

M. Cocceius Nerva and the Flavians^{*}

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SUMMARY: Very little information survives about the career of M. Cocceius Nerva before he became Roman Emperor in A.D. 96. His importance by the end of Nero's reign is demonstrated by the rewards bestowed on him in 65 after the suppression of the Pisonian conspiracy; thereafter he became ordinary consul with Vespasian in 71 and with Domitian in 90. In this paper the attempt is made to explain by plausible hypothesis why Nerva was so highly regarded by both Vespasian and Domitian, and also how and why he succeeded Domitian in 96.

ALTHOUGH THE FUTURE EMPEROR NERVA was of distinguished background, with a consular ancestor during the triumviral period and a grandfather and father who were both distinguished jurists,¹ our information about him before his accession in A.D. 96 is decidedly sparse. There is one inscription, one mention of him in the *Annals* of Tacitus, two short epigrams addressed to him by Martial, and entries in the *Fasti* indicating that he was *consul ordinarius* (member of the first pair of consuls in any year, usually as colleague to the Emperor) first in 71 and then again in 90.² I have discussed his involvement in the suppression of the Pisonian conspiracy elsewhere (Murison forthcom-

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¹ All of these individuals here mentioned were, like the emperor, named M. Cocceius Nerva; for details see *PIR*² C 1224, 1225, and 1226.

² *CIL* 11.5743 (= *ILS* 273; cf. Smallwood no. 90), commemorating Nerva's services as patron to the people of Sentinum: the date is uncertain, though clearly after 65, and possibly even 71 or later (for discussion see Garzetti 22–24; unfortunately, however, this inscription is of little assistance in explaining anything about Nerva); Tac. *Ann.* 15.72.1–2, on rewards paid by Nero to certain “loyalists,” Nerva among them, after the suppression of the Pisonian conspiracy in 65; Martial 8.70 and 9.26, on Nero's relations with Nerva; for the consulships see McCrum-Woodhead pp. 4, 9.

ing); here it is the two ordinary consulships and the questions they raise for the period from the fall of Nero to the latter part of the principate of Domitian which are under consideration.

For the year 71 the consular *Fasti* reveal that, in this first year when Vespasian was actually in Rome on 1st January and most of the tumult arising from the troubles of 68–70 had died down, the ordinary consuls were the Emperor Vespasian and M. Cocceius Nerva—this being the only time during his principate when Vespasian as consul did not share the office with his elder son Titus. We must ask—why Nerva?

In 90, after the suppression of the revolt of L. Antonius Saturninus in Upper Germany³ at a time when Domitian had many supporters to honour and reward for their loyalty to himself and the regime (in fact, there were 13 consuls that year), the ordinary consuls were the Emperor Domitian and M. Cocceius Nerva. Once again we must ask—why Nerva?

Finally, we are told by Dio that in 96, when the ultimately successful conspiracy to remove Domitian was being planned, Nerva was persuaded to “accept the leadership of the state” (67.15.5). Yet again we must ask—why Nerva?

THE CONSULSHIPS OF 71 AND 90

By way of background, we should note that both Nerva and Vespasian had been *amici* (friends) of Nero. Nerva seems to have been particularly close, given the rewards that Nero bestowed him on after the Pisonian episode was over (see above, n. 2) and the respect that, according to Martial (8.70.7–8; 9.26, esp. lines 9–10), Nero accorded his literary taste: Nero hailed Nerva as the “Tibullus of our time” and asked him to comment on his own poetic endeavours.⁴ But Vespasian too seems to have worked his way into a degree of closeness to Nero: he became part of Nero’s entourage in Greece during the “grand tour” of that province,⁵ and it was from Greece during the winter of 66/67 that he was sent by Nero to the East with three legions to assume the

³ On the revolt of Saturninus in 89 see Ritterling 203–42, Walser 497–507, Syme 1978: 12–21, Murison 1985: 31–49, Strobel 203–20, Jones 1992: 144–49.

⁴ Mart. 9.26.9–10: *ipse tuas* (sc. *Nervae*) *etiam veritus Nero dicitur aures, / lascivum iuvenis cum tibi lusit opus*.

⁵ He is said to have incurred Nero’s disfavour by falling asleep (or leaving) during Nero’s public performances: see Suet. *Vesp.* 4.4, Dio 66.11.2; cf. 63 10.1^a. These stories may well have been exaggerated later to distance Vespasian from Nero, as Jones points out (2000: on Suet. *Vesp.* 4.4; note also on 4.4 Jones’ repeated comments on Vespasian’s generally sycophantic attitude to Nero.)

command in the Jewish war.⁶ It seems more than likely that Nerva was part of Nero's entourage as well: Nero was *very* anxious about his performances in Greece (cf. Suet. *Ner.* 23.3–24.1) and if Nerva was his poetic coach and cheerleader (which is what I take Martial 9.26 to imply), Nero would have relied on his comforting presence in Greece. Following this assumption, I draw the further conclusion that Nerva and Vespasian, although very different in character (Nerva the quiet counsellor and aesthete and Vespasian the bluff, no-nonsense man of action), came to respect each other and actually became friendly: this will serve to explain the sequel without straining credibility.

This brings us to the matter of the ordinary consulship of 71, which can be explained only by extending the speculation outlined above. However, none of this goes beyond what may be considered reasonable, and it will serve in turn to explain the second ordinary consulship, in 90, quite easily.

Suetonius, in what might be termed his *National Enquirer* mode, suggests that in his youth, because of extreme poverty, Domitian prostituted himself homosexually (*Dom.* 1.1), adding *nec defuerunt qui affirmarent corruptum Domitianum et a Nerva, successore mox suo* ("there were even people who claimed that Domitian had been debauched by Nerva, who subsequently became his successor").⁷ What Suetonius' "people" is referring to, I suggest, is a relationship that came about at Vespasian's request: I conjecture that when he was leaving Greece to go to the East Vespasian asked Nerva to "keep an eye on the lad" (i.e., Domitian),⁸ and I assume that Nerva did so when he got back to Rome with Nero at the end of 67.⁹ The closeness which developed between Domitian and "Uncle" Nerva—most of us have had "Uncles" and "Aunts" to whom we were not at all related—and the fact that Nerva was almost sixteen

⁶ Jos. *BJ* 3.6–8, 65, 69; Suet. *Vesp.* 4.4–6 with Jones' comments; Dio 63.22.1^a; see also Levick 29–31.

⁷ It is generally assumed that when Vespasian went to Syria/Judaea in 66/67 he left his younger son Domitian, then fifteen-plus years old, in the care of his elder brother, the Urban Prefect T. Flavius Sabinus. That would certainly be the entirely proper and conventional thing to do, and it may be "formally" true. However, relations between Vespasian and his brother were not particularly good. There is a story (told by both Tacitus and Suetonius: Tac. *Hist.* 3.65.1; Suet. *Vesp.* 4.3) that, when Vespasian came back from his governorship in Africa (the date is not quite certain, but Levick plausibly suggests "c. 62–3" for the office), he was so hard up that he went to his brother for a free loan, but Flavius Sabinus refused and forced him to mortgage his house and lands to cover the loan. For the office see Levick xx, 24; see also Bosworth 350.

⁸ His elder brother Titus was going from Italy to Judaea as legate of the legion XV Apollinaris (Suet. *Vesp.* 4.6; Jos. *BJ* 3.8).

⁹ For the date see Bradley 70–72.

(or twenty-one) years older than Domitian (born in October 51¹⁰) will have given rise to the Suetonian slander. However, it is hard to imagine that the blunt Vespasian, though friendly with Nerva, would have appreciated hearing of an “*erastês-erômenos*” (“lover-beloved”) situation involving his younger son.¹¹ Rather, Suetonius’ story should be seen as part of the unbridled post-mortem attacks on Domitian in general and, especially, on matters involving sexuality and masculinity.¹²

Thus the ordinary consulship in 71 came about for two reasons. First, Nerva and Vespasian were politically close: Nerva seems to have been a prominent member of the “loyalist group” in the Senate—men who generally supported the *status quo*—and there is no difficulty in seeing the ambitious Vespasian as part of this group. Also, we should note that there is no sign of any disloyalty on Vespasian’s part towards Nero during that emperor’s lifetime; and it is clear from Tacitus that it was not until *after* Nero’s death that Vespasian and C. Licinius Mucianus, governor of Syria, resolved their differences and began to plot the Flavian seizure of power.¹³ Indeed, Nerva may even have worked quietly on Vespasian’s behalf in the latter part of 69.¹⁴ The second reason for the consulship would be that Vespasian was grateful to Nerva for keeping Domitian out of harm’s way in 68–69 up to the time in December of 69 when Flavius Sabinus, as his “formal” guardian, insisted on Domitian joining him and his children in the potential death-trap on the Capitol (Tac. *Hist.* 3.69.4; cf. Suet. *Dom.* 1.2).

It is, perhaps, now easy to see why Domitian chose Nerva as his consular colleague in 90: they had been close for over 20 years and, with his demonstrated long-time support for stability and the *status quo* (since at least 65) and for the Flavian version of these things in particular, Nerva was the ideal person to show that the crisis of 89 was over.¹⁵

¹⁰ Nerva was born on 30 November, but the year is uncertain: Dio 68.3.4 suggests 30, while the *Epit. de Caes.* 12.11 implies 35; for modern comment see Holzapfel 82–86 and Syme 1958: 653 n. 5.

¹¹ See further MacMullen, though he accepts the Suetonian gibe as true (495 and n. 45).

¹² Vinson’s paper is especially valuable in this context.

¹³ *Hist.* 2.5.2: *invidia discordes, exitu demum Neronis positis odiis in medium consuluerunt* (“divided by jealousy, only after Nero’s death did they lay aside their hatreds and make common plans”).

¹⁴ Again, this is mere possibility; but in this context it is worth recalling a passage from Chilver (34): “The penetration of Vespasian’s agents into high circles is almost more extraordinary than that of Galba’s; the ubiquity of his party was embarrassing when it came to paying off his debts.”

¹⁵ Recently Berriman and Todd have implied (314) that Domitian gave Nerva the ordinary consulship in 90 for urban services in 89, by remarking that “one might ask who

DOMITIAN'S DEATH AND NERVA'S ACCESSION

This brings us to the vexed question of Domitian's death and the accession of Nerva. No one today disputes that Nerva was a Domitianic loyalist: even Jones, in his monograph on Domitian, admits this (in spite of his general hostility to Nerva) in his discussion of the conspiracy against Domitian: "Once Emperor, Nerva maintained his friendship with the pro-Domitianic faction in the Senate—and was notorious for it."¹⁶ Accordingly, Nerva's alleged involvement in the plot to murder Domitian (Dio 67.15.5) requires examination.

Jones' conclusion about the conspiracy is that Domitian's *amici* at Rome "may have been consulted" and finally decided that Domitian had to be got rid of; and that then one of them (Jones suggests someone such as the leading general A. Bucius Lappius Maximus) persuaded the actual conspirators (members of Domitian's household) to "urge the nomination of someone uncontroversial ... A known Flavian supporter, old, sick and childless, Nerva was the perfect choice,"¹⁷ Jones' idea here being that Nerva would only be a stop-gap. By contrast, Syme sees Nerva as "likely to be elusive" in any conspiracy against Domitian; and he had earlier made the eminently reasonable point that "the facts about a conspiracy are not always published or ascertainable."¹⁸ In reality, neither Suetonius nor Dio, our two main sources for Domitian's death, is prepared to vouch for the accuracy of his individual account. Suetonius says (*Dom.* 17.1), *de insidiarum caedisque genere haec fere divulgata sunt* ("concerning the nature of the conspiracy and of his death, this is more or less what came out"), and then gives an account of the actual murder and those who participated in it.¹⁹ But he does not mention Nerva.

minded the store for him at this crucial moment" (i.e., during the emperor's dash to Germany in that year). One might suggest C. Rutilius Gallicus, Urban Prefect at the time; for that was the Urban Prefect's job: see *Stat. Silv.* 1.4.91; cf. Syme 1984: 151 (= *Roman Papers* 5: 516) and Vidman 1982b: 293, 302.

¹⁶ Jones 1992: 183 and 195, with a reference to *Plin. Ep.* 4.22.7, the letter which tells the story about Nerva dining with a bunch of cronies including the well-known Domitianic informer A. Fabricius Veiento. Conversation turned to L. Valerius Catullus Messallinus, the blind and cruel informer allegedly used by Domitian to ensnare honest men; when those present reminisced about his villainy, Nerva said: "What do we think would have happened to him if he were alive today?" and Junius Mauricus, whom Pliny calls "that steadfast champion of honesty," replied, "He would be dining with us."

¹⁷ Jones 1992: 195: "urge" on whom? we may ask; did the Senate or the Praetorian Prefects take orders from a coterie of imperial household freedmen?

¹⁸ Syme 1983: 138, and 1958: 3 n. 2.

¹⁹ Although earlier (at 14.1) Suetonius had said: ... *tandem oppressus est insidiis amicorum libertorumque intimatorum simul et uxoris* ("... finally he was crushed by a con-

Dio, who has the most detailed account of Domitian's end (67.15–18), describes the actual murder in a fashion quite similar to, but much less gory than, what we have from Suetonius; and before that he supplies the names of the household staff involved in the conspiracy (again, his information is similar to, but not quite the same as, Suetonius'); and then mention is made of Domitia, Domitian's wife (cf. Suet. *Dom.* 14.1), and others (Dio 67.15.2): οὔτε ἡ Δομιτία ... οὔτε δὲ ὁ Νωρβανὸς ὁ ἑπαρχὸς οὐδ' ὁ συνάρχων Πετρώνιος Σεκοῦνδος ἠγνόησαν ("Neither Domitia ... nor Norbanus the Guard Prefect ... nor his colleague Petronius Secundus was unaware"), which scarcely suggests enthusiastic participation; moreover, we should note what follows: ὥς γε καὶ λέγονται ("this at any rate is the tradition"): Dio is telling us that this is hearsay.

It seems highly unlikely that either Domitia or the Guard Prefects were involved in Domitian's murder: Dio "needs" Domitia because, in his account, her finding of a Domitianic death-list with her name and the name of all the other conspirators on it, and her passing it on to these conspirators, led to the speeding-up of the plot. The problem with this is that Herodian, Dio's contemporary, has an exactly similar tale about events leading up to the murder of Commodus in 192 (1.17.1–7) and there is no way to tell which story, if either, is true. However, the undoubted fact (not a hypothesis) that almost 30 years after Domitian's death, Domitia, who owned a brickworks in the vicinity of Gabii, had some of its products stamped "From the Sulpician brickworks of Domitia, wife of Domitian, in the consulships of Paetinus and Apronianus" (*CIL* 15.548–58; the consular year is 123) argues strongly against her involvement. As for the Guard Prefects, who were quite new to the job since Domitian had cashiered a pair in 95 (Dio 67.14.4), Norbanus (*PIR*² N 162) was a firm Domitianic loyalist who, as governor of Raetia in 89, had helped with the suppression of the revolt of Saturninus (cf. Mart. 9.84), and T. Petronius Secundus, the other Guard Prefect (*PIR*² P 308), had been Prefect of Egypt a few years earlier (attested in 92 and 93). He is said by the *Epitome de Caesaribus* (12.8) to have been killed in the Praetorian riot of the following year, when Domitian's murderers were demanded for punishment. But it is at least arguable that Petronius perished in 97 resisting the soldiers' demands, that is, trying to protect Nerva from insult, and that he subsequently came to be "lumped in" with Domitian's assassins. On the other hand, Norbanus is not mentioned after 96; so it may be that Nerva immediately dismissed both

spiracy of his closest *amici* and freedmen and also of his wife"), this, seemingly, being the source of Jones' remark that Domitian's *amici* at Rome "may have been consulted" (1992: 195).

Prefects for failure to protect Domitian and that they were therefore believed to have “known” of the conspiracy, as Dio says.

Without Domitia and the Guard Prefects, then, when Dio speaks of “conspirators,” he means Domitian’s senior household staff—and *no one else*. However, Dio continues (67.15.4–6), they did not actually carry out the deed until they had confirmed a successor. They held discussions ἄλλοις τισί—“with some others” (others, that is, *before* they went to Nerva), which means, perhaps, two at least. But these individuals believed that their loyalty to Domitian was being tested and they would have nothing to do with the business; and so the conspirators went to Nerva, who is said to have accepted their offer because he believed that his life was in danger.²⁰

If Syme’s conclusion on the “conspiracy question” is correct (“A large measure therefore of fable as well as speculation and surmise ... Cocceius Nerva was likely to be elusive”²¹), how, exactly, did Nerva become emperor? The answer is simple: he *was* the Senate’s choice. When news spread of Domitian’s murder in his residence on the Palatine Hill on 18 September 96, members of the Senate, according to Suetonius (*Dom.* 23.1; cf. Dio 68.1.1), rushed to pack the Curia and shouted the harshest insults at the dead emperor. The *Fasti* from Ostia record Domitian’s death and then add: *Eodem die M. Cocceius N[erva] / imperator appellatu[s est]* (“On the same day M. Cocceius Nerva was named Emperor”).²² To this we can add a delicious story from the *Epitome de Caesaribus* (12.1–3), which says that soon after Nerva had assumed the imperial power, a rumour arose that Domitian was still alive and was going

²⁰ The motif of “Nerva in imminent danger from Domitian” does not apply to him alone: Pliny the Younger, that most docile of imperial servants, later claimed that he too would have been brought to trial *si Domitianus ... diutius vixisset* (“if Domitian had lived longer”: *Ep.* 7.27.14; cf. *Pan.* 90.5 and *Ep.* 3.11.3–4). Of course, allegations that Nerva had been banished to Tarentum in 94 are “plain fiction” (Syme 1958: 3; this notion comes from a very dubious source—Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 7.8 and 11); and we should note that the poems of Martial addressed to Nerva (and cited above, n. 2) date from c. 94. For Galba in similar circumstances in 68 see Suet. *Gal.* 9.1–2 and Chilver 32.

²¹ Syme 1983: 137–38, to which may be added Syme 1958: 3 n. 2, “Nor was this a man whom any conspirators could approach with confidence (given his past performance) until the deed was done.” It should be noted that Syme was no admirer of Nerva; cf. 1958: 2, “No need to add that Nerva stood as the sublime example of that mocking paradox in all human life which was borne in ever the more upon a man when he meditated on things ancient and things modern. Rumour, conjecture, and public esteem would have deserved anybody for the purple, anybody but the ruler whom Fortune was keeping in reserve behind the scenes.”

²² The text is from Vidman 1982a: 45.

to appear; however, reassured by Parthenius, Nerva quickly got over his panic.²³ We should note especially the appearance of Parthenius, Domitian's chamberlain (*a cubiculo*), who was the most senior figure in the conspiracy (Dio 67.15.1; cf. Suet. *Dom.* 16.2). He knew that Domitian was dead: but this rumour, if the story has any truth to it, must have happened very soon after Domitian's murder.

The picture, therefore, of events after Domitian's death is as follows: the Senate met; Nerva was not present (he had no desire to run about and shout and dance); but Nerva was nominated to succeed Domitian (he was, after all, "safe" and commanded the respect of a substantial part of the Senate; nor was he likely to cause any really drastic changes; indeed, he was, according to Pliny the Younger, interested in things done for the public good²⁴); so he was *then* summoned to the Curia; he accepted the nomination and was on his way to be greeted as Princeps when the ghastly rumour arose ...²⁵ Furthermore, we should note the continuation of the account in the *Epitome*: *qui cum in curiam a senatu gratanter exceptus esset* ... (12.3 "When Nerva was received with joy into the House by the Senate ..."). Except for the rumour about Domitian still being alive, we need have no real difficulty with this account: the Senate knew from the accession of Claudius in 41 (and possibly from the accession of Domitian in 81 as well) that any hesitation—even for a few hours—might result in someone going to the Praetorian Camp and receiving an acclamation from the Guard.

Finally, there is another hypothesis about the circumstances of Nerva's accession which must be mentioned: in a paper published in 1987 Christopher Ehrhardt accepts everything in Dio as literally true;²⁶ and, after remarking on, and wondering at, Nerva's ordinary consulships in 71 and 90, he states,

²³ *Epit. de Caes.* 12.1–2: *Cocceius Nerva ... cum imperium suscepisset, mox rumore orto vivere atque affore Domitianum, perinde trepidavit ut, colore mutato, verbis amissis, vix consisteret. Sed a Parthenio confirmatus, recepta fiducia, ad sollemne delenimentum conversus est.*

²⁴ *Ep.* 7.33.9: ... *Nerva (nam privatus quoque attendebat his quae recte in publico fierent).*

²⁵ The source of this story, almost certainly, was the "consular biographer" Marius Maximus, as Syme always called him, whose now-vanished *Lives* of the twelve emperors from Nerva to Elagabalus were the main source of the early part of the *Historia Augusta*. On this see A. R. Birley's splendid study (1997).

²⁶ Ehrhardt 18–20. There are, however, some slight inconsistencies in his argument: Nerva was not a nominee of the Senate but was imposed by the Praetorian Prefects (19); however, "the conspirators ... came from the heart of the imperial household" (19); and emissaries came to Nerva from Domitia and Parthenius to offer him the still-occupied throne (20).

on the subject of Nerva's apparent lack of doubts about the viability of the conspiracy against Domitian in 96, "The simple conclusion is, that he knew; that he controlled an intelligence service which kept him informed on plots and conspiracies, and that without his approval none would succeed. He survived and amassed honours because he was indispensable; and he had no enemies because none dared offend him" (20). It is not clear whether Ehrhardt's "intelligence chief" is modelled on Yuri Andropov²⁷ or J. Edgar Hoover. However, we hear nothing of intelligence services such as this in imperial Rome²⁸—only of "independent" informers and, of course, of the Praetorian Prefects as guardians of the imperial person—Seianus under Tiberius, Tigillinus under Nero, and, particularly, Titus under Vespasian. That was the nearest thing the Romans had to a Secret Intelligence Service; but there is no reason to believe that Nerva was either a James Bond "M" figure, or, for that matter, a sort of Gestapo Chief. However, Ehrhardt's theory about Nerva accepting the invitation to head a conspiracy that he knew all about already has had its effects on recent historiography: Brian Jones, in his recent commentary on Suetonius' *Domitian*, speaks of Nerva as "participating in the murder of his predecessor" and describes Dio as mentioning "that the conspirators had discussed their plans with Nerva."²⁹ But Dio speaks only of Nerva knowing about the plot to kill Domitian—and that is a legitimate conclusion for Dio (or his source) to have drawn, given the smoothness of Nerva's acclamation in the Senate, even though, as I have tried to demonstrate, it is inaccurate: Nerva had no part in the conspiracy to remove Domitian.

CONCLUSIONS

Nerva was, it would seem, the ultimate "committee" man. He was not, apparently, a great orator (indeed, the only example of his prose to survive, an edict quoted by Pliny the Younger at *Ep.* 10.58.7–9, is pompous and flatulent), and one has the impression that he functioned better in small groups, where his generally calm approach to problems will have impressed people. Nerva, as Nero's friend, kept him steady and sane during the Pisonian crisis—one might say that Tigillinus, the Guard Prefect, provided the muscle and Nerva pro-

²⁷ Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov, former head of the KGB, succeeded Leonid Ilych Brezhnev as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in November 1982; he remained in power for some fifteen months, dying in February 1984.

²⁸ At least not until the appearance under Diocletian of the *agentes in rebus*; cf. Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.44.

²⁹ Jones 1996: at 14.1, with note on *amicorum libertorumque*; cf. Jones 1992: 160–61 and n. 3 for citation of Ehrhardt's paper.

vided the brains—and when it was over Nero realised that Nerva’s contribution had been as important as that of Tigellinus; hence the equal honours bestowed on them (Tac. *Ann.* 15.72.1). As a fellow Neronian loyalist and personal friend, Nerva earned Vespasian’s gratitude—a plausible reason has been suggested for this—and at the same time he became an “uncle” figure to Domitian. In A.D. 89 he will have performed a function similar to that of the year 65; and Domitian’s gratitude is reflected in the ordinary consulship of 90.

In 96, on 18 September, Nerva had perhaps ten or fifteen minutes to decide whether or not to accept the “call” from his fellow Senators to become Princeps. He knew most of the people in public life in Rome; he had seen the turmoil of 68–70; and he quickly decided that, rather than risk a period of chaos and destruction,³⁰ he should accept the invitation. What is well-known today, however, is that, more often than not, if the “super committee man” takes on an important administrative job, the result is quite dreadful. Rome was, indeed, spared catastrophe; but for all that near-contemporary writers were “careful” about what they said,³¹ Nerva’s administration was fairly inept. It would not be unfair to say that he was a textbook illustration of what nowadays is called the “Peter Principle.”³²

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³⁰ Dio tells us (65.19.3) that, during the period of turmoil in and around Rome late in 69, culminating in the Flavian capture of the city, up to 50,000 people perished. There is no reason to doubt this figure.

³¹ Cf. especially Pliny in the *Panegyricus* and Tacitus in his introduction to the *Historiae* (1.1.4).

³² The “Peter Principle” is an attempt to explain why so many administrators appear to be incompetent. Its formulation is: “In a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of *incompetence*,” the consequence being that once an individual is promoted to a level *above* his abilities to function efficiently, he will cease to be promoted and will remain indefinitely at that level. The Corollary to the Peter Principle is, therefore: “In time, every post tends to be occupied by an employee who is incompetent to carry out his duties.” See further Laurence J. Peter and Raymond Hull, *The Peter Principle: Why Things Always Go Wrong* (New York, 1969).

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