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Source: An excerpt of a historical text written by Priscus, Roman ambassador to the Huns, 449 CE.

Note: Priscus is reporting a conversation he had with a former Roman citizen whose land had been conquered by the Huns.

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[He] ... considered his new life ... better than his old life among the Romans, and the reasons he gave were as follows: ... The condition of [Roman] subjects in time of peace [is worse than war] ... taxes are very severe, and unprincipled men inflict injuries on others ... A [wealthy lawbreaker] ... is not punished for his injustice, while a poor man ... undergoes the legal penalty The climax of misery is to have to pay in order to obtain justice.... [He said] that the laws and constitution of the Romans were fair, but deplored that the governors, not possessing the spirit of former generations, were ruining the state.

Document Analysis

1. Who was Priscus? Do you think his description is reliable? Why?
2. Why were some Romans happy about being conquered by the Huns?
3. What does the person talking to Priscus mean when he says, "The climax of misery is to have to pay ... for justice"?
4. How can you use this document to help explain what caused the decline of the Roman Empire?