

Information on Fulvia

Biographical Briefing

Fulvia (pronounced FULL-vee-ah) was the wife of Mark Antony, who was her third husband. When assassins murdered the dictator Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.E., the two men closest to him began a struggle for control of Rome and its territories. One of the men was Caesar's adopted son, Octavian. The other man was Caesar's most loyal supporter, Mark Antony. In 43 B.C.E.—with her husband away in Egypt—Fulvia began to acquire political power on his behalf in Rome. The following year, Octavian and Mark Antony agreed to share power. Octavian took control of Rome and all of Italy. Mark Antony would control Rome's territory in the east, including Egypt, from where he ruled. However, Fulvia was not satisfied with this arrangement. She was ambitious and ruthless—and famous for her high style of living. She spent money freely, gave wild and expensive parties, and was intent on living a rich life as the wife of a powerful Roman statesman.

Fulvia had plans to expand her husband's rule—as well as her own power and influence—to include Octavian's territories. Without Mark Antony's approval, she joined forces with his brother Lucius (pronounced LOO-shuss) to lead a rebellion of Italian cities against Octavian's rule. The revolt became a war in 41 B.C.E. Octavian's forces easily defeated Fulvia and Lucius, and the two fled to Greece. When Mark Antony learned what had happened, he traveled to Greece and condemned their actions. Fulvia then grew very ill and retired to a Greek coastal city, where she died in 40 B.C.E. Upon her death, Octavian and Mark Antony reached a peace agreement that lasted until a civil war erupted in 31 B.C.E.



- **Why did Fulvia's marriage to Marc Antony make her one of Rome's most politically powerful women?**
- **What actions did Fulvia take to expand her husband's political powers?**
- **What happened to Fulvia after she and Lucius led a rebellion against Octavian's military forces?**

Position: Fulvia believed that military conquests helped Rome by improving the standard of living of Roman citizens, both rich and poor.

Main Points on Roman Expansion

The Roman government used the military conquests of new provinces to help the poor. The government collected taxes, or *tribute*, from the conquered people in these new provinces. This meant that Roman citizens no longer had to pay direct taxes. In addition, these funds from the provinces helped pay for free food and entertainment for the poor people of Rome.

This military expansion also greatly improved the lives of Rome's upper classes. Through both legal and illegal business practices, Rome's wealthy citizens became even wealthier. Rich citizens could now afford to own several houses. They built many of them in the classic Greek style, with clay-tile roofs and airy courtyards. Home owners furnished these homes with tables made from African cypress trees and fine linens from Asia. Many homes contained furniture, paintings, and sculptures stolen from the homes of the conquered Greeks.

Expansion also made exciting new foods available to those who could afford to pay for them. Food from Italy was no longer considered fashionable. Instead, the wealthy served such foods as caviar and anchovies from the Black Sea for appetizers. For a main course, instead of a standard roast, guests could feast on peacocks, mackerels, eels, prawns, geese, ostriches, and partridges from Spain, Gaul, Asia, and Asia Minor. For beverages, Rome's upper class was no longer satisfied drinking Italian wines. Instead, a good host served the much higher quality wines from Greece. Dinner parties at the homes of Rome's wealthiest citizens often involved enormous amounts of food. Many guests would stuff themselves and then retire to the *vomitorium*, where slaves would tickle the back of their throats with special wooden sticks and feathers until they vomited. (They considered this act a compliment to the host!) Once they were done, they were ready to resume eating.



- In what ways did military conquests help the poor people of Rome?
- How did expansion improve the lives of Rome's upper classes?
- What new foods were available to the wealthy as a result of Rome's military expansion?