Crimes Committed by Caesar

Caesar was a politician and general of the late Roman republic, who greatly extended the Roman empire before grabbing and taking control of power and making himself dictator of Rome, paving the way for the imperial system. Caesar is not only known for his rise to power and fame but also for his evil and violent war crimes. The crimes that Julius committed are extremely significant back in his day and nowadays.

Before everything started, Julius had a fairly stable childhood. (Gaius) Julius Caesar was born in Subura, Rome in the year 100 BC. He was born to an aristocratic family that if traced, their bloodline would intercept with the founding of Rome. His parents were well-off, but they weren't rich by Roman standards during that time. Young Caesar was soon in the midst of a power struggle in the government between two factions. Rome's current dictator, Sulla, was both enemies of Caesar's uncle Marius and Caesar's in-law father Cinna. To flee Sulla and his allies, Caesar joined the army and left Rome. Caesar came back to Rome after Sulla died. Through his years in the army, he was now a military hero. In the Roman government, he quickly rose up the ranks. He made alliances with mighty men like General Pompey the Great and the rich Crassus. Caesar was a great speaker and respected by the people of Rome. While Dictator, Caesar accomplished plenty of things. He used his power to amend, reduce debt, extend the senate, create the Iulium Forum, and update the calendar. Dictatorship has always been considered a temporary role, but Caesar took it to life. In 44 BC, Republican senators are deeply offended by his popularity and ambition.

So what war crimes were Julius Caesar involved in? 'War crimes' is not a term that Roman law can recognize. It is an assumption of our modern legal concepts, to believe that in a world where mass enslavement and complete devastation of settlements were the rules rather than the exception one could be legitimately punished for some supposedly unlawful military action. Caesar, in his time, would have been prosecuted for a term called maiestas (Law of Treason), which continues to exist in legal codes as lèse-majesté (a French term for “to do wrong to majesty”). However, according to Suetonius, the prosecution's blame would likely not rest on the proconsulship of Caesar, but on the conduct of his consulship in 59, which would be far better. Indeed, the movement to prosecute Caesar began well before he entered Gaul, it began even before he had renounced his consulship, while he still had the immunity of consular imperium (absolute power). If in fact there was a legitimate movement to prosecute Caesar for maiestas it was on these grounds, that his consulship had displayed a disregard for the law. Any actions that occurred in Gaul (mainly, it is argued, leaving his province to cross the Rhine--Gabinius was tried for maiestas for leaving his proconsular province to march into Egypt) would have simply added to the issue, not the core of it.

Apart from his cruelty against the Gauls, one of the lesser-known facts is that Caesar committed genocide on two Germanic tribes that were at the time migrating and conquering parts of Gallia. The names of these tribes disappeared from history, together with 400000 people, in just one day. The mass killings started when their leaders were discussing a peace agreement. In Caesar’s defense, the hostility started in the Germanic side, and he had reasons to fear an ambush (although documents about it may be just slightly biased because written by Caesar himself).