

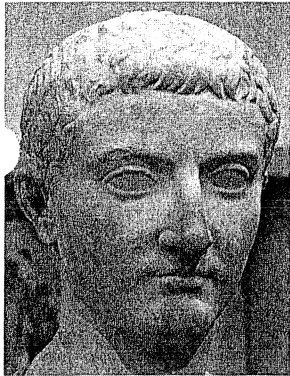
Tiberius Gracchus and the Fall of the Roman Republic

Rome had many powerful emperors from good to mad. But Rome didn't always have emperors. At one point, it's leaders used to be elected and no one person could hold too much power. This was essential to Romans, as they hated kings. This government was called the Republic and it lasted for 500 years. But what caused Rome to give up on the Republic and turn to emperors?

Tiberius Gracchus was one man who caused "chaos" in Rome.

Gap Between Rich and Poor Grows

Rome beat Carthage in the Punic Wars and there was no other society left around the



Mediterranean to challenge Rome's power. At the same time the gap between the rich and the poor grew. The rich took the land of the poor and create large estates with opulent villas, or mansions. They used slaves (many were slaves from Carthage) to work the

farmland. In fact, as much as 1/3 of the population of Rome was slaves. They would take the jobs of the middle class. But these landowners had to get land from somewhere. Where did they get it from?

They took the land from poor people. Many of the soldiers who fought for Rome were enlisted for long periods of time. All men who owned land (big or small) were required to serve in the army. They left their wives and families and were gone for years. Many never returned at all. Their wives and children were left to run the farm.

Oftentimes, these small farms could not turn a profit and went bankrupt. Therefore, they would be sold to rich landowners who added the land to their estates. These wealthy landowners became

richer. Meanwhile, the poor got poorer. They had nowhere else to go. Where would you go if this happened to you? Many families went to Rome and became part of the Roman mob. One-fourth of Rome's population was urban poor.

Tiberius Gracchus Helps the Poor

One man wanted to help the poor. This man, Tiberius Gracchus, a war hero and member of the upper class, thought that the way to help these people would be to limit the amount of land that the rich could own. He also wanted to redistribute land to farmers who lost their land. Who is happy? Who is not?

Gracchus was elected tribune of the People's Assembly, a governing body that represented the plebeians. This position lasted for only one year. While he served in the People's Assembly, he passed the land reforms. This made him popular with the Roman mob, but hated by the Senate and upper classes. It was, after all, their land that would be taken away. Even though he had passed the reforms, Tiberius made too many powerful enemies. Some senators said that Tiberius wanted to be king of Rome. Romans believed that there was no greater sin than wanting to be king. This turned around the support Tiberius had. Rome was on the brink of a civil war between those that supported Tiberius and those that thought he was a "tyrant in waiting". Tiberius tried to run for a second term as tribune but was killed by the senators. His popularity and murder unleashed the power of the Roman mob. Rome descended into political chaos and civil war for the next 100 years until a true dictator emerged.

During this time popular generals would recruit soldiers from the landless poor. These soldiers would be loyal to the general who paid them, not to Rome. They replaced the citizen-soldiers who had been loyal to the republic of Rome.

Review:

1. Why would Roman's hate the idea of a king?
2. How did slavery impact Rome's economy?
3. What caused the gap between the rich and the poor?
4. How did the gap between the rich and the poor contribute to Rome's problems?
5. How would soldiers being loyal to a general impact Rome?
6. Tiberius Gracchus ends up being murdered by Senators. To what extent was violence acceptable in Roman politics? Could there have been a realistic peaceful solution? If so, explain.