the obvious conclusion is that, amid the succession of hostilities, the consular elections were not held at all until those hostilities had ended. The earliest point at which Asinius Pollio could therefore have become consul was after he ceased to be an active opponent of Octavian – that is, during the negotiations at Brundisium.[211]

The sequence would thus have been as follows. The consular elections for 40 BC were not held, and most of the year – probably until late September – passed without consuls in office. During the negotiations at Brundisium, Octavian and Antony agreed upon the consuls for the next several years. Yet there were quite a few friends and associates who needed rewarding, so instead of appointing only two for each year, they designated several pairs.[212] *And the men first to enter upon the office of consul secured the name of consuls for the whole year'; those who followed held the same title, but were known chiefly at Rome and in Italy, while elsewhere in the empire few or none of their names were known, so they came to be called 'lesser consuls'.*[213] Since Asinius Pollio and Gnaeus Domitius Calvinus stood first in line to be rewarded, they gave their names to the year 40 BC. They remained in office, however, for only a few months and resigned towards the end of the year to make way for Lucius Cornelius Balbus and Publius Canidius Crassus.[214] These two, in turn, were consuls for less than a month before the year 39 BC opened under new eponyms, Gaius Calvisius Sabinus and Lucius Marcius Censorinus. Pollio thus completed his whirlwind consulship and departed for Macedonia already as proconsul, there to succeed Censorinus, who was already *designatus* for the following year. No wonder this causes a certain amount of confusion.

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[211] When describing his operations on Antony's side during 40 BC, before the reconciliation at Brundisium, the sources do not refer to Pollio as the consul then in office. Likewise, in accounts of events at the end of 41 BC, he is nowhere described as *consul designatus*. Evidently because he was not one at the time.

[212] Dio 48.35.1–3. Cf. Dio 48.53.1–3. Although these passages of Cassius Dio occur in the context of the agreement at Misenum, concluded several months after that at Brundisium, they are certainly applicable to 40 BC as well, since it is noticeable that from this point onwards consules suffecti become an integral feature of the lists of magistrates (see Broughton 1952, 378 ff.). Cf. Broughton 1952 and the lower frequency of suffect consuls in the years before 40 BC.

[213] Dio 48.35.3.

[214] Dio 48.32.1–2.

Now let us recall the apparently contradictory statements of the scholiast Servius Maurus: Pollio captured Salona before his consulship,[215] but at the same time in the year in which he obtained the consulship.[216] Servius also provides a third piece of information, according to which Pollio was *expugnaturus Salonas et inde ad orientem ad Antonium profecturus*,[217] that is: he captured Salona and from there – or subsequently – set out eastwards towards Antony. It is difficult to imagine that Servius did not have some biography of Pollio before him. He may therefore have erred in interpreting the information he was reading, but there is no reason to expect him to have been mistaken about the biographical facts themselves. His interpretations thus provide us with a very clear and internally consistent picture. Pollio captured Salona in the year in which he was consul = 40 BC. He did so before becoming consul = before approximately the end of September 40 BC. The fact that he set out from Salona to join Antony – that is, embarked upon the journey that would eventually bring him, together with Antony, to Brundisium – allows the chronological framework of the Salonitan events to be defined still more precisely. Pollio's war against the Delmatae would thus fall between his activities in Venetia and his appearance at the negotiations in Brundisium, precisely within the period for which we otherwise possess no information about his activities.

Syme, however, argues that Servius Maurus is mistaken precisely about the biographical facts.[218] He adduces two examples:[219] 1) Pollio was not commander of a 'German army' (*conductor Germanici exercitus*); and 2) Pollio did not celebrate a triumph before holding the consulship (*primo meruisset lauream, post etiam consulatum adeptus fuisset*). We genuinely see no reason why these statements must necessarily be wrong. They may appear so when viewed solely through the evidence available to us, but the amount of evidence that happens to have survived is simply not sufficient to establish what is meant here. As regards 1), it should be stressed that we know Pollio commanded seven legions, but we do not know which legions they were, what military traditions they possessed, whether they had previously fought against Germans, how many German auxiliary units they contained, or whether the principal task Antony had assigned them was precisely to guard the frontier against the Germans.[220] There are any number of reasons why an army might be called

[215] Serv. *Ecl*. 3.88.
[216] Serv. *Ecl*. 4.1.
[217] Serv. *Ecl*. 8.12.
[218] Syme 1937, 42.
[219] Both in Serv. *Ecl*. 4.1.
[220] Although we possess few details, we know that Pollio had commanded these seven legions only since 41 BC, that is, from the period immediately preceding the outbreak of

'German' – especially by a poet – and we simply lack sufficiently reliable evidence either to explain the designation satisfactorily or to demonstrate convincingly that it was wrong.

As for point 2), the explanation of Servius' 'error' might proceed in two directions. a) If, like Syme, we insist upon the smallest details, it should be stressed that Servius does not write that Pollio *celebrated* a triumph (Syme: *hold a triumph*) before his consulship; he writes that Pollio had *earned* it (*meruisset*). Since the two verbs need not mean the same thing, Servius may here be expressing his own view – or reproducing Horace's – that Pollio had already earned a triumph through his operations against the Delmatae, but did not receive it because of the political interests and intrigues of the moment. Or b) Servius may simply have swallowed the bait left by Horace. On the one hand, he read in Horace that Pollio had celebrated a triumph over the Delmatae,[221] while elsewhere he found information that Pollio had fought the Delmatae before becoming consul; he then simply combined the two pieces of information. What matters most for our purposes is that this statement does not challenge the sequence of events at all, but instead confirms it: first the war against the Delmatae, then the consulship. On this reading, the 'error' would not be Servius', but Horace's – if it was an error at all.

Thus, the entire confusion surrounding Pollio's triumph over the Delmatae was caused by Horace. It was he who stated that Pollio had celebrated a Dalmatian triumph; the scholiasts merely followed his assertion. There is no other evidence whatsoever for the existence of such a triumph, and it certainly never took place. Was Horace simply mistaken, or is something else involved? As we have said, Horace is hardly likely to have been wrong about the biographical details of a contemporary and still-living friend – unless, perhaps, deliberately. Once again, therefore, we have two possibilities: 1) Horace included this information deliberately; or 2) from Horace's perspective, it was not incorrect information at all.

1) Horace believed that Pollio, who was not merely his friend but one of the greatest Romans of all time, had been unjustly deprived of a well-deserved triumph over the Delmatae. At that point the fierce critic of social injustice familiar to us from the *Satires* stirred within him, and he decided to do something about it. If an ungrateful Rome, for no reason other than base political considerations, refused to grant Pollio the triumph he deserved, then Horace himself would grant it to him. And

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the Perusine War (see further Brunt 1971, 479 ff.), which means that before then they had indeed had time to earn the epithet 'German'.

[221] Which is plainly true. Serv. *Ecl*. 3.88: *(...) nam vicerat Salonas, civitatem Dalmatiae: Horatius "cui laurus aeternos honores Dalmatico peperit triumpho"./* (…) 'for he had conquered Salona, a city of Dalmatia: Horace writes, "for whom the laurel brought forth evergreen honours in your Dalmatian triumph"."

hence: 'O Pollio … counsellor of the Senate, for whom the laurel brought forth evergreen honours in your Dalmatian triumph'[222] If this interpretation comes anywhere near the truth, our confusion over Pollio's triumph could genuinely be called an instance of poetic justice. And in that case Horace succeeded completely in what he intended.

2) Horace was, in fact, not mistaken at all: he was simply avoiding an anachronism. His verses were not written at the time of the events in question. The first three books of the *Carmina* were published in 23 BC, almost twenty years later. The province of Illyricum still existed at the time, but since it was very large, it had already become customary to call its southern part Dalmatia,[223] and its northern part Pannonia. Although Pollio celebrated a triumph over the Parthini, who lived in Macedonia – admittedly very close to the border with Illyricum – Horace may not have regarded it as incorrect, by poetic licence, to call this region Dalmatia in his own day and thus to refer to Pollio's Dalmatian triumph. Horace would simply have been using the geographical terminology current in his own time to describe a historical event. There is nothing surprising about this in ancient authors; Appian, Cassius Dio, Pliny, Livy, Velleius and many others do precisely the same. On this interpretation, Horace did something that may appear to us today to be an error, but which was not erroneous from the standpoint of the literature and historiography of his own age – even though it succeeded in confusing the later scholiasts.

Now that we have some idea of how, when and why Pollio came to Salona, it is finally time to reconstruct the campaign against the Delmatae.

Pollio's – and Domitius' – military operations against the Delmatae resulted in the recapture of Delmataean Salona, the one at the Klis pass, but apparently not only that. Our principal sources of information are the scholiasts, who are actually more interested in the story of the child Saloninus and therefore go no farther than Salona. Yet there is one piece of evidence suggesting that these operations were not confined merely to the capture of the Klis pass, or Delmataean Salona. Florus writes that Asinius Pollio devastated the fields of the Delmatae with a large army.[224] This would suggest that Pollio's actions were not limited to preventing Delmataean attacks on the Roman city of Salona – by then perhaps already a colony – but penetrated into the interior as well. They ended with no more than the devastation of territory to a certain depth because, owing to the priorities imposed by the dynamics of the conflict among the triumvirs, Pollio no longer had time after the capture of Salona to embark upon com-

[222] Hor. *Carm*. 2.1.13–16.

[223] Čače 2003, 44 ff.

[224] Flor. *Epit*. 2.25. On the problem of the precise meaning of Florus' text, see below.

plicated and prolonged operations and sieges. With the death of Fufius Calenus in Gaul, Mark Antony had lost half his legions, and if he intended to confront Octavian on Italian soil he needed every force that remained to him. Once Antony set out for Italy, Pollio had to curtail, or perhaps even terminate, the operations already begun against the Delmatae and hurry to assist his superior.

With Florus, the only historian to mention Pollio and the Delmatae in the same context, there is often a problem caused by his rhetorical embellishment of the text. The same is true here. There is no question that he refers to a campaign against the Delmatae led by Asinius Pollio; the problem lies in defining the details he gives about that campaign. The question is whether his text should read *Asinius Pollio gregibus, armis, agris multaverat* or *gregibus armis agris multaverat* – with commas or without them. In either case, the expression is rhetorical, almost poetic, and very close to figurative language. The first reading would mean that Pollio deprived – or even fined – the Delmatae of their flocks, weapons and fields (territory); the second, that he devastated their fields with a large army. What matters most in Florus is his confirmation that Asinius Pollio really did fight against the Delmatae, information which he found in Livy or in some other source available to him. The differences between these interpretations of the wording are not particularly substantial and ultimately amount to much the same thing.

If *gregibus armis* is the correct reading, most commonly translated as 'with a large army' but literally meaning a mass or heap of weapons, it could tell us a good deal about Pollio's motives. In practical terms, this really may have been a mass of troops on a scale the Delmatae had never previously faced. Pollio had seven legions at his disposal. He joined forces with Domitius Ahenobarbus, who had seventy warships and two legions. That gives nine legions, plus Pollio's allied contingents, whatever allied troops Domitius may also have possessed, and approximately 5,000–7,000 marines, unless these have already been counted within the two legions. There is always the problem of legionary strength, since legions on campaign were never at their full establishment. In this case it may be assumed that Pollio's legions, which had not participated in major battles – their role in the Perusine War had consisted largely of manoeuvring – were not far below their nominal strength, whereas Domitius' were probably in considerably poorer numerical condition. In any event, Pollio may on this occasion have been able to deploy some 50,000–70,000 men against the Delmatae, at least half of them hardened veterans of Caesar's wars and those of the triumvirs. That really was a *mass of troops*. If we add the crews of the warships and transports, together with several thousand rowers, we arrive at a staggering number of stomachs that needed feeding, several times greater than the entire population Salona could have suppor-

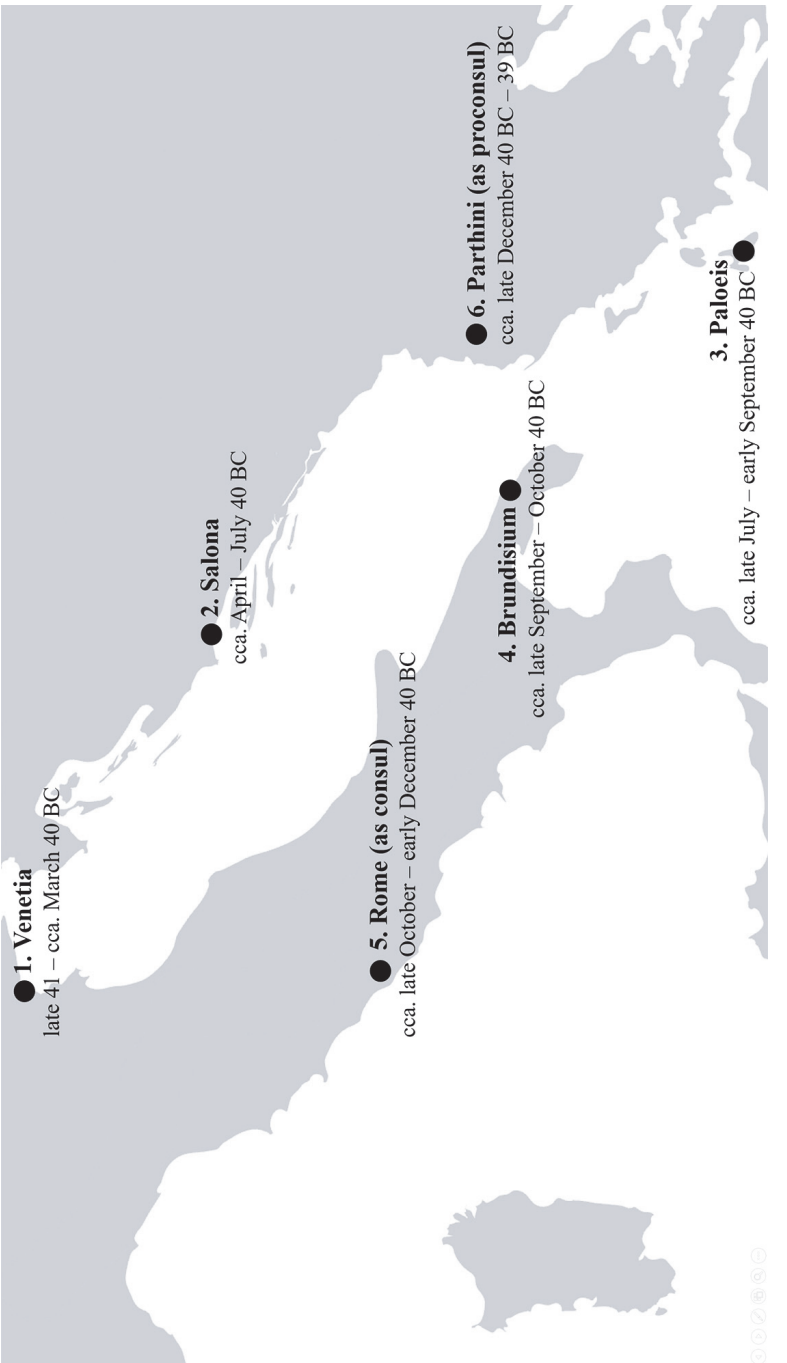


Fig. 1. The activities of Asinius Pollio in 40 BC

ted at the time. An attack on the Delmatae and the *devastation of their fields* – or their being *fined in flocks, weapons and land* – could therefore easily have become a logistical necessity. Furthermore, if the fields of the Delmatae were being plundered in order to supply an army of this size, the most logical date for these operations would be around harvest time, sometime in June or July 40 BC. This would still leave Pollio and Domitius ample time to join Antony from there and participate in the operations around Brundisium, which ended with negotiations in late September or early October. The logistical aims of the campaign also make it likely that Pollio advanced from Salona towards larger areas of agricultural land: the Muć plain, or more probably the Sinj plain.

From Salona, as Servius writes,[225] Pollio, together with Domitius Ahenobarbus, headed eastwards towards Antony, who had managed to raise a small army and a fleet of two hundred ships with which he set out for Italy. On the way, a dramatic encounter took place with Domitius' fleet, described in detail by Appian.[226] Once mutual confidence had been established, the two combined fleets sailed to Paloenta, where Domitius' – and perhaps Pollio's – land forces were then stationed. Since Domitius there gave Antony his own command tent, this was probably some place where Domitius had established a temporary marching camp rather than a permanent base for his army. All of this suggests that, once Pollio and Domitius received news of Antony's movements, they set out to meet him. Where exactly they encountered him is difficult to determine, since the place called Paloenta (Παλόεντα) cannot now be located with precision – perhaps Cephalonia? From there they proceeded to Brundisium, where the part of the story described in the historical background begins.

And with this we reach the end of the discussion. Instead of a conventional conclusion, which we do not consider necessary in this case because we have attempted to complete the reconstruction of Pollio's activities in 40 BC within each of the sections considered above, we may finish by setting out chronologically the principal points to which the analysis of the sources has led us. Since the problem is complex and multilayered, such a 'list', together with the accompanying map, will, we hope, make it easier for the reader to follow the principal results of the study.

1) Asinius Pollio was on Antony's side both before and after the Perusine War; 2) he did not fall from Antony's favour after the Perusine War; 3) after the fall of Perusia he resumed the settlement of veterans in Venetia and the strengthening of Antony's position in north-eastern Italy; 4) he left Venetia for Salona on his own initiative in order to strengthen Antony's political position on the eastern Adriatic coast; 5) he concluded

[225] Serv. *Ecl*. 8.12.
[226] App. *BCiv*. 5.55.

the alliance with Domitius Ahenobarbus not in Italy but in Illyricum; 6) he was at Salona after the Perusine War but before the conclusion of the agreement at Brundisium; 7) he assisted 'Roman' Salona by capturing the nearby 'Delmataean' Salona and thereby driving the Delmatae farther away from the Roman *conventus* and towards the interior of the province; 8) he captured 'Delmataean' Salona in the year of his consulship, but before entering office; 9) after the agreement at Brundisium he served as Antony's proconsul in Antony's Macedonia.

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