

BARBARIAN INVADERS AND ROMAN COLLABORATORS

E.A. Thompson

The first ten years of the fifth century A.D. were the worst decade that Italy had experienced at the hands of foreign enemies since the days of Hannibal. In seven of these years powerful armies of barbarian invaders were on Italian soil. In each of the years 408, 409, and 410 Rome itself was besieged, and in 410 the city fell to a foreign enemy for the first time since Brennus and his Gauls captured it 800 years earlier. The civilized world was dumbfounded. There were less civilized Romans, however, who were by no means at a loss to know how to handle the situation.

In a law drawn up on December 10, 408 (*CTh* 10.10.25) Honorius stated that a barbarian inroad was expected in Illyricum, and that numbers of the inhabitants had taken flight to other provinces. He declared that their freedom was therefore in danger: they were likely to be kidnapped by unscrupulous men and enslaved. In another law drafted on the same day he speaks of prisoners sold by the barbarians and bought by Romans. Since it was unreasonable to expect the purchaser to stand the loss of the sum which he had paid, such a prisoner, if he had been a free man before his capture by the barbarians, must refund the price which the purchaser had given for him or he must work for five years for him. One great danger to prisoners of the barbarians, who had previously been free, was that after being released by the enemy they would fall into the hands

of the large landowners or their bailiffs or agents, who were permanently short of labour. These might illegally force them to work on the great estates, and then they would never be heard of again. The Emperor accordingly laid down severe penalties for estate-owners and their agents; and Christian priests and town-councillors living in the neighbourhood of a raid were warned to watch out for such cases and to see that the prisoners in fact reached their homes.¹ Legislation continued in the following year. On March 23, 409 Honorius took further steps to ensure that, when the armed forces recovered the barbarians' booty, soldier and provincial alike should see to it that those free persons who had been taken prisoner should regain their freedom (*CTh* 5.6.2).

There are two points of particular interest in this legislation. In the first place, in this desperate crisis of the Roman Empire trade between Roman merchants and the invaders was accepted by the government as a matter of course. It was illegal to sell certain commodities to the barbarians, but trade in itself was not regarded as illegal or even apparently as undesirable. Secondly, Roman slave-traders had no scruples in buying from the barbarians Roman prisoners who had been free men before the barbarians captured them. It was a recognized practice, and the government knew that there were traders who would not hesitate, if given a free hand, to keep such persons permanently enslaved. The government's aim was to see that free Romans, who had been captured by the barbarians and sold back by them to Roman traders, should regain their freedom. It was by no means self-evident that this would happen automatically. St. Ambrose tells us that after some raids on Illyricum and Thrace in 378-82 there were numberless prisoners on sale throughout the whole world: even prisoners who had been ransomed by the Church were re-enslaved by unscrupulous Romans before they could reach home.²

It would be a mistake to think that it was only the trade in slaves which flourished. Romans might also buy golden and jewelled necklaces from the barbarians, and silk clothing and other luxury goods, all of which had been plundered from Romans. The invaders no doubt kept some such goods for themselves, but others they were prepared to sell off to traders. So at the opening of the fifth century an Italian preacher protested that it was legitimate to buy luxury articles from the barbarians

only when the purchaser's intention was to restore these articles to their rightful owners.³ But I suspect that many a purchaser had no such righteous intention, and even if he had, it might well have been utterly impossible to find the true owner of the article in question.

This legislation refers to occasions when the invaders were Goths. But the same sort of thing happened with other enemies, too. We have a relatively detailed account of a nobly born girl called Maria, who was captured by the Vandals when they surprised Carthage in October 439. The Vandals sold her and her maid (who was a slave) to Roman slave-traders, who in turn sold the pair to some purchasers residing far away in Cyrrhus in the province of Euphratensis. "So they endured the bitter yoke of slavery together, the mistress and the maid," says our authority, Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus. But the maid continued to act as her mistress's servant. After they had finished their day's work for their owners, the maid would wait upon Maria, washing her feet, making her bed, and so on. In due course their owners noticed this. The mistress's free birth and maid's good character became the talk of the town. Some Christian soldiers who were stationed there subscribed to buy Maria and set her free. Ten months later she heard that her father, too, had survived the fall of Carthage and was holding office in the West; and Theodoret, in the letter which is our source of information about Maria, is now writing to arrange Maria's safe return to him. A happy ending? Yes, provided that we ask no questions about the maid, whose kindness and attentiveness first drew attention to Maria's plight. The soldiers did not subscribe to buy *her*. It probably occurred to no one to set her free. She was a slave at the beginning of the story, and at its end she was a slave still, though apparently not Maria's slave.⁴

Of course, the Roman slave-merchants could have argued (though they are not known to have done so) that if they had not bought the prisoners from the invaders, then many of the adult male prisoners would have been massacred by their captors. In the conditions of the invasions, when the invaders' food was often in short supply and the means of producing it were all but non-existent, most of the male prisoners -- apart from a few who might be useful for carrying burdens⁵ or for acting as personal servants -- and all the old people would be nothing more than so many

mouths to feed. If they could not be sold and were not ransomed, there was little else to do than to massacre them. Women slaves, of course, could be used for the purpose for which women slaves have always been used since slavery began.⁶ The barbarians who used to invade Libya Pentapolis early in the fifth century would prize no piece of booty more than a woman and child. The female captives would bear them sons, while the captive male children, when they grew up, would fight in the barbarian levies "for they become loyal to those who brought them up instead of to their real parents." So the children who were carried off captive might be expected to come back some day and ravage the land that bore them. That, at any rate, is what Synesius tells us.⁷

The merchants who made the most of their opportunities were those who came from Syria. "They have an innate fervour for trading," writes St. Jerome, "seeing that they hurry over the entire earth . . . to such an extent that, now that the Roman world has been seized [by the enemy], they search for riches among the swords [of the foe] and the deaths of poor wretches, and through danger they escape poverty."⁸ About a hundred years after St. Jerome had spoken about the matter we catch a glimpse of a Syrian trader as he helped a band of steppe nomads against the Persian Empire (and he would doubtless have helped them against the Roman Empire, too, if it had suited his interests). This band of "Huns" invaded the Persian Empire in 503. The Persian king opened sham negotiations with them, presumably so as to gain time, but the Huns were guided by the wise advice of Eustace, a merchant of Apamea in Syria, a clever man, who was in their company. When the king tried to surprise the 400 Huns whom he met, Eustace the merchant encouraged the Huns to fight him even though they were outnumbered, and, thanks to the advice of Eustace, they defeated the treacherous king.⁹

The case of Eustace shows that it was only a short step from trading with the invaders to giving them active assistance in other ways. When the Emperor Septimius Severus' forces in the course of a civil war were besieging Byzantium in 194, some traders gladly consented to be taken "prisoners" by the Byzantines; and when they had sold their wares to the besieged citizens, they were allowed to succeed in "escaping."¹⁰ Why should we think that traders would be any less resourceful when they

were dealing with external enemies than when dealing with internal ones? We know that when "Scythians" invaded the Eastern Empire in the reign of Valerian (253-60), they received help not only from the Roman prisoners whom they had taken but also from Romans who were among them for the purposes of trade.¹¹ Observe that point. There were Roman traders inside the band of marauding barbarians: they were moving round with them, just as Eustace was moving round with his Hun friends. It is not out of the question that many a band of invaders of the Roman Empire included in its ranks one or more than one Roman trader, who was with the raiders in order to buy whatever part of their booty they were willing to offer for sale; and undoubtedly it was sometimes in these traders' interests that the raid or the invasion should be a success and that the invaders should obtain enough loot to be in a position to offer a surplus for sale.

At least one merchant actually fought openly against the Roman Empire because he thought it to be a bad institution. This is the merchant whom the historian Priscus met in the camp of Attila and the Huns in 449 (frag. 8 [ed. Dindorf], p. 305). He was a Greek who had settled in the frontier city of Viminacium (Kostolacz), where he had prospered as a merchant and had married a rich wife. But he was taken prisoner when the city fell to Attila in 441, and he was carried off into the Hun dominions. There he fought bravely against the Romans and other enemies of the Huns, and so was able to earn his freedom. He decided never to return to the Empire, and he married a barbarian wife by whom he now had several children. He liked the idle, carefree life which the Huns led when they were not at war, each man enjoying what he had, neither causing nor suffering trouble. But in the Empire, said he to Priscus, his chances of being killed in wartime were high, for the citizens were unarmed and the generals who were supposed to protect them were too cowardly to face up to a war. In peacetime conditions were even worse. The exaction of the taxes was ruthless, and it was impossible for a poor man to obtain justice in the law courts. A rich wrong-doer could not be brought to justice at all, and a poor plaintiff, even if he bribed the appropriate officials, giving them the appropriate amounts of money, would probably be dead before judgement was delivered on his case, so slowly did justice

move. There is no hint in Priscus' account of the conversation that this man would not be prepared to fight against the Romans again and yet again. But the man had clearly ceased to be a merchant: he was not at any time among the Huns for purposes of trade.

A much more damaging case than the unnamed trader with whom Priscus spoke was a rich merchant called Antoninus. He suffered heavy financial losses in 359 through the sharp practices of others but found that he could obtain no redress in the corrupt law-courts against those who had cheated him. He decided to flee from the Roman Empire and to take with him as much military information as he could assemble. With infinite trouble he noted down troop concentrations, their strength and their position, what plans there were for future campaigns, what stocks of arms and supplies were available. His next problem was how to get his family and property out of the Empire and into Persia. (To leave the Roman Empire illicitly was just as hard as to enter it illicitly.) What Antoninus did was to buy a fairly cheap farm at a place called Iaspis on the Tigris, so that he could visit the frontier without arousing suspicion. By means of intermediaries who could swim the river he opened negotiations with the Persian governor on the other side, and was able finally to cross in fishing boats with all his family. He became one of the Persian king's foremost advisers during the campaigns of 359 and 360.¹²

Traders might also give away military secrets inadvertently. So when the Imperial government in 408-9 restricted trade with the Persian Empire to the three cities of Nisibis, Callinicus, and Artaxata, and banned it everywhere else, it gave explicitly as its reason the fact that traders of one of the two empires might otherwise find out the military secrets of the other. The Romans had other reasons, too, for denying Roman markets to the barbarians, but this is the one which they specified in 408-9. This, too, may have been their reason in 501 when Anastasius gave instructions that the *castrensiani* of Libya Pentapolis should watch the roads so that no one should go to the barbarians so as to buy or sell without being ordered to do so (*CJ* 4.63.4; *SEG* 9.356).

If Roman prisoners of the barbarians were not bought by the traders or ransomed by their friends or by the Church, they were likely to be cut down in cold blood by their captors (p. 73-4 above.) It is not surprising,

then, that they would sometimes do their best to help the barbarians in the hope of saving their own lives. In 416 the government enacted a law pardoning all those who, while prisoners of the barbarians, had helped them to plunder, knowing that they would be put to death if they refused to do so: such men were merely obliged to return their loot to its owners (*CTh* 15.14.14). But some men who were with the barbarians helped them without being under any compulsion. And unfortunately for the government, it was not always easy to know who was a genuine prisoner and who was not. A law of 366 states that any person who returned from captivity among the barbarians should be entitled to recover his property, whether in land or in slaves, even if in his absence the property had been taken over by the State or had been presented by the State to a third party. But the law stressed that this right could only be claimed by a returned prisoner when an enquiry had established that he had been a genuine prisoner *and had not been among the barbarians of his own free will* (*CTh* 5.7.1). Evidently the government had reason to suspect that some men had been living among the barbarians not because they were forced to do so but because they wanted to do so; and these were not in all cases poor men -- they had owned land and slaves.

In the early days of the Roman Empire a Roman had complained that, when the Imperial armies entered Germany, the Germans would conceal the tracks through the forests and marshes, and would hide their stocks of food, and so on.¹³ But later the tables were turned. When Germanic warriors entered the Roman provinces in the third and fourth centuries they, too, wished to find the roads and the stocks of food. That is the explanation of the old Roman custom of restricting trade with the barbarians to specified places: the traders, whether barbarian or Roman, might otherwise discover or divulge military information, including the site of the roads and the villas where stocks of food might be found, so that the villa-sites were a matter of military importance. We have already seen that such were the motives of the Imperial government in 408-9 (p. 76 above).¹⁴ Tacitus thought it noteworthy that the Hermunduri, who were allowed unrestricted access to the provinces, could see the homes and villas of the provinces near their own country (*Germ.* 41.2).

So far we have been discussing traders and prisoners and alleged

prisoners. But the invaders also received help from persons who were neither traders nor prisoners. In one of the third-century raids the invaders were able to cross from the neighbourhood of Byzantium into Asia because they reached an agreement with the fishermen of the Philia-tine marsh, who ferried them across to Chalcedon, a city which they then devastated to such effect that some parts of it were still lying in ruins 300 years later. Once in Asia they were directed to Nicomedia by a certain Chrysogonus, whom they held in high honour for his services. We know nothing of Chrysogonus's motives or of how the fishermen benefitted from their action.¹⁵

On the eve of the Visigothic invasion of 376 unrest was widespread throughout parts of the Roman countryside. According to an anonymous Roman author of the period 366-75,¹⁶ the Roman poor were so violently exploited that they were driven to a life of "crime," they ravaged the provinces and set up "emperors" of their own, though we know nothing of these emperors beyond the fact of their existence. Other men, though they did not join the invaders outright, might take over certain regions of the provinces on their own account, and thereby divert Imperial forces from the business of repelling the barbarians. Shortly before the battle of Adrianople Basil of Caesarea heard of Roman troops operating against a group of "brigands and deserters" in the hope of opening a road which they controlled in Thrace.¹⁷ Some men dreamed of another sort of remedy for their hardships. About that same date a Greek orator, addressing the Emperor Valens, declared that the tax-collectors and the great land-owners so oppressed those in their power that they made them long for the barbarians to come and rescue them from their intolerable sufferings.¹⁸ In the early years of Theodosius the Great, after the Visigoths had entered the provinces, taxation in Macedonia was so heavy that "every-one was calling on the barbarians and imploring their aid;" and the same cry had already been heard in Gaul during the Alamannic invasion in 354-5.¹⁹ The passages from which we learn of these aspirations are rhetorical. If their authors had in fact wakened up one day and found the barbarians on their doorstep, they might well have been horrified. But it is revealing to find that such thoughts could come into these writers' heads at all and that they could publish them without making

themselves appear ridiculous.

In the third century some Romans, when taken prisoner by the invaders, would throw in their lot with them, and "forgetting that they were Christians and natives of Pontus," would become barbarians themselves and would kill fellow-Romans and loot Roman houses. They would "point out the roads and the houses to the barbarians who did not know them," and so would lead the hungry invaders to places where they could find stocks of food -- to the villas in particular.²⁰ In the year 376, when the Visigoths had been robbed of all their food by the Romans as they crossed the Danube, they were rescued from starvation "by their captives and those who surrendered to them," for these "showed them the rich villages, particularly those where it was said that enough food could be found." They were helped, too, by the gold-miners of Thrace, who were particularly oppressed by the government at this time. Being natives of Thrace they were very welcome "and were of great service to the Visigoths, roaming over a countryside that was unfamiliar to them. They pointed out hidden stores of food and disclosed the hiding places and the secret refuges of the inhabitants," just as the natives of Pontus had done in the third century. Their service as guides was especially valuable when Roman forces were closely watching the main strategic roads. Apart from what was inaccessible or lay out of their path, nothing remained untouched when these men were guiding them. Goldminers who did not desert now were later conscripted into the army by Theodosius.²¹

It was not only civilians who assisted the invaders. Throughout the history of the events which led up to and followed the battle of Adrianople in 378 we hear repeatedly of the help given to the Visigoths by deserting Roman soldiers. At one point the confidential plans of three Roman generals, plans relating to their fundamental strategy, were betrayed to the Visigoths "by the reports of deserters, owing to whom nothing could be concealed." We hear again and again of the desertion of whole companies of Roman troops. One of them numbered three hundred men, who deserted in a body. Another almost succeeded in handing over the great city of Adrianople to the enemy. Indeed, the citizens of Adrianople, among whom traitors and deserters were very active, soon became so demoralized that they refused to admit one of their own generals

into their city "because they feared that he had been captured by the enemy and had come to them after being induced to fight for the Visigoths," a nice comment on Roman morale. In one case it was even rumoured that a Roman regiment was actually urged to desert by its commanding officer, who had his own reasons for acting as he did. In the very last chapter of his book Ammianus observes that "deserters gave them complete information, and they knew what was inside the very houses, to say nothing of the cities."²²

Information was also given away, though surprisingly rarely (so far as we know), by barbarians serving in the Imperial armies. In the fourth century barbarians were enlisted by the Romans in enormous numbers, and sometimes rose to high, even the highest, ranks, as they are not known to have done in the third century. In 354 three Alamannic officers of very high rank, Count of the Domestics, Tribune of the Stable, and Commander of the Scutarii, were thought to have sent word across the Rhine to their fellow-countrymen, telling them that Constantius II was planning to ford the river and invade their country. The suspicion which fell on the three was never confirmed, but our excellent authority for the incident seems not disinclined to believe it.²³ Again, Valentinian I put one Hortarius, an Alamannic chieftain, in command of some Roman troops ca. 372. He was later found to have written treasonably to Macrianus, another chief of the Alamanni, "confessed" his guilt under torture, and was burned alive by the Romans.²⁴ Much more important was an event which took place in 378, the year of the battle of Adrianople. Some months before the battle was fought, an unnamed Alamannic soldier serving with the Western Emperor Gratian's bodyguard was given compassionate leave to go home and settle some pressing business. When a crowd of his countrymen asked him what was going on in the palace, the soldier, being somewhat too talkative, let out a military secret of capital importance: he said that Gratian was soon about to march to the East to assist Valens against the Goths. The Alamanni made full use of this information. They invaded the province of Raetia in such force as to oblige Gratian to recall the troops who were now on their way eastwards; and Valens fought the Goths at Adrianople without the aid of the Western army.²⁵

But the significant point about these facts is that the Roman government thought the employment and promotion of barbarians in the army to be worth the risk of an occasional betrayal: otherwise, they would not have hired so many of them. And if Ammianus thought it necessary to mention only three cases of treachery -- one of them not proven -- in his entire book, which covers twenty-five years of history in great detail, we may be sure that no more than three cases came to light throughout that quarter of a century. The risk, then, would seem to have been justified.

Those who co-operated most eagerly with the invaders were the slaves and especially, of course, the barbarian slaves. The fact was no surprise to Synesius, to whom the possibility that barbarian invader and barbarian slave would join hands was self-evident (*De Regn.* 20 [ed. Terzaghi], p. 48). One of the conditions on which Alaric offered to spare Rome in 408 was that the Romans should surrender all "the barbarian slaves" in the capital. He was concerned to recover the members of his own people whom the Romans had enslaved after Stilicho's victories and on other occasions. He did not find it necessary to press the point, however, because in fact nearly all the slaves in the City, homegrown as well as barbarian, deserted to him. Though their number unfortunately is not given by our authority, their arrival in his camp brought the total of his men up to about 40,000 warriors. In the following year Alaric called on the population of Rome to join him against Honorius so as to spare the City the horrors of a sack. But those slaves who intended to leave had left already, and his appeal met with no response: he had misjudged the temper of the citizens.²⁶

Yet so great was the influx into the Visigothic camp of oppressed Romans, townsmen, peasants, soldiers, and slaves, that the invading army to some extent changed its character. It was no longer composed solely of barbarian tribesmen but also included significant numbers of Romans. For the historian Zosimus, Alaric's army in 395 was composed of "barbarians and other riff-raff;" and for St. Jerome in 414 that same army was largely a mere "sweepings of deserters and slaves." In 409 Jerome lamented that "tears have been dried with the passing of time: apart from a few old men, all who had been born in captivity do not regret the liberty

which they never knew," that is, they have never even tried to escape: like the merchant to whom Priscus spoke, the captives have lost the wish to return home. In 417 St. Augustine observed that some of the Donatists in Africa were willing to reach an understanding with the Visigoths in Spain; and when the Vandals landed in Africa some years later the population as a whole cannot be said to have been deeply distressed (though it would be a mistake to think that Roman Arians in general welcomed the Arian invaders). In that same year 417 Orosius in Spain tried to make the best of a bad business when he said that the barbarians had turned their swords into ploughshares, that they cherished the Romans as allies and friends, and "that some Romans are to be found among them who prefer poverty and freedom among the barbarians to putting up with the duty of paying taxes among the Romans." The fact is that, at any rate early in the fifth century, the invading armies included so large a Roman element that it was remarked upon by contemporary writers.²⁷

We must not oversimplify. The situation in some of the towns may have been more complex than might appear at first sight. When the Visigoths surrounded the walls of Bazas in southern Gaul in 414 the slaves of the citizens were joined by a number of young free men in a conspiracy of which the aim was to assassinate the members of the landed gentry who were taking refuge in the town. The nobility considered these men to be more dangerous to themselves than were the barbarians outside the walls -- indeed, one of the besieged noblemen had long been on friendly terms with the Alan king who was assisting the Visigoths to attack Bazas. The conspiracy was detected and suppressed, and some of its leaders were executed. Now, there is no record that these slaves and their allies had made any attempt to join hands with the Visigoths. Perhaps our authority is inadequate, or perhaps no such attempt was made: and it may be that the struggle at Bazas was a three-cornered one.²⁸ We only twice hear of Roman cities going over voluntarily to the invaders. Soon after the battle of Adrianople Nicopolis in Thrace went over to the Visigoths -- "to freedom," as the citizens said -- and they laughed at the cowardice of the other Thracians who did not side with them but endured endless hardships for fear of Theodosius, who, said the men of Nicopolis, would never help them. And many years later Bordeaux opened its gates to

Athaulf without resistance. It is unfortunate that we know nothing of the internal politics of these two cities at the time when these decisions were made.²⁹ They may have been very complex: it is not easy to see what the city-dwellers would have gained from admitting the barbarians.

Roman deserters, then, might give the invaders invaluable information about the site of the great roads and of food supplies and military secrets bearing on numbers and the plans of the relevant troops. This information might also reach them from traders -- from Roman traders, who might talk too much when they crossed the frontier, and from barbarian traders, who might see too much when they came into the Empire. Hence the Imperial government made repeated attempts to control trans-frontier trade and to limit it to specified points on the frontier. But soldiers and others might also give the enemy technical knowledge which had not previously been available to them, especially knowledge of how to construct and use the dreaded Roman artillery, the *ballistae* of various kinds. When Septimius Severus defeated one of his rivals in 194 numbers of the defeated troops fled to Persia; and some of these men were technicians. They settled down in Persia and not only taught the Persians how to use weapons which they had not used before but also showed them how to make these weapons for themselves. The result was that the Persians had higher hopes of victory now than formerly when they engaged the solid ranks of a Roman army; and the historian who reports this matter looks upon it with grave concern.³⁰

A later writer goes out of his way to record at length how a Roman called Busas taught the nomadic Avars how to make a type of siege-engine called a *helepolis*, "a city-taker," which they could not otherwise have made.³¹ Krum, the famous ruler of the Bulgars, attacked Mesembria in 812 with siege-engines; but he was only able to do so because an Arab, who was very skilful at these matters, deserted from the Roman Empire and taught the Bulgars all his skill. As Bury quaintly put it, "he instructed the Bulgars in every poliorcetic device." And a certain Eumathius, also trained in siege-engines, fled to the Bulgars.³²

But although we hear of deserters and prisoners handing on this knowledge to the Persians and others, we never hear that the Persians

and the others absorbed this skill into their general military techniques, so as to be able to apply it on their own account when there were no obliging prisoners and deserters with them to give them instruction. In spite of what had happened in 194 we never hear in later ages that the Persians could make and use *ballistae* on their own account. I do not know why this should have been so. Not all *ballistae* can have been very difficult to make and use, for we possess a letter in which a bishop tells us that he was engaged in making one and proposed to use it.³³ If a bishop could do so, why not Alaric or Attila or their henchmen? Late in the sixth century Marcian, a relative of Justin II, laid siege to Nisibis, constructed a palisade around it, and "commenced, with the aid of skilful mechanics, whom he had brought with him, to erect more scientific works, consisting of lofty towers and strong covered approaches." But his men panicked and fled, and the Persian king arrived at Nisibis, "and found the engines and machines which Marcian had erected standing before it." He took them all away and used them against a Roman city. But there is no hint that he could have constructed them for himself.³⁴

Ship-building, too, was an art that was unknown to many of the barbarians, or at any rate the art of building ships that could weather the Mediterranean. But a group of "Scythians" were enabled to sail the Black Sea in Valerian's reign (253-60) because their prisoners and some traders built ships for them.³⁵ The Imperial government took such precautions as it could to prevent the art of ship-building being made known to the barbarians. In 419 Asclepiades, bishop of the Chersonese, petitioned the Emperor to free from prison men who had been convicted of betraying to the enemy the art of ship-building, which had hitherto been unknown to them. The Emperor freed them, but threatened the death-penalty to anyone who should act similarly in the future (*CTh* 9.40.24). The identity of the barbarians in question is very obscure, and it is hard to believe that the Huns of south Russia had ambitions to turn pirate.³⁶ The chronicler, Prosper of Aquitaine, tells us that in 427 the two contending parties in a Roman civil war, calling upon some barbarians for help, once more gave the secret away (*Chron. Min.* I.472 init.). But there is neither evidence nor likelihood that these barbarians retained the forbidden art or that they passed it on to other invaders. We do

hear, however, that some barbarians, who had deserted -- their identity is unknown -- practised piracy in the central Mediterranean, plundering many islands and especially Sicily. Their activities are reported only from the years 437 and 438, and we do not know what became of them. Whether or not this was a common experience during the centuries of the Later Empire is hard to say.³⁷

Most of the evidence, then, bears on collaboration between Roman traders and the invading barbarians; but it is clear, too, that prisoners, slaves (whether homegrown or barbarian), soldiers (whether Roman or barbarian mercenaries), and even free persons would sometimes aid the incomers. But what was the significance of this aid? What effect did it have on the general course of the invasions? Can we say that the military destruction of the Western Empire was in any sense, or in any degree, due to the collaboration of numbers of Romans with the invading forces? That the actions of Roman traders and of Romans who offered themselves as guides facilitated some phases of individual raids and forays cannot be doubted. But I find it impossible to believe that the course of the major invasions -- those movements which had settlement rather than mere loot as their chief aim -- was seriously affected by dissident Romans, whether slave or free, civilian or military. We have very detailed accounts of the events that led up to and followed the battle of Adrianople on 9 August 378, and it is true that these accounts contain numerous references to disaffected Romans, soldiers as well as civilians, and the help that they gave to the Visigoths. But they do not supply any basis for the view that without them the battle of Adrianople might have been won by Valens. There was no systematic collaboration between the invaders and the dissidents; and it is very improbable that any of the Germanic leaders saw the potentialities of the unrest within the Empire. Again, the surviving accounts of the great Alamannic invasions of Gaul in 354-5, though hardly so detailed as those of the campaign of Adrianople, are very full. Yet, although we are told that the Gauls had been longing for the barbarians to come and rescue them from their miseries, there is not a single reference, whether specific or general, to any Gallo-Roman or group of Gallo-Romans who actually helped the Alamanni when at last they arrived. In fact, conditions south

of the lower Danube in 376 and the following years may well have been the exception, not the rule. The conditions which prevailed in that region at that date were not repeated in the Noricum which Eugippius describes or in the Libya Pentapolis of which we read in the letters of Synesius or in the Galicia where events were chronicled by Hydatius.

Nottingham University
University of Wisconsin

NOTES

- ¹ *CTh* 5.7.2; *Const. Sirmond.* 16.
- ² Ambrose, *De Offic.* 2.15.70 (PL 16.129). For the sale of Romans by Romans to the barbarians see *Nov. Valentin.* 33 (January 31, 451), but this probably happened in time of famine or extreme hardship.
- ³ Maximus of Turin, *Sermo* 18 (ed. Mutzenbecher) 68 f.
- ⁴ Theodoret, *Ep.* 70 (ed. Azéma, who says that the letter could have been written between 443 and 448).
- ⁵ *Carmen de Providentia Divina*, 57 f. (PL 51.618).
- ⁶ Ambrose, *De Offic.* 2.28.137 (PL 16.148 f.): the Lord may say, "cur tot captivi deducti in commercio sunt, nec redempti, ab hoste occisi sunt?"; *ibid.* 2.28.136: "quis autem est tam durus immitis ferreus qui displiceat quod homo redimitur a morte, femina ab impuritatibus barbarorum, quae graviore morte sunt . . . ," written in 368 or a little later. Old men taken prisoner: *Amm. Marc.* 31.6.7; *Prudentius, C. Symm.* 2.735.
- ⁷ Synesius, *Catastasis*, 2.3 (ed. Terzaghi) 289.
- ⁸ Jerome, *Comm. in Ezech.* 8 on 27:15 f. (PL 25.255).
- ⁹ Zachariah of Mytilene, 7.3 (trans. Hamilton and Brooks) 152.
- ¹⁰ Dio Cassius, 74.12.3.
- ¹¹ Zosimus, 1.34.1. Zachariah of Mytilene, 7.5, tells that when the Persians had taken the city of Amida in 503 and were holding it

against the Romans, the local peasantry sold them supplies.

- 12 Amm. Marc. 18.5.1-3 and 8.
- 13 Strabo, 1.10.
- 14 Cf. E.A. Thompson, "Constantine, Constantius II and the Lower Danube Frontier," *Hermes* 84 (1956) 376-7.
- 15 Zosimus, 1.34.2; Jordanes, *Get.* 107.
- 16 Anon., *De Rebus Bellicis*, 2.3.
- 17 Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 268, addressed to Eusebius, bishop of Samosata, who had been exiled by Valens and spent the years 374-8 near the Danube. His writings gave a picture of Thrace "when the Goths were ravaging it and besetting the cities" (Theodoret, *HE* 4.13 fin.), but unfortunately they are lost.
- 18 Themistius, *Or.* 8.115A-C.
- 19 Zosimus, 4.32.3; *Pan. Lat.* 3 (11).4.2.
- 20 Gregory Thaumaturgus (ed. J. Dräseke, *Jahrb. f. protestantische Theologie* 7 [1891] 735).
- 21 Amm. Marc. 31.4.11; 8.5; esp. 6.5 f.; Themistius, *Or.* 14.181B.
- 22 Amm. Marc. 31.7.7; 11.3; 15.2, 4, 8 f.; 7.4; 16.1.
- 23 Amm. Marc. 14.10.8.
- 24 Amm. Marc. 29.4.7.
- 25 Amm. Marc. 31.10.1.
- 26 Zosimus, 5.40.3; 42.3; 6.6.1 f.; Sozomen, *HE* 9.6.3.
- 27 Zosimus, 4.25.1; 5.5.4; Jerome, *Ep.* 130.6; 133.17; Augustine, *Ep.* 185.1.1; Salvian, *DGD* 7.71; Orosius, *Adv. Pag.* 7.41.1.
- 28 Paulinus of Pella, *Euch.* 346.
- 29 Eunapius, frag. 50; Paulinus, *Euch.* 312 f.
- 30 Herodian, 3.4.8 f.
- 31 Theophylactus Simocatta, 2.16.
- 32 Theophanes, *Chron.* a.m. 6301 and 6305; J.B. Bury, *History of the Eastern Roman Empire* (London 1912) 348 n. 1. According to the Scriptor Incertus in the Bonn edition of Leo Grammaticus (p. 347) rumour assigned an amazing--and impossible--variety of *ballistae* to Krum when he planned to attack Constantinople just before his death in 814. I do not know how to account for the *ballistae* of the Slavs outside Thessalonica as reported in the *Miracula S. Demetrii* (PG 116) 1.125, col. 1300; 138,

col. 1309; 141, *ibid.*; 142, col. 1311; et al.

³³ Synesius, *Ep.* 132 (133) (PG 66. 1517 ff.).

³⁴ John of Ephesus, *HE*, trans. R. Payne Smith (Oxford 1860) 6.2.5.

³⁵ Zosimus, 1.34.1.

³⁶ Cf. O. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns* (California 1973)

75. Certainly the Goths were no seamen: see Norman H. Baynes, *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London 1965) 220 f.

³⁷ *Chron. Min.* I.476. In this paper I have not dealt with those Romans who collaborated with the barbarians when the latter had founded their kingdoms in the provinces.