

How true do you consider Augustus, claim that in 28-27 BC he transferred the republic from his power to the dominion of the senate and people?

After the battle of Actium at 31 BC, Augustus was put into a dilemma. Originally, the Second Triumvirate had the mission to restore the republic but now after the death of Mark Antony only one man was left in charge, a position in disagreement with the Roman tradition. The hatred of kings was painfully fresh in all minds, ever since Caesar's assassination. Thus, Augustus had to find a way to prevent any future civil wars but without usurping the leadership.

In 28 BC he symbolically retired, knowing that the senate and people of Rome would beg for his return, and all this with the aim to differentiate him from the previous tyrants. In Suetonius 28 we read that Augustus was afraid that dividing the power would jeopardize the national security. Truly, with 500 000 soldiers Rome had too many ambitious generals with too little wars to fight and each of them could become the next Sulla or Marius. Hence is the decision of Augustus to reduce the troops to 300,000 (Res Gestae 3) and therefore get rid of people with ambiguous loyalty.

The First Settlement from 27 BC gave Augustus more powers than he was supposed to hold – proconsular power in an extended province and 10 years of consulship. This did not mean that he had the power or responsibility to do everything, but that he must do everything to save the state. Moreover, the word 'respublica' continued to be used as proven by public inscriptions praising the 'restoration'. Thus, Augustus would keep an eye on things, to exercise what Romans called a tutela or cura, a role of guardian or protector.

Having one man with as much power as Augustus was in controversy with foundation of democracy. However, Rome was not a democracy of an Athenian type where everyone has an equal voice. Money and heritage were leading factors when running for elections and in this sense Augustus might have only transformed the oligarchy into autocracy. Actually, the construction of a new voting hall on Campus Martius presents evidence that Augustus restored the most important civil right of all – the right to vote. In order to gain magistracy the candidates had to win the popular masses by giving them money, entertainment or bread and the poor benefited from this.

Finally, 34 Res Gestae proves that Augustus restored the republic as he had no more official power than his colleagues but it was his 'auctocratis' that made him influential. Indeed, his power had roots in the love of the popular masses towards their champion – he was not only the heir of Caesar but also the generous saviour. Thus, creating the right image helped immensely Augustus to build up strong influence over the public affairs.

On the other hand, the same image might have been the disguise Augustus used to create a new regime, a non-republic. The actions of 28-27 BC happened four years after the battle of Actium, a time used by Caesar's heir to maintain a high public profile and celebrate his victories. Thus, senate's decision to call him back was perfectly predictable.

And it is true that Augustus did not hold all the responsibilities, but he had just enough to make himself almighty. The consular and subsequently the tribunician powers had the role to provide him with control within the city of Rome and the patronage over the

legions gave him legal rights to govern the Empire. As seen in *Res Gestae* the soldiers had to swear an oath of allegiance not to Rome, as the tradition was, but to Augustus as he had 'imperium'. In this way Caesar's heir found a way to be a king outside the boundaries of the republican city of Rome. And because the First Settlement left a gap in this regime as seen from Marcus Primus' treachery, Augustus chose to add the word 'maius' towards his responsibilities and finally outwash the republican tradition.

It is interesting to note Tacitus' references to 'dominatio' and the existence of 'domus regnatricis' (royal family), two important features of the monarchy. Maybe it is true that when Augustus inherited Caesar it looked like a dynasty was created but Octavian's true powers came from another source. He might have returned the republic to the senate but it was his senate. Few years after Actium, Augustus made clearance in the senatorial house and got rid of few enemies. The vacancy were filled with people loyal to him and gradually the senate started to look like 'Augustus' friends club'. Moreover, after receiving 'maius proconsulare' he took advantage to personally choose legates to govern his provinces. Given also the positions of Pontifex Maximus, censor and tribune Augustus had almost the full power to decide the magistrates around him. Thus the whole republican system seems to be manipulated by the influence of one single man, a thing equal to a monarchical regime.

In conclusion, after 28-27 BC a long period of gradual change was started. It is clear that the republic as it existed before the civil wars was not restored. But Augustus made not such promise. His role was to extinguish the fire of civil wars, protect Rome against tyrants and bring peace and prosperity to the city. In this sense, he restored the republic but in a new 'Augustan' version.