

### Sulla's Brutality

Source: Livy *Periochae* 88-89. Translated by Jona Lendering. From Lendering's Livius.org (<http://www.livius.org/li-ln/livy/periochae/periochae00.html>). Appian 1.95-96, 98-99. Translated by Horace White. In *Appian's Roman history: in four volumes*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard U. Press, 1913.

#### Livy: *Periochae* 88-89

*Livy describes Sulla's war against the pro-Cinna forces in Italy and Rome in 82 BCE, and its aftermath. (The source here, the Periochae, is a summary of Livy made centuries later; these chapters of Livy are lost.)*

Sulla drove Carbo out of Italy,<sup>1</sup> having defeated his army at Clusium, Faventia, and Fidentia, and fought, with the Samnites (the only Italian nation that had not laid down its weapons yet) near the city of Rome at the Porta Collina, and having restored the state, soiled his beautiful victory with a greater cruelty than anyone had ever displayed.

In the Villa publica, he killed 8,000 people who had already surrendered, set up a proscription list, filled the city and all of Italy with slaughter, ordered the murder of all unarmed Praenestines, and killed Marius, a man of senatorial rank, after having broken his legs and arms, cutting off his ears and pulling out his eyes.

When C. Marius,<sup>2</sup> still besieged at Praeneste by Lucretius Ofella of the Sullan faction, wanted to escape through a tunnel that turned out to be blocked by the army, he choose death. That means that when he found out that there was no escape from the tunnel, he and Telesinus, his companion in flight, ran into each other's drawn swords; Marius killed the other, was wounded himself, and killed by his slave.

M. Brutus, sent in a fisherman's ship by Cn. Papirius Carbo from Cossyra, where they had put in, to Lilybaeum, to see if Pompey was already there, was surrounded by ships sent by Pompey; he pointed his sword against himself and bracing it on a thwart of the ship, fell upon it with all his weight.<sup>3</sup>

Cn. Pompey, sent to Sicily by the Senate with special powers, killed Cn. [Papirius] Carbo, who met his death crying like a woman.

Sulla was made dictator, and had twenty-four fasces carried before him, something that no one had ever done before. With new laws, he strengthened the republic, diminished the powers of the tribunes of the plebs by taking away from them the right to introduce legislation, expanded the number of priests and augurs to fifteen, enrolled members of the equestrian order into the Senate, blocked the children of those who were proscribed from obtaining office, sold their possessions, and was the first to seize the profits. The proceeds were 350,000,000 sesterces.

He had Q. Lucretius Ofella<sup>4</sup> murdered at the Forum because he had run for consul against his wishes, convened a meeting and explained to the angry Roman people that he had ordered the assassination.

In Africa, Cn. Pompey defeated and killed the exiled Cn. Domitius<sup>5</sup> and king Hiarta of Numidia (who were stirring up war), and at the age of 24 celebrated his African triumph, even though he was still a Roman knight—an honor without precedent.

When C. Norbanus, an exiled former consul, was arrested in the city of Rhodes, he committed suicide.

Another exiled man, Mutilus, secretly, with his head covered, arrived at the rear entrance of his wife Bastia's residence, but was not allowed to enter because he had been proscribed. Consequently, he stabbed himself and sprayed the doorway of his wife with his blood.

Sulla recaptured Nola in Samnium. He settled forty-seven legions in the conquered country and divided it between them. He besieged Volaterrae, a town still in resistance, and accepted its surrender.

Finally, Mitylene in Asia, the only city still in arms after the defeat of Mithridates, was captured and destroyed.

#### Appian: 1.95-96, 98-99

*Appian is describing Sulla's actions after defeating the rebel government of Carbo, the successor to Cinna.*

... And now, after thus crushing Italy by war, fire, and murder, Sulla's generals visited the several cities and established garrisons at the suspected places. Pompey was dispatched to Africa against Carbo and to Sicily against Carbo's friends who had taken refuge there. Sulla himself called the Roman people together in an assembly and made them a speech, vaunting his own exploits and making other menacing statements in order to inspire terror. He finished by saying that he would bring about a change which would be beneficial to the people if they would obey him, but of his enemies he would spare none, but would visit them with the utmost severity. He would take vengeance by strong measures on the praetors, quaestors, military tribunes, and everybody else who had committed any hostile act after the day when the consul Scipio violated the

<sup>1</sup> Cn. Papirius Carbo was Cinna's chief successor; he was consul (for the third time) in 82.

<sup>2</sup> C. Marius the Younger, son of C. Marius, was illegally (because underage) consul beside Carbo in 82.

<sup>3</sup> M. Junius Brutus, praetor 88. This is *not* the father of Brutus, Caesar's assassin.

<sup>4</sup> Sulla's loyal supporter, victor over Marius the Younger at the siege of Praeneste.

<sup>5</sup> Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, Cinna's son-in-law.

agreement made with him.<sup>6</sup> After saying this he forthwith proscribed about forty senators and 1600 knights. He seems to have been the first to make a formal list<sup>7</sup> of those whom he punished, to offer prizes to assassins and rewards to informers, and to threaten with punishment those who should conceal the proscribed. Shortly afterward he added the names other senators to the proscription. Some of these, taken unawares, were killed wherever they were caught, in their houses, in the streets, or in the temples. Others were hurled through mid-air<sup>8</sup> and thrown at Sulla's feet. Others were dragged through the city and trampled on, none of the spectators daring to utter a word of remonstrance against these horrors. Banishment was inflicted upon some and confiscation upon others. Spies were searching everywhere for those who had fled from the city, and those whom they caught they killed.

There was much massacre, banishment, and confiscation also among those Italians who had obeyed Carbo, or Marius, or Norbanus,<sup>9</sup> or their lieutenants. Severe judgments of the courts were rendered against them throughout all Italy on various charges—for exercising military command, for serving in the army, for contributing money, for rendering other service, or even giving counsel against Sulla. Hospitality, private friendship, the borrowing or lending of money, were alike accounted crimes. Now and then one would be arrested for doing a kindness to a suspect, or merely for being his companion on a journey. These accusations abounded mostly against the rich. When charges against individuals failed Sulla took vengeance on whole communities. He punished some of them by demolishing their citadels, or destroying their walls, or by imposing fines and crushing them by heavy contributions. Among most of them he placed colonies of his troops in order to hold Italy under garrisons, sequestering their lands and houses and dividing them among his soldiers, whom he thus made true to him even after his death. As they could not be secure in their own holdings unless all Sulla's system were on a firm foundation, they were his stoutest champions even after he died.

Thus Sulla became king, or tyrant, *de facto*, not elected, but holding power by force and violence.<sup>10</sup> As, however, he needed the pretence of being elected this too was managed in this way. The kings of the Romans in the olden time were chosen for their bravery, and whenever one of them died the senators held the royal power in succession for five days each, until the

people should decide who should be the new king. This five-day ruler was called the *Interrex*, which means king for the time being. The retiring consuls always presided over the election of their successors in office, and if there chanced to be no consul at such a time an *Interrex* was appointed for the purpose of holding the consular comitia. Sulla took advantage of this custom. There were no consuls at this time, Carbo having lost his life in Sicily and Marius in Praeneste. So Sulla went out of the city for a time and ordered the Senate to choose an *Interrex*.

They chose Valerius Flaccus, expecting that he would soon hold the consular comitia. But Sulla wrote ordering Flaccus to represent to the people his own strong opinion that it was to the immediate interest of the city to revive the dictatorship, an office which had now been in abeyance 400 years.<sup>11</sup> He told them not to appoint the dictator for a fixed period, but until such time as he should firmly re-establish the city and Italy and the government generally, shattered as it was by factions and wars. That this proposal referred to himself was not at all doubtful, and Sulla made no concealment of it, declaring openly at the conclusion of the letter that, in his judgment, he could be most serviceable to the city in that capacity.

Such was Sulla's message. The Romans did not like it, but they had no more opportunities for elections according to law, and they considered that this matter was not altogether in their own power. So, in the general deadlock, they welcomed this pretence of an election as an image and semblance of freedom, and chose Sulla as their absolute master for as long a time as he pleased. There had been autocratic rule of the dictators before, but it was limited to short periods. But under Sulla it first became unlimited and so an absolute tyranny. All the same they added, for propriety's sake, that they chose him dictator for the enactment of such laws as he himself might deem best and for the regulation of the commonwealth. Thus the Romans, after having government by kings for above sixty Olympiads, and a democracy, under consuls chosen yearly, for 100 Olympiads, resorted to kingly government again. This was in the 175th Olympiad, according to the Greek calendar, but there were no Olympic games then except races in the stadium, since Sulla had carried away the athletes and all the sights and shows to Rome to celebrate his victories in the Mithridatic and Italian wars, under the pretext that the masses needed a breathing-spell and recreation after their toils.

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<sup>6</sup> L. Cornelius Scipio Asiagenus, consul 83, was captured by Sulla and agreed to support him; on being freed, Scipio immediately renounced Sulla.

<sup>7</sup> Latin *proscribere*, whence "proscription."

<sup>8</sup> Probably from windows or roofs; but the Greek may merely mean "carried" as opposed to "dragged."

<sup>9</sup> C. Norbanus, Scipio's colleague in the consulship.

<sup>10</sup> Sulla did not call himself king; Appian is drawing attention to Sulla's autocracy as dictator.

<sup>11</sup> Some slip of text or memory is probable; 120 years is correct.