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CHAPTER TEN

CIVIL WAR IN THE *RES GESTAE DIVI AUGUSTI*: CONQUERING THE WORLD AND FIGHTING A WAR AT HOME¹

CARSTEN HJORT LANGE

Nowadays there seems to be a tendency to approach the *Res Gestae* as a means of revealing Augustus and his deceptive ways, what might be called the right-or-wrong approach to history.² The German epigraphist Alföldy rightly observes that the *Res Gestae* is different from biographies, and in continuation of this point stresses that inscriptions did not normally focus on the negative qualities of the honorand.³ That Augustus does stress civil war more than once seems not to have distracted him from that

¹ I am very grateful to Dr Andrew Bayliss, Dr Alison Cooley, and Prof. John Rich for comments. An article of this length cannot possibly engage with all theories and approaches to the *Res Gestae*. For the immense bibliography, see Ramage 1987; Kienast 1999, 208-212; and Ridley 2003. All translations in the article of the *Res Gestae* are by Brunt and Moore 1967.

² There is a tendency among historians to try to make known, to expose, something that has been concealed. See Hedrick 2000, 133. Syme 1939 (1952), 522 stresses the *Res Gestae* as “the hall-mark of official truth”. Similarly Yavetz 1984, 23; Jones 1977², 168f; Ramage 1987, 32-37. On page 36, he mentions that only Augustus is given credit for building in Rome and Italy, but the inscription is about the *Res Gestae* of Augustus. Eder 1990, 71 and Osgood 2006, 182 stress civil war issues omitted from the *Res Gestae*. Of course the *Res Gestae* constitutes Augustus’ truth, his ideology, but what is missing from the modern debate is an explanation for why he wrote as he did. Already in the eighteenth century the moderate policy of Augustus was thought by some to be intended to conceal the realities of despotism. See Erskine-Hill 1983, 249-266, who describes this appropriately as ‘the spread of a Tacitean view’.

³ Alföldy 2005, 32. To be fair, Alföldy 1991 is a brilliant example of the difference between approaching inscriptions and historical writing.

conclusion.⁴ One might say that the ending of the civil wars is accentuated, but the good ending only makes sense as a counterbalance to the not so good, i.e. the civil war itself. The question is what is expected from the *Res Gestae*.

This article will look at approaches to the *Res Gestae* and will suggest that negative things are not left out, but used to stress the coming of a new and better age of universal peace. Had Augustus tried to deceive, he would have jeopardised his *res gestae*. Not to mention the negative sides of Octavian would be absurd; it is by addressing the negative aspects that justification becomes possible.⁵

A reconsideration of Heuss' article on the ideology of the *Res Gestae* will be used to exemplify this approach. According to Heuss, the inscription should be used in its entirety, not just for cherry-picking. Surprisingly, he does not think a connection between the chapters was important for Augustus. Chapter 28 is thus misplaced because the mentioning of colonies should not be part of the section on foreign politics.⁶ This might seem rather unimportant, but that is far from the case. Heuss dismisses information instead of trying to find out why the information is in the chapter in question. This article will try to focus on the colonies of chapter 28 and the problem of why colonies are mentioned in this chapter; this will be the key to understanding that, apart from expansion and war, a subject of the *RG*, is the return to normality after civil war. In *RG* 3.3 foreign and civil wars are mentioned, as are indeed colonies; there is right from the outset a clear connection between civil war and colonies.

How to approach an inscription

As Bosworth argues in his article on apotheosis in the *Res Gestae*, it is a good start to accept that the conquest of the world is a primary theme.⁷ The genre of the *Res Gestae* is a very different question, as are its purposes and multiple levels, not to mention the audiences of the

⁴ Most clearly *RG* 3.1, 34.1

⁵ Morgan 1999, 128: propaganda cannot or should not ignore the prevailing mood of the public. Similarly Johnson 1976, 7f.

⁶ See also *RG* 3.3, 16.1 and Heuss 1975, 56-62.

⁷ Bosworth 1999, 1. Similarly Nicolet 1991, 9, 74, who stresses it as a geographical survey and makes a connection to the map of Agrippa in the *Porticus Vipsania* (Plin. *HN* 3.17, Cass. Dio. 55.8.3-4). But why is the map not at or close to the Mausoleum of Augustus?

inscription or even inscriptions.⁸ One model might be the traditional Roman *elogium*, but the scope and length of the *Res Gestae* make it so very different.⁹ Because of its length and its use of first person, the inscription is best looked at as something unique.¹⁰ Perhaps this is the reason that no other *princeps* in Rome “dared” to put up something similar.

Stating the obvious will perhaps clarify the discussion: it was a document written by Augustus, presented to the world as such,¹¹ and read in the Senate after his death. The documents kept by the Vestal Virgins, including the *Res Gestae*, were sealed, and the instructions were simple; the intention was to have the document, the *Res Gestae*, inscribed on bronze tablets in front of Augustus’s mausoleum on the *Campus Martius*.¹² Suetonius mentions them as *tabulae*; they were set up *ante Mausoleum*, not on the building. There was also a document with instructions for his funeral; nothing was left to chance. This is the context Augustus chose for himself; the *Res Gestae* is an inscription, a fact too often overlooked by modern scholars who write as if the *Res Gestae* was a literary text. Unlike a literary text, an inscription is always part of a

⁸ Yavetz 1984, 14-20, stressing the *iuventus* of Italy and Rome. This is supported by Millar 1988, 18, using the *Tabula Siarensis*. But why does the inscription not spell it out if the audience is a specific one? For multiple purposes see Bosworth 1999, 1.

⁹ Regarding *elogia*, see Gag e 1950², 29. Nicolet 1991, 31-33 mentions the *elogium* of Pompeius Magnus as a possible model (Diod. Sic. 40.4, Plin. *HN* 7.97-8). The conquest of the world is a definitive connection, but the length is a difference and Pompeius’ inscription is not written in the first person. According to Kraus 2005, 192, the *commentarii* of Caesar “serve the *Res Gestae* as ground text” She also refers the inscription back to the Hellenistic biographical tradition (191 n. 25), which misses the point that it is an inscription.

¹⁰ Mommsen 1887a, 393; Syme 1939 (1952), 524. One theory tries to connect the *Forum Augustum* and the *Res Gestae*, see Frisch 1980, 93-98 and Luce 1990, esp. 127-128. Augustus in both instances wanted to stress that he has surpassed the *res gestae* of all great men in Roman history, but an ideological connection should also take into account the physical distance between the monuments. For the *summi viri*, see Suet. *Aug.* 31.5. These *elogia* are also much shorter than the *Res Gestae*.

¹¹ Suet. *Aug.* 101.1-4; Cass. Dio 56.33.1.

¹² Suet. *Aug.* 101.4. Amm. Marc. 17.4.16 mentions two obelisks, perhaps Augustan or perhaps later, as they are not mentioned by Strabo and Pliny. Buchner, in a recent excavation, has found two bases, the level most likely being Augustan; thus there are four bases, and so the *Res Gestae* can have been placed *ante Mausoleum* with the obelisks placed close by as well. See Buchner 1996, 163-167; Rehak 2006, 62-95.

monument.¹³ Millar points out that we ought to look up from our book and doing so, we would see the Mausoleum with the statue of Augustus. Millar concludes that nobody, in antiquity that is, would be clever enough to read it as a republican “document”.¹⁴ This is the ideology of Augustus; this is how he wanted to be perceived by posterity.¹⁵ Elsner, in a more provocative manner, but rightly so, observes that Mussolini “grasped the essentially monumental quality of the *Res Gestae* as a text designed to be inscribed on or in front of buildings”.¹⁶ Mussolini inscribed the *Res Gestae* on the building containing the *Ara Pacis*, a building situated today by the mausoleum of Augustus. Thus one conclusion to be made already is the difference in audience between the document and the inscription, the document being Augustan and the inscription Tiberian, the inscription being set up in a garden open to the public, the document being read out only to the Senate.¹⁷

There is no reason to believe that the chapter divisions do not go back to the original inscription and Augustus’ draft. Thus a reading of structure is possible.¹⁸ Therefore, a theory about the *Res Gestae* should in principle be in agreement with all chapters of the inscription, but also with the historical and ideological context, and the surroundings on the northern parts of the *Campus Martius*.

The Augustan Peace altar is mentioned in *RG* 12. The next chapter mentions the closing of the temple of Janus, the honour after the victories of Antonius and Cleopatra that pleased Augustus the most.¹⁹ The *Ara*

¹³ Ramage 1987 and Ridley 2003 both ignore the context of the inscription. Rehak 2006 accepts that the context of the *Res Gestae* is the Mausoleum (54-58), but oddly sees a difference between the monarchical buildings of the *Campus Martius* and the “Republican” *Res Gestae* (8). Alföldy 1991, 292 stresses that an inscription always belongs to a monument. Similarly Woolf 1996, 28. The heading of the *Res Gestae* was, according to Gagé 1950², 9: *res gestae divi Augusti, quibus orbem terrarum imperio populi Romani subiecit, et impensae quas in rem publicam populumque Romanum fecit*. Volkmann 1969, 10; Ramage 1987, 13 both suggest there might be no “title.” One problem is of course the deification in prescript, but that could easily have been changed after the deification itself. From Suet. *Aug.* 101 (on the will) and *Aug.* 50 Augustus emerges a pedant. He would hardly have forgotten a heading and at the same time not mention his name in the first line.

¹⁴ Millar 1984, 58.

¹⁵ *RG*, 8.4 does mention posterity. Similarly the *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre* 165-170 (*posterorum memoriae*).

¹⁶ Elsner 1996, 34-35.

¹⁷ Suet. *Aug.* 100.4, 101.

¹⁸ See Brunt and Moore 1967, 2.

¹⁹ Cass. Dio 51.20.4.

Pacis is put up later, but the inscription's chronology is relative. According to *RG* 13, the temple of Janus was closed *cum per totum imperium populi Romani terra marique esset parva victoriis pax* ("When victories had secured peace by land and sea throughout the whole empire of the Roman people"). Similar statements appear in Livy 1.19.3 on Actium and the inscription from the victory monument at Actium itself: Actium meant peace.²⁰

The *Horologium* commemorates the capture of Egypt, as mentioned in the inscription on the base. The obelisk is of course Apollo's, Augustus' patron god and helper at Actium.²¹ The mausoleum is best looked at in the context of 32 BC and the will of Antonius, with his wish to be buried in Alexandria next to Cleopatra. The Mausoleum in Rome is the perfect counterpart to Alexandria.²² The field of Mars is turned into the field of peace, Augustus' peace after his victories. Importantly, the entrances of both the Mausoleum and the Augustan Peace Altar point inwards to the *Campus*, not to the *via Flaminia* or the Tiber.

According to Buchner the birthday of Augustus was central to the area and on the 23rd September a shadow from the obelisk would point to the centre of the Peace Altar. Sadly, this theory did not stand the test of time and a physicist from Tübingen.²³ However, Gabba observes how odd it is

²⁰ See Murray and Petsas 1989, 76. According to Rosenstein 2007, 232 the Romans did not use the term *pax* for reconciliation after civil war, but *concordia*. But in fact the term *concordia* is not used in the *Res Gestae*, civil war and peace are. To make no connection between the two in the inscription makes little sense.

²¹ The dedication of the inscription reads "*Soli donum dedit*" (*CIL* VI 702; Taf.109.1), and also mentions *Aegypto in potestatem populi Romani redacta*, closely resembled in *RG* 27.1. Sol points to Apollo, see Champlin 2003, 114. For Apollo as divine helper at Actium see Verg. *Aen.* 8.704. On Apollo as the patron god of Octavian see Hekster and Rich 2006.

²² Suet. *Aug.* 100.4 mentions that the structure was built in his sixth consulship: *sexto suo consulatu extruxerat*. Clearly it could not have been built in 28 BC, and Cass. Dio 53.30.5 even suggests it was not finished in 23 BC. 32 BC is by far the most likely candidate looking at context, even though no source mentions that year. The struggle with Antonius and his will mentioning his own future burial at Alexandria instead of Rome is mentioned by Cass. Dio 50.3.5 and Plut. *Vit. Ant.* 58.4. Octavian did choose to finish the tomb of Antonius and Cleopatra in Alexandria and allow them to be buried there (Suet. *Aug.* 17.4). For 32 BC see Kraft 1967 and Rehak 2006, 35-53.

²³ Buchner 1982 and 1988, 240-245. For the criticism see Schütz 1990, 432-457, comprehensively refuting the measurements of Buchner. Schütz 1990, 451 stresses that even if Buchner was correct, the shadow to pierce the *Ara Pacis* on the birthday of Augustus would have been invisible six meters from the monument. Buchner 1996, 161-168 has tried to hit back, but his theory seems tenuous. See

that Augustus mentions his own birth in *RG* 13; Roman history is divided into two parts and Augustus' birth is the turning point. This makes Augustus a godlike person, perhaps sent by the gods.²⁴ Earlier the birthday of Caesar had been celebrated in public and the fourth *Eclogue* of Virgil, the calendar of the province Asia, and the *fasti* of the Arvals tell the story of a period obsessed with birth.²⁵ According to Gradel the *Res Gestae* might be Augustus' argument, his *apologia*, for state divinity.²⁶ Perhaps the "proposition" did not come as a surprise for anybody: the victory in the war against Cleopatra and Antonius meant peace for Rome, all visible on the *Campus Martius* when the *Res Gestae* was inscribed as Augustus' last alteration to the area, a peace that was only possible with Augustus.

The Triumviral assignment

The inscription seems to have an introduction and a conclusion: chapters one and two, perhaps including chapter three and chapters 34 and 35. Ramage is right in stressing a chronological coherence, with the nineteen year old *privatus* who becomes *pater patriae*.²⁷

Appian, trying to define the triumvirate, stresses that three men were in possession of all power in the *Res Publica*,²⁸ although he also observes they were given the powers of consuls.²⁹ This appears contradictory, but

also Rehak 2006, 62-95 and Barton 1995, especially 44-46 for criticism of Buchner.

²⁴ In the interpretation of Gabba 1995, 11-14. This bears resemblance to the idea of the Messiah. See Suet. *Aug.* 100.3, 94.3.

²⁵ Weinstock 1971, 211 on Caesar; Coleman 1977 on the fourth *Eclogue*; Degraasi 1963, 13.2, 512 on the *fasti* of the Arvals; and *EJ* 98 on the new calendar of Asia Minor based on Augustus' birthday (9 BC).

²⁶ Gradel 2002, 281. See also Weber 1936, 102-104.

²⁷ *RG* 1.1, 35.1; Ramage 1987, 19. According to Mommsen 1887b, V, the *Res Gestae* must be divided into three sections: *honores* (1-14), *impensae* (15-24) and *Res Gestae* proper (25 to the end). Hardy 1923: 14-18 stresses *RG* 1-3 as the introduction. Weber 1936: 150 makes chapters 1-2 stand out, together with 34-35 (217-224). Gag  1950,² 13-16 on the triple division of the *Res Gestae* (*RG* 34-35 as conclusion). Yavetz 1984, 14-15 observes that we ought not to rigorously accept the three parts. According to Kornemann the *Res Gestae* is written in stages: *RG* 1-4 constitutes the "Urmonument" (1921, 28-40). The *Res Gestae* was begun 28 BC according to Kornemann (1921, III), perhaps because this is the year the Mausoleum was built according to Suetonius. This is difficult to determine, and the document seems to have been edited to a final version (See Gag  1950, 16).

²⁸ App. *B Civ.* 5.1.

²⁹ App. *B Civ.* 4.7.

the reason for this difference is with all probability that the triumvirs were trying to avoid the title of dictator.³⁰ There is a difference between the formal vote, the *Lex Titia*, and “Realpolitik”. Importantly, the purpose of the new magistracy was to constitute the *Res Publica* and end the civil wars, thus also avenging Caesar.³¹

According to Mommsen, the renewed triumvirate was extended to the end of 33 BC, but it did not expire until given up by its holders, and in the end this was done by Octavian on 13 January 27 BC.³² This view was challenged by Kromayer as early as 1888: the triumvirate did lapse in 33 BC and that was the end of it. Thus 32 BC constitutes a *coup d'état*.³³ Similarly to Mommsen, Fadinger suggests that Octavian was not a triumvir in 32 BC, but was still in possession of the triumviral *potestas*. What is given back in 27 BC is the triumviral *potestas* as observed by Mommsen.³⁴

That the triumvirs at various points did speak of laying down the triumviral powers suggests that the triumvirate did not lapse automatically.³⁵ But again, the main problem is the *Res Gestae* itself: Why would Augustus say that he was triumvir for 10 years if this was not so? Fadinger is thus most likely right.

³⁰ App. *B Civ.* 4.2; Cass. Dio 46.55.3.

³¹ Avenging Caesar, see App. *B Civ.* 4.8f. and Cass. Dio 46.56.1ff. On the termination of the civil wars, see App. *B Civ.* 4.2. Both factors are to be found in Cass. Dio 53.4.4. Reynolds 1982, n. 9 line 12 and n. 8 line 80, may point to the triumvirs being conceived as promagistrates, not magistrates, and thus contradictory to App. *B Civ.* 4.2.7. But, as pointed out by Rich 1992, 113, we cannot be certain that their powers in respect to the provinces were proconsular.

³² Mommsen 1887b, 702-742, especially 718-719. This idea has found support; see Girardet 1990, 324 n. 4 on the German scholarship. See also Brunt and Moore 1967, 48-49 and Rich 1992, 114. The triumvirate, instituted 27 November 43 BC, did initially terminate at the end of 38 BC (*EJ* 32). It was renewed for 5 years at the meeting at Tarentum in the autumn 37 BC (App. *B Civ.* 5.95, Cass. Dio 48.54.6). The terminal date is thus the end of 33 BC. This is favoured by Augustus in *RG* 7.1. See also Suet. *Aug.* 27.1. *Livy Per.* 132 may stress the same, but is problematic. App. *Ill.* 28.80 states that the triumvirate ended 32 BC. Even if a conclusion is uncertain because of the sources, Augustus in the *Res Gestae* did state that he was a triumvir for ten years.

³³ Kromayer 1888, 2-21, stating that the triumvirate did lapse in 32 BC (9), and thus the actions of Octavian in 32 BC equal a “Staatsstreich” (15). It was not the triumviral powers given back in 27 BC (11f). Similarly Syme 1939 (1952), 225, 270-1.

³⁴ Fadinger 1969, especially 143-145.

³⁵ App. *B Civ.* 5.73, 132; Cass. Dio 49.41.6, 50.7.1, *Livy Per.* 132.

In *RG* 1, the tyranny of a faction turns a coup into something legitimate. Ridley comments on this in a chapter called “Lies”, but in fact Augustus does explain that he was a *privatus* who raised an army, and then goes on to give his view of why this was acceptable. The obverse legend *Libertatis P R Vindex* on a cistophorus from 28 BC, whose reverse commemorates *pax*, and the *corona obsidionalis*, a military distinction given to Octavian for saving the community, point to the defence of the liberty of the Roman people. This is close to *RG* 1.1, and the justification is the same as later with the triumvirate: Augustus did what he did to save the *Res Publica*. All this material must be seen in relation to the war against Antonius and Cleopatra.³⁶

RG 2 reads:

Qui parentem meum trucidaverunt, eos in exilium expuli iudiciis legitimis ultus eorum facinus, et postea bellum inferentis rei publicae vici bis acie.

I drove into exile the murderers of my father, avenging their crime through tribunals established by law; and afterwards, when they made war on the republic, I twice defeated them in battle.

RG 3.1 constitutes in many ways a small conclusion to the inscription right at the outset. It reads:

Bella terra et mari civilia externaque toto in orbe terrarum saepe gessi...

I undertook many civil and foreign wars by land and sea throughout the world...

This is very close to *RG* 13 and the slogan of peace through victory. And in *RG* 34, the conclusion of the *Res Gestae*, the ending of the civil wars appears prominently.

RG 34.1 reads:

In consulatu sexto et septimo, postquam bella civilia extinxeram, per consensum universorum potens rerum omnium...

In my sixth and seventh consulship, after I had extinguished civil wars, and at a time when with universal consent I was in complete control of affairs...

³⁶ Rich and Williams 1999, 184-185. *Libertatis P R Vindex*, Cistophori, see *RIC* 1² 476. *Corona obsidionalis*, Plin. *HN* 22.13 and Cass. Dio 51.19.5.

The *Res Gestae* does seem to reveal itself as Augustus' "commentaries" on the civil wars. The triumvirate is only very loosely defined in *RG* 1.4, but taken together with chapter two and 34 a picture emerges: Caesar is avenged in chapter two, and the civil war ended in chapter 34. *RG* 2 constitutes a partial success in the constituting of the *Res Publica*. This is very close to the information given by especially Appian (*B Civ.* 4.2).

The civil wars

The question that remains unanswered is whether Actium, the turning point in history, was a civil or a foreign war? But again, let us begin by stating the obvious: *RG* 27.1 stresses *Aegyptum imperio populi Romani adieci* ("I added Egypt to the empire of the Roman people"). The victory over Egypt and Cleopatra cannot constitute the ending of the civil wars as mentioned in *RG* 34, at least not on its own.

RG 25.2 reads:

Iuravit in mea verba tota Italia sponte sua, et me belli quo vici ad Actium ducem depoposcit.

The whole of Italy of its own free will swore allegiance to me and demanded me as leader in the war in which I was victorious at Actium.

Next is chapter 24, which reads:

In templis omnium civitatum provinciae Asiae victor ornamenta reposui quae spoliatis templis is cum quo bellum gesseram privatim possederat.

After my victory, I replaced in the temples of all the cities of the province of Asia the ornaments which my late adversary, after despoiling the temples, had taken into his private possession.

Ridley in his recent book on the *Res Gestae*, discussing *RG* 24.1 and *is cum quo bellum gesseram*, writes: "He has revealed the gender of his real opponent in a civil war and thus undone years of official propaganda." The opponent is a man.³⁷ To believe this was unintentional is very odd indeed and very negative in its approach. One might ask a different question: why

³⁷ Ridley 2003, 125 for the quotation. Ridley looks at "omissions", "defensible statements", and "lies". The assumption seems to be that we can judge the *Res Gestae*, not a piece of historical writing, by modern historical standards alone.

did Augustus mention the civil war in the *Res Gestae*, even when implicit as here. This might indeed be what makes the inscription truly unique.

The chapter is datable since it begins with “after my victory”, the context showing it most likely to be Actium. It might relate to his return from Asia in 30/29 BC, but the victory must surely refer to Actium. The wrongs of Antonius, the unmentioned adversary, are made right by Octavian, returning temple ornaments to their rightful owners. And Augustus mentions that he had statues of himself in Rome melted down and put the money gained to use, by giving golden offerings to Apollo, the patron god of Octavian and helper at Actium. This is a counterbalance to Antonius’ wrongdoing, not about Asia Minor.³⁸

This is the last chapter of the *impensae* section of the inscription; the first chapter of the *Res Gestae* proper on wars is *RG* 25, mentioning Actium.³⁹ The civil war is not mentioned in this chapter because of the triumph of 29 BC, a triumph is in principle not possible after civil war.⁴⁰ The adversary in *RG* 24 is the same as in *RG* 25 and again not mentioned; the adversary is Antonius.

The subject here is “*damnatio memoriae*”, or perhaps more correctly, the omission of the name of Antonius; of course none of the enemies of Augustus are mentioned in the *Res Gestae*, but the fact remains that the recipients must have suspected Antonius and this was the point. The ideas put forward by Hedrick regarding the Late Roman Empire can be used for the Augustan age as well: Antonius was not mentioned by name, not to forget him, but to dishonour him.⁴¹ Why would Augustus stress Antonius so often in the *Res Gestae* if he was trying to make everybody forget him?⁴² The result of the “*damnatio memoriae*” is clearly visible in other sources where Antonius is not mentioned by name. This seems later to have changed partly, for Antonius is mentioned in book eight of the *Aeneid* (685).

³⁸ According to Elsner 1996, 35 the text was exported, but nothing suggests involvement from Augustus. Alföldy 2003, 7 observes that all three copies are from one and the same province, which suggests the involvement of the provincial governor. The appendix would have been odd as a postscript after the conclusion. The appendix stresses the provinces more than the main text, and importantly, the total of expenses in section 1 is not given in sesterces as in the *Res Gestae*, but in *denarii*. See Brunt and Moore 1967, 80-81.

³⁹ *RG* 25.2.

⁴⁰ Val. Max. 2.8.7, Cic. *Phil.* 14.22f.

⁴¹ Hedrick 2000, chapter 4, especially 114. For the more traditional view of ‘*damnatio memoriae*’, a very flexible concept, see Vittinghoff 1936 and Flower 2006.

⁴² *RG* 1.1.

Returning to the powers of the triumvirate, the inscription may reveal even more. Augustus in *RG* 34.1 describes his own powers in 28-27 BC as *potens rerum omnium* (“I was in possession of all things”).⁴³ As mentioned above, the likely scenario is the continuation and retention of the triumviral *potestas*, but detached from the magistrate itself.⁴⁴ All the powers in the *Res Publica* cannot be explained within the powers of the consul. The termination of the triumvirate is the end of 33 BC; *RG* 7.1 states *triumvir per continuos annos decem*. Octavian was not triumvir in the year 32 BC.

One way of saving the legitimacy of Octavian in 32 BC has been put forward by some scholars, as part of a trend to normalise the triumvirate: the triumvirs only retained powers in the provinces, i.e. as proconsuls.⁴⁵ During a senate meeting in early 32 BC Octavian did in fact sit between the consuls,⁴⁶ but it is believed the meeting was outside the *pomerium*. But the proconsuls were not allowed to sit between the consuls, and the triumvirate would hardly have degraded into a proconsulate.⁴⁷ One might add that the powers of a proconsul cannot be spoken of as *potens rerum omnium* either.⁴⁸

Potens rerum omnium clearly focuses on Octavian’s position prior to the surrender of these powers in 28-27 BC and not 32 BC, but since no decision is known giving Octavian all powers in the state, this most likely

⁴³ Botteri 2003, 264 has found a new fragment of the *Res Gestae*. This fragment from Antiochia shows that *potens* is the correct reading of *RG* 34.1, not *potitus*. See also Drew-Bear and Scheid 2005, esp. 233-236. Lebek 2004, 60 points out that the idea of *potens* goes back to Kassel. See Krömer 1978, 135 for this. See Lebek for scholarship on the issue. The reading *per consensum universorum* [*potitus rerum omnium*] goes back to Mommsen 1883. See also Ramsey and von Premerstein 1927, 95 and Tab.XIV, with a fragment containing the letters M and OM. On the vast amount of scholarship on *RG* 34, see Ramage 1987, 154-157.

⁴⁴ Regarding the period between 32 BC and 27 BC see Fadinger 1969, 144, 302f. Fadinger also observes that it is impossible to see any difference in relation to Octavian's powers between the year 33 BC and 32 BC (137).

⁴⁵ Girardet 1990, esp. 338-342; 1995, 151; Lewis 1991, esp. 61; and Bleicken 1990, 38-39 and 57-62. On normality, see Gruen 1974; Millar 1973 and 1998. Ungern-Sternberg, 2004, in a German approach to the question, stresses the normality, but defines this as a question of a “crises without an alternative” quoting Meier’s *Res publica amissa* (1997). According to Ungern-Sternberg, the main participants did not propose a different constitution (106).

⁴⁶ Cass. Dio 50.2.

⁴⁷ Rich 1992, 114; Millar 1973, 59.

⁴⁸ *RG* 34.1.

happened after the victory over Antonius. There is no new command in *RG* 25 or in our external sources.

The oath of allegiance to Octavian in the year 32 BC is best seen as some kind of political justification. In the *Res Gestae* Augustus does not set out to describe his powers and positions in constitutional terms. This is also the reason for relating that more than seven hundred senators served under him during the battle of Actium.⁴⁹ This oath leads to *per consensum universorum potens rerum omnium*.⁵⁰ The consensus justified the fact that Octavian was still in possession of the triumviral powers; it justified him fighting for the *Res Publica* against the enemies Cleopatra and Antonius.⁵¹ This is similar to the way in which the two triumvirs divided the *potestas* of Lepidus in 36 BC; Octavian now was in complete possession of all powers in the *Res Publica* because he had defeated Antonius in battle.⁵² The powers that had been shared between the triumvirs devolved to Octavian, which made him in effect *potens rerum omnium*.

That Octavian was fighting for the *Res Publica* is visible in the external sources as well. Part of the inscription of Octavian's victory monument at Actium reads:

vacat Imp · Caesa[r] · Div[us] · Iuli · J[ulius] · vict[oriam] · consecutus · bell[o] · quod · pro [re]p[ublica] · ges[si]t · in · hac · region[e]

Imperator Caesar, son of the Divine Julius, following the victory in the war which he waged on behalf of the *res publica* in this region...⁵³

“*Pro republica*” does seem to point in the same direction as *RG* 2. This is also close to “*re publica conservata*” on an inscription firmly dated to 29 BC, found in the Forum Romanum, and most likely to have come from the Actian arch. Similarly, the 1st Augustus 30 BC, the day of the capture of Alexandria, was *feriae* because Octavian “freed the *res publica* from very grave danger” (*rem publicam tristissimo periculo liberavit*).⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *RG* 25.

⁵⁰ *RG* 34.1.

⁵¹ Von Premerstein 1937, 60ff; Fadinger 1969, 315-332; Kienast 1999, 67-69.

⁵² App. *B Civ.* 5.1. Mommsen 1996 (German ed. 1992), 91; Fadinger 1969, 296ff.

⁵³ See Murray and Petsas 1989, 76, 86 for translation. For the inscription in general see Zachos 2003, 76, who has found a new block with the letters TI · NEP and thus likely restored as [MAR]TI · NEPTUNO [QUE]. Mars thus needs to be placed before Neptune. The traditional reading goes back to Suet. *Aug.* 18.2: “*Neptuno ac Marti*”.

⁵⁴ Rich 1998, 100-114 and Rich and Williams 1999, 184-185 on the inscription (*EJ* 17) and the arch. For the first August see *EJ*, 49.

The triumvirate had indeed constituted the *Res Publica*. *RG* 34 constitutes the giving back of the powers of the triumvirate to the *Res Publica*. The assignment had been accomplished successfully, the civil war was terminated.

Conquering the world and fighting a war at home

According to Gruen “The *Res Gestae* places emphasis not on peace but on pacification.”⁵⁵ He stresses foreign, not civil wars. The heading of the inscription states beautifully:

Rerum gestarum divi Augusti, quibus orbem terrarum imperio populi Romani subiecit.

The achievements of the Divine Augustus, by which he brought the world under the empire of the Roman people.

However, Weinstock demonstrated many years ago that the peace of the Augustan era was not only a question of expansion, but also a question of civil war: *pax* is both internal and external.⁵⁶ Dio comes closest of the sources to understanding the context of Actium and the war against Antonius and Cleopatra, stating that the war was declared on Cleopatra, in reality of course, against Antonius.⁵⁷ There was going to be a civil war, the question was who was going to start it. In the end Antonius and Cleopatra did, moving their troops close to Italy (Actium and Patras); when Antonius in the end did help Cleopatra at Actium, he became automatically an enemy of Rome. He started the civil war.

As shown in this paper, the triumviral assignment, including the civil war, is the setting in the preface and conclusion of the *Res Gestae*. Moreover, these parameters are found in the three opening chapters of the main sections of the *Res Gestae* (*RG* 3, 15, and 25), *honores* (*RG* 3-14), *impensae* (*RG* 15-24), and *Res Gestae* proper (*RG* 25-33): *RG* 3 on the civil wars, *RG* 15 on the giving of money to the poor in Rome in accordance with the will of Caesar, and *RG* 25 on Naulochus and Actium. Similarly for the closing chapters: *RG* 24 as already mentioned, *RG* 33

⁵⁵ Gruen 1985, 54; see also Syme 1989, 116.

⁵⁶ Weinstock 1960, 45. On *pax* and victory, see Rich 2003. The blurring of civil and foreign war is obvious in Verg. *Aen.* 8.685ff., which mentions both Antonius and Cleopatra as the enemies. According to DeBrohun 2007, 256, the Romans made a clear distinction between foreign and civil war. This is clearly wrong.

⁵⁷ Cass. Dio 50.4.5.

focuses on the fruits of peace, with *RG* 14.1 mentioning Gaius and Lucius as the possible exception. Even if the traditionally perceived tripartite structure of the inscription should be dismissed as too rigid, it is still necessary to explain why specific things are mentioned and in what context.⁵⁸

It is time to return to Heuss and the misplaced chapter 28, time to put it into context. Reading the section *Res Gestae* proper (*RG* 25-33), an alternative possibility appears, one of universal peace and the return to normality after civil war. *RG* 25 concerns the justification of the war against Sextus Pompeius and Actium. Chapter 26 is about the expansion of the Roman Empire without waging an unjust war. The information is specifically about the war in the Alps, but the implications are general for all Augustus' wars. The result, or one of them, is the victory over Egypt (*RG* 27) and the death of Cleopatra and Antonius. Therefore, the context of the inscription only allows one conclusion, namely that Octavian's participation in the civil wars (*RG* 34) was justified: the civil war began with Antonius helping Cleopatra. Chapter 29 is concerned with the regaining of the lost standards and the claiming of victory over the Parthians. *RG* 30 mentions what happened when Augustus was *princeps*. The implicit message is clear: these victories would not have been possible without his person. The chapters 31 to 33 are about the *Imperium Romanum* as the centre of the *oikoumene*. This is truly a list of the positive consequences of the termination of the civil wars with the Roman Empire assuming its rightful place in the world. Once his ending of the civil wars had been celebrated as the establishment of universal peace, Augustus then moved on to an explicit programme of pacification, inaugurated in 27 BC. Again we have a blurring of civil and foreign war.⁵⁹

In *RG* 28 the context of the colonies must briefly be explained. The major programmes of colony foundation took place not only immediately after Actium, but also in 14 BC (*RG* 16.1). Some of them were founded to settle the veterans recruited for the Actium war, but this was later followed up with new military service regulations on his return in 13 BC.⁶⁰ By these means he sought finally to banish the spectre of the army in politics by recruiting soldiers on the basis that on discharge they would be given not land, but cash to set themselves up on land they would purchase themselves. It was most likely no accident that these regulations were

⁵⁸ Dr Alison Cooley kindly brought my attention to the possibility that the traditional tripartite structure might be too rigid. But even so, it remains a useful starting point for understanding context.

⁵⁹ See Rich 2003 on the pacification after 27 BC.

⁶⁰ Cass. Dio 54.25; Brunt 1971, 332ff.

promulgated at the same time as the decision was taken to found the Altar of *Pax Augusta*. So the second wave of colonies and the ensuing military regulations completed outstanding civil war business.

Chapter 28 thus becomes part of the ending of the civil wars: when wars are won and peace secured, the legionaries are sent to colonies. This is a symbol of peace and the return to normality. Heuss is clearly wrong; the chapter is not misplaced. Of course the *Res Gestae* is about conquering the world, but there is more to it. That both the introduction and the conclusion are so blatantly referring to the civil war is a surprise. Instead of criticising Augustus for omitting the negative sides of his reign, scholars ought to be positively surprised that he did not do so, at least not entirely. The *Res Gestae* is after all not history writing, and ought not to be approached as such. It is a monumental inscription and its main focus is Augustus and what he did for the *Res Publica*, as told by himself.

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