

Economic Problems



The empire could no longer feed its many people. Some farmland had been destroyed by warfare. But the biggest problem was improving farm production. With many slaves to do the work, plantation owners chose not to develop more-productive farming technology. As a result, the land wore out and harvests did not increase. Food shortages caused unrest.

The empire was running low on money. Taxes were high, so many people did not pay them. Without tax money, the government could not pay the army or buy needed services.

Military Problems



Rome was constantly at war with nomadic peoples in the north and northeast, as well as with the people who lived along its eastern borders. The empire needed larger armies to respond to so many threats, so it hired foreign mercenaries, or soldiers for hire.

Mercenaries often had no loyalty to the empire. They pledged their allegiance to an individual military leader. Having armies that were loyal to only one man created independent military powers within the empire. In addition, mercenaries were not as disciplined as Roman soldiers. This lack of discipline made the army less effective. The result was a weakened defense along the empire's borders.

Social Tension after the Punic Wars



The recent conquests of the Punic Wars had opened many doors to newfound wealth, but the rapid pace of such expansion opened more doors to corruption and mismanagement... Farmers who had left their land when drafted into the army to fight in the Punic Wars could not maintain them while away. Small farms were slowly driven into extinction as the wealthy bought up land and resources for vast estates. Laws prevented the army from taking landless men as recruits. These displaced Romans had no farms and no opportunities to regain their status through military service, and the army did not receive enough new soldiers to govern the empire effectively.

Meanwhile, slaves imported with the conquests replaced the Italian worker and the small farmer. Thousands of landless and jobless Romans were idle in the city, with little hope for relief. Food supplies dwindled as fewer farms were worked... The stability of Rome was badly fractured, just as it started to grow into an empire

Domestic Governance Issues



The sheer physical size of the Roman Republic after the Punic Wars made it hard to govern. Government officials found it was not easy to obtain news about affairs in some regions of the empire. This made it more difficult to know where problems were developing. Also, many government officials were corrupt, seeking only to enrich themselves. These political problems destroyed a sense of citizenship. Many Romans no longer felt a sense of duty to the empire. Many chose to get rich in business rather than serve in the government.

Other aspects of Roman society also suffered. The cost of education increased, so poor Romans found it harder to become educated. In addition, distributing news across the large empire became more difficult. People grew less informed about civic matters.

The Senate becomes Ruled by the First Triumvirate



Three men, Pompey, Crassus, and Julius Caesar, combined their influence to seize power in Rome.

Pompey was an extremely popular general who defeated numerous enemies of the oligarchy, including a rebellion in Spain and a war against pirates in the Mediterranean. Pompey had a loyal private army, but proved politically incapable of delivering on his promises of land and bounties.

Crassus had made himself the wealthiest man in Rome by outlawing certain Roman citizens by putting their names on lists and putting a price on their heads, wanted dead or alive. When these wanted citizens' property was confiscated and auctioned off by the state, Crassus exploited the proscriptions to acquire perhaps as much as 20% of the property in the city of Rome and countless estates throughout Italy. He used his wealth to buy influence in the Senate.

Caesar began his career as a young aristocrat who excelled at manipulation through public generosity and became the darling of the masses by the late 60s BC. In the Senate, he delivered key legislation and received for his effort a 10-year extraordinary command in Gaul, where news of his success would cause his popularity to grow even more.

Intense rivalry existed between these three men, but so long as they maintained their illegal political association, the senatorial aristocracy was powerless to thwart them. By working together, they could essentially command the Senate.