“Die funeris militis velut praesidio stetere, multum inridentibus qui ipsi viderant quique a parentibus acceperant diem illum crudi adhuc servitii et libertatis inprospere repetitae, cum occisus dictator Caesar aliiis pessimum aliis pulcher-rimum facinus videretur: nunc senem principem, longa potentia, provis etiam heredum in rem publicam opibus, auxilio scilicet militari tuendum ut sepulta eis quiseta foret.”

It is the purpose of this note to offer an alternative to the traditional interpretation of “heredum opibus” as found eg. in Furneaux and Grant. Furneaux comments ‘‘resources against the commonwealth’. The allusion here is to the will lately read.” Grant offers this translation: “his heirs too have been allocated resources for the suppression of the old order.”

However, when considered within the context of the passage as a whole, such interpretations appear weak. Clearly, the circumstances of 44 B.C. and A.D. 14 are being contrasted by the “inridentes” who are able, in one way or another, to make the comparison. In order to understand what Tacitus means to convey by his highly selective summary of the situation in A.D. 14, one must first establish what is said or implied in the equally selective sketch of circumstances in 44 B.C.

The first point Tacitus makes is that people were not yet accustomed to tyrannical rule—“diem illum crudi adhuc servitii”. A reason for this was that Caesar had not held supreme power for long. Arising from this is the second point that an attempt was made to regain freedom but the attempt was unsuccessful—“libertatis inprospere repetitae”. That such an attempt was made due to many factors, one of which was that Caesar had no successor clearly marked out to take over his position, so that it seemed that the removal of the dictator alone would be sufficient—“cum occisus dictator Caesar”.

Turning now to A.D. 14, Tacitus notes that Augustus had been exercising supreme power for a very long time—“senem principem, longa potentia”, and this contrasts with the first point made about Caesar—“crudi adhuc servitii”. In view of this one would expect to find in “provis etiam heredum in rem publicam opibus” something to form a contrast with “libertatis inprospere repetitae”. It is at this point that the weakness of the traditional interpretation becomes clear, for Caesar too had provided his heir with material resources. Can the words “heredum opibus” bear any other meaning?

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2. I wish to express my thanks to Prof. M. M. Henderson and Dr. P. Murgatroyd for reading a draft of this note and offering much helpful criticism. They are in no way responsible for such errors as may remain in the text.
It is quite possible that "heredum" is a genitive of definition such as Tacitus uses freely\(^4\) and that "heredum opibus" might mean "resources consisting of heirs".\(^5\) On this interpretation there is a contrast with the implication made in the second point about Caesar i.e. unlike Caesar, Augustus did have a successor clearly designated to inherit his position and furthermore Tiberius had two possible successors, Germanicus and Drusus. The dynasty was established and there was obviously no chance of "libertas" being restored after Augustus' death.\(^6\)

Thus Caesar and Augustus are being compared by the "inridentes" in two respects; a) the duration of their supreme power and b) the steps they had taken to secure the continuation of that power after their deaths. Since on both counts Augustus is clearly Caesar's superior, the sneer "auxilio siliciet militari tuendum ut sepultura eius quieta forsi" has additional force and point.

Finally, it remains to consider the meaning of "in rem publicam". Goodyear\(^7\) reviews the evidence presented by J. Béanger\(^8\) in support of the interpretation "for the state". After pointing out that Béanger's evidence in part supports the traditional interpretation "against the state", he concludes: "I still prefer the traditional interpretation, above all because it gives a particularly nasty twist to the idea of imperial 'providentia' expressed in 'provisio', and by so doing accords very well with the general tone of these early chapters."

The interpretation of "heredum opibus" proposed in this note does not help to clarify the situation, except in that Goodyear's "nasty twist" is given to "provisio" whichever way one cares to interpret "in rem publicam". "Provisio etiam heredum in rem publicam opibus" may mean either "he provided many heirs for purposes of state i.e. to uphold the constitution" or "he provided many heirs against the state": either way, the phrase connotes the suppression of "libertas", an idea already introduced in connection with Caesar.

To sum up: the approach to "heredum opibus" proposed here accords with Tacitean usage and adds greatly to the force of a passage which is clearly intended to make a considerable impact on the reader since it introduces the largely unfavourable discussion of Augustus which follows.

University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

LOUIS DU TOIT

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4. Cf. Tac. Ann. I.17.3 and 76.1. For such a genitive used with "opes", see Tac. Ann. II.63 and XI.8, and also Sall. Hist. IV.69.16 "scio equidem tibi magnum opes virorum, armorum et auri esse."
5. There does exist, of course, the accessory idea that the heirs have power and wealth.
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