

THE HISTORY OF ATTLA & THE HUNS



E. A. Thompson

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BOOKS



A HISTORY OF ATTILA AND THE HUNS

BY
E. A. THOMPSON

PREFACE

I SHOULD like to begin this book by acknowledging my indebtedness to Dr. Norman H. Baynes. He helped me by reading successive drafts of my manuscript, by lending me books which I should not otherwise have been able to obtain, and by spending an altogether disproportionate amount of his time in discussing with me several problems which arose from my work. As a very slight return for his great kindness and patience, I would here offer him my gratitude and respect.

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INTRODUCTION

A STUDENT of the later Roman Empire who undertakes to write the history of the Huns must start with the admission that he is offering his readers a story that has neither a beginning nor an end, neither a head nor a tail. Every such history should begin with the question, Are the Huns to be identified with the Hsiung-nu of whom the Chinese annals speak so often? The identification has been discussed endlessly since De Guignes first suggested it in the eighteenth century, but, without a knowledge of Chinese, one can do no more than say that most, but not all, competent authorities incline to accept it. On the other hand, the most recent inquirer¹ has built up what seems to the layman's eye a very strong case against the identification, and indeed many who have sought to follow the discussion must often have brought Bury's words to mind: 'It is a mortal leap from the kingdom of the northern Zenghi to the steppes of Russia, and he who takes it is supported on the wings of fancy, not on the ground of fact.'² At any rate, until the experts reach some agreement the student of the later Roman Empire is best advised to say nothing of the Hsiung-nu.

At the end of our story we should discuss the history of what is called the 'Attila legend'. Why was the Scourge of God never forgotten? Why did the Eastern Romans call by the name of Huns each successive wave of ferocious barbarians who descended upon them from the north-east?³ Why do we ourselves, when we wish to vilify our enemies, apply to them the name of those poor nomads who lived in conditions of terrible hardship and poverty fifteen hundred years ago? An answer to these questions would imply a knowledge of Germanic saga and of medieval and modern literature to which the present writer can lay no claim. The task is not simplified by the fact that much of the discussion of the Attila legend has been conducted by Hungarian scholars in their native tongue: and Hungarian, like Chinese, lies beyond the powers of many classical students.

In the present book, then, we must content ourselves, as some

¹ Maenchen-Helfen, pp. 222-43.

² Ed. of Gibbon, vol. iii, Appendix 6; but Bury later inclined to accept the identification: cf. his *Later Roman Empire*², i, p. 101.

³ J. Dalkó, p. 479 f.; Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, i, pp. 28-9, ii, pp. 199-204.

of the Romans did, by beginning the history of the Huns not in Mongolia but in the basin of the river Kuban, and by confessing that nothing is known of them for certain until, towards the close of the fourth century A.D., they fell upon the Ostrogoths. Our story will end with the collapse of the empire of Attila and with the immediate aftermath of that event. True, Huns are still found fighting in the armies of Justinian, but their significance in the sixth century is slight, and they were soon to be absorbed into the general population of Europe or replaced by other so-called Huns who were constantly streaming westwards across the steppe. Of Etzel, as of the Hsiung-nu, we shall have nothing to say.

Within these limitations then the plan of this book is as follows. In the first chapter a brief account is given of the principal sources from which we derive our knowledge of the Huns. Chapters II and IV-VI are entirely narrative and descriptive. They contain an account of the Huns' diplomatic relations with the Romans and of their victories and defeats in war. This is a story which has been told before, but the available English accounts are not altogether satisfactory. Gibbon's chapters on the fifth century are far from being among the best in his *Decline and Fall*. Hodgkin, in his *Italy and Her Invaders*, has written the fullest English history of the Huns, but his work, though of great value, is now old, and renewed study of the texts may elicit some facts which he passed by. More recent writers, such as Bury, the authors of the *Cambridge Medieval History*, and so on, have dealt with the Huns at greater or lesser length, but their purpose was to tell the history of the Roman Empire, a subject to which the career of Attila is only incidental. These chapters then do not seem to be entirely superfluous; at any rate, they contain an attempt to tell the story in considerably greater detail than will be found elsewhere. The reader should be warned, however, that the emphasis given to the various events recounted in these chapters is not such as the writer would have desired: it is entirely conditioned by the varying amount of evidence at our disposal. Thus, although we can give a full account of the inconclusive diplomatic mission of Maximinus, we can say very little of the great invasion of 447 and nothing at all of its causes.

The remainder of the book is devoted to an attempt to explain the narrative contained in these chapters. Why did the Huns

act as they did? How were they able to accomplish their impressive deeds? What sort of people were they? In an effort to answer these questions I have devoted Chapters III and VII to an attempt to analyse the material civilization and social organization of the Huns. It becomes apparent at once that the society which Ammianus' informants observed had changed into something very different by the time Priscus visited it. If we wish to understand the society which produced Attila we must understand how that society had come to be what it was when he became its leader. No human community is, or ever has been, entirely static: the society of the Huns was more dynamic than most. No attempt has been made hitherto, I believe, to describe in detail the social history of the Huns, and it is therefore to be feared that the reader will find even more imperfections in Chapters III and VII than elsewhere in the book.

We next seek to understand why the Romans behaved as they did in their dealings with the Huns. Under what conditions was Roman foreign policy operating with regard to the new invaders? What judgement are we to pass on the respective policies of Theodosius II (aided by his minister Chrysaphius) and of Marcian? Modern historians from Tillemont and Gibbon to Bury and Ernst Stein have consistently condemned Theodosius as a weak and feeble prince and have praised Marcian as a tower of strength. But if we grasp the nature of Hun society, if we bear in mind some of the more obvious social divisions existing within the East Roman Empire, and if, further, we realize that Priscus was an author with strong prejudices, then I believe that we shall come to a different conclusion. Theodosius guided the Eastern Empire through one of the most violent storms of the fifth century in the best and most economical way open to him. It was Marcian's good fortune that, when he acceded to the throne, circumstances had altered and an entirely new situation had come into being. My excuse for adding this chapter is that, interesting as the Huns are in themselves, they are even more interesting in their relations with the Romans. And the present book is intended primarily for students of Roman history.

Finally, the reader will find in the last chapter a few general observations on the Huns and a tentative estimate of the significance for European history of their appearance on the Danube and the Rhine.

I SOURCES

WHEN the Huns first crossed over the Straits of Kerch into the Crimea and into the stream of European history they were illiterate. When they finally vanished in the turmoil of the sixth and seventh centuries, they were illiterate still.¹ The songs which Priscus heard them singing when the torches had been lit in the banqueting-hall, songs in which they extolled the warlike deeds of Attila, might in time have produced an epic record of some of their achievements. Certainly the Ostrogoths, among whom they lived for so long, remembered their own early history in a cloudy fashion 'in priscis eorum carminibus pene storico ritu', and used to sing of the deeds of their ancestors to the strains of the harp.² But the Huns vanished so quickly that if such epics began to develop among them they were never written down and did not survive the society which sang them. In fact, the Huns appear to have remained ignorant of their early history and could tell nothing of it to the Roman travellers who came among them.

I

But primitive peoples can leave behind them other records than epic poems and literary histories. Those scholars, for instance, who try to reconstruct the early history of the Germanic nations would be gravely handicapped were it not for the archaeological remains which have survived on old German sites. But Hun society by its very nature was such that we can never expect to discover many traces of it in the archaeological record. The difficulties of working metals on a large scale in the conditions of steppe nomadism are overwhelming. The nomad could only carry with him a limited supply of his raw material—whether metal, wood, or textile—as he rode from pasture to pasture. He could obtain an abundant quantity of his raw material only if he settled down at the source of supply,

¹ Procopius, *BG.* viii. 19. 8 γραμμάτων παντάπασιν Οὐννοι ἀνήκοοί τε καὶ ἀμυλέττητοι ἐς τότε εἰσι καὶ οὐτε γραμματιστὴν τινα ἔχουσιν οὐτε τῶν περὶ τὰ γράμματα πόνον συναίξεται αὐτοῖς τὰ παιδία.

² Jordanes, *Get.* iv. 28, v. 43: so too among the earlier Germans celebration in song *canis* *canis* *canis* Tacitus, *German.* ii. 3, cf. *Ann.* ii. 88. 4. On the H

if, that is, he detached himself altogether from the society of which he formed part. The manufactured commodities, therefore, which the steppe society used were for the most part acquired by trade or plunder, and were not the handiwork of the nomads themselves.¹ 'I do not think', writes Minns (p. 56), 'that the nomads worked metals themselves. Metal-work, if not all art-work, was for slaves, tributaries, and neighbours to supply', and it is certainly difficult to imagine one of Attila's henchmen spending his time on artistic metal-working. There is no inherent reason, however, why a nomad should not be able to carry about with him a few tools and a limited quantity of his raw material. Indeed, he has much freer access to materials that are not available everywhere than has the smith of a settled society. The point is that his products must of necessity be very few in number and can at most leave only a faint trace in the archaeological record.

It is true that several objects have been found which archaeologists ascribe with confidence to the nomadic peoples who swarmed into Europe in antiquity and early medieval times. Unhappily it does not seem to be possible in the present state of our knowledge to say whether these objects were all imported into the steppe, and, if not, whether any of them should be attributed specifically to the Huns. Professor Alföldi produced in 1932 a considerable volume entitled *Funde aus der Hunnenzeit und ihre ethnische Sonderung*, in which he claimed that at least four groups of objects can be regarded as exclusively Hunnic. In 1935 another Hungarian scholar, Zoltán de Takács (p. 177 n.), declared that 'the Hunnic objects discussed by Alföldi are in reality late Roman export goods known also from Untersiebenbrunn in Austria, Airan in Normandy, Southern Russia and Kudiät Zateur'. Recent discoveries and further study of the objects available to Alföldi have introduced such uncertainty into the subject² that even an expert archaeologist, if he were to undertake to write of the Huns, could scarcely make any profitable use of the finds. Certainly, no use will be made of them by one who has never inspected the kettle found at Dossa in Little Wallachia,³ and to whom the Pécsüzög and Nagyszekszos finds are only names.

¹ Cf. Lattimore, pp. 70, 329.

² See Werner, pp. 236-8; Maenchen-Helfen, pp. 239 ff.; cf. Minns, p. 72.

³ For this see Nestor and Plopsor, pp. 178 ff.

Similarly, since the Huns minted no coins, it might reasonably be expected that the numismatic evidence would be slight. This is indeed the case, but from the distribution of Roman coins found in some of the territories once ruled by the nomads it does seem possible to draw one or two inferences. These inferences, however, are of a tentative character and serve, if at all, only to confirm an occasional conclusion already suggested by the literary evidence.

II

It is clear then that at present the history of the Huns depends exclusively on what we are told by Greek and Roman travellers and historians.

It may well be that, when the Huns began to expand westwards in the seventies of the fourth century, Ammianus Marcellinus had already decided to write the history of his age. At any rate, when he composed his thirty-first book about the year 395, he found it necessary to take account of the new-comers and to offer his readers a description of them. But he had no literary authorities to draw upon, for no account of the history of the seventies of the century, comparable in scale with Ammianus', had been published before his own. Therefore we need have no hesitation in supposing that, as he himself hints,¹ his description of the Huns is something more than a re-hash of an earlier account.

The description is in fact justly famous and well worthy of the great historian who wrote it. Its defect—if that be the right term—is that, since Ammianus himself in all probability had never in his life laid eyes upon a Hun, he could not rely here upon his own observations. The chapter therefore summarizes information which the historian had obtained at second hand from military officers, civilian officials, and others who had come in contact with the strange new barbarians. These informants were not infallible, and, although Ammianus doubtless relied on witnesses as trustworthy as those who supplied him with the information contained in the rest of his history, he is not entirely free from error in his account of the Huns (xxxi. 2). To take a notorious example, he tells us that the Huns ate raw meat which they warmed a little by carrying it between their saddles and their horses' backs as they rode on their journeys.

¹ xxxi. 2. 1.

Although this story was long believed and is also told of the Tartars of Tamburlaine's day, it is now known to be false. This is an honest mistake, however, for the historian's informants were misled by a deceptive custom of the steppe horsemen, the nature of which has only been elucidated in comparatively recent times.¹

Ammianus has been accused of a more sinister type of error. Since he loves to scatter throughout his work phrases and sentences taken from earlier writers, and since such *flosculi* occur in the chapter in question, it has been concluded that he 'adhered to the traditional picture of the Scythians and northern barbarians in general. He transferred to them not only the stock epithets; he took also the primitive traits which the Stoics found ennobling, and used them as evidence of Hunnish savagery.'² Thus he attributes to the Huns qualities which Pompeius Trogus had applied to the Scythians,³ and even ascribes to them a trait which Livy had given to the Africans.⁴ All this cannot be denied, but what conclusion are we to draw from it? Let us beware of blaming upon the historian the fact that many nomadic tribes have many customs and attributes in common. Ammianus is a candid writer, and where his information failed him, as in his effort to solve the problem of the origin of the Huns, he is not afraid to say so frankly. Moreover, he took the utmost pains to procure accurate information on the various peoples and provinces that he describes elsewhere in his book, and he included the results of his extensive reading as well as of his personal observations. There is no reason whatever to suppose that his account of the Huns is a solitary exception and that here alone he was indifferent to the accuracy of his narrative. The *flosculi* may or may not deserve criticism on literary and stylistic grounds: to the historian in this case they are immaterial. The portrait of the Huns which emerges from his chapter, although incomplete, as we shall see, is highly vivid and consistent, and Rostovtzeff is justified in calling it 'eine

¹ See Franz von Schwarz, *Turkestan, die Wiege der indogermanischen Völker*, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1900, p. 89, n. 1. The story is also told of the early Hungarians, a fact which still occasions pain to some Hungarians: see A. Solymossy, 'La Légende de "la viande amortie sous la selle"', *Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie*, xxx, 1937, pp. 134-40.

² Maenchen-Helfen, p. 234; cf. Alföldi, *Gnomon*, ix, 1933, p. 565.

³ Maenchen-Helfen, p. 234, n. 76.

⁴ Amm. xxxi. 2. 11 'ad omnem auram incidentis spei novae perquam mobiles'; Livy, xxix. 3. 13 'gente ad omnem auram spei mobili atque infida'.

meisterhafte, ganz realistische Sittenschilderung'.¹ In the present book Ammianus' statements will be accepted as valid, except in the few instances (like that of the raw meat) where they can be proved false.

III

The information contained in Ammianus xxxi. 2 relates to Hun society as it existed between c. 376, when they first came in contact with the Ostrogoths, and c. 395, when Ammianus published the last instalment of his history. The first traveller whom we know to have published an account of a personal visit to the Huns is Olympiodorus of Egyptian Thebes. He served on an embassy sent out from Constantinople to the Hun king Donatus about the year 412, and when he came to write the history of his age some years later, he included in it a description of his mission and, apparently, an excursus on the Huns (frag. 18). The loss of Olympiodorus' work is a disaster for our knowledge of the nomads. He may indeed have displayed marked prejudices in narrating some controversial episodes of internal Roman history, but he had a passion for statistics and for geographical and chronological accuracy, and possessed a keen eye for social distinctions. Even in his meagre fragments we can detect traces of his precise terminology. He seems to have distinguished carefully between the military commander of a confederacy of barbarian tribes and the military leader of an individual tribe, calling the former *φύλαρχος* and the latter *ῥήξ*: the *ῥήγες* of the Huns will present us with a problem later on (p. 58 below). Furthermore, Olympiodorus was intimately acquainted with the affairs of the Western Roman Empire and knew the Latin language. These are facts of importance, for during the years covered by his work (407–25) the Huns devoted more of their unwelcome attention to the Western Empire than to the Eastern. It is clear then that his book, if it had survived, would have been of fundamental value.² However, we need not merely be content with the brief paraphrase of his description of the Huns which Photius has preserved for us. Zosimus and the ecclesiastical historian Sozomen fortunately made extensive use of his work, so that parts of their

¹ *Skythien und der Bosporus* (Berlin, 1931), p. 103.

² For further information about this interesting author see *Classical Quarterly*, xxxviii, 1944, pp. 43–52, and Haedicke, P.-W. s.v.

narratives are of extreme importance, coming as they do from so talented a source. We should remember, however, that Zosimus also made use of the history of Eunapius, who was endowed with more than a due share of human frailties. We must therefore be careful to distinguish between those parts of Zosimus' work which are based on Eunapius and those which paraphrase Olympiodorus.¹ Of Eunapius himself we need say nothing here: would that we could avoid him throughout.

IV

The last visitor to the Huns with whom we are concerned here is incomparably the most important for the study of Attila, but to understand the work of Priscus of Panium we must be clear as to one or two facts relating to the circumstances in which the late Greek historians produced their works. Their books were intended to be read only by the narrow circle of the educated, and, for reasons which we shall indicate later (p. 19 below), these educated readers expected certain canons of composition to be observed. Thus the conventional prose style, at the time when Priscus wrote, insisted on the avoidance of the expressions of the spoken tongue. In particular, masses of figures and technical terms of all kinds were to be excluded as being ruinous to a good style. It is Olympiodorus' merit to have discarded this convention and to have spoken boldly, for instance, about the *ῥῆγες* of the Huns. Unhappily Priscus did not follow him, and has thereby introduced an element of vagueness into his work where we should have liked him to be more specific.

On the other hand, citations of classical authors were regarded as an essential quality of a good style, and here Priscus gave his readers full measure. When his information failed him—and this was particularly the case with the movements of distant tribes and with the course of military operations²—he fell back on his reading and introduced into his work phrases and sentences culled from his favourite authors which were designed to tide him over his difficulties. It does not follow that every borrowed phrase to be found in his work—and a thorough search would reveal dozens—conceals a fact or series of facts which the historian was unable to discover from his informants

¹ Zosimus begins to use Olympiodorus as his source at v. 26.

² Moravcsik, *Ung. Jbb.* x, 1930, pp. 53 ff.; Thompson, *CQ.* xxxix, 1945, pp. 92-4.

and such documents as he was able to use. Nevertheless, the accounts of the siege of Naissus, the cause of the movements of the steppe tribes of the Saraguri, and so on (frags. 1 b, 30), show us that his work contained weaknesses. The reader will notice the sharp contrast with the methods of Ammianus. A *flosculus* in Ammianus' writings is merely an indication of his stylistic ambitions: he knew what he wanted to say, but he did not know how to express it and went to Livy or Tacitus for help. Priscus, on the other hand, quoted Herodotus or Thucydides when in fact he had nothing to say at all.

Some of these *flosculi* have misled recent historians. Thus there is a widespread view that in the fourth century and the early years of the fifth it was not the Huns as a whole who pushed westwards and subdued the Goths, but only their 'royal' families. Alföldi, for instance, writes: 'Hier (i.e. in Wallachia in 380) kommt der Völkerstrom zum Stillstand; nur der Herrscherstamm schiebt sich dreissig Jahre später noch weiter in westlicher Richtung vor und kommt durch diesen Vorstoss in unmittelbare Berührung mit dem Weströmischen Reich.'¹ Now the only evidence for such a view is the recurrence of the phrase of βασιλῆσι Σκύθαι in Priscus. It is exceedingly hazardous to base such a theory on this phrase. It is, of course, a mere *flosculus* taken indirectly from Herodotus, and a glance at Zosimus (iv. 20. 3) will show that it was Eunapius who first suggested the identification of the Huns of central Europe with the βασιλῆσι Σκύθαι of Herodotus (iv. 20). That the phrase should be found in Priscus is merely one of several indications of his literary debt to Eunapius and Herodotus. As used by Priscus, the phrase refers to Attila and Bleda with or without their great lieutenants, and is never used as a collective term for all the Huns in central Europe.

Again, Priscus' use of the term 'Scythian' has introduced no little confusion into modern works, but here, I believe, the truth was found by Bury.² Bury pointed out that there is a distinction between Priscus' use of the terms 'Scythian' and 'Hun'. Scythian was a generic term for all nomadic nations, and, as a great many different nomadic nations were united under the sovereignty of Attila, it was a very convenient term to apply to his subjects: the Huns were Scythians, but all

¹ *Menschen die Geschichte machten*, i, p. 229, cf. p. 230.

² *Later Roman Empire*, ed. 1 (1889), i, p. 223; the remark does not recur in ed. 2.

Scythians were not Huns. Most scholars, however, reject this distinction and believe that the term Hun is used indiscriminately for any northern nomadic barbarian. But this shows a misunderstanding of the canons of historiography in the time when Priscus was writing. At that date the term 'Hun' had not yet been sanctified by use in the classical historians. It was still a new and barbarous name which no one would introduce into his work if he could avoid it. Later on, when the works of Priscus and the like became classics in their turn, we find historians using the word 'Hun' precisely as Priscus uses the word 'Scythian': it had then become a term sanctified by long usage and was familiar to every reader, and so could be employed in place of such new and uncouth names as Turk, Khazar, Petcheneg, and the like.¹ We must assume then that when Priscus says 'Hun' he means it, and accordingly we cannot follow those numerous scholars who believe that the Acatziri were not Huns and that Edeco was a German, despite Priscus' statements to the contrary.²

From what sources did Priscus receive his information? We do not know whether he was able to use written authorities for the earlier period covered by his book. Evagrius (ii. 1; cf. v. 24) tells us that the history of Marcian's reign was written by 'others' in addition to Priscus, and one or several of these unknown historians may have published before him. At any rate, his accurate knowledge of the many treaties made with the Huns would seem to show that he was able to draw on official records for information about them. He might also have derived more or less valuable information from the countless speeches, panegyrics, pamphlets, historical and other poems, and the like, which were turned out on so many occasions. But on the whole it is safest to assume that Priscus gathered most of his information painfully from interviews with participants in the events which he describes, in so far as he was not an eyewitness himself. Thus Bigilas, the interpreter, must have been his source for the highly secret conversations between Chrysaphius and Edeco, whom the eunuch tried to induce to murder Attila; we know that Bigilas was present at these

¹ I am glad to note that this conclusion has already been reached by Reynolds and Lopez, p. 48.

² Priscus, pp. 341. 16; 291. 4. If Edeco was a German, why had Chrysaphius to speak to him through Bigilas, the interpreter of the Hunnic language?

conversations and that he afterwards spoke of the matter to the historian.¹ If we grant that oral sources supplied him with most of his information it follows that we must treat his references to the history of the far West with especial caution.² The famous account of his own journey to Attila, of course, falls into a category of its own. This account is so detailed and minute that few will disagree with Hodgkin's assertion (p. 60, n. 1) that Priscus was jotting down notes from day to day and almost from hour to hour while the embassy was still in progress. It would have been all but impossible for him to have remembered the incidents of the journey so vividly and in such detail had he not written down copious notes on the spot.

It may be that Bury has overstated the virtues of Priscus when he claims him as the greatest historical writer of the period.³ The fact that so few chronological indications have survived in his fragments is a sinister sign. His lack of exact specification in the matter of Greek renderings of Roman official titles, his more or less inadequate geographical data, his incompetence as a military historian, the fact that he approved, as we shall see, of the disastrous social organization of the later Empire—all these features of his work combine to give the *Byzantine History* a lower place in our estimation than the *Ἰστορία Συγγραφή* of Olympiodorus. None the less, his merits are striking. There is no need to emphasize the vigour and lucidity of his narrative. He is, as Bury says, a master of narrative. Nor need we dwell on his qualities in expounding the course of East Roman diplomacy, or on the vast mass of reliable facts which his work contained when it existed in its entirety. The history of eastern Europe in the middle of the fifth century is a subject of great difficulty: without the fragments of Priscus we should be lost. Other writers tell us isolated facts pertaining to secular affairs in that age: Priscus alone gives us a history.

V

Apart from the chroniclers, all later historians who supply us with information of interest about the Huns derived their knowledge from the work of Priscus. Hence they require little comment here.

¹ Priscus, pp. 287. 19; 297. 26; see p. 100, n. 3 below.

² Cf. N. H. Baynes, *Journal of Roman Studies*, xii, 1922, p. 225.

³ Ed. of Gibbon, vol. iii, Appendix 1, p. 483; *Later Roman Empire*², vol. ii, p. 418.

Published soon after 476—frag. 42 could not have been written until Basiliscus had fallen—Priscus' book won immediate fame even in the West. It was heavily drawn upon by Cassiodorus, the primary source of Jordanes. The latter names Priscus half a dozen times, and Mommsen¹ has well analysed his debt to him. He points out that Jordanes has nothing to say about Attila which is not taken from Priscus, and that there are no traces of Priscus in him save those which refer to Attila. The first passage of the *Getica* (§§ 178–228), which is taken from Priscus, contains a sketch of Attila's character and a narrative of his expedition to Gaul, while the second (§§ 254–63) tells of Attila's death and burial and of the dissolution of his empire. Mommsen has admirably illustrated the superiority of Jordanes' style in these parts of his work—the vivid characterization of the Huns, the beautiful song sung at Attila's funeral, the scrupulous motivization of events, the care with which conjecture is said to be such, the admirable *sententiae*, the happy similes. When we reach these two passages of Jordanes' work, says Mommsen, 'ex barbarico iam videmur in civilem vitam rediisse et pro infantia monachi Moesiaci humanos sermones exaudire'. This praise, of course, is only relative: Mommsen is thinking of Jordanes' achievements in the other parts of his work. Even in the passages which are based on Priscus Jordanes displays his genius for misunderstanding the most straightforward narrative his source could supply to him.

In the Eastern Empire John Malalas was among those who knew and valued the work of Priscus, but he had read it to such purpose that he believed Attila to have been, not a Hun, but a Gepid.² Evagrius pays tribute to the accuracy of Priscus' account of Attila's career,³ and although he says that the period was covered by other writers, too, it was to Priscus that he went for most of his facts pertaining to the secular history of the mid-fifth century.⁴ Unfortunately, the epithets which he uses of Priscus' style are applied by him indiscriminately to so many other writers (including himself) that we do not know what specific features of the work appealed to him particularly. Finally, John of Antioch used the *Byzantine History* as one of his

¹ Ed. of Jordanes, p. xxxiv f.; but I see no reason for believing that *Get.* iii. 21 on the Scirefennae is from Priscus. Mommsen denies, for unconvincing reasons, that the account of Bleda's death in *Get.* xxxv. 181 is derived from Priscus.

² p. 358. 8, Bonn; cf. *Chron. Pasch.* p. 587. 9, Bonn: but see p. 20 below.

³ ii. 16 ἀκριβέστατος, cf. i. 17.

⁴ ii. 1; v. 24.

sources, and three of his fragments overlap three of the fragments of Priscus. This is fortunate, for John simply transcribed his authorities' works, so that he preserves the actual words of Priscus, and thereby helps us to solve an important chronological problem.¹

What is truly surprising is the fact that Procopius went elsewhere for his knowledge—such as it is—of the mid-fifth century,² a fact which has had an unfortunate effect on some parts of his work. Thus he places the great Hun advance of *c.* 376 *after* the settlement of the Vandals in Africa, and he dates Attila's siege of Aquileia *after* the death of Aetius, which, as Gibbon justly says, is 'an inexcusable mistake'.³ The student of the Huns can hope for little help from Procopius.

Such, in brief, are our main authorities for reconstructing the history of Attila and the Huns. It is to be hoped that, after further study, the archaeologists will be able to contribute appreciably more to our knowledge.⁴ But it may be urged that we do not merely require to be told whether such and such an article was used by the Huns. We also want to know whether it was *made* by them, and, if so, where the raw material came from, in what circumstances the Huns acquired it, and in what conditions they worked it into the finished article. Even in the present state of our knowledge, however, we should indeed be fortunate if we were as well acquainted with the other barbarian invaders of the fifth century as we are with Attila and the Huns.

¹ See Appendix E.

² The contrary is argued unconvincingly by J. Haury, ed. of Procopius, vol. i, pp. vii–viii.

³ Procopius, *BG.* viii. 5. 10; *BV.* iii. 4. 30; cf. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, vol. iii, p. 468, n. 50.

⁴ Alföldi, *Gnomon*, ix, 1933, p. 563 n., has promised us a new volume of *Hunnenstudien*.

II

THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY HISTORY OF THE HUNS BEFORE ATTLA

I

‘The nation of the Huns, scarcely known to ancient documents, dwelt beyond the Maeotic marshes beside the frozen ocean, and surpassed every extreme of ferocity.’¹

AMMIANUS makes no attempt to derive the Huns from the depths of Asia. He offers no wild equation of them with any of the barbarous peoples who had been known long ago. In the course of his wide reading he had rarely, if indeed ever, come across their name. He may have had his private view as to their origin, but, if so, he could base it on no satisfactory evidence, and he therefore says simply that they dwelt in that region in which they had been living when they first became known to history. For him their story began in eastern Europe, north or north-east of the Sea of Azov, and they lived near the Northern Ocean. Why they left this home he does not even conjecture.

Where Ammianus had feared to tread, Eunapius did not hesitate to rush in. There is a story, professing to explain the first appearance of the Huns, which can be read in every age of East Roman historical literature. It is to be found in Sozomen and Zosimus, in Priscus, and, after him, in Jordanes. It reappears in Procopius and Agathias. Its course was not stopped by the Arab invasions. It may be read in Simeon the Logothete, both in the Slavonic version and in the Greek versions of Leo Grammaticus and Theodosius of Melitene. Thence it passes to Cedrenus and is finally found at the beginning of the fourteenth century in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulos.² Few stories of equal value have had so long a life.

According to this tale, the Goths and the Huns had long lived side by side without either knowing of the other's existence. They were separated by the Straits of Kerch, and each nation thought that there was no land over the horizon. But one day it happened that a heifer belonging to the Huns was stung by

¹ Amm. xxxi. 2. 1.

² See Vasiliev, pp. 24 ff.

a gadfly and fled through the marshy water to the opposite shore. Its herdsman followed it, and, finding land where it was believed that none existed, he came back and told his fellow countrymen. The story offered an alternative. According to the second version, some Hunnic huntsmen in pursuit of a stag were led across the straits by the flight of their quarry. They were amazed by the mild climate and fertile soil of the land to which they had come, and returned with the good news of its existence to their fellow Huns. Whether a heifer or a stag were the guilty party, the Huns soon after crossed the straits in force and attacked the Gothic inhabitants of the Crimea.¹

Now this story originated in the history of Eunapius, and we are fortunate in possessing a fragment of the part of his work where he was discussing the origin of the Huns.² He states frankly that no one can give any clear account of their origin or of the country in which they were living when they set out on the conquest of Europe. In these circumstances, he says, he had recourse at first to τὰ παλαιά, and gave as plausible an account as he could at the beginning of his work. Later, however, he revised his opinion in the light of τὰ ἀπαγγελλόμενα, and this second account he believed to be the more satisfactory. What are we to understand by these terms? Vasiliev (p. 24 f.) is too kind to Eunapius, for he paraphrases τὰ παλαιά as 'the information about the Huns given by ancient writers from whom he borrowed data, in his opinion, reliable'. Alas, τὰ παλαιά means no such thing, as Vasiliev himself has enabled us to see. When Eunapius turned to τὰ παλαιά, it was not the historians to whom he had recourse, but the poets. Vasiliev (p. 29 f.) draws attention to a sentence which occurs in Sozomen's version of the story: 'And when it chanced that a heifer ran across the marsh stung by a gadfly, its herdsman followed it.' The word οἰστροπήξ, 'stung by a gadfly', is taken from Aeschylus in his story of Io, who had herself crossed this very strait 'stung by a gadfly'. We must agree with Vasiliev that the story is merely an adaptation of the old tale of Io as Aeschylus had told it.³ Eunapius then had placed at the beginning of his work an invention of his own to explain the first appearance of

¹ Zosimus, iv. 20 (a slightly different version); Sozomen, vi. 37; Jordanes, *Get.* xxiv. 123-5 (Priscus is expressly mentioned as his source); Procopius, *BC.* viii. 5. 7 ff.; Agathias, v. 11 κατὰ τοῦτο δὴ τὸ ἐρμολόμενον, &c.

² Frag. 41; Vasiliev, l.c.

³ Sozomen, vi. 37. 3; Aeschylus, *PV.* 681, cf. 729 ff.

the Huns, and there it remained and was read, although he himself subsequently changed his opinion in the light of τὰ ἀπαγγελλόμενα, the reports about the Huns which later reached him. It would be unnecessary to add that the tale throws no light on the Huns' attack on the Crimea, were it not that some scholars assume from it that the nomads crossed over the Straits of Kerch in winter when the water was frozen.¹ The only legitimate conclusion we can draw is that, even in the earliest years of the fifth century, no one knew precisely how the Huns had come to attack the Ostrogoths.

From later versions of Eunapius' story we can see that he made several attempts to identify the Huns with various peoples known in antiquity. Thus Zosimus says on his authority that we must identify the Huns either with the 'Royal Scyths' or with the 'Snub-nosed men', both mentioned by Herodotus, or else we must simply suppose that they originated in Asia and crossed thence to Europe.² Philostorgius reports an additional speculation which we can scarcely doubt is also drawn from Eunapius. He is inclined to equate the Huns with the Nebroi of old, whom Herodotus had mentioned as an all but mythical people living at the extreme edge of Scythia.³ Of Eunapius we can say at any rate that he did his utmost for his readers. At least four suggestions as to the origin of the Huns—three of them based on Herodotus—were offered by him, and those readers who were not satisfied by at least one of them must have been, by Eunapius' historical standards, very difficult persons indeed.

The Eunapian theories, although they dominated later thought on the subject, did not entirely exclude other speculations. Quite apart from them stands the view of Orosius. He mentions the Huns as living in the neighbourhood of the Caucasus, and he believes that the reason for their descent upon the Goths and the Romans was no mystery but a thoroughly obvious and well-deserved punishment for the sins of the world. The Huns had long been shut up in inaccessible mountains,

¹ e.g. Vasiliev, p. 30; L. Schmidt, *Geschichte*, pp. 251 ff. There is a considerable literature in Hungarian on this story which is inaccessible to me: see *Byzantion*, vi, 1931, p. 679.

² Zosimus, iv. 20. 3; the βασιλικοὶ Σκύθαι, Herodotus, iv. 20. 1 f., &c.; the σινοὶ, id. iv. 23. 2.

³ Philostorgius, ix. 17 (p. 123. 12 ff.); Herodotus, iv. 17 and 105. For Eunapius and Philostorgius see Bidez's ed. of the latter, p. cxxxviii.

but God sent them forth as a punishment for our iniquities.¹ Many Christians must have believed likewise, but a greater Christian than Orosius went back to Herodotus for information about the Huns. Jerome equates them with those Scythians who, according to Herodotus, held the East captive for twenty years and exacted an annual tribute from Egypt and Ethiopia.² Procopius added to the cloud of conjectures by proposing that the new invaders were no others than the Cimmerians.³ This was exact historical inquiry in comparison with what was to come, for as time went on, scholarship went to more and more desperate lengths in its effort to solve the mystery. It was a small matter that Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos thought that Attila was the king of the Avars and that his conquests resulted in the foundation of Venice.⁴ But what of the report which reached Jordanes, that one tribe of the Huns at least had once been slaves in Britain—or some other island—and had been redeemed for the price of a single horse? Unfortunately Jordanes was unable to find a written account of this.⁵ Even more curious was the view of Constantine Manasses, himself a poet. According to Manasses, Sesostris, king of Egypt, made allies of the Huns, and, after subduing Asia, gave them the land of Assyria and changed their name to 'Parthians'.⁶ This train of thought was pushed to its logical conclusion by John Tzetzes in the twelfth century: according to this scholar the Huns fought in the Trojan war, for Achilles had come to Troy leading an army of Huns, Bulgars, and Myrmidons.⁷

Leaving aside these later fancies, let us return to the earlier speculations, for they call for some comment. Did Eunapius and his followers really believe that the Huns were identical with the Nebroi, the Simoi, and the others? Did one of the most eminent bishops of the fifth century, whom we shall discuss presently (p. 36), really believe that the Huns ate their parents? It may be doubted. Greek inquirers at that time did not consider it their duty to venture out into the steppe and discover the exact truth about the ferocious barbarians who roamed there. An Ammianus or an Olympiodorus might have some-

¹ *Hist.* i. 2. 45; vii. 33. 9 f.

² Jerome, *Ep.* lxxvii. 8; Herodotus, i. 103 ff. Contrast the restraint of Ambrose in Migne, *PL.* xv. 1898.

³ *De adm. Imp.*, p. 123, Bonn.

⁴ *Ed.* Bonn, p. 27. 566, 574 f.

⁵ *Alleg. Iliad.* proleg. 427.

⁶ *BG.* viii. 5. 1.

⁷ *Get.* v. 38.

what higher standards than their contemporaries; in general, however, neither the historians nor their public demanded the precise truth in descriptions of the northern nomads. But every writer considered it his duty to display his knowledge of the classics which were the heritage of his class. It was their possession of the classical authors which distinguished the educated class from the other inhabitants of the world. 'You know well', writes Libanius to the Caesar Julian in 358, 'that if anyone extinguishes our literature, we are put on a level with the barbarians', and a century later the same sentiments are current among the well-to-do. Sidonius writes to a correspondent: 'When the grades of office have been taken away from us, by which the highest used to be distinguished from the lowest, then the only indication of nobility will be a knowledge of literature.'¹ To equate the Huns with the Massagetae, to believe of them what Herodotus had believed of the nomads of old, to decorate one's account of their wars with the phrases of Thucydides, was not a sign of childish credulity or indescribable stupidity. It was an indication that the writer belonged to that social class which Sidonius equates with the community of Rome, 'the only community in the whole world', he says, 'in which slaves and barbarians are the only strangers'.²

Let us turn to the Goths. They did not possess the works of an Aeschylus or an Herodotus upon which to base their speculations. Instead there circulated among them a folk-tale which has survived in Jordanes.³ According to this tale there was once a Gothic king called Filimer, who ruled over his people in the fifth generation after they had emigrated from Scandinavia. Among his subjects he discovered certain witches, who were called in the Gothic language 'Haliurunnae'.⁴ These he expelled from among his people and drove them far into the solitude of the Scythian desert. Some evil spirits, who were wandering about the wilderness, saw these witches and fell upon them, so that they brought forth this most ferocious of all races, 'minutum tetrum atque exile quasi hominum genus'. Whatever the source of Jordanes, few will doubt that this was

¹ Libanius, *Ep.* 369. 9; Sidonius, *Ep.* viii. 2. 2.

² *Ep.* i. 6. 2.

³ *Get.* xxiv. 121 f.

⁴ On this word see J. de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, vol. i (Berlin and Leipzig, 1935), p. 264, cited by Maenchen-Helfen, p. 245.

a story told by the horrified Goths, amazed at the ferocity of their masters.¹

In view of all this wild sea of speculation it is difficult not to admire the restraint of Ammianus: 'The nation of the Huns, scarcely known to ancient documents, dwelt beyond the Maeotic marshes beside the frozen ocean, and surpassed every extreme of ferocity.'

II

It was the practice then for those historians who wrote for an educated public to substitute the old familiar names given by Herodotus and Thucydides in place of the uncouth names of contemporary barbarians. The reverse was customary among those historians whose works were intended to be read only by humble monks and laymen. It was idle to speak to them of Nebroi and Simoi and Neuroi, of whom they had never heard. But everyone knew of the Huns, the Gepids, and the like, and so we often find John Malalas and other writers whose works were read by the uneducated calling earlier barbarian peoples by the names of tribes dreaded in their own day—even if the latter had been quite unknown at the time spoken of.² This is why we read in John Malalas that Lucius Verus and the Emperor Carus met their deaths when fighting against the Huns.³ So, too, we hear from an anonymous popular writer that Constantine the Great crossed the Danube and conquered the land of the Huns.⁴ Such statements we may confidently ignore. But it used to be held by modern scholars that when Dionysius Periegetes mentions the 'Tocharoi, Phrounoi, and barbarous nations of Seres'⁵ he means by Phrounoi the Hsiung-nu, who are often equated with the Huns. This view has now been exploded and abandoned.⁶ Dionysius, in his editions, also mentions the Οὔννοι as living near the Caspian Sea, but it has now been proved that in fact he there wrote Οὐίτιοι, a name which soon became meaningless and was altered by scribes to

¹ *Contra*, Maenchen-Helfen, pp. 244-51, who believes the tale to be based on the Christian, or late Jewish, legend of the fallen angels. Herbert, p. 281 n., refers to an English parallel in the *Faerie Queene*, bk. 2, c. 10, st. 8.

² So Dicuiescu, p. 19.

³ Malalas, pp. 282, 18, 303, 3, Bonn; cf. Zonaras, xii. 30.

⁴ *Vita Constantini*, ed. H. G. Opitz, *Byzantion*, ix, 1934, p. 586.

⁵ v. 752: besides Φρούνοι, the MSS. also give Φρούποι, Φρούριοι, &c.: see Müller, *ad loc.*; Maenchen-Helfen, p. 248.

⁶ See W. W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India* (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 84 ff.

one of which the meaning was only too well understood.¹ We are left with a passage of Ptolemy (iii. 5. 10), where we read that 'between the Bastarnae and the Roxolani [are] the Chuni', Χοῦνοι or Χουνοι. On the basis of this text it is confidently asserted that early in the second century A.D. the Huns were already settled in the Pontic area, perhaps between the Bug and the Dniester. But it seems very doubtful whether they could have survived there for two hundred years without becoming known in any way to the Romans. If, in fact, they were close neighbours of the Bastarnae and Roxolani, why did their appearance towards the close of the fourth century cause so much surprise? Again, they are placed by Ptolemy in a very unexpected area if in fact they were the ancestors of the Huns, who, beyond all question, were settled in or near the basin of the Kuban when they first became known to the Goths. It may be suggested that the similarity of the names Χοῦνοι and Οὔννοι is merely a coincidence; and it should be noted that, although West Roman writers often refer to the *Chunni* or *Chuni*, no East Roman ever has the guttural at the beginning of the name.²

Whatever be the truth of Ptolemy's Χοῦνοι, we need have little hesitation in rejecting Seeck's suggestion that the Persians and the Romans had already encountered the Huns in the year 363. In that year Jovian signed his notorious truce with Sapor, the Persian king, and in the treaty it was stipulated that the Romans and the Persians should unite in building fortifications in the passes of the Caucasus so as to prevent Armenia being overrun by the incursions 'of those barbarians who are unknown both to us and to the Persians'.³ These barbarians were not the Huns who later invaded Europe, but the Kidarites or Black Huns who were to preoccupy the Persian kings throughout the course of the following century. Not only the origin of the true Huns, but also their movements and activities before the last quarter of the fourth century, remain as profound a mystery to us as they were to Ammianus.

III

In the year 376 reports reached the Roman officers commanding the Danube garrisons that new and unusually large

¹ Dionysius, v. 730: see Kießling, P.-W. viii. 2953 f.; Maenchen-Helfen, p. 250 f.

² See the lists in Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, vol. ii, pp. 199-204.

³ John Lydus, *De Mag.* iii. 52; Seeck, *Untergang*, v, p. 466.

movements had begun among the northern barbarians. It was said that all the peoples between the Theiss and the Black Sea were in commotion. A savage people of great ferocity had struck the nations with terror and sent them fleeing from their homes. The officers received the news with indifference. They rarely heard of barbarian wars beyond the great river until the fighting had completely died down or had at least come to a temporary close. Their experience told them that no exceptional events could be expected. But the rumours persisted, and then the first refugees appeared on the northern bank, begging to be taken into the safety of the Empire. The first fugitives were joined by others and yet others, until an immense multitude crowded on the bank of the river.¹ The officers had been mistaken. The Gothic kingdom of Ermanarich had fallen before the Huns.

Ermanarich was not the first victim. Before him, the Alans had been reduced to subjection. The western frontier of this people was the river Don; the eastern lay beyond the knowledge of Roman inquirers and was said to be outside Europe altogether.² The Alans were typical nomads, and drove their flocks and herds to new pastures every spring and autumn. They had no temples, but worshipped a naked sword stuck in the ground. Otherwise they were not remarkable, except that at one time they had not known the institution of slavery.³ They had often attacked Bosphorus in the Crimea, and even Armenia and Media, so that the Romans knew them, like other nomads, as unconquerable warriors. But they had been conquered now. At a date and in circumstances which have not been recorded, they became the subjects of the Huns. We only know that vast numbers of them were slaughtered before the nation submitted.

It seems to have been soon after the year 370 that the Huns, accompanied by contingents of their Alan subjects, began their assault on the rich villages of the great Ostrogothic kingdom. This newly built empire stretched from the Don to the Dniester and from the Black Sea to the Pripet marshes.⁴ It was attacked first by small parties of the Huns, but soon had to bear their full assault.⁵ While the bulk of the Hun forces drove straight

¹ Amm. xxxi. 4. 1-4.

² Ib., 2. 13 and 16.

³ Ib., §§ 17-25 *servitius quid sit ignorabant*.

⁴ On its extent see L. Schmidt, *Geschichte*, pp. 240 ff.

⁵ Sozomen, vi. 37. 5 ὁλίγων δὲ τὰ πρῶτα καταστήσει εἰς πλείον τοῖς Γότθοις. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα, πανουδαίᾳ ἐπιπορευέσθαι, καὶ μάχῃ κρατῆσαι, κτλ., Vasiliev, pp. 23 ff.

across the steppes along the north coast of the Black Sea, a smaller party entered the Crimea from the east, drove the Gothic inhabitants into the mountains, and then proceeded through the isthmus to join the main mass of their companions, leaving perhaps a small group to exploit the peninsula. The aged Gothic king, Ermanarich, although unnerved by the rumours of the Huns' savagery which had reached him, was able to maintain himself for a considerable time, but then in despair he committed suicide and was succeeded by his great-nephew Vithimiris.¹ The Alans were being made to fight in the van of the Huns, and Vithimiris met them with an army composed partly of some Huns whom he had hired to fight for him against their countrymen. With these and his own followers he went into battle again and again, but each time met with a severe and bloody defeat. Finally, in a battle said to have been fought on a certain river Erac, somewhere between the Dnieper and Dniester, when he had reigned only about a year, he was killed.² Most of the Gothic nation now submitted to the nomads, but the story that was told afterwards, that they voluntarily abandoned the struggle, is only a Gothic fable designed to explain away their crushing defeat.³

The remainder were now ruled by Vithimiris' son Viderichus, but, as he was still a child, the command of the army was entrusted to Alatheus and Saphrax. Now, the name Saphrax is said not to be Germanic and may be Hunnic. If Saphrax was a Hun, it would seem that the mercenaries hired by Vithimiris had won such authority with those who paid them that their leader had actually obtained a share in the Gothic high command.⁴ At any rate, despite the skill and courage of Alatheus and Saphrax, the Goths were gradually forced back behind the river Dniester.⁵

This brought the Huns to the frontiers of Athanaric, the chief (*iudex*) of the Visigoths, whose country had been devastated by the Emperor Valens in three successive campaigns a few years previously.⁶ Athanaric determined to resist the new invaders if he too should be attacked, and he established himself on the

¹ Amm. xxxi. 3. 2.

² *Ib.*, § 3; Sozomen, l.c. Jordanes' narrative in *Get.* xlviii. 249 is merely saga, and cannot be accepted as historical: see L. Schmidt, *Geschichte*, pp. 253-7.

³ Jordanes, l.c., § 248.

⁴ Seeck, *Untergang*, v, p. 98. L. Schmidt, *Geschichte*, p. 253, n. 2, believes the name to be Iranian, i.e. Alanic. ⁵ Amm., l.c. ⁶ Amm. xxvii. 5. 2 ff.

banks of the Dniester not far from Alatheus and Saphrax. His first move was to send some of his chief men, led by one Munderich, at the head of a considerable force, some twenty miles beyond the river, with instructions to report on the movements of the enemy and to screen the main body of the army as it prepared its defences. The Huns at once realized that Munderich's force was but a fraction of the Gothic army, and decided to ignore it. Riding hard through a moonlit night, they completely outmanœuvred and eluded Munderich, and, before he could even discover their whereabouts, they had forded the Dniester twenty miles in his rear. Athanaric had no suspicion of his danger. He and his army were stunned by the surprise of the Huns' attack. There was no resistance: the Goths scattered to the Carpathian foot-hills behind them with slight losses.¹ Alatheus and Saphrax appear to have been crushed simultaneously.

Athanaric next decided to build and defend a wall between the Gerasus (Pruth) and the Danube. The work was hurried on with skill and vigour; but again the troops were surprised and would have been massacred, had it not been for the weight of the Huns' booty, which prevented them from carrying out their usual swift manœuvres.²

The Goths were panic-stricken: they could resist no longer. They melted away from Athanaric, and with their families and their goods began to stream towards the Danube. In the fertile fields of Thrace, secured by the broad Danube and the strength of the Roman garrisons, they would escape from this 'race of men, which had never been seen before . . . , which had arisen from some secret corner of the earth, and was sweeping away and destroying everything that came in its way'.³

As more and more of them reached the Danube, the Roman officers on its southern bank began to realize that the reports, which they had heard with contempt,⁴ were nothing more than the truth.

IV

In the autumn of 376 the Goths, said by contemporaries to number 200,000, were permitted to cross the Danube, and two years later, on 9 August 378, they engaged the Emperor Valens

¹ Amm. xxvii. 5. 4-8.

² Ib., §§ 7-8.

³ Ib., § 8.

⁴ Amm. xxxi. 4. 3 *aspernantes*.

on the plains outside Adrianople.¹ Did the Huns take any part in this greater Cannae?

In the autumn of 377 the Goths were penned in among the defiles of Mount Haemus in Thrace by a Roman army.² Their position was desperate. They had no food, and all their efforts to break through the ring formed by the Romans had been beaten back. When they were reduced to the last extremities some of their number managed to slip through the enemy lines and arrange an alliance with a body of Huns and Alans who were roaming the land north of the Danube. The Gothic emissaries held out hopes of immense booty if the nomads would rescue them from their critical position in Thrace. The effect of this alliance was striking. As soon as the Roman commanders heard of it, they at once began to withdraw their men cautiously. The Goths escaped from the trap in which they had been caught, and began once again to devastate the unlucky country-side of Thrace.³

Now the band of Huns which thus dramatically rescued the Goths is not reported to have left them before the battle of Adrianople. Immediately after the battle, when the Goths had made a vain effort to surprise Adrianople itself, we hear of these same Huns again: a few days after the great victory they are found still in the company of the Goths.⁴ We cannot doubt that they had been with them all the time, and it is not impossible that the cavalry charge which decided the greatest disaster in Roman military history was headed, not by Goths, but by Huns. That our sources say nothing of this is not surprising: the Roman disaster was so complete that no one could afterwards give a clear or accurate account of what had happened.⁵

We hear little of the Huns in the years which immediately followed. We are assured explicitly, however, that they took their full share in the plundering and devastation of the north Balkan provinces in the period after Adrianople.⁶ Theodosius I was proclaimed emperor on 19 January 379, and in his first year, we are told, he defeated several bands of Huns, Alans, and

¹ On the date of the crossing see Seeck, *Untergang*, v, p. 466. The figure of 200,000, given by Eunapius, frag. 42, is much exaggerated; Amm. xxxi. 4. 6 says expressly that all efforts to count the Goths failed.

² On the site see W. Judeich, 'Die Schlacht bei Adrianopel', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, vi, 1891, p. 5, n. 1.

⁴ *Ib.*, 16. 3.

⁵ *Id.*, 12. 7 mentions a band of Alan cavalry.

⁶ Paneg. Lat. ii (xii), 11. 4; cf. Victor, *Epit.* 47. 3; Philostorgius, xi. 8.

Goths, who were still devastating the Balkans, and was able to proclaim considerable victories on 15 November. It would seem that companies of the Sciri and Carpodacae were serving in a subordinate position, like the Alans, under the Huns,¹ who themselves behaved with their usual ferocity: they were *omni perniciē atrociores*, according to a contemporary.² It is said by a later authority that in the year 427 the Huns had been in occupation of Pannonia for fifty years.³ The statement has been vigorously denied,⁴ but if we remember that a few years after the accession of Theodosius I a company of Huns is found approaching the frontiers of Gaul, it seems reasonable to suppose that on the morrow of Adrianople great tracts of Pannonia, especially the eastern regions, had already fallen under their sway.⁵

Although we hear once or twice of the *vaga Chunorum feritas* in the years which followed,⁶ it was not until 395 that the new barbarians launched their first great invasion of the Roman Empire, and their raids of that year seem to have been conducted on a bigger scale than any others until the days of Attila. In the winter of 395 the Danube was frozen, and the Huns took the opportunity of crossing into the Roman provinces and renewing the devastation which Theodosius had barely managed to check. Once again Thrace bore the brunt of the suffering, but Dalmatia, too, feared an invasion.⁷ Claudian maliciously suggests that the Huns were actually invited into the Empire by the praetorian prefect Rufinus, whose position was being violently assailed by Stilicho. But this is merely the propaganda of the poet in favour of his patron, and we know that Rufinus did what he could to alleviate the fearful hardships of the peasants of Thrace.⁸

The Huns put out their greatest effort, however, far to the east. Pouring over the passes of the Caucasus, their bands overran Armenia and made for the richest provinces of the Eastern

¹ *Chron. Min.* i, p. 243; Victor, *Epit.* 48. 5; Zosimus, iv. 34. 6.

² Victor, *Epit.* 47. 3; cf. Ausonius, *Proc. cas.* 31.

³ Marcellinus, s.a.

⁴ Cf. Alföldi, *Untergang*, ii, pp. 66 ff., 71 ff.

⁵ Ambrose, *Ep.* 24; Migne, *PL.* xvi. 1081; cf. Ensslin, *Phil. Wochenschr.* xlvii, 1927, col. 847.

⁶ Claudian, *De cons. Stil.* i. 110; Ausonius, *Epigr.* xxvi. 8.
⁷ Claudian, *In Rufin.* ii. 26 ff., 36; Philostorgius, xi. 8; Sozomen, viii. 25. 1; Caesarius, *Dial.* i. 68 (Migne, *PG.* xxxviii, 936), who says that the enemy was *ἐν χιλιάσι δέκα πηλίκους ὁρώμενον*.

⁸ See p. 37 below. Claudian's rumour is repeated by Socrates, vi. 1. 7; Joshua Stylites, ix (p. 8, trans. Wright); and cautiously (*Μέγρο*) by Sozomen, viii. 1. 2.

Empire. The smoke rose from the villages of Cappadocia. The invaders were said to have approached the Halys. Areas of Syria itself were devastated, and Antioch looked to her defences:

Assuetumque choris et laeta plebe canorum
Proterit imbellem sonipes hostilis Orontem.¹

Crowds of captives and great herds of cattle were led away north of the Caucasus.

Extra Cimmerias, Taurorum claustra, paludes
Flos Syriae servit.²

In Armenia the Huns reached the city of Melitene; thence they overran the province of Euphratesia and even galloped into Coele Syria and Cilicia.³ Jerome writes vividly of this raid:

'Behold, the wolves, not of Arabia, but of the North, were let loose upon us last year from the far-off rocks of Caucasus, and in a little while overran great provinces. How many monasteries were captured, how many streams were reddened with human blood! Antioch was besieged, and the other cities washed by the Halys, Cydnus, Orontes, and Euphrates. Flocks of captives were dragged away; Arabia, Phoenicia, Palestine, and Egypt were taken captive by their terror.

Non mihi si linguae centum sint oraue centum,
Ferrea vox,
Omnia poenarum percurrere nomina possim.'

And again:

'Lo, suddenly messengers ran to and fro and the whole East trembled, for swarms of Huns had broken forth from the far distant Maeotis between the icy Tanais and the monstrous peoples of the Massagetae, where the Gates of Alexander pen in the wild nations behind the rocks of Caucasus. They filled the whole earth with slaughter and panic alike as they flitted hither and thither on their swift horses. The Roman army was away at the time and was detained in Italy owing to the civil wars. . . . May Jesus avert such beasts from the Roman world in the future! They were at hand everywhere before they were expected: by their speed they outstripped rumour, and they took pity neither upon religion nor rank nor age nor wailing childhood. Those who had just begun to live were compelled to die and, in ignorance of their plight, would smile amid the drawn swords of the enemy. There was a unanimous report that they were making for Jerusalem and that they were

¹ Claudian, *In Rufin.* ii. 28-35; *In Eutrop.* i. 16 f., ii. 569-75.

² *Ib.*, i. 243-51; Joshua Stylites, ix, xii (pp. 7 f., 12, Wright).

³ Philostorgius, xi. 8; Socrates, vi. 1. 7; Sozomen, viii. 1. 2.

converging on that city owing to their extreme greed for gold. The walls of Antioch, neglected in the idle times of peace, were hastily patched up; Tyre wished to break away again from the land and looked for her ancient island. Then we ourselves were forced to make ships ready, to wait on the shore, to take precautions against the enemy's arrival, to fear the barbarians more than shipwreck even though the winds were raging.¹

As Jerome says, there was no regular army to meet them: Theodosius, at his death, had left the armies of the Empire in the West. An important officer in the East was suspected of cowardice and of indifference to the lot of the country under his command.² At any rate, the invasion was unopposed³ until the eunuch Eutropius, hastily assembling a few Gothic troops⁴ and whatever Roman soldiers he could lay hands on, succeeded in taking the field against them.⁵ He failed to recover the booty they had taken,⁶ but peace was restored to the East at the end of 398,⁷ and the world saw a eunuch as consul in 399.

For some thirteen years the Huns do not appear to have raided the Eastern provinces again, but in the first years of the new century they seem to have undertaken a tremendous drive through central Europe towards the West from their recently conquered homes in the northern Balkans. Scenes similar to those of 376 were witnessed again. In the closing months of 405 Radagaisus broke into Italy, and terrified contemporaries said that he headed 400,000 men, though more sober judgements put the figure far lower. On 31 December 406 swarms of Vandals, Sueves, and Alans broke the Rhine frontier for ever and crowded into Gaul. These movements, it is agreed,⁸ were caused by a westward expansion of the Huns, but only one hint has survived in our authorities of the fierce battles by which the Germans were dislodged from their homes and sent fleeing into the provinces of the Roman Empire. Orosius, in reference to this period, writes: 'taceo de ipsorum inter se barbarorum crebris dilacerationibus, cum se invicem Gothorum cunei duo, deinde Alani atque Huni variis caedibus populabantur.'⁹

¹ *Epp.* ix. 16, lxxvii. 8.

² Joshua Stylites, ix (p. 8, Wright), 'all Syria was delivered into their hands by . . . the supineness of the general (στρατηλάτης) Addai' (i.e. Addaeus).

³ Claudian, *In Eutrop.* ii. 572 *nullo obstante*.

⁴ *Ib.* i. 242 *Getas*.

⁵ *Ib.* ii. 223-5.

⁶ *Ib.* 572.

⁷ *Ib.* 122.

⁸ See, for example, Gibbon, *Decline*, iii, p. 262, ed. Bury.

⁹ vii. 37. 3.

Attacks on the lower Danube provinces were resumed in 408. In that year a certain Uldis, the first Hun whom we know by name and one whom we shall have to mention frequently again, crossed the Danube and captured *Castra Martis*, a fortress lying well back from the river in the province of *Moesia*.¹ He took this place by treachery, and unhappily we do not know who it was that co-operated with him and betrayed the fort. Uldis then proceeded to overrun Thrace, and, when the Romans tried to buy him off, he rejected their offer: when the Roman officer commanding the army in Thrace made his proposals to him, the Hun merely pointed towards the rising sun and said that, if he so wished, he would find it easy to subdue all the land which the sun looked upon. He demanded an impossible sum as the price of peace, but the Roman officer was not at a loss. He prolonged his conversations with Uldis, and entered into secret negotiations with the subordinate leaders in the enemy's army. He emphasized the great humanity of the Roman Emperor and the very acceptable gifts which that Emperor was accustomed to offer to brave men. His suggestions were agreeable. Many of Uldis' followers deserted, and he himself only escaped across the Danube with difficulty. He lost many Huns and a considerable number of *Sciri* who were serving under him in much the same capacity as we have seen the *Alans* serving in other Hun armies.²

We have more than one memorial of the East Roman government's efforts to repair the damage done by Uldis and to prevent the recurrence of such raids as his. *Herculius*, the praetorian prefect of *Illyricum*, a patron of letters and the arts, was instructed to force everyone, without distinction of rank, to take part in the rebuilding of city walls and in the collection and transport of food to the ruined areas. The Emperor, instructed by his praetorian prefect *Anthemius*, expected that many would endeavour to evade this work, and he therefore repeats: '*a summis sarcina ad infimos usque decurrat*.' The raid may be repeated: the moment is critical.³ *Anthemius* issued further orders. Every possible method of entering the Eastern Empire is to be scrutinized; every place where the provinces can be

¹ *Procopius, De Aed.* iv. 6. 33, who says that it was restored by Justinian, having fallen down from neglect; cf. *Amm.* xxxi. 11. 6: modern *Kula* in Bulgaria.

² *Sozomen*, ix. 5: see pp. 58, 199 below.

³ *CTh.* xi. 17. 4 = xv. 1. 49.

approached—'omnes stationes navium portus litora, omnes abscessus provinciarum, abdita etiam loca et insulae'—is to be guarded closely because of the *barbarica feritas*.¹ Specific measures were taken for the strengthening of the Danube fleet. A seven-year programme of shipbuilding was published on 28 January 412. In the provinces of Moesia and Scythia, which bordered on the great river, a stated number of vessels, both warships and supply ships (*naves agrarienses*, as they are called), were to be built every year and a stated number of old ships to be repaired. Over two hundred vessels were to be in service at the end of seven years, and local officials were to be heavily fined if the programme was not fully carried out each year.² But Anthemius' greatest achievement in these years was the construction of the Theodosian walls on the land side of Constantinople, which had long since extended beyond the original wall of Constantine. The need for them had been felt as early as the time of Theodosius I,³ but it was not until 4 April 413 that the government could refer to the completion of the new wall, 'qui ad munitionem splendidissimae urbis exstructus est'.⁴ Who can doubt that it was Uldis' raid that impressed upon Anthemius the urgent necessity of the defence of the capital? Bury justly says that 'in planning the new walls of the capital, he was preparing consciously for the Hunnic war which he foresaw'.⁵

After the defeat and disappearance of Uldis we come to one of the obscurest incidents in the history of the Huns. Priscus heard of it from a West Roman, Romulus, whom he met in Attila's encampment in 449 and of whom he held a high opinion. Romulus told him that the Huns had once, πάλαι, sought to attack Persia at a time when famine prevailed in their own country and the Romans were engaged in a war. Under two leaders named Basich and Cursich, who afterwards went to Rome to obtain an alliance, a large Hun army entered a desert country, passed a certain lake, which Romulus thought might be the Maeotic Sea, and after fifteen days crossed some mountains and found themselves in Persia. After devastating the land, they encountered a Persian army which filled the air over

¹ *CTh.* vii. 16. 2, of 24 April 410.

² *Ib.* 17. 1, to Constans, the Magister militum per Thracias.

³ Van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople*, p. 42.

⁴ *CTh.* xv. 1. 51, cf. Socrates, vii. 1. 3; Dessau, *ILS.* 5339.

⁵ *Selected Essays*, p. 234 f.

their heads with arrows. The Huns were beaten back and recrossed the mountains with only a little of their booty, for the Persians succeeded in recovering most of it. Fearing a pursuit, Basich and Cursich returned home by a different route, which appears to have led them past the oil country of Baku.¹ This expedition seems to have taken place about the period 415-20 or a little later.

In 420 the Eastern Roman Empire went to war with Persia. The Persians had been taking the merchandise from the Roman traders in their dominions and had refused to return the Roman gold-miners whose services they had hired. In addition, they had begun a general persecution of the Christians in Persia.² As the Roman armies became more and more deeply involved in the East, the northern frontier seems to have been stripped of its defenders, and this was doubtless the reason why the Huns in 422, after a long interval, again launched a plundering raid on Thrace.³ We have no details and know nothing of how they were expelled. We hear of no further hostilities on the northern frontier of the Eastern Empire before the appearance of Rua, the uncle of Attila.

v

The little that our authorities enable us to say about the wars between the Romans and the Huns before the days of Attila has been summarized above. But in the early days of their life in Europe the Huns by no means appear exclusively as the enemies of the Romans, Goths, or Persians. We have already seen that, although Huns destroyed the kingdom of the Ostrogoths, Huns also fought in its defence. In their first great achievement in Europe the new barbarians were divided against themselves. So it continued throughout the entire period at present under review, a fact which was noted by contemporaries with surprise and satisfaction.⁴

We have seen that Theodosius I, in his first year as Emperor, managed to drive the Hun raiders from the northern Balkans and that his reign was frequently troubled by them thereafter.

¹ Marquart, *Eränfahrt*, p. 97, believes that they returned from Atropatene past Baku, crossed the lower Daghestan, and so reached the pass of Derbend.

² Socrates, vii. 18. 4.

³ *Chron. Min.* ii, p. 75, s.a. 422 *Hunni Thraciam vastaverunt*: cf. Seeck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 86.

⁴ Paneg. Lat. ii (xii). 32. 4.

But he also used them as allies. When he engaged the army of the usurper Maximus on the river Save in 388, his very swift cavalry victory was won by Hunnic horsemen serving in his army.¹ It may well be, as Seeck suggests, that, after the victory over Maximus' brother Marcellinus at Poetovio in that same year, it was Hunnic cavalry that inflicted the heavy losses suffered by the fleeing enemy.² Again, towards the end of the eighties officers of Valentinian II beat back a party of Huns who were approaching Gaul, while at the same time Bauto, the Master of the Soldiers, succeeded in inducing an army of Huns to attack the Juthungi, who were then devastating the Roman province of Raetia.³

We have already mentioned the defeat of Uldis in 408. But Uldis' history had a beginning and a middle as well as an end. In the year 400 the German rebel Gainas attempted to cross into Asia Minor, but was deterred by the warships of the Imperial fleet. He therefore retreated northwards and crossed the Danube with a small body of followers. Here he was met by Uldis, who decided to attack him for two reasons. He did not wish an independent barbarian army to roam at large north of the Danube, and he believed that, by destroying Gainas, he would do a service to the Eastern Emperor. He therefore collected his forces and fought the German, not once but many times, before he succeeded in slaying him. Gainas' head was displayed to view in Constantinople on 3 January 401, and in return Uldis demanded 'gifts', which, in fact, he received. An alliance was thereupon concluded between him and the East Romans, and it may be supposed that it involved the payment of an annual tribute to this body of the nomads.⁴ The credit for the overthrow of Gainas did not belong exclusively to the Hun. The reason why the Germans had to turn northwards towards the Danube in the first place lay in the initiative of the local city magistrates and of the urban population of Thrace. Foreseeing the arrival of Gainas' band, the citizens hastily repaired the defences of their cities, and themselves manned them with their weapons in their hands. 'Owing to previous raids',

¹ Paneg. Lat. ii (xii). 32. 4.

² Ib. 35 f.; Seeck, *Untergang*, v, p. 215.

³ Ambrose, *Ep.* 24 (Migne, *PL* xvi. 1081).

⁴ Zosimus, v. 22. 1-3; *Chron. Min.* ii, p. 66; cf. Alföldi, *Untergang*, ii, p. 69. That payments were made to the Huns even before this may result from Synesius, *De Regno* xi (Migne, *PG* lxvi. 1081). For the aftermath of this incident see p. 54 below.

says our authority, 'they were not unpractised in warfare, and applied themselves to the struggle with all their strength. Gainas found nothing outside the walls except grass,' he goes on, 'for everyone had taken care to bring inside the walls all the crops and the livestock and all the furniture and equipment of the farmsteads.' Evidently the events of 395 had taught the townsmen of Thrace a lesson which they were not slow to learn. Neither were they quick to forget it, as Attila many years later had good reason to observe when his horsemen were beaten back by the initiative and courage of the citizens of Aesum.¹

Uldis next appears in the service of West Rome. At the end of 405 Radagaisus and a huge throng of Germans, fleeing before the Huns, as we have seen, descended into Italy. The cities of the peninsula were panic-stricken, but Stilicho, as well as mobilizing the forces at his disposal in Italy, managed to make an alliance with a body of Huns and Alans: these Huns were the followers of Uldis. In the battle of Faesulae early in 406 they showed their mettle. They first prevented the Germans from collecting provisions, and then in the conflict itself a swift out-flanking movement by their cavalry enabled Stilicho to encircle the enemy and destroy them with the utmost carnage. Uldis' men sold off their prisoners at one *solidus* a head.² They had rendered considerable service, then, to both Eastern and Western Rome before they invaded Thrace in 408.

The measures which the Western government took against its German mercenaries after the fall of Stilicho in 408 rendered it essential to obtain military assistance from some non-Germanic source in future. They therefore turned to the Huns and obtained assistance from them by a treaty which seems to have involved the giving of hostages: one of the hostages was a young man named Aetius.³ Many years later his panegyrist magnified the results of Aetius' life among the Huns:

dedit otia ferro
Caucasus et saevi condemnant proelia reges.

Indeed, Rome would otherwise have fallen before the 'shafts of the North':

¹ Zosimus, v. 19. 6 f. (from Eunapius); see p. 85 below.

² *Chron. Min.* i, p. 652 'exercitum . . . hostium circumactis Chunorum auxiliariis Stilicho usque ad internicionem delevit'; *ib.* ii, p. 69 'captivos . . . singulis aureis distrahentes'; Zosimus, v. 26. 4.

³ *Greg. Tur.* ii. 8; cf. Ensslin, l.c., col. 850.

cum Scythicis succumberet ensibus orbis
 telaque Tarpeias premerent Arctoa secures,
 hostilem fregit rabiem pignusque superbi
 foederis et mundi pretium fuit.¹

At any rate, we find that when Athaulf, the brother-in-law of Alaric, appeared south of the Julian Alps in 409, leading an army which included a number of Huns, Honorius' minister Olympius was able to meet him at the head of a little band of 300 Huns, and at a cost of 17 dead slew 1,100 of the enemy.² Later in that same year, 409, as the relations of the West Roman government with Alaric grew steadily worse, a force of 10,000 Huns was brought into Italy from Dalmatia by the Imperial government. Their presence seems to have weighed with Alaric, who at once abandoned his plan of an immediate march on Rome.³ More than thirty years after their first appearance in Europe the name of the Huns struck terror even into the bravest of those who heard it.

In 412 we find the East Roman government again in diplomatic relations with the Huns, or at any rate with some of them. We learn from a fragment of Olympiodorus that in that year he himself served on an embassy which was sent out from Constantinople to the barbarians. In order to reach their destination the ambassadors had to sail northwards across the Black Sea and were almost lost in a storm on the way. They eventually reached a Hun king named Donatus, whose sphere of activity was obviously far from that in which Uldis had held sway. On their arrival the ambassadors successfully achieved what one of Priscus' companions failed to do in similar circumstances many years later: after exchanging oaths of friendship with Donatus they treacherously murdered him. Perhaps his realm had recently grown to dangerous strength and the East Roman government, which was still controlled by the prefect Anthemius, saw a cheap way of dispelling the danger. But a certain Charato was chosen to succeed Donatus, and, not without reason, he entertained feelings of some hostility towards Olympiodorus and his friends. But the ambassadors had come prepared to deal with such a situation, and costly presents given in Theodosius' name induced the barbarian to remain at peace (frag. 18).

¹ Merobaudes, *Paneg.* ii, 3 f., 127 ff.

² Zosimus, v. 45. 6, cf. 37. 1 (both from Olympiodorus).

³ *Ib.*, 50. 1 f., from Olympiodorus: see p. 47 below.

In 425, when the usurper John was fighting for his life against East Roman forces at Ravenna, he sent Aetius to the Huns to hire an army and bring it to Italy as quickly as possible. But Aetius returned too late. When he appeared in Italy John had been three days dead. Nevertheless, he engaged Aspar, the commander of the Eastern forces, in a stubborn but apparently indecisive battle, and finally induced the Huns to leave Italy and return home. The Huns, we are told, laid aside their anger and their arms for gold, gave hostages, and exchanged oaths. Aetius' achievement in getting rid of them was considered to be so great that Placidia and Valentinian III made their peace with him and gave him the rank of Count. It was said that the number of Huns whom he had sent home was 60,000.¹

VI

Thus the Huns were not only the foes of the Romans towards the close of the fourth century and in the opening years of the fifth; also to some extent they were their friends, and served not without effect as mercenaries in the Imperial armies.

It was not only the Roman government which profited from their services: wealthy private individuals did so too. We hear of only two cases, but there is no reason to doubt that in fact there were others. Claudian tells us that Arcadius' praetorian prefect Rufinus maintained a personal guard of barbarians, and we hear from another source that this guard was composed of Huns.² Rufinus' great rival Stilicho also sought to ensure his own safety by hiring a private army of Huns, and before his enemies could set about murdering him they had to deal with these retainers. Consequently, at the head of an army they made a sudden descent upon them while they were asleep and slew them as they lay.³ Since Rufinus' Huns are mentioned in one of our meagre chronicles, it would seem that the force was of considerable dimensions, although we need not believe that it was as vast as the private armies maintained by some subjects of the Empire in later days.

If a few of the great potentates of both the East and the West relied on Huns for their personal security, many of the popula-

¹ Philostorgius, xii. 4 (p. 150, Bidez): *Chron. Min.* i, p. 471. 658; Greg. Tur. ii. 8: On this figure see below, p. 49.

² Claudian, *In Rufin.* ii. 76 f.; *Chron. Min.* i, p. 650 *Chunorum, quo fulciebatur, praesidio.*

³ Zosimus, v. 34. 1.

tion were willing to believe the new barbarians capable of the utmost atrocities. Claudian does not hesitate to tell his readers not only that the Huns slew their parents but that they delighted to swear oaths by their bodies thus slain. This was a belief that did not soon die out: had not Herodotus said that the Massagetae sacrifice their old men? Indeed, half a century later, Theodoret is prepared to go considerably farther. According to him the 'Massagetae', as he terms the Huns, not only made a regular practice of killing off their old men but actually ate their bodies.¹ All alike agreed that they lived the life of wild beasts. They descended upon the Goths like wolves, according to Priscus. 'Though by nature they lived the life of wild animals', writes an ecclesiastical historian, a missionary changed them to milder ways. Even the sober Ammianus says that you could take them to be two-footed animals, and to Jerome also they were wolves and wild beasts. In the sixth century Jordanes considered them to be 'a race almost of men', and Procopius notes that the Ephthalites, alone among the Huns, do not live the life of animals. Indeed, Zachariah of Mitylene at the end of the fifth century represents some Huns as referring to themselves as 'barbarians, who, like rapacious wild beasts, reject God in the North-West region'.²

Unspeakable hardships were caused to the people living in the actual areas devastated by the raids of the Huns. We can say little of the sufferings of the Goths when this new nation of barbarians descended upon them as unexpectedly and suddenly, in Ammianus' words, as a storm from the high mountains.³ But we have a little information from Thrace. During the raid of 395, when St. Hypatius was twenty years of age, he visited the monks of that area and found that, since Hun bands were roaming the country-side and plundering everywhere without hindrance, the brethren had been compelled to build forts, καστέλλια, wherein they might live in comparative security. Hypatius himself and eighty of the brethren proceeded to build a big fort, καστέλλιον μέγα, for themselves so that they might continue their devotions without

¹ Claudian, *In Rufin.* i. 328; Theodoret in Migne, *PG.* lxxxiii. 1405; cf. Herodotus, i. 216.

² Claudian, *In Rufin.* i. 324; Priscus, p. 348. 9; Sozomen, vii. 26. 8; Amm. xxxi. 2. 3, cf. 11; Jerome, *Ep.* lx. 16, lxxvii. 8; Jordanes, *Get.* xxiv. 121; Procopius, *BP.* i. 3. 5; Zachariah, p. 152, transl. Hamilton and Brooks.

³ xxxi. 3. 8: see Eumapius, frag. 42 init. on the Goths.

interruption. Evidently there was no organized defence left in the province.¹ Many years afterwards Hypatius used to tell his disciples of how the Huns surrounded his καστέλλιον in Thrace, but God protected His servants and put their enemies to flight. 'They had a hole, τρυμαλιδί, in the wall', he said, 'through which they hurled out a stone and dealt a blow to one of the foe, so that the others saw it, and, waving their whips, φραγγέλλια, as a signal, they mounted their horses and retreated. When a stop had been put to the fighting, the people of the country-side, who had been plundered and had nothing left, ran to the monastery, seeking their sustenance.' The head of the monastery, he went on, Jonas, an Armenian, thereupon went to Constantinople and told the great men there, τοῖς ἰλλουστρίοις, that the poor in Thrace were starving. When this became known, Rufinus and the other officials 'filled ships with grain and with pulse'—presumably communications by land were broken—and sent them to Jonas that he might distribute them to the poor.² The central government no doubt did what it could to relieve the suffering, but its means were limited, and little or no help can have reached the most exposed districts immediately behind the frontier and far from the sea.

The Church was not daunted by the fury and savage reputation of the new invaders, and very soon after their first appearance on the frontier, Christian missionaries went among them. At the turn of the fifth century they were visited by Theotimus, bishop of Tomi and Scythia. The Huns on the Danube held him in high respect, we are told, and called him 'God of the Romans', Θεὸς Ῥωμαίων.³ It was said that Theotimus had performed wondrous deeds among them, but the ecclesiastical historian who tells us of them seems to have had his doubts as to the truth of the stories.⁴ It was said that as he journeyed one day through enemy territory, Theotimus saw a band of Huns riding towards him on their way to Tomi. The bishop's companions were dismayed and began to lament that they would be put to death at once; but Theotimus dismounted from his horse and began to pray, whereupon he and his companions

¹ Callinicus, *Vita S. Hypatii*, p. 61. 11 ff.: see p. 26 above.

² *Ib.*, p. 64. 21 ff. The Teubner editors, Index nominum, s.v. βάρβαροι, mistakenly assume that the barbarians in question were the Goths.

³ Sozomen, vii. 26. 6.

⁴ *Ib.*, § 7 λέγεται, § 9 φασί.

and their horses became invisible and the Huns rode by without seeing them. On another occasion a Hun, who thought the bishop to be a rich man, plotted to take him prisoner and hold him to ransom. He therefore prepared a lasso, such as the Huns often used in warfare, and tried to entangle him in its coils. But as he raised his hand to cast the noose around the bishop, he became as it were petrified and could not lower his arm again. He remained as though tied by invisible ropes until, at the request of his companions, Theotimus prayed to God to release him from his predicament.¹

Despite such prodigious works Theotimus does not seem to have met with any success in converting the Huns. All that our authority can claim is that he changed them from their bestial manner of life to milder ways, and this he accomplished by the procedure, not unusual in a bishop of those times, of inviting them to banquets and presenting them with gifts.²

At approximately the time when Theotimus was active, other missionaries were sent to work among the Huns. John Chrysostom, we are told, dispatched them to some 'of the nomadic Scyths who were encamped along the Danube'. The term 'nomadic Scyths' is one which our authority uses elsewhere of the Huns and of no one else,³ and we can have no doubt that the great Patriarch of Constantinople had endeavoured to have the new barbarians converted. But again no claim is made that the missionaries met with the slightest success. One of their greatest difficulties must have been that of language. John Chrysostom himself could find an interpreter easily enough when he wished to preach to the Goths in the capital; but, as we shall see later, the number of Romans who knew the Hun language was exceedingly small (p. 98 f. below), so that churchmen qualified to preach among them can only have been acquired with the utmost difficulty, if, indeed, at all.

None the less, there were not wanting enthusiasts within the Roman Empire who believed that the task of converting the Huns was all but accomplished. *Huni discunt psalterium*, cries Jerome in a letter written in 403, only eight years after he had trembled in his cell in Bethlehem. Orosius in 417 observes that 'the churches of Christ everywhere throughout the East and the

¹ Sozomen, vii. 26. 6, §§ 6-10.

² *Ib.*, § 8.

³ Theodoret, *HE.* v. 31; see *Hermathena*, lxxvii, 1946, p. 75.

West are filled with Huns, Suevi, Vandals, Burgundians, and innumerable other peoples of believers'. In the very hey-day of Attila, Theodoret considered that the Huns had abandoned with loathing the custom of eating their old men because they had now heard the gospel, and he mentions their name in a list of those who profit from the good works of the martyrs.¹ Unhappily, more sober witnesses had to admit the complete failure of the Church's efforts, and towards the middle of the fifth century, in the great days of Attila, Salvian classes them without qualification among the pagans. Prudentius, far away in Spain, although he thought that the 'bloody ferocity' of the Huns had been tamed somewhat—they no longer drink blood, he says—can do no more than look forward to the day when they will drink the blood of Christ.² Even in the sixth century their wanton cruelty, their readiness to rape nuns and to massacre those who had taken refuge at the altars of the churches, shocked even the barbarous armies of Justinian.³ It is possible that individual Huns, particularly among those living in the Roman Empire as captives or exiles, had been converted to Christianity; but if so, we hear of none of them until long after the death of Attila. Thereafter, those few whom we know to have been converted had especially close relations with the Romans, like that Sunica whom Zachariah of Mitylene describes as 'a general, who was a Hun, and, having taken refuge with the Romans, had been baptized'. Zachariah, then, pictured only the truth when he made the Huns describe themselves as 'barbarians, who, like rapacious wild beasts, reject God in the North-West region'.⁴

Such was the impression which the Huns, in their early days, left upon those Romans whose literary works have come down to us. But they, the educated, the comparatively well to do, were a small minority in the Empire. We cannot doubt that this impression was shared by all, high and low alike, who lived in the areas actually devastated, who saw their hovels burnt and their sons and daughters led away into a bitter slavery. We shall try in later pages to discover the sentiments of the vast bulk of the population of the European provinces, that is, the

¹ Jerome, *Ep.* cvii. 2; Orosius, vii. 41. 8; Theodoret in Migne, *PG.* lxxxiii. 1405, cf. 1009.

² *Apoth.* 430 ff.: he calls the Huns 'Geloni'.

³ See, for example, Procopius, *BG.* v. 10. 29; Agathias, v. 13, p. 368, Dindorf.

⁴ pp. 224, 152, Hamilton and Brooks.

peasants living far from the frontiers, both those who sweated in the fields of their masters, and those who had been entirely expropriated and lived as brigands in the mountains and forests. Attila, it has been said, was only the Scourge of God for the Roman priests and administrators interested in keeping the nations under the domination of Rome.¹

¹ Saffet, p. 9.

III

HUN SOCIETY BEFORE ATTLA

AN attempt has been made in the previous chapter to outline the military exploits of the Huns and the wars which they fought for and against the Romans and Goths before the days of Attila. But it is clear that many problems arise from our narrative and demand explanation. Before we approach them the reader may be urged to bear constantly in mind the rapidity with which the Hun empire rose and fell. When Priscus crossed the Roman frontier and entered the dominions of the Huns in 449 he passed into a world which a generation before his birth had not yet come into existence, and which had utterly disappeared by the time his book was published. If we are to understand the strange phenomenon presented by the great nomad empire we must never forget that their society was not static but dynamic. History is no longer satisfied to ascribe so striking a movement as the rise of the Hun empire to the genius of a single man, and in fact, as we shall see, there is not much evidence to show that Attila was a genius. It is only in terms of the development of their society that we can explain why the Huns attacked the Roman Empire at all, why they as often defended it, how they came to build up so vast an empire of their own, and yet proved unable to hold it for more than a few years. We must therefore examine their society, and we can only hope to succeed if we are clear as to the productive methods at their disposal. In no part of our study shall we have more reason for gratitude to Ammianus than here.

I

In material civilization they belonged to the Lower Stage of Pastoralism as defined by Hobhouse, Wheeler, and Ginsberg (p. 26 f., *et passim*). The herds which they had driven before them over the steppes of southern Russia consisted, according to Ammianus, of all kinds of domesticated animals¹—cattle, horses, goats, and, above all, sheep, which, although unmentioned by our authorities, are more essential to the steppe

¹ xxxi. 2. 3 *cuiusvis pecoris*—but not pigs; see G. F. Hudson *op. cit.* Toynbee, *A Study of History*, iii, p. 11 n.; cf. Parker, p. 83.

nomad even than horses.¹ But so low was their standard of production that they appear to have worn no woollen clothing, and there is no evidence that they knew how to weave. Like some nomads of the Asiatic steppe at the present day, they could not weave because they had no time for it: they therefore used their wool on the sheepskin or in the form of felt. Their clothing was made either of linen or of the skins of *murinae* (marmots?) stitched together, and some of the steppe tribes were famed in the Roman Empire for their trade in such skins.² Owing to the hard conditions of their life the Huns wore their clothes on their backs, we are told, until they disintegrated and fell off bit by bit, a fact which reminds us that in the law code of Chinghis Khan it was made obligatory for the Mongols to wear their clothes without washing them until they should be worn out.³ The Huns wore leggings of goat-skin, and round caps on their heads, but of what material these were made we do not know.⁴

Although they derived the bulk of their food from their herds, it is quite certain that, like all other nomads of the steppe, they had to augment their supply by hunting. While Ammianus, oddly enough, mentions hunting only in connexion with the Alans, Priscus appears to have thought that, when the Huns were settled in the Kuban (immediately before they began their attacks on the Ostrogoths), their whole food-supply was obtained by hunting.⁵

Finally, they had to rely on food-gathering, and Ammianus tells us that they collected the roots of wild plants to supplement their diet.⁶ The fact that he mentions this at all in such a comparatively brief account of their way of life suggests that food-gathering played a very important part indeed in their economy. We need scarcely add that agriculture was entirely unknown.⁷

¹ Lattimore, pp. 74-5 and esp. 413 f.; Peisker, p. 331.

² Amm., l.c., § 5; Jordanes, *Get.* v. 37 'Hunuguri autem hinc sunt noti quia ab ipsis pellium murinarum venit commercium'; cf. Justin, ii. 2. 9 (of the Scythians), and other passages cited by Wagner-Erfurdt on Amm. xxxi. 2. 5.

³ Amm., l.c.; Fox, p. 114.

⁴ Amm., l.c., § 6: a description of such *galeri* or *tīaræ* will be found in Jerome, *Ep.* lxiv. 13.

⁵ Amm. xxxi. 2. 21; Priscus *ap.* Jordanes, *Get.* xxiv. 123, who may, of course, have misrepresented him; cf. Claudian, *In Rufin.* i. 327 *praeda cibus*, 'the chase supplies their food' (Platnauer).

⁶ Amm. xxxi. 2. 3.

⁷ *Ib.* 2. 10; Sozomen, vi. 37. 4, is absurd to endow them with an interest in γεωργία.

Their linen clothing, then, must have been acquired by barter, for a people which knows nothing of agriculture does not grow flax.

The productive methods available to the Huns were primitive beyond what is now easy to imagine. When Ammianus says that they were accustomed to endure hunger and thirst from their very cradles, he reminds us that their own economy was simply *unable* to support them unaided. Without the assistance of the settled agricultural populations at the edge of the steppe they could not have survived. They were therefore compelled to have continuous intercourse with these peoples, and the question of their trade will occupy us at length later on.

II

From this description of their primitive methods of producing and appropriating food it will be evident that a very large area of pasture land was necessary to support a comparatively small number of Huns. Hence they must not be pictured as wandering over the steppe in one enormous multitude—Hunnish 'hordes' and their *unzählige Schwärme* are misleading terms. Rather, a large number of comparatively tiny groups drove their herds hither and thither in search of pasture and water, and, within limits, the smaller the groups the more secure was their food-supply. What can we learn of these groups? It is unfortunate that Ammianus omits to tell us anything of the tribal organization of the Huns. We know from Priscus and other writers that they were organized in tribes, and we have a number of their tribal names. Ammianus' remark that they entered battle *cuneatim* reminds us of the *cunei* in which the Germans fought, according to Tacitus, of whose chief works Ammianus was writing a continuation.¹ But whether the *cunei* of the Huns were formed likewise of *familiae et propinquitates* we do not know. There is no direct evidence to support the suggestion, but, although tribes and confederacies were easily broken up in the unstable conditions of steppe life, clans and families tended to survive,² so that the conjecture may not be incorrect. However that may be, scholars appear to agree in making deductions as to the Huns from what is in general customary on the steppe. Thus Bury accepts Peisker's statements to the effect that the basic unit of Hun society was formed by the five or six persons

¹ xxxi. 2. 8; Tac. *Germ.* vi. 5, vii. 3.

² Peisker, p. 334.

of one family who lived in one tent. 'Six to ten tents formed a camp, and several camps a clan. The tribe consisted of several clans and the highest unit, the *il* or people, of several tribes.'¹ If we equate the word 'several' in this quotation from Bury with the figure 10, we may conclude that the average Hun tribe consisted of about 5,000 persons all told. But not all pastures and hunting-grounds would support 5,000 persons with their flocks and herds if they moved about in one group; and that is why Peisker tells us that the camps, i.e. the groups of about 50 persons, wandered about separately. Priscus says that the Acatziri, a people whom he declares to be Hunnic, were divided into several tribes and clans under their own leaders.² We may suppose that the clans, γένη, which he mentions correspond to the groups of about 500 persons of whom a clan, in Peisker's terminology, was composed. The organization in households may be taken as certain, for it still existed in Attila's day, as we shall see (p. 169 below).

Something can be learned of the social organization of these tribes at the time of which we are speaking. When every male was engaged in the day-long task of looking after the herds, and when even then famine conditions very often prevailed among them—'famem sitimque perferre ab incunabulis adsuescunt'³—a leisured or even a semi-leisured class of nobles could not fully emerge. Ammianus explicitly notes the absence of kings from their society, 'aguntur . . . nulla severitate regali'.⁴ Instead of kings, he says, each group was content *tumultuario primatum ductu*. Who these *primates* were he does not say, but it is clear from his language that their *ductus* existed only in time of war. Indeed, we may guess that even in war-time they could not so much exercise any legal or traditional power as merely use personal influence: they had, one may suspect, little or no right of coercion. It is known that the Mongols had no king until 1206: when Chinghis was proclaimed Khan a few years previously, in 1203, he had not been vested with any royal power, but was merely the leader of a little band of adventurers—his followers swore to obey him in war, but in peace merely to refrain from 'harming his affairs'.⁵ Ammianus' *primates* may well have been in some such position within their own tribes.

¹ *Later Roman Empire*, i, p. 102; Peisker, p. 333; cf. Fox, p. 43.

² Priscus, p. 298. 29.

³ Amm. xxxi. 2. 4.

⁴ l.c., § 7.

⁵ Fox, pp. 77, 106; cf. Seeck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 280. 9.

As among the Alans,¹ they were, no doubt, simply those who had won the greatest reputation as military leaders, and in time of peace their power will have been little greater than that of any other adult male Hun: for in peace-time the clans scattered to their various pastures and the basis of a ruler's existence was gone. It would appear instead that all the adult Huns—or at any rate the heads of the households—met together in a form of council to discuss matters of general interest, and we are told that, when they came together thus, they carried on their discussions on horseback.²

Ammianus omits to say on what basis property rested, whether it was held privately, by the clan, by the family, or by some other unit. There was certainly no private ownership of land, for that was impossible among the pastoral nomads.³ But what of the herds? We know that among the Mongols of Chinghis Khan's time each nomad household owned its own herds, tents, and accoutrement,⁴ and it is perhaps safest to assume that this was also the case among the Huns; it will scarcely be doubted that Onegesius, whom we shall meet in the sequel, owned all the property used by the persons of his household. It may be pointed out, however, that if private property, as we understand the term, were highly developed in the period that Ammianus is speaking of, we should find ourselves in some difficulty with the *tumultuarius primatum ductus*; for if the *primates* were simply those who had inherited or acquired most property it is all but inconceivable that their *ductus* should have been practically non-existent in times of peace. A propertied class is never slow to make full political use of its economic and social advantages. It follows that the military leadership of the *primates* was not strictly hereditary, although the prestige of a father who had held the leadership might well give some indefinite advantage to his son when a new leader was to be chosen. Finally, we may safely assert that slavery was but little developed in Hun society. That it did exist at this time is indicated not only by what we know of other pastoral peoples at the same stage of material culture as the Huns,⁵ but also by Ammianus' failure to say that it did *not* exist—for in the case of the Alans, who had once had no slaves, the historian is careful

¹ Amm. xxxi. 2. 25; cf. the *duces* of the Germans in Tac. *German.* vii. 1-2.

² Amm. xxxi. 2. 7.

³ Lattimore, pp. 66-8.

⁴ Fox, p. 43.

⁵ See the very illuminating graph in Hobhouse, &c., p. 237.

to point out the absence of the institution. The function of the slaves of the Huns will have been to carry out menial work at the great hunts and to act as shepherds and stable boys, as among the early Mongols.¹ They were completely at the mercy of their masters, who could put them to death without scruple or hindrance, and Priscus saw two of them crucified on a charge of having killed their masters. The sole source of slavery seems to have been warfare: we hear of no native Hun slaves.

III

Such being the material civilization of the Huns in the later fourth century, let us turn now to the question of their numbers and their military strength.

It has been pointed out above that the present writer cannot pass judgement on De Guignes's identification of the Huns with the Hsiung-nu of the Chinese annalists. Now the Chinese, when they deal with the steppe nomads, speak with embarrassing frequency of nomad armies numbering 100,000, 200,000, 300,000, and even 400,000 men. Thus Parker, whose narrative in *A Thousand Years of the Tartars* is closely based on the original authorities, writes, '[Baghdur] had 300,000 troops under his command', 'Baghdur let loose 300,000 of his best troops', '[Merchö] had a standing army of 400,000 horse-archers always ready', and so on.² It may seem impertinent for one who knows nothing of the Chinese authorities to criticize the historians who follow them, but we may be permitted to ask (a) how the extremely primitive nomadic pastoralists of Mongolia could possibly feed three hundred thousand men concentrated into one body, and (b) how their society could function at all if even one hundred thousand men were withdrawn from production and from the business of tending and protecting the flocks and herds for an entire campaigning season. Indeed, even when we find the view³ that in 430 Attila's Huns numbered some 600,000 or 700,000 persons, we cannot but wonder how such an enormous multitude managed to feed itself in Pannonia and on its long journey thither, even if they had come from no more distant spot than the Kuban basin.⁴

¹ Fox, p. 47, and see Priscus, pp. 309, 3, 321, 2, cf. 326, 13.

² Parker, pp. 12, 15, 159, *et passim*.

³ Quoted without disapproval by H. Leclercq, *Dict. d'arch. chrét.* vii. ii. 2793, s.v. 'Huns'.

⁴ Those who, despite Ammianus' description of the methods of producing food

The statistics given by our fifth-century Greco-Roman authorities indicate a very different state of affairs. In 409 Honorius employed 10,000 Huns against Alaric.¹ It is significant, however, that the excellent authority from whom we derive this information, Olympiodorus, himself a first-hand observer of Hun life, immediately goes on to describe the extraordinary efforts which the Emperor found it necessary to make in order to collect food to support this force: he brought both livestock and grain from Dalmatia into Italy for the purpose. As Zosimus puts it, ὁ βασιλεὺς . . . μυρίους εἰς συμμαχίαν Οὐννοὺς ἐπεκλείετο· τροφὴν δὲ τούτοις ἑτοιμον εἶναι παροῦσι βουλόμενος, σίτον καὶ πρόβατα καὶ βόας τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς Δελματίας εἰσφέρειν ἐκέλευεν. From the fact that Zosimus, or rather Olympiodorus, thought this information sufficiently important to include in his history, it is clear that it was quite exceptional and that the feeding of 10,000 Huns for a campaigning season was considered to be no ordinary task. In fact, one might reasonably suspect that only the commissariat of the Imperial government was at this period in a position to concentrate so large a force of Hun warriors in one spot. In view of what we have seen above, it is highly unlikely that the Huns themselves, in the years immediately after their first appearance in Europe, could produce a sufficient surplus of food to feed so large a body throughout a campaign: certainly there could be no question of living off the land after the devastating invasion of Radagaisus a few years earlier. It is true, however, that at the end of the period under review Octar's Huns, who were defeated by the Burgundians, are said by Socrates to have numbered 10,000 (p. 66 below). But at that time circumstances had changed: whole nations of agricultural peoples were then working perforce to feed their masters. Moreover, it suits Socrates' *Tendenz* in that passage to make the Huns as numerous as possible: they may therefore have numbered far fewer than 10,000. Indeed, when ancient authors give us figures relating to the size of barbarian armies operating beyond the frontier against other barbarians, they are hardly ever right: it was nearly always impossible for them to obtain reliable information on such matters.

at the disposal of the Huns, believe their numbers to have been anywhere near this figure should ponder over some observations uttered by a Chinese general in A.D. 11 and recorded in Parker, p. 57 f.: see also Lattimore, p. 438.

¹ p. 34 above; Zosimus, v. 10. 1, from Olympiodorus.

Next, we are told by Olympiodorus¹ that the Hun force which defeated Athaulf's Goths in the interests of Olympius in 409 numbered 300. In view of the supply difficulties which we have already mentioned this is the sort of figure that we should expect. In the time of Procopius, when the Huns had reverted, as we shall see (p. 182 below), to a kind of social organization similar to that in which they were living *c.* 376, their armies nearly always appear to number between 200 and 1,200 men, and the expedition of Zabergan, which caused so much alarm in Constantinople in 558 and was composed of 7,000 Kotriguri, was noted as altogether exceptional.² We shall not be very likely to err then if we assume the average Hun raiding party, which harried the Roman provinces at the beginning of the fifth century, rarely if ever to have numbered more than about 1,200 warriors. We may assign the same sort of figure to the average body of Hun mercenaries employed by the Roman government at the same period.

According to Ralph Fox (p. 39), who had first-hand experience of Mongolia, the nomads living there under the old tribal society went from pasture to pasture in companies of several hundred tents. This suggests that each company could muster approximately a thousand warriors; presumably, when a raid was undertaken, some grown men were left behind to protect the women and children, and to look after the flocks and herds. Further, we have already seen that the tribal unit in our period may well have consisted of about 5,000 persons all told. This again points to a field force for each tribe of about the figure we have suggested, and it indicates that the smaller Hun forces which harried the Roman provinces on so many occasions and the bodies of Hun mercenaries hired out by the Roman government were, not random groupings, but tribal levies. In this fact we have the answer to many of our questions. Since each tribe sought out its pastures and hunting-grounds in comparative isolation, the tribal forces could act with complete independence, the one of the other, and we may be sure that rivalry and hostility were as common among them as friendship and co-operation. This is the fundamental reason why, when some Huns were attacking Vithimiris' Goths, others played a considerable part in the Gothic defence (p. 23 above). This is why

¹ *Ap. Zosimus*, v. 45. 6: see p. 34 above.

² *Agathias*, p. 367. 22, Dindorf.

the Huns as often defended the Roman Empire as they attacked it. Again, the Huns had a reputation for extreme faithlessness in making and breaking treaties.¹ The reason why they should have acquired such a reputation lies in their tribal organization: a treaty made by one group in no way bound another. Finally, this is the explanation of the fact that no major battles between the Huns and the Romans are reported for many years after the first appearance of the former across the Danube frontier.

The preceding discussion throws considerable doubt, I think, on the last figure at our disposal, the 60,000 Huns whom Aetius is alleged to have brought into Italy in 425.² A force of 60,000 warriors implies a total population of at least a quarter of a million Huns, and when we consider that only a fraction of the Huns in Europe were united in the confederacy which supported Aetius, and when we further take into account the fact that neither Aetius nor the Western government could possibly have paid or fed 60,000 mercenaries, we cannot but conclude this figure to be an exaggeration. In all probability, if we may risk a guess, Aetius' force was about one-tenth of the figure given by Philostorgius. Quite apart from the fact that Aetius, like other commanders, will have exaggerated the size of his army for purposes of propaganda, it cannot be sufficiently emphasized that the astounding mobility of the steppe horse-men has always led contemporary historians to believe them much more numerous than they actually were. It should be remembered that our best authorities rarely, if ever, attempt to assess the numbers of the armies of the Huns in their greatest days. It is to Priscus' credit that he gives no such figures in the extant fragments. Attila, he says, took Margus μετὰ βαρβαρικῆς πολυπληθείας;³ the men of Asemus fought πρὸς ἀπειρον πλῆθος.⁴ But such terms are elastic: for instance, the Huns ferry a πλῆθος βαρβαρικόν across a stream, and Attila's tent, he observes, was surrounded ὑπὸ βαρβαρικοῦ πλῆθους.⁵ Again, Basich and Cursich are said to have been πολλοῦ πλῆθους ἀρχοντες.⁶ Unfortunately in a lost part of his work, Priscus, if we can trust Jordanes, appears to have given it as his opinion that Attila's army in 451 numbered 500,000 men, a figure that outdoes even the Chinese annalists; but the historian was careful to point out that this

¹ Amm. xxi. 2. 11.

³ p. 281. 1.

⁵ pp. 292. 7, 296. 5.

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² Philostorgius, xii. 14: see p. 35 above.

⁴ p. 284. 14; cf. p. 344. 22.

⁶ p. 313. 1.

figure was conjectural.¹ How could he find out the truth? It is unlikely that Attila himself knew even approximately the number of men in his army on that occasion, or that he was less willing than Geiseric to exaggerate the size of his force.² In view therefore of the direct evidence of our sources together with what is known of nomad empires in general, we may safely conclude that the enormous conquests of the Huns were carried out by 'a ridiculously small band of horsemen'.³

IV

It was not because of superiority in numbers that the Huns were so often able to defeat the Roman and Gothic armies. What of their armament? No one can read the relevant chapter of Ammianus (xxx. 2) without feeling something of the profound horror which their appearance in south-eastern Europe stirred in this capable officer: as Peisker (p. 350) says, they froze the blood of all peoples. We may confidently deny the view⁴ that 'at the time of the death of Theodosius [the Great] they were probably regarded as one more barbarian enemy, neither more nor less formidable than the Germans who threatened the Danubian barrier', for it was precisely at the time of Theodosius' death that Ammianus was writing his thirty-first book. Even Seeck, who limits this growth of confidence to the East Romans, is scarcely correct: 'im Osten', he writes, 'wo Römer und Germanen bald als Feinde, bald als Bundesgenossen schon oft genug mit ihnen gekämpft hatten, muss sich jener erste zwingende Eindruck allmählich durch die Gewohnheit abgestumpft haben'.⁵ But several passages in Procopius and Agathias show that even in the sixth century the Huns still aroused exceptional terror.⁶

It is curious that Ammianus, Claudian, Sidonius, and Jordanes, when they first turn to describe the Huns, at once speak of their loathsome personal appearance. These writers can find no words strong enough to express their horror of the new barbarians. The Huns, says Ammianus, are 'prodigiose deformes et pandi, ut bipedes existimes bestias, vel quales in

¹ Jordanes, *Get.* xxxv. 182 'cuius exercitus quingentorum milium esse numero ferebatur'. ² Procopius, *BP.* i. 5. 18-19; note Fox, p. 147.

³ I take the phrase from Peisker, p. 350.

⁴ Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, i, p. 103 f.

⁵ *Untergang*, v, p. 214.

⁶ Note Zosimus, v. 22. 3, discussed p. 54 below; Procopius, *BP.* i. 21. 16, *BP.* iii. 18. 17, and the passages cited above, p. 39, n. 3.

commarginandis pontibus effigiati stipites dolantur incompte'. Claudian introduces his description of them with the words *obscaena visu corpora*. Sidonius, in his panegyric of Anthemius, assures us that 'truly the very faces of their infants have a gruesome all their own'. Jordanes develops the theme. They caused excessive panic, he says, by the terror of their faces; they put men to flight by their 'terribilitas, eo quod erat eis species pavenda nigridinis et velud quaedam, si dici fas est, informis offa, non facies'. Jerome puts the matter in a nutshell: 'The Roman army', he says, 'is terrified by the sight of them.'¹ Evidently the facial appearance and tattered marmot-skin clothing of the new invaders unnerved the soldiers of the Empire, accustomed as they were to fight opponents who at least looked and dressed like themselves. This psychological weapon must have been of great military value at first, and seems to have declined very slowly later.

There is no need to labour the point that the Huns all but lived on horseback, and in sheer horsemanship they far surpassed the best Roman and Gothic cavalry. They are, says Ammianus, *equis prope affixi*. 'They are unable to plant their feet firmly on the ground', says Zosimus, 'they live and sleep on their horses.' Jerome observed that the Romans are defeated by men who are not able to walk, men who think themselves dead if they touch the ground. Suidas glosses the word ἀκροσφοδαίς as 'persons who trip up when walking, i.e. the Huns'. Priscus tells us how they even carried on their negotiations with the Romans on horseback, and he himself saw Attila eat and drink when mounted.² The Romans could never produce such cavalrymen because they could not abandon their agricultural economy. 'The Chinese', writes Lattimore (p. 65), 'took over the whole of the technique of mounted archery, but without subordinating their agricultural economy to the nomadic economy. This meant that both their horses and their archers were inferior to those of the nomads, except in abnormal periods when years of consecutive campaigning, at ruinous cost to their settled economy, produced a professional cavalry that could match the "natural" cavalry of the steppe.' The Romans did not imitate this

¹ Amm. xxxi. 2. 2; Claudian, *In Rufin.* i. 325; Sidonius, *Carm.* ii. 245 (transl. Anderson); Jordanes, *Get.* xxiv. 127-8; Jerome, *Ep.* lx. 17; cf. Procopius, *BP.* i. 3. 4.

² Amm. xxxi. 2. 6; Zosimus, iv. 20. 4; Jerome, *Ep.* lx. 17; Suidas, s.v. ἐν τῷ βολάζειν σφαλλόμενοι: τοῦτέστιν οἱ Οὐννοί; Priscus, pp. 277. 5, 304. 16, &c.

desperate policy, not because they were too wise, but because they were too weak.

It is easy to under-estimate the military strength of nomadic mounted archers, especially those of a nation which had so recently emerged from tribal society and was still endowed with all the courage engendered by the free institutions of the tribes. As late as the mid-nineteenth century the fighting qualities of the mounted archers of a tribal society, even when faced with modern fire-arms, were demonstrated on more than one occasion in more than one part of the world.¹ The horses of the Huns were of a hardy though ugly breed, and when Jerome contrasts their *caballi* with the *equi* of the Romans, we must not forget that their pasture-fed horses could do less work than the stall-fed horses of the Romans which had their hay and grain brought to them.² But the Huns were not long in mounting themselves on Roman horses,³ so that this disadvantage quickly disappeared. The complete command of horsemanship possessed by these unsightly beings, and the ferocious charges and unpredictable retreats of their cavalry,⁴ the clouds of arrows which they discharged from their dreaded bows and which never missed the mark,⁵ the astounding speed of their strategic manoeuvres,⁶ were too much for the cruelly exploited and dispirited infantrymen of the declining Empire.

Ammianus speaks of iron swords, and these must have been obtained by barter or capture from the peoples with whom the Huns came in contact, for metal-working on more than a minute scale was impossible in the conditions of nomadic life:⁷ their arrows consequently were tipped with bone. In close fighting, however, they did not rely on the sword alone. They

¹ See a good example in W. P. Webb, *The Great Plains* (Oxford, 1931), pp. 167 ff.

² Amm. xxxi. 2. 3 *duris quidem sed deformibus*; Jerome, *Ep.* lx. 17; Lattimore, p. 58.

³ Orosius, vii. 34. 5 '... (gentes)'.

⁴ Amm. xxxi. 2. 6. Ordine mobilitas

insperatique recessus'; Zosimus, iv. 20. 4 περιλάσσει δὲ καὶ ἐκδρομαῖς καὶ εὐκαίροις ἀναχωρήσειν, ἐκ τῶν ἵππων κατατοξεύοντες; Jerome, *Ep.* lxxvii. 8 'Hunorum examina ... pernicibus equis huc illucque volitantia'; Agathias, i. 22.

⁵ Sidonius, *Carm.* ii. 266 f.:

teretes arcus et spicula cordi,
terribiles certaeque manus iaculisque ferendae
moris fixa fides et non peccante sub ictu
edoctus peccare furor.

⁶ Cf. Jerome, quoted p. 27 above, and Nestorius quoted p. 62 below. On their tactics see E. Darkó, p. 449 f. It is significant that the Persians had less to fear from them: see p. 30 f. above.

⁷ Amm. xxxi. 2. 9: see p. 4 f. above.

also used a lasso or net wherein they entangled their opponent, whether horseman or foot, and in fact we hear of several other northern peoples in antiquity who used the lasso without any knowledge of the sword at all.¹ When Sozomen tells of the Hun who tried to ensnare the bishop Theotimus in a lasso, it is noteworthy that the nomad whom he describes has no sword, although he does carry a shield.²

But the Huns were ἰπποτοξόται above all, and the bow was by far their most characteristic weapon. Both Darkó (p. 449) and Lattimore (pp. 465, 466) agree that the superiority of the nomads was due to their peculiarly powerful bow. The compound bow of the steppe horseman, according to Lattimore, 'is notably short for its great power and is made of horn—a steppe material—and short pieces of wood spliced double'. Alföldi argues that the Hun bow was not short: the types of bow used in northern Asia, he says, are in general very long. But this information must be rejected in view of the testimony of Lattimore, whose knowledge of steppe conditions is unsurpassed. It should be remembered that a horseman would find a short bow less unwieldy than a long one—and the steppe was treeless.³ The accuracy with which the Hun archers used this formidable weapon never failed to astonish Greco-Roman observers.⁴ Aetius, who had been a hostage among them, became, we are told, 'eques promptissimus, sagittarum iactu peritus'. The Romans were always glad to capture these *Scythicae arcus*, and when Vegetius, who seems to have written during the reign of Valentinian III, says of the Romans of his day that they 'exemplo Gothorum et Alanorum Hunnorumque equitum arma profecerint', he may well mean by *equitum arma* the dreaded bow of the Huns.⁵ In all, when we bear in mind that the Huns possessed horses which were at least equal to those of the Romans in performance, and that they also seem to have adopted some

¹ Amm., l.c. *Iacinia*. Some good examples will be found in the references cited by Wagner-Erfurdt, ad loc. I regret that I cannot consult Gy. Moravcsik, 'A hunok taktikájához', *Kőrösi Csoma-Archivum*, i, 1921-5, pp. 276-80: one gathers from *Byzantion*, vi, 1931, p. 685 f., that the author shows from Byzantine writers that other peoples systematically used the lasso in warfare.

² Cf. p. 38 above; Sozomen, vii. 26. 8.

³ Lattimore, p. 64 f.; Alföldi, *Funde*, p. 19.

⁴ Olympiodorus, frag. 18; Amm. xxxi. 2. 9; Sidonius, *Carm.* ii. 266-9; Jordanes, *Get.* i. 27. 27.

⁵ p. 33 above. Scythian bows: Claudian, *iii cos. Hon.* 27; Vegetius, i. 20, with Alföldi, *Funde*, p. 24.

Roman defensive armour,¹ we can see that their horsemanship and above all the extreme mobility of their entire society gave them a decided tactical and strategical advantage over their opponents. 'The whole people', writes Minns (p. 51) of the steppe nomads in general, 'is a ready-made army, easily marshalled, self-supporting, capable of sudden attacks, of long-distance raids. In the steppe the nomad is always on a war footing.'

The Romans, however, could scarcely have been defeated for long were it not that they fought with a hostile rear. Ralph Fox writes that 'It is doubtful if even the Mongol military genius could ever have conquered China completely . . . without the help of great sections of the population who were full of hatred and contempt for their degenerate and greedy rulers' (p. 142). The same is true of the Huns and the Eastern Roman Empire. Zosimus says that in 400, when Thrace was in a state of utter confusion following the defeat and death of Gainas at the hands of Uldis' Huns, runaway slaves and 'others who abandoned their posts' in the Roman caste system gave out that they were Huns and proceeded to devastate the Thracian country-side until they were defeated by Fravitta.² These slaves presumably said that they were Huns because they knew that this name would cause more terror and confusion than any other; the Huns, then, be it noted, were at this time more dreaded by those Romans, who still had something to lose, than were the Goths (p. 50 above). More important, the incident shows us clearly that the coming of the Huns, like that of many other barbarians hostile to the Imperial government, was greeted by the depressed classes in the Empire with enthusiasm: it meant a chance to throw off the burden of their servitude. It was a symptom of the times that, as early as 408, an important frontier fortress should have been betrayed to Uldis (p. 29 above), and we may be sure that the treachery at *Castra Martis* could be paralleled many times if our sources for early-fifth-century history were less unsatisfactory.

The condition of the army too was disastrous from the point of view of the Roman government. Admittedly Vegetius finds

¹ This seems to be implied by Orosius, vii. 34. 5, quoted above; cf. the shield in Sozomen, vii. 26. 8.

² See p. 29 above: Zosimus, v. 22. 3 (from Eunapius) *φυγάδες γὰρ οἰκείται καὶ ἄλλως τὰς τάξεις ἀπολιπόντες*.

one matter to the credit of the high command: the equipment of the cavalry had been improved as a result of study of the weapons of the Goths, Alans, and Huns, and we have seen that the Roman cavalymen may have been equipped with the 'Scythian' bow.¹ In the *Problemata* of Leo VI, who is drawing on Urbicius, who in turn is based on the accumulated experience of the fifth and sixth centuries, we find another illustration of the observational powers of the Roman high command. Leo puts his information in the form of question and answer, and writes as follows:

Q. 'What must the general do, if the nation [of the enemy] be Scythian or Hunnic?'

A. 'He should attack them about the month of February or March, when their horses are weakened by the hardships of winter.'²

Further, many of the Gothic troops in the service of the East and West Romans must have had relatives living north of the Danube and subject to the harsh exploitation of the Huns. The knowledge of their relatives' suffering will have added a bitter zest to their struggle with the invaders. None the less, the Roman army mirrored faithfully the miseries of Roman society in general. Many passages of Synesius' letters describe for us the disorganization of the Eastern forces about the year 400, and Synesius' complaints are loudly echoed by Vegetius in the West. The fact was that no efficient military force could be built up on the basis of the colonate.

Again, it seems impossible to resist the conclusion that the Huns were only able to overrun the great Ostrogothic kingdom so quickly because they received the assistance of the subjected nations inside the realm of Ermanarich. The direct evidence for this—such as it is—can be found in the saga material which Jordanes believed to be history. We are told there that Sunhild or Svanhildr was the wife of a man who was, if not the prince, at least a member, of the *gens infida Rosomonorum*, one of the subject nations of the Ostrogoths. Svanhildr was punished *pro mariti fraudulento discessu* at the time when Ermanarich was perplexed by the onset of the Huns. We need follow the story no farther. What does Jordanes mean when he says that the

¹ Vegetius, i. 20; see p. 53 above.

² Leo, *Problemata*, vii. 9, p. 48, ed. Dain. Leo is drawing verbally on Urbicius, vii. 1, in Jo. Scheffer, *Arriani Tactica* (Uppsala, 1664), p. 137.

Rosomoni were a *gens infida*? And to whom did Svanhildr's husband desert? In the circumstances we can only conclude that, according to the saga—and such sagas usually have an historical basis—at least one of Ermanarich's tributary nations was willing to help the Huns to overthrow him. And if one, why not more?¹

To return to the Romans, we shall have occasion in the sequel to examine the relations of Attila and the Bagaudae of Gaul, and we shall see that the Huns were regarded in 448 as saviours by the lower classes within the Western Empire. When we read through the expressions of dread and loathing uttered by the writers of the Empire when their thoughts turned towards the Huns, we must remember that these writers were educated men, belonging to the propertied classes in the Empire. They were a tiny minority of the total Roman population. If then we seek the sentiments of the Romans in general towards the Huns, we shall turn, not to Ammianus or Claudian or Jerome or Theodoret, but to a man whom we shall meet presently, Eudoxius, by profession a physician, whose only recorded action speaks to us more clearly than the rhetoric of bishops or court poets.

V

Such in brief was the material civilization and the military potential of the Huns when they first came in contact with the Romans. The reader will note, on the one hand, their crushing poverty and the extreme primitiveness of their productive methods, and, on the other hand, their immense potential military strength. But the Huns could never seriously threaten the Roman Empire as a whole so long as their primitive economy rendered any kind of political integration and any united military action impossible. So long as the Hun tribes and clans sought water and pasture-lands as isolated units, they could never develop sufficient political coherence to threaten more than isolated districts of the Empire. Yet there must have been from the very beginning a strong tendency for these nomads,

¹ Jordanes, *Get.* xxiv. 129, with Chadwick, *Heroic Age*, p. 157, who, while allowing that 'the element of fiction was probably present from the beginning', concludes that it was probably only the elaboration of the incident of Svanhildr and the exaggeration of its effects that were fictitious. Note also F. Lot, *Les Invasions germaniques: la pénétration mutuelle du monde barbare et du monde romain* (Paris, 1945), p. 58.

who 'famem sitimque perferre ab incunabilis adsuescunt', to take what they could from the provinces of the Empire, which to them appeared a paradise of riches and prosperity. 'In your empire', says a Hun to Justinian many years later, 'there is a superabundance of everything, including, I suppose, even the impossible.'¹ The tendency to take what they could, or, failing that, to hire themselves out as mercenaries to the Imperial government or even to individual Roman ministers must have laid the seeds of endless conflicts. That this was the sole reason for their contacts with the Roman Empire would seem to be indicated by Ammianus when he speaks of them as *auri cupidine immensa flagrant* and *externa praedandi aviditate flagrant inmani*.² Although this is inadequate, as we shall see, for it omits the question of trade, it is certainly no worse than to ascribe to the Huns, even under Attila, the idea of world domination. When we find Tillemont writing that Attila 'sembloit n'aspirer pas moins qu'à la Monarchie de tout l'Univers', and Alföldi speaking of 'ces rêves de domination universelle', we may reply that Attila is as little likely as Chinghis Khan to have entertained any such idea.³

It is time now to point out that even before Ammianus published his work the state of affairs which he depicts was coming to an end. In Jordanes' mythical account of the Hun conquest of the Ostrogoths we find a king named Balamber, who is mentioned as leading the nomads in the years immediately preceding the battle of Adrianople. It seems reasonably certain that Balamber never existed: the Goths invented him in order to explain who it was that conquered them.⁴ Nevertheless, the Huns at this time achieved one great victory: they subdued, as we have seen, an *ampla pars* of the Ostrogoths. This suggests that they were operating on that occasion with a much larger force than any one of their tribes could have put in the field.

¹ Procopius, *BG.* viii. 19. 14.

² xxxi. 2. 11 and 12.

³ Tillemont, *Hist.* vi. p. 140; Alföldi, *Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie*, xlvii, 1932, p. 295: the view is often repeated, as, for example, by C. Gerard, *Les Bulgares de la Volga et les Slaves du Danube* (Paris, 1939), p. 39, F. Lot, *Les Invasions germaniques* (Paris, 1945), p. 103. Contrast Fox, p. 130 f.

⁴ Jordanes, *Get.* xxiv. 130; xlviii. 248, 249, cf. L. Schmidt, *Geschichte*, pp. 253-7. The attempt of Marquart, *Streifzüge*, p. 368 f., to combine the saga of Jordanes with the history of Ammianus seems to the present writer to be unconvincing. Observe that a Germanic name like Balamber is impossible among the Huns at this—or perhaps any—period: see Appendix G.

Ermanarich, Vithimiris, and Viderichus were not successively beaten by a body of about 1,000 Huns—the approximate size of a tribal muster. It seems then that we are dealing here with a confederacy of a group of tribes. From a sentence of Sozomen¹ it would seem that the first minor attacks of the Huns on the Ostrogoths were carried out by tribal forces, and, when these attacks proved lucrative, the tribes coalesced into a confederacy so as to launch the main invasion. But this confederacy can only have existed for a very short time, for we do not hear of its accomplishing any further exploits. Also, Ammianus is an excellent authority, and his express statement that the Huns were not ruled by kings forbids us to posit several ‘Balambars’ or more than one confederacy.

Some light is thrown on the development of Hun society by what is known of the first historical kings whose names have come down to us. We hear that Uldis defeated and killed Gainas in 400 in the neighbourhood of Constantinople. In 406 he was in Italy helping Stilicho to defeat Radagaisus. In 408 he is found in Thrace attacking the Roman dominions (pp. 33, 29 above). In the last of these campaigns the Roman officer opposing him detached many troops from the Hun after negotiations with his *οἰκῆται καὶ λοχαγοί*. A fragment of Olympiodorus throws some light on these subordinate commanders in this Hun army. During his visit to the Huns Olympiodorus was greatly impressed by the archery *τῶν ῥήγων αὐτῶν*, and met Charato *ὁ τῶν ῥήγων πρῶτος*. Now we have seen that Olympiodorus was extremely careful in his use of such terms,² and it is clear that among the Huns whom he visited there were several *ῥῆγες* and one *πρῶτος τῶν ῥήγων*. The latter position was filled by Donatus and after his death by Charato. From his usage elsewhere it seems that Olympiodorus drew a distinction between the military leader of a confederacy of tribes, the *φύλαρχος* or *πρῶτος τῶν ῥήγων*, and the military leader of a single tribe, the *ῥήξ*. From this we can deduce that in Uldis’ confederacy the leaders of the individual tribes, doubtless the *primates* of whom Ammianus had spoken, retained a position of authority and responsibility even when serving under a *φύλαρχος*. It should further be noted that after his defeat in 408 Uldis is never heard of again and would appear to have lost his command. This is no coincidence. The

¹ vi. 37. 5, quoted p. 22, n. 5 above.

² Frag. 18: see p. 8 above.

military leader retains his position only as long as he fulfils the function for which his position came into being, that is, the collection of food and plunder and the defence of his people's flocks and herds. That this last was also part of the military leader's function, incidentally, is explicitly stated by one of our authorities in the case of Uldis himself. Zosimus, following Eunapius, tells us that Uldis attacked Gainas in 400 'because he did not think it safe to allow a barbarian with an army of his own to take up his dwelling across the Danube'.¹ The disappearance of Uldis as soon as he was unsuccessful in war is one more sign of that democratic character of primitive kingship which historians too often overlook. The kingship, however, seems to have become a permanent institution among at least one body of Huns by the year 412; for when Olympiodorus visited them he found that as soon as Donatus was murdered, Charato was appointed immediately to fill his place.

What are we to say of the continuity of the confederacies led by Uldis, Donatus, and the others? Are we to picture a Hun empire founded by Uldis or a predecessor of his, and surviving as a political entity until the death of Attila? Kiessling, for instance, speaks of a Hun empire stretching from the Carpathians to the Don in the seventies of the fourth century, the political unification of which was confirmed by Uldis, who was followed as its leader by Octar (Uptar), then by Rua, and finally by Bleda and Attila.² This view, it may be suggested, is unlikely. After their conquest of the Goths there is no reason to believe that the Huns maintained in its entirety such political unification as they had achieved. The various tribes would seem to have relapsed to a large extent into their original state of mutual independence, each controlling a specific portion of the subject Goths and Alans.³ Their raids during the closing decades of the fourth century and the first years of the fifth were carried out by independent tribes without any central direction. There is no reason to suppose, for instance, that the raid across the Danube in 395 was timed to coincide with that launched over the Caucasus in that same year (pp. 26 ff. above). Two unrelated groups of Huns simply took advantage simultaneously of the absence of the Roman armies in the West. Such independent tribes at times coalesced into confederacies of which we

¹ Zosimus, v. 22. 1.

² P.-W. viii. 2601.

³ Cf. Alföldi, *Untergang*, ii, p. 67.

hear about those led by Uldis and by Donatus and Charato and by Basich and Cursich. But we have no evidence to show that there existed one single, continuously growing confederacy of which Uldis, Donatus, and the others were the successive military leaders. There is evidence, on the other hand, which seems to show that some of the Goths were in a position at times to act independently of the Huns in the period before Rua, that is, before c. 430; for about the year 418 the Goth Thorismud was able to win a victory over the Gepids, and our sources give us no hint that he was acting under Hunnic orders.¹ This could scarcely have happened under an empire that was in any way centralized.

Much confusion has been caused by the scanty data concerning Uldis. Many scholars believe that it was he who led the great westward advance of the Huns in the opening years of the fifth century. Alföldi thinks that it was Uldis who first fixed the residence of the Hun kings on the bank of the Danube opposite Margus and that it remained there without interruption until the forties of the century.² Seck actually inclines to the view that Rua and Octar were the sons and successors of Uldis.³ Bury states that 'it is uncertain whether Uldis . . . was king of all the Huns or only a portion'.⁴ But indeed Uldis was clearly a minor figure in Hun society—the mere fact that he was reduced to seeking service in the Roman armies of both the East and the West shows that he was not the ruler of a great state north of the Danube. Moreover, Zosimus tells us that he had great difficulty in defeating Gainas in 400; he had to engage him in several battles before he could dispose of him. Yet Gainas was leading a very weak force which had already been defeated by the Romans (p. 32 above). We may believe then that Uldis was the leader of a mere fraction of the Huns, and that it is quite certain that he did not lead them all. That the family of an unsuccessful leader should have retained the command of the Huns for fifty years is impossible at this stage of the develop-

¹ I take the date, but not the interpretation, of Jordanes, *Get.* xxxiii. 173–5 from Dicuiescu, pp. 53–5.

² *Untergang*, ii, p. 69.

³ *Untergang*, vi, p. 282.

⁴ *Later Roman Empire*, i, p. 104 n. He is also inaccurate in his remark (op. cit., p. 271) that Rua 'seems to have brought together all the tribes into a sort of political unity': cf. Jordanes, *Get.* xxxv. 180. Similarly, Grousset, p. 117, misleadingly says that it was Balamber who led 'the Huns' across the Volga and the Dnieper: even Attila on his accession was not ruler of all the Huns (Priscus, frag. 1).

ment of Hun society. We may safely conclude that the confederacies of Uldis, Donatus, and the rest had little inter-connexion and that it was not until about 420, if even then, that the confederacy which Rua subsequently led came into existence.

VI

When the nomadic Huns, living in the conditions of desperate hardship which we have outlined above, came into contact with the higher material civilization of the agricultural peoples on both sides of the Danubian frontier, it was inevitable that they should try to ease the harshness of their lot by collecting as much food and plunder and as many primitive luxuries as they could from the Goths and Romans. In times of drought particularly, attacks on their rich neighbours must have been a matter of life and death for them. At first they carried on the struggle under their tribal *primates*, although even in the seventies of the fourth century the increased food-supplies won by their superior military strength and their subjugation of agricultural peoples in southern Russia enabled larger concentrations of warriors to be made. This fact resulted in the appearance of a confederacy of some of their tribes which was able to overpower the Ostrogoths. But on the whole at this time there were only tribal *ῥῆγες*, and these in time of war alone. When war became the normal state, however, 'kingship' became a more or less permanent institution; and as their military ability brought them more and more success, greater and greater forces of warriors could be concentrated and confederacies grew larger and larger. Apparently, however, the *primates* of Ammianus' day still continued to function inside the confederacies as late as the time of Uldis and Donatus. Clearly then it is scarcely true to say that the Huns rose to power as rapidly as they afterwards fell from it: Attila's position is now seen to be the culmination of a process which had been gathering strength for half a century.

The turning-point in their history in the period under review would seem then to have been their move from the country east of the Black Sea into what is now the Ukrainian Republic. This was not a mere geographical move, an exchange of neighbours. It was a move from an area where there was no surplus of food to an area where there was a surplus of food. East of the Black Sea the Huns could exploit only the Alans, a race of

nomads as primitive as themselves, whereas the Ostrogoths were agriculturists, living in rich villages.¹ It was the possibility of wresting their food-surplus from the Ostrogoths that enabled Hun society to develop on the lines which it eventually followed.

It will be seen in the sequel that we have neglected an important factor in this summary of the process by which the Huns developed their strength—the factor of trade. It will be more convenient to discuss it at a later stage. A contemporary of Attila, who also tried to summarize the process, omits it likewise. Nestorius, the heresiarch, writes as follows:

‘For because the people of the Scythians were great and many and formerly were divided into peoples and into kingdoms and were treated as robbers, they used not to do much wrong except only as through rapacity and through speed; yet later they made them a kingdom and, after they were established in a kingdom, they grew very strong, so that they surpassed in their greatness all the forces of the Romans.’²

¹ Amm. xxxi. 3. 1 *uberes pagos*.

² *The Bazaar of Heracleides*, p. 366, transl. Driver and Hodgson.

IV

THE VICTORIES OF ATILA

THE *Byzantine History* of Priscus began with the year 434, the year in which Attila acceded to the leadership of the Huns. In this chapter, then, we have the invaluable aid of his work. But his book has survived only in fragments, so that in our journey through the history of these years we pass in rapid succession from periods of bright sunshine to periods of almost complete darkness. When discussing incidents related in his fragments we can enter into great detail; when his help is lacking we are reduced to conjecture or to blunt confession of our ignorance. Moreover, it could probably be shown that his work did not include a consecutive narrative of Western affairs; our sunny moments, then, are restricted to the frontier history of the Eastern Empire.

I

In the later twenties of the fifth century a certain Rua obtained the military leadership of the last and greatest of the Hun confederacies. He was not its only leader, for we hear that he shared the position with his brothers Mundiuch and Octar.¹ Presumably each of the brothers ruled over a specific portion of the Huns and their subject nations, for joint rule of a common territory seems to have been a principle unknown to this people. We have no information as to the father or forebears of Rua, Mundiuch, and Octar, nor do we hear how they came to acquire their positions of authority. We can only say that Octar and Mundiuch died some years before their brother, for Rua was the sole military leader of the confederacy when he first appears in history in the year 432.

In that year Aetius had been defeated by Boniface, Count of Africa and Master of the Soldiers, in a battle fought at the fifth milestone from Ariminum. After the battle Aetius had retired to one of his estates, where he was too strong to be attacked openly; but Sebastian, Boniface's son-in-law, made an un-

¹ Jordanes, *Get.* xxxv. 180. For the various forms of his name in our authorities see Seeck, P.-W. (*Zw. R.*) i. 1157, and note that the form *Roilas* is found in John of Nikiu, § 85, transl. Charles: cf. Appendix G.

expected and unsuccessful attempt to have him murdered. Actius realized his insecurity, went to Rome, and embarked on a ship bound for the Dalmatian coast. He then travelled through the provinces of Pannonia and reached the Huns, whom he had long counted as his friends: he had been their hostage more than twenty years before and they had helped him in the crisis of 425.¹ The Huns, who were now led by Rua, proved faithful to him once again, but at a price. In 427 Pannonia Secunda, including the great city of Sirmium, had been recovered from the Huns by the forces of East Rome, which now occupied all the powerful Danube fortifications lying in that province;² but during the year 433, as a result of a treaty between Actius and the Huns, Pannonia Prima was surrendered to the latter by the Western government.³ The province was in a difficult position: there were no natural boundaries between it and the even more exposed Valeria, and its loss was in any event merely a matter of time. The fact remains that Actius voluntarily surrendered to the barbarians a province of the Roman Empire. It may have been in connexion with this agreement that his son Carpilio followed in his footsteps by serving as a hostage among the nomads.⁴

Whatever the precise terms of the treaty, Actius was able to re-establish his position in Italy with the aid given him by Rua. It may well be that he once again led a force of Huns into Italy, but our sources do not indicate that he found it necessary to fight a battle with the Gothic troops whom Sebastian and the Empress Placidia had summoned to their help from Gaul.⁵ Actius became a patrician and Sebastian fled to Constantinople. For a decade and a half thereafter Italy and the Western Empire remained undisturbed by the Huns, and it was contingents of their cavalry that enabled Actius and the Gallo-Roman landlords to maintain themselves with such success in Gaul throughout the years which followed. The enemies whom the Huns, supplied by Rua, helped them to withstand in Gaul were three-

¹ See pp. 33, 35 above. For these events see *Chron. Min.* i, pp. 473 f., 658; ii, p. 22, with J. de Lepper, *De rebus gestis Bonifatii Comitis Africae* (Tilburg, 1941), pp. 107-9.

² *Chron. Min.* ii, p. 76, cf. Jordanes, *Get.* xxxii. 166, and see Ensslin, *Phil. Wochenschr.* xlvii, 1927, p. 846 f.

³ Priscus, p. 286. 25; *Chron. Min.* i, p. 660 'Rugila rex Chunorum, cum quo pax firmata, moritur'.

⁴ Priscus, p. 296. 31; Cassiodorus, *Var.* i. 4. 11.

⁵ For these see *Chron. Min.* i, p. 658, s.a. 433.

fold, and it was the Burgundians who first engaged their attention.

The Burgundians seem to have been among the Germanic peoples driven across the Rhine by the great westward expansion of the Huns in 405-6.¹ They were a powerful nation, numbering, according to Jerome, no less than 80,000 souls and stated by Ammianus to be a terror to their neighbours.² In 413 they had been settled on the left bank of the middle Rhine as *foederati* of the Romans, and their new kingdom, centred on Worms, seems to have included the territories of Mayence and Speyer.³ For over twenty years we hear little of them, but at the beginning of the thirties their vigorous and growing population seems to have demanded an increase of land, and, taking advantage of the weakness of the Romans, they followed their king Gundahar in 435 in an invasion of Upper Belgica (the area around Trier and Metz).⁴ But they under-estimated their adversary. They were crushed in a battle by Aetius and begged for a peace which they obtained but did not enjoy for long.⁵ In 437, for a reason which can no longer be determined, Aetius induced his Hun friends to assail them. The result was devastating. According to one authority 20,000 Burgundians were massacred. Another says that almost the whole race was destroyed, and we know that the king Gundahar was among the slain.⁶ This was the end of the Burgundian kingdom of Worms: it had lasted less than a generation, and in 443 its survivors were settled in Savoy. The destruction of their realm caught the imagination of contemporaries. Alone among the events of this period of Burgundian history it is mentioned by no less than four of the chroniclers, and it provided the historical basis of the epic of the *Nibelungen*. It was indeed a *bellum memorabile*: yet the reason for it is, to us, an utter mystery.

¹ p. 28 above. See H. de Claparède, *Les Burgondes jusqu'en 443* (Geneva, 1909), pp. 26-9, but cf. Coville, pp. 101-4.

² Jerome, *Chron.* s.a. 2389 (misunderstood by Orosius, vii. 32. 11, who gives them 80,000 warriors, and so Bury, op. cit. i. p. 106); Amm. xxviii. 5. 9.

³ Claparède, pp. 29-34, but his conclusions cannot be pressed, cf. Coville, p. 104.

⁴ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* vii. 234 f.

⁵ *Chron. Min.* i, p. 475, s.a. 435; ii, p. 22, s.a. 436; Sidonius, l.c., with Anderson's note.

⁶ *Chron. Min.* ii, p. 23, s.a. 437; i, p. 660, s.a. 436, cf. p. 475. I follow Waitz, pp. 3 ff. Bury, op. cit. i, p. 249, n. 3, rightly says that 'the number of 20,000 is of course an exaggeration'.

It may be, however, that the Huns had an account to square with the Burgundians. The ecclesiastical historian Socrates tells a curious tale which is sometimes neglected by modern writers.¹ Some of the Burgundians, he says—and here he is supported by independent sources²—had remained east of the Rhine when the majority of their nation had fled into Gaul in 406. The eastern Burgundians appear to have lived on the right bank of the Rhine, between that river, the Main, and the Neckar, in the neighbourhood of the Odenwald.³ 'These men', Socrates goes on, 'always live an idle life, for they are practically all carpenters and they support themselves by their earnings from this craft.' (The East Romans held many curious beliefs about the West.) The Huns used to assail them continually, and devastate their land, and often slay large numbers of them. As a counsel of despair the Burgundians embraced Christianity, for they understood that the Christian God helped those who feared Him. They were not disappointed, and the immediate result of their conversion was striking: the king, βασιλεύς, of the Huns, Uptar by name, burst open during the night as a consequence of his gluttony, and left his men without a leader. They numbered about 10,000, but were routed by 3,000 Burgundians. 'As a result', Socrates concludes, 'the nation of the Burgundians became ardent Christians.'

What are we to make of this tale? Fortunately, Socrates dates it with some precision to the year 430. The name Uptar therefore takes on a new interest: as Valesius pointed out in the seventeenth century, Uptar is none other than Octar, the brother of Rua, who outlived him, as we have seen. The purpose of Socrates' story, of course, is to explain the conversion of the eastern Burgundians, but it is nevertheless unlikely that every incident of the tale is a fabrication. The details are too plausible: the fact that Huns and Burgundians are fighting immediately east of the Rhine, the name of Uptar and the date of his death, the numbers of those engaged in the battle—none of these matters bear the stamp of an ecclesiastical historian's invention. We may safely conclude that seven years before the destruction of the kingdom of Worms Rua's brother Octar had been

¹ Socrates, vii. 30. 1-6: Reading, ad loc., denies the historicity of the story, which is not mentioned, for example, by Bury, op. cit., or by Seeck, *Untergang*; but see Coville, p. 99 f.

² Sid. Ap. Carm. vii. 322; Procopius, BG. v. 12. 11; cf. Claparède, p. 33 f.

³ Id., p. 33, n. 4.

operating somewhat east of the Rhine, that he died in the middle of a campaign, and that some thousands of his men were surprised and defeated by the eastern Burgundians. The Huns who fell upon the kingdom of Worms, then, must have done so with particular relish; but, of course, that does not explain why Aetius unleashed them in the first place.

One of the officers who fought under Aetius against the Burgundians was Avitus, the future Emperor of the West.¹ After the campaign he retired to his estate of Avitacum, in Auvergne near Clermont-Ferrand. But his repose was soon rudely interrupted. Litorius, the principal lieutenant of Aetius and perhaps Master of the Soldiers in Gaul, marched hastily past the future Emperor's estate on his way to Narbonne. This city was being besieged by the Visigoths of Theodoric I, who were making full use of Aetius' difficulties with the Burgundians in Upper Belgica. Litorius' army consisted of Huns—presumably those lent by Rua—and as they passed by the estate of Avitacum they behaved as though they were the enemies rather than the friends of the Gallo-Romans:

qui proxima quaeque
discursu, flammis, ferro, feritate, rapinis
delebant, pacis fallentes nomen inane.²

One of them, more savage than his companions, cut down one of Avitus' servants for no reason that has been recorded. The news was brought to Avitus, busy with the defences of his estate, the inhabitants of which had been thrown into a panic by the news of their allies' approach. Avitus put on his armour, mounted his horse, galloped after the host of Litorius, and in single combat avenged his murdered servant.³ None the less, Litorius proceeded to Narbonne, where the Huns, each of whom had been directed to carry two bushels of wheat with him, drove away the Visigoths after a vigorous charge and replenished the starving town.⁴ In the years which followed, Litorius and his Huns maintained their offensive against the Visigoths. In 437, we are told, the war was continued *Chunis auxiliantibus*.⁵ Roman successes in 438 are also recorded, and, although the Huns are not mentioned, we need have no doubt that the successes were due to them.⁶ Aetius himself, now freed from

¹ Sid. Ap. Carm. vii. 234 f., 241 ff.

³ Ib., 251 ff.

⁵ Chron. Min. i, p. 475 s.a.

² Ib., 248 ff.

⁴ Prosper, s.a. 436.

⁶ Ib., p. 476 s.a.

his entanglements in the north, slew 8,000 Goths in this year; but we have no information as to the nationality of the troops he was leading.¹ The crisis was reached in 439, when the Huns of Litorius laid siege to Theodoric's capital at Toulouse. The Goths had been discouraged by their losses in three successive years. They sent certain bishops as ambassadors to Litorius to beg for terms; but, says a contemporary, 'while they laid their hopes in God, we laid ours in Huns'. Litorius, anxious to eclipse the glory of Aetius, contemptuously rejected their embassy.² Outside the city walls he made a concession to his pagan troops: for the last time in Roman history a Roman general performed the ancient sacrifices and consulted the soothsayers on the result of the forthcoming battle. But the gods betrayed him when he engaged the army of Theodoric. At first the Huns inflicted fearful losses on the Visigoths, but at the height of the battle Litorius himself was taken prisoner by the enemy. The scales were turned and the Huns were destroyed to a man.³ Litorius was brought into Toulouse and put to death. 'Qui se exaltat', said Salvian, quoting Luke xiv. 11, 'humiliabitur, et qui se humiliat exaltabitur.'⁴ After a few months Aetius arrived upon the scene and engaged in a drawn battle with the exhausted Visigoths, after which peace between the Romans and Goths was arranged by Avitus, and the patrician returned to Italy to deal with a greater crisis.⁵

When Litorius led his undisciplined army past the estate of Avitus on his way to Narbonne he was coming from an encounter with the third of Aetius' enemies in these years. This third enemy was greater and of more interest than the Burgundians of Gundahar or Theodoric's Visigoths, for it consisted of the peasants, slaves, and brigands of north-western Gaul, the Bagaudae. As usual, our authorities tell us practically nothing of them, but two entries in a Gallic chronicle indicate the immense extent of their movement in these years. We are told that in 435 the Bagaudae of the *tractus Armoricanus* detached themselves entirely from the Western Empire and proclaimed themselves an independent state. Now it must be remembered

¹ *Chron. Min.* ii, p. 23, s.a. 438; cf. Mommsen, *Ges. Schr.* iv, p. 535.

² Salvian, *De Gub. Dei*, vii. 9. 39 'praesumeremus nos in Chunis spem ponere, illi in deo'. ³ Prosper, s.a. 439. ⁴ Salvian, vii. 9. 39 f.

⁵ Prosper, s.a. 439. For the two battles outside Toulouse see A. Loyen, pp. 47-50.

that the *tractus Armoricanus* covered a far greater area than the modern Brittany. It consisted of the vast stretch of land between the mouth of the Garonne and that of the Seine, including the provinces of Poitou, Brittany, Anjou, and Normandy, with the cities of Tours, Orleans, and even Auxerre.¹ In this enormous tract of land then the slaves and peasants rose in rebellion against the oppression of their Roman and Gallic masters. Even in the third century the Gallic Bagaudae had succeeded in setting up two emperors of their own, Aelianus and Amandus, a fact which suggests that the political, like the social, organization of their independent state was a mere replica of that from which they seceded.² It is mere prejudice to characterize it as a *Räuberstaat*, a term which would more aptly describe the Empire which they sought to leave.³ At any rate, that the Bagaudae should have sought independence was, save in the case of newly conquered territories, an almost unique event in Roman Imperial history: the closest parallel was furnished by their ancestors in the third century who, before setting up Aelianus and Amandus, seem to have supported Postumus and Tetricus.

In 435 the leader of the Bagaudae was Tibatto, of whom we know nothing: even his name is unique. We can only say that, soon after he rose, he was joined by practically every slave in Gaul.⁴ For two years Tibatto and his men held their own, but in 437 Litorius and his Huns fell upon them. We have no details of the struggle which ensued. The chronicler merely tells us that 'when Tibatto had been captured, and some of the other leaders, *principes*, of the uprising had been thrown into chains, and others slaughtered, the disturbances of the Bagaudae came to rest'.⁵ Litorius, the proud conqueror, had seen himself compelled, as Bury puts it, 'to reimpose upon them the "liberty" of Imperial rule'.⁶ The court poet, Merobaudes, who was him-

¹ Cf. A. Loyer, *Bulletin de la société archéologique et historique de l'Orléanais*, xxii, 1935, p. 502.

² For their social organization see the well-known passage of the *Querolus*, p. 58, ed. Hermann. Hermann, *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, vii, 1928, p. 1217 f., doubts that the reference is to the Bagaudae, but adduces no convincing reason. No doubts are expressed by F. Lot, *La Gaule* (Paris, 1947), p. 472 f.

³ Seeck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 115; for Amandus, &c., see id. *P.-W.* ii. 2766 f.

⁴ *Chron. Min.* i, p. 660 'omnia paene Galliarum servitia in Bacaudam conspiravere'.

⁵ *Ib.*, cf. Sidonius, *Carm.* vii. 246 f. 'Litorius . . . subacto / celsus Aremorico'.

⁶ *Later Roman Empire*, i, p. 250.

self to smash an uprising of the Bagaudae in his native Spain a few years later, sings thus of the suppression of Tibatto:

Lustrat Aremoricos iam mitior incola saltus;
perdidit et mores tellus, adsuetaque saevo
crimine quaesitas silvis celare rapinas
discit inexpertis Cererem committere campis
Caesareoque diu manus obluctata labori
sustinet acceptas nostro sub consule leges.¹

Litorius thereupon galloped light-heartedly at the head of his unruly followers towards Narbonne, but the road led him in the end to Toulouse (p. 68 above). We shall see in the sequel that a solitary Hun campaign had not been sufficient to crush the Bagaudae of the *tractus Armoricanus*: the economic condition of the Empire called for something more constructive than a massacre of the peasants. We shall also see that the Huns were not to continue for ever in the role of henchmen to the Gallic landlords.

From the time when Aetius negotiated his treaty with Rua in 433 until Litorius' disaster before Toulouse in 439, the Huns were the main prop of the vanishing dominion of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy in Gaul. But in 439 they were massacred (p. 68 above): brutal and senseless oppression exercised in the interests of great landowners is rarely successful for long.² The Huns do not appear to have reinforced Aetius after 439, for their forces were required elsewhere. It is time now to return to Rua and to consider events on the lower Danube frontier of the Eastern Empire.

II

In the opening months of the year 434 Esla, the principal diplomat of Rua, appeared in Constantinople. He came with a blunt demand. The Romans must return to Rua's dominions certain peoples who had fled from it; otherwise, Rua would declare war.

The Hun had chosen his time well. The great raids of 395 were only carried out when the Roman armies were assembled in Italy and the East was helpless. The attack of 422 was launched when the Eastern armies were at grips with the

¹ *Paneg.* ii. 8 ff., cf. John of Antioch, frag. 201. 3 (from Priscus).

² See the excellent summary of Aetius' ruinous career in E. Stein, *Geschichte*, i, pp. 501-17.

Persians (pp. 28, 31 above). Now too, in 434, the East was denuded of troops. Five years before, East Rome had been alarmed by the news that large tracts of Africa had been conquered by the Vandals. The loss of Africa was to the Roman Empire—so men said in Constantinople—what the Sicilian expedition had been to Athens.¹ So steps were taken at once to help the Western government. Aspar commanded the combined Eastern and Western forces in North Africa, but suffered a grievous defeat and lost the entire province, apart from the cities of Carthage and Cirta. When Boniface went home to Italy in 432 to fight Aetius (p. 63 above), Aspar and the Eastern forces continued the struggle alone, and the commander was appointed Western consul for the year 434. It was a golden moment for an enemy on the Danubian frontier, and Rua was prepared to use it.

The peoples whose return Esia demanded were the Amilzuri, Itimari, Tunsures, Boisci, and others whose names are not given by our authorities. Their habitation seems to have lain near the Sea of Azov, but otherwise nothing is known of them. It seems very reasonable to suppose, however, as several scholars have done, that they were Hunnic tribes who refused to recognize the overlordship of Rua. He had doubtless sought to compel them to join his confederacy, but the old freedom of the steppe was strong in them, and they had preferred the comparative independence of service under their own chiefs in the Imperial army. In any event, it is clear that the Huns were not yet a political unit.²

The Eastern government, always glad of recruits for its army, and especially so when its regular forces were away in Africa with Aspar, prepared to negotiate, and two diplomats showed some anxiety to undertake the task of appeasing Rua. In 418 Plintha, a Goth, had suppressed a rebellion in Palestine and had been made consul for the following year.³ He was quickly appointed Master of the Soldiers, and, despite his ardent Arianism, was at one time recognized as the most powerful person in

¹ Theodoret, *Ep.* 22, Sakellion.

² The names are given in Priscus, p. 276. 7, cf. Jordanes, *Get.* xxiv. 126, who seems to distinguish them from the Huns: but who else could they have been? They are regarded as Huns by Tomaschek, P.-W. i. 1835; Kiesling, *ib.* viii. 2603; Seck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 461, &c. The Itimari are identified by Marquart, *Streifzüge*, p. 356 n., with the *Dirmar* of Zachariah of Mitylene, p. 328.

³ *Chron. Min.* ii, p. 73, s.a. 418, corrected by Seck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 484.

the court of Theodosius.¹ He and a certain Dionysius, the consul of 427 and Master of the Soldiers in the East, volunteered to travel to Rua, and Plintha sent out one of his henchmen named Sengilachus to urge the Hun to open negotiations with himself and not with any other Romans.² It would seem that it was a sort of Gothic clique in East Rome which tried to monopolize these negotiations with Rua; but it is not easy to see who were the 'other Romans' whom they wished to exclude from the negotiations. This is one of our tantalizing glimpses into the internal political struggles of Theodosius' reign upon which we have too little information to pass a judgement.

Whatever the intrigues which lay behind Plintha's moves, in the event it proved unnecessary to send any embassy to Rua; for, on the eve of the campaigning season of 434, the Hun leader suddenly died.³ His death gave great relief to the East Romans, who had been thoroughly alarmed by his warlike attitude, and the Patriarch Proclus (434-47) preached a sermon of thanksgiving when the news arrived, taking as his text Ezekiel xxxviii. 2 and 22,

'Son of Man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of *Rosh*, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.' (*Rosh*, 'Pós, is omitted from the Authorized Version.)

The archbishop was highly commended for his adaptation of Ezekiel's words, and the sermon became the universal topic of conversation in Constantinople. But men soon became somewhat confused as to the precise order in which the events had taken place. It was believed that, when the people were still *expecting* the attack, Proclus had assured them that God had expressly announced his intention of destroying Rua with a thunderbolt, and his people with fire and brimstone from heaven. It was further believed that the prediction had been confirmed in as much as Rua had never come near the capital. The final stage in the growth of the miracle was that which is still preserved in three of our sources, two Greek and one

¹ Socrates, v. 23. 12; Sozomen, vii. 17. 14.

² Priscus, p. 276. 14-24.

³ April or May 434: see *Chron. Min.* i, p. 660, with Seeck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 460.

Ethiopian. Socrates, Theodoret, and John of Nikiu combine to tell us that, when Rua was about to launch an attack on the Eastern Empire, God destroyed him and his followers in accordance with the prophecy contained in Ezekiel xxxviii. 2 and 22.¹

But no miracle prevented the ominous event which followed: Rua was succeeded by his two nephews, of whom the elder was named Bleda, and the younger Attila.²

III

We know little of the rough, boisterous character of Bleda, except that it was very different from his brother's. After the great invasion of 441 we find him in possession of a Moorish dwarf named Zerco, the very sight of whom Attila was unable to endure. But Bleda was amused beyond all measure, not merely by Zerco's stammering talk, but particularly by his twisted and painful walk. He kept him by his side both at his banquets and on his campaigns: he even made him a little suit of armour to increase the grotesqueness of his figure. Once Zerco escaped with a number of other Roman prisoners. Bleda cared nothing for the others, but he was wild with rage at the loss of Zerco. Horsemen scoured the country-side until the dwarf was found, and Bleda roared with laughter when he saw him brought back in chains. He asked him why he had tried to escape. Zerco, in his strange, halting speech, said that it was because Bleda had never given him a wife. The Hun laughed more loudly than ever. He swore that he would give him one of the ladies-in-waiting from the Empress's palace in Constantinople.³

No one could have formed a greater contrast to Attila. When we follow Maximinus and Priscus to his camp in a later chapter, we shall see something of his unbending, but not pitiless, character. The portrait of him which has survived in Jordanes

¹ Socrates, vii. 43; Theodoret, *HE.* v. 37. 4; John of Nikiu, § 85. It was a Dean of Manchester who first explained how the miracle arose: see Herbert, pp. 325 ff. This text of Ezekiel did good service again during the first Russian attack on Constantinople in 860-1, cf. A. A. Vasiliev, *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860* (Mediaeval Academy of America), 1946, pp. 166-8.

² Theophanes, p. 102. 16, explicitly describes Bleda as the elder, a piece of information which undoubtedly goes back to Priscus, Theophanes' source for the Huns. Priscus, curiously enough, always mentions Bleda second in the extant fragments; but in *Chron. Min.* i, p. 660, s.a. 434, we read 'Rugila, rex Chunnorum, moritur cui Bleda successit', and Marcellinus, s.a. 442, has *Bleda et Attila*.

³ Priscus, frag. 11 = Suidas, s.v. Ζέρκων. Zerco re-appears on p. 117 f. below.

is based on Priscus, who had seen him more than once, and Gibbon's paraphrase of it has rendered it famous.¹ No period of his manhood is as obscure as his first years after he and Bleda had succeeded Rua. We know only the circumstances and terms of his first treaty with the East Romans, and then for some five years all is dark. The Senate decided that Plintha's embassy should be sent, notwithstanding the death of Rua and the accession of new rulers among the barbarians. Plintha brought with him a certain Epigenes, who was a noted speaker and whose eloquence, it was hoped, might prove effective with the Huns: he had until recently been engaged on the commission which drew up the Theodosian Code.²

Plintha and Epigenes travelled to the city of Margus in Moesia Superior, where, more than a century and a half before, an obscure soldier named Diocles had sprung to fame by defeating the Emperor Carinus. Its situation near the mouth of the river Morava made it an important trading-centre,³ and its bishop was soon to play an ignominious part in the wars of the Huns and Romans. Bleda and Attila met the Roman ambassadors outside the walls, and throughout the conversations which followed remained seated on their horses. The Romans considered that it would be unsuited to their dignity to stand on the ground and look up at the Huns as they talked, and they therefore sat painfully on horseback throughout the negotiations.⁴ But an agreement was eventually reached. The Romans were to receive no further fugitives from the dominions of the Huns, and they were at once to return those whom they had already admitted into the Empire. They were also to send back escaped Roman prisoners or were instead to pay 8 *solidi* for each of them, a sum which, in this period, in normal times and places, would buy almost 100 *modii* of corn. It was further stipulated that the Romans should make no alliance with any people with whom the Huns went to war. Attila and Bleda then turned to an old treaty with Rua which the Romans had signed at an unknown date. This treaty had guaranteed to the Huns trading rights in certain Roman market towns. These rights were now re-affirmed: the Huns were to trade on equal terms with the Roman merchants and in complete security. Rua's treaty had

¹ *Decline and Fall*, iii, p. 418 f.

² For the date see Appendix B. Observe the power of the East Roman Senate, cf. Helin, p. 397 f.

³ *CIL*, iii. 8140.

⁴ Priscus, pp. 276. 24-277. 10.

also bound the East Roman government to pay him the sum of 350 lb. of gold per annum, a fact which perhaps explains the peace that prevailed on the Danube frontier for the first few years after Aspar had departed to Africa with large Eastern forces in 431: it may well have been in that year, and as a result of Aspar's departure, that Rua had extorted this treaty. At any rate, Attila's price was higher. Plintha was obliged to agree that the annual tribute payable to the Huns should be doubled, and that henceforth 700 lb. of gold should cross the Danube every year. On these conditions the Roman government signed what we may call the Peace of Margus in the year 435.¹

At this point the darkness descends. What occupied Attila between the years 435 and 439? A sentence in Priscus seems to hint at the answer. After signing the Peace of Margus, says the historian, Bleda and Attila 'went on subduing the nations in Scythia and made war upon the Sorosgi'.² It would seem then that in these obscure years Attila completed the task of extending his frontiers to the limits which they finally attained.

These limits cannot be exactly determined, and the direction in which Attila now turned cannot even be guessed at, for the Sorosgi are mentioned nowhere else. The western boundary of the Huns did not reach the Rhine, for, as we have already seen, the independent eastern Burgundians lay between them and the great river. Nor did the Burgundians stand alone: the Ripuarian Franks were also independent (p. 134 below), and there were doubtless many others. Octar had clearly ruled the easternmost territories of the Huns in the early days of Rua, and at the end of his life he had apparently been thrusting towards the Rhine, but he died before his task was finished. Towards the north there is no doubt that the Huns reached the Baltic. Priscus heard from a very reliable authority that Attila ruled 'the islands in the Ocean'.³ Historians now agree that the islands ruled by Attila were those of the Baltic Sea, but Mommsen (p. 539, n. 5) thought that Britain was intended. In fact, Priscus himself may well have thought that his informant meant Britain: probably the historian's knowledge of the geography of north-western Europe was so limited that, knowing certain islands to be subject to Attila, he assumed them to be the British Isles. It is just possible that the coins throw some light on the

¹ Priscus, p. 277. 11-27: on the date see Appendix B.

² *Ib.*, p. 278. 1.

³ Romulus *op. cit.* Priscus, p. 312. 19.

problem. Roman *solidi* dating from the period before Valentinian III and Theodosius II are very rare in the islands of Bornholm, Oeland, and Gotland. (Only inconsiderable numbers have been found on the Scandinavian mainland.) But these islands have produced several *solidi* of Valentinian III, Majorian, Libius Severus, and Anthemius, and a much larger number of Eastern *solidi* of Theodosius II, Marcian, Leo, and Zeno. Later emperors in both cases are scarcely represented. How are we to explain the sudden appearance of Roman *solidi* in the islands precisely in the opening years of the fifth century and their rather abrupt disappearance with Zeno? It may be that the answer lies in Priscus' words that Attila ruled 'the islands in the Ocean'. It seems reasonable to suggest that the stability provided by the Hun empire produced a rapid and extensive growth of trade between these three islands and continental Europe, and that, in the confusion which followed Attila's death, this trade soon withered away.¹ Gibbon believed very plausibly that the Huns derived a tribute of furs from these northern regions.²

Priscus says that Attila ruled 'all Scythia'.³ How far did his dominions extend towards the east? Kiessling supposes that the Alans between the Don and an area somewhat west of the Aral Sea also recognized without qualification the overlordship of Attila. This seems scarcely likely to be correct. True, the Alans had never won their independence, but they would appear to have been ruled by Huns who owed little, if any, allegiance to Attila. We shall see that the Hun tribe of the Acatziri, who lived east of the Black Sea, were leading an independent life under their own chieftains until the year 448 (p. 95 f. below), and there is no reason to suppose that they stood alone.

We may conclude then that all the Germanic and other nations between the Alps and the Baltic, and between the Caspian (or somewhat west of it) and a line drawn an unknown distance east of the Rhine, recognized Attila and Bleda as their masters. Although the two brothers always acted in concert, so

¹ For these coins see Olov Janse, *Rev. Num.*, Ser. IV, vol. xxv, 1922, pp. 38-48. The same scholar (Bibliography III above) believes that he has shown some bracteates found in Scandinavia to have been made in Attila's dominions: he considers that one of them is actually stamped with Attila's name.

² *Decline and Fall*, iii, p. 421. Hodgkin, p. 42, n. 2, asks whether this northward drive of the Huns had any effect on the migrations of the English to Britain between the years 430 and 450.

³ Priscus, p. 312. 20.

far as we know, and regarded their empire as a single property, they divided it between them and ruled separately;¹ but we do not know which portion was allotted to each.

In the years from 435 to 440 East Rome seems to have enjoyed an uneasy peace on her northern frontier. In the case of the Western Empire Attila, it will have been observed, continued the policy of his uncle. The troops whom Rua had lent to Actius continued to serve the landowners of Gaul until the Visigoths destroyed them outside Toulouse in 439 (p. 68 above). But Litorius' force was not replaced, for by the year 440 a critical position had come about on the Danube.

When Theodosius ratified the treaty which Plintha had negotiated in 435, it would seem that he did so with little intention of carrying out its terms. True, his government did not hesitate to make a show of doing so. They at once surrendered the barbarians who had fled to them for refuge, among them two boys of Attila's own family named Mama and Atakam, who are otherwise unknown. They had been kept imprisoned by the Romans in a fort called Carsum in the Dobrudja near Troesmis, and, as soon as they had been handed back, they were crucified without delay.² Yet it would seem that, in the years which followed, Theodosius omitted to pay the 700 lb. of gold which he had stipulated to send across the Danube. It is quite certain that he found the fugitive tribes far too valuable as soldiers in his army to send them back to their master.³ He must have realized fully the danger of his policy, for in 439 he took a significant step. We have seen that after Uldis' raid into Thrace in 408 the prefect Anthemius had refortified Constantinople, building the great Theodosian wall some distance to the west of that of Constantine. But this did not fully secure the capital, for the sea-shore at either end between the two walls remained open, and these two gaps would be a standing invitation to Vandal sea-raiders, who might well become the allies of the Huns. Therefore, in 439 Theodosius instructed the prefect Cyrus to complete the fortification of the capital.⁴ The Imperial government was not without its internal troubles. At some

¹ See the passages of Prosper and Jordanes cited below, p. 88, n. 4.

² Priscus, p. 277. 29 Καρσός, cf. Procopius, *De Aed.* iv. 11. 20; *Itin. Ant.* 224. 4, &c.; despite G. Tocilescu, *Arch.-epigraph. Mitth. aus Oesterreich-Ungarn*, xiv, 1891, p. 16, it seems doubtful whether the correct form was *Carsum*. Patsch, *P.-W.* iii. 1616, overlooks Priscus here.

³ See Appendix B.

⁴ Cf. Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, i, p. 72, n. 2.

date in these years a certain Valips, a chieftain of a body of Rugi settled within the Empire, who had caused trouble before, now rose in open rebellion, and, appealing to the innumerable discontented persons in the European provinces to join him, managed to seize the city of Noviodunum on the Danube, and compelled the government to give him terms.¹ None the less, the forces of East Rome were substantially unimpaired: the forts were manned and Anthemius' warships still actively patrolled the Danube.² There was no chance for Attila, still busy with his conquests in the north, to collect the 700 lb. of gold which each year failed to arrive. The East was too strong: the opportunities of 395, 422, and 434 seemed unlikely to recur. But in fact an unparalleled chance presented itself in 440.

IV

In the year 440 the resources of East Rome were as severely strained as they had ever been hitherto during the long reign of Theodosius II. Shortly before, the tremendous news had arrived in Constantinople that Carthage had fallen to the Vandals on 19 October 439, and that the citizen population—but not the slaves—of Italy had been armed for the defence of the peninsula.³ Sigisvult, the Master of the Soldiers, was organizing a watch on the Italian coasts. Aetius was on his way from Gaul (p. 68 above). A proclamation was issued by Valentinian's government on 24 June 440 to reassure the people of Rome and to inform them that assistance from the Eastern Empire was already on the way.

Was it necessary for Theodosius to send help to the West? In view of the danger which his northern policy invited, should his armed forces show any weakness, ought he not to have left the West to fend for itself? Such a course would have been impossible, for the defence of North Africa was as vital to Constantinople as to Italy. A hostile fleet based on Carthage could ruin New Rome almost as easily as Old. Already, it would seem, Vandal raiders had made a descent on Rhodes, aiming at the interruption of the grain route from Egypt,⁴ and not many years later a panic was caused in Constantinople by the rumour that Geiseric proposed to assail Egypt itself.⁵ In

¹ Priscus, p. 278. 4–20: see Appendix C.

² p. 30 above, cf. Vegetius, iv. 45.

⁴ E. Stein, pp. 436, 440.

³ *Nov. Val.* ix, of 24 June 440.

⁵ *Vita S. Danielis Styl.* 56.

the spring of 440 then, a huge naval expedition, said to consist of 1,100 ships and commanded by five Germanic generals,¹ sailed from Constantinople to rescue Carthage from the Vandals.² Its setting forth was not a sign of criminal rashness on the part of Theodosius and his ministers. It was one of many indications that the political history of the fifth century, in the East and in the West alike, was dominated by the loss of North Africa. Before this crowning disaster all other considerations had to take a secondary place.

By coincidence, a further misfortune occurred at approximately the same time. A Persian army under Yezdegerd II (438-53) launched an invasion of Roman Armenia for reasons which cannot now be recovered. Although the Persian forces soon had to retire because they were menaced in the rear by an attack of the Ephthalites or 'White Huns', a considerable Roman army must have been deployed to meet their threat. The northern frontier was thus still further stripped of its defenders.³ Attila's chance had come, and he made full use of it.

The first indication Theodosius received that trouble was at hand was the news that a Roman fort lying north of the Danube had been surprised and captured by the Huns. This fort was one where the Huns had trading rights under the Treaty of Rua.⁴ The enemy descended upon it at market-time, outmanoeuvred whatever Roman troops were at hand, and slew many of the merchants.⁵ The Roman government at once protested against the capture of the fort and the breach of the Treaty of Margus, in which it had been stipulated that the markets should be conducted on fair terms for both sides and without danger to either. But the Huns only revealed some additional grievances. They stated that the bishop of the city of Margus—the city outside which Plintha had signed the treaty of 435—had crossed the Danube into Hun territory, had robbed the royal Hun graves on the opposite bank, and stolen the treasure buried there with their kings. This was a charge which the Roman ambassadors do not appear to have been

¹ Theophanes, A.M. 5942 (wrong date), cf. Bury, *op. cit.* i, p. 255, n. 3.

² Prosper, s.a. 441.

³ For this Persian invasion see Bury, *op. cit.* ii, p. 5 f.

⁴ See p. 74: on the chronology of Priscus, frags. 1 b, 2, and 3, see Appendix D.

⁵ Priscus, p. 280. 5-7: that πολλούς there refers to merchants is the plausible belief of Seck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 291.

able to deny: the bishop had in fact provided the nomads with an excellent pretext. The Huns went on to allege that the Romans had retained possession of a considerable number of fugitives from the Hun empire contrary to the terms of Plintha's treaty. Here again the Huns had the right upon their side. They therefore demanded the immediate surrender both of the bishop of Margus and of the fugitives. The Roman envoys could do no more than feebly and falsely deny the truth of both charges,¹ and the Huns continued their military operations. Crossing the Danube at an unspecified point they devastated a considerable number of towns and fortresses lying on the river's southern bank, and gained their first major success when the great city of Viminacium fell into their hands. The fate of Viminacium (the modern Kostolac) warned the Romans of what was in store for their frontier cities. It was razed to the ground, and when Procopius had occasion a century later to mention the site, he says simply that 'the old city of Viminacium stood there, but long ago it was destroyed from the very bottom of its foundations'.² For a hundred years the site was desolate, until Justinian rebuilt it. When the catastrophe was imminent the local magistrates found time to bury the city exchequer, but they never returned to recover the money, and a find of no less than 100,000 coins has rewarded recent archaeologists.³ Those citizens who survived the storm of the city were led away into captivity, and later in our story we shall meet a Greek merchant of Viminacium who was marched away among the prisoners (pp. 184 ff. below).

The morale of the frontier towns was shaken by this calamity. Men began to protest that the bishop of Margus should be handed over: why should entire provinces be endangered for the sake of a single man? The force of their plea was not lost on the prelate. He suspected that he would be given up, and, as Hodgkin (p. 49) puts it, 'determined to be beforehand with Fate'. He therefore slipped out of Margus, deserted to the Huns, and ensured his safety by promising Attila to hand over to him his city and his flock. Attila accepted the offer. A force of Huns was posted outside the town by night, the bishop

¹ Priscus, by his use of the terms *ἐλιγυρίας* and *καταλιγώρουν* at p. 280. g. 19, tries to shift the blame on to the Huns.

² Procopius, *De Aed.* iv. 5. 17: observe that Priscus said nothing of the circumstances of the capture of this important city, a striking illustration of his lack of interest in military affairs.

³ See E. Gren, p. 61.

managed to have the gates opened, and Margus fell into the hands of the enemy. It met the same fate as Viminacium: but it was never rebuilt, and Procopius knows nothing of it. The fate of its bishop is unknown.¹

We have no detailed record of the rest of this campaign, but the main successes of the Huns can be discovered in our shattered authorities. At the same time as they took Margus the fortress of Constantia, directly across the Danube, fell into their hands.² The major disasters of the year, however, were still to come. Singidunum (Belgrade) was razed to the ground, and, like Viminacium, was left utterly desolate until the days of Justinian.³ The worst calamity of all was the loss of the vitally important city of Sirmium, the hinge upon which the defence of the whole Danube frontier turned. Sirmium was destroyed and its inhabitants enslaved.⁴

With the capture of Sirmium the campaign of 441 came to an end. In the midst of walled cities and fortresses the manoeuvres of the Hun cavalry were cramped and restricted, and no deep penetration had been made into Roman territory. Nevertheless, the season's achievement had been immense. An enormous gap had been broken in the fortifications of the Danube frontier, and the Balkans lay at the mercy of the Hun squadrons the following year.

Yet, surprisingly enough, there were no military operations in 442. In circumstances of which we know nothing whatever, Aspar, the Master of the Soldiers, managed to arrange a truce for one year at the beginning of the campaigning season of 442.⁵ As soon as they learnt that a major Hun attack had developed, Theodosius and his ministers recalled the fleet from Sicily, where, owing to the subtle diplomacy of Geiseric, it had achieved nothing against the Vandals and had served only to oppress the Sicilians.⁶ Aspar had come home ahead of the fleet, which was unable to reach East Rome in time to allow the soldiers on board to take part in the operations of 441. Consequently the

¹ Priscus, frag. 2.

² Theophanes, p. 102. 22, cf. Not. Dign. xli. 33 'praefectus militum . . . contra Margum in castris Augustoflavianensibus', but the exact site cannot be determined: see Patsch, P.-W. iv. 951.

³ Procopius, *De Aed.* iv. 5. 13; Marcellinus, s.a. 441.

⁴ Priscus, p. 302. 20. That Sirmium fell in this invasion, and not that of 447, was shown by Alföldi, *Untergang*, ii, p. 96. On Justinian, *Nov.* xi, see E. Stein, *Rhein. Mus.* lxxiv, 1925, pp. 355 ff.

⁵ Marcellinus, s.a. 441.

⁶ Prosper, s.a. 441 'Siciliae magis oneri quam Africae praesidio fuisse'.

government had been unable to organize any defence whatever against the attacks on the frontier towns. We are assured explicitly that throughout the campaign Attila had met with no opposition from the Roman field army.¹ The reason was, of course, that he had chosen his time so well, when the campaigns in Persia and the central Mediterranean had absorbed all the available Roman forces. Whatever hope may have existed—and it must have been very slight—was ruined by a highly obscure incident which occurred in Thrace, the area which should have served as a base for a counter-attack on the Huns. A chronicler tells us, in his laconic style, that 'John, the Master of the Soldiers, a Vandal by race, was killed in Thrace by the treachery of Arnegisclus'.² Arnegisclus was a member of that clique of Germans which controlled the East Roman armies in these years; and after the murder he succeeded to John's office of Master of the Soldiers. What personal or even nationalist rivalry lay behind this murder we have no means of saying. Only one thing is clear: when the commanding officer was liable to be murdered and his place filled by the murderer, no organized Roman defence was possible.

Whatever the terms of the truce—they certainly included demands for the fugitives and for the arrears of tribute³—Theodosius made the utmost use of the year's respite. His efforts to finance the preparations for a renewal of the war and to provide for the pay of his men have left an interesting memorial in an issue of golden *solidi* dating from the first nine months of 442.⁴ The coins, which were issued in considerable numbers and in great haste, show the bust of Theodosius wearing his helmet and his cuirass and holding a lance and shield. On the reverse Constantinople is shown also helmeted, with her left foot on the prow of a vessel: she holds the world in her right hand, and in her left the cross. Behind her a shield lies upon the ground. A small number of the coins show, instead of Theodosius, his wife Eudocia and his sister Pulcheria. It would seem that they made personal contributions of valuables to enable the new issue to be brought out.⁵ Now, while many of Theodosius' coins are inscribed with boastful inscriptions, *gloria oris terrarum*, *virtus exercitus Romanorum*, *victoria Augustorum*, and

¹ Procopius, *De Aed.* iv. 5. 6.

² Marcellinus, s.a. 441; John of Antioch, frag. 206.

⁴ See A. Blanchet, pp. 97 ff.

³ Priscus, p. 281. 11.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 101, n. 2.

the like, this issue carries the date alone. The crisis was too acute for idle words.¹

As a result of his hasty preparations and the return of the fleet from Sicily, Theodosius felt himself able to show a bolder front to Attila when the campaigning season of 443 came round. Attila assembled his army and demanded the fugitives and the tribute money. He added that if there were any delay, or if the Romans carried out any offensive strategical moves, he would no longer hold back the Huns. Theodosius' ministers refused to hand over the fugitives, whom they had enrolled among the Imperial forces; but they undertook to send envoys who would attempt to reach an agreement satisfactory to both sides. It seems clear that, in spite of the events of 441, they had not yet realized what war with the nomads meant. They were soon to discover.²

When Attila heard the Emperor's reply he began in great anger to devastate the Roman territory opposite him, and, driving eastwards along the Danube, captured a few forts of minor importance and then took the great and populous city of Ratiaria on the right bank of the Danube in Upper Moesia.³ This large city, the capital of the province of Dacia Ripensis, was a base of the Danube fleet and contained one of the state arms factories. It was utterly destroyed and the inhabitants carried off as slaves into the dominions of the Huns.⁴

Their rear was now secure. No Roman attack could be launched on their communications when they turned to the interior of the Imperial provinces. Riding up the valley of the river Margus (Morava) they came to the city of Naissus (Nish), the strategic importance of which was as great in antiquity as it is to-day. It lay on the right bank of the river Nishava in Dacia Mediterranea,⁵ and it too was the seat of an Imperial arms factory and was thickly populated.⁶ As the Huns rode away from it, the birthplace of Constantine lay desolate like Singidunum and Viminacium until Justinian restored it in the following century.⁷ It would seem that an encounter outside the walls had sufficed to seal the city's fate.⁸

¹ *Ib.*, p. 102.

² Priscus, frag. 3.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 281. 23; 318. 32. It is the modern Artscher in Bulgaria.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 318. 32, cf. *Not. Dign. Or.* xlii. 43; xi. 38.

⁵ On its site see R. Roesler, pp. 843 ff. ⁶ *Amm.* xxi. 10. 5 *copiosum oppidum*.

⁷ Procopius, *De Aed.* iv. 1. 34; 4. 122.

⁸ For Priscus' literary account of a siege see *CQ.* xxxix, 1945, pp. 92-4. He says

The Huns now turned south-west up the valley of the river Nischava and devastated another great Balkan city, Sardica, the modern Sophia, and we need not doubt that it too was left almost uninhabited.¹ The road to the capital was now largely cleared, and they galloped down the military highway which ran along the valley of the Hebrus (Maritza). When Philipopolis fell into their hands, the defence of the European provinces was rendered impossible, for at this ancient city the great north-south road from Oescus on the Danube to the Aegean Sea crossed the age-old highway running from the Bosphorus to the West. And, although Adrianople and Heraclea either beat off their attacks or were by-passed, Arcadiopolis was taken also. The booty was enormous and the number of prisoners beyond counting.²

At last they met the new army of Theodosius. It was commanded by Aspar, the Alan who had negotiated the truce of the previous year, and by the Germans Areobindus and Arnegisclus, the murderer of the Vandal John. They were beyond doubt the foremost generals in the East Roman service at that time, but they were no match for Attila. They engaged him in a succession of battles outside the capital, but suffered heavy defeats in them all,³ and, as a result of a rapid manoeuvre by the Huns, were cut off from Constantinople and forced back into the Chersonesus. The Huns now reached the sea at three points, at Callipolis and Sestus south of the capital, and at an unspecified place north of it. Athyras, a fortress dangerously close to the city walls, was also occupied.⁴ It was hopeless for the ill-equipped nomad squadrons to attack the new fortifications of Constantinople and no move seems to have been made against the capital itself. Instead, Attila turned upon the

that he saw a bridge connecting Naissus with the left bank of the river, and he asserts that this was constructed by the Huns so that their forces could approach the city easily. I find this hard to believe. Is it likely that Attila would have wasted time in bridge-building in the middle of a campaign, even if he had with him men competent to carry out such an operation? And was this great city entirely unconnected with the left bank of the river throughout antiquity until the nomads linked it up? Finally, the nomads were already on the same side of the river as Naissus. The sentence referring to the construction of the bridge is probably nothing more than an unhappy guess on the historian's part.

¹ Priscus, p. 290. 3 *Σερδικῆς ἀνωστῆτος*: see p. 104 below.

² Theophanes, p. 102. 21 ff.

³ *Ib.*, p. 102. 24.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 102. 25 ff. On its site and importance see Agathias, p. 371, Dindorf. It was not far from the village of Melanthias, which lay only seventeen miles from the capital.

remnants of Aspar's army in the Chersonesus, and in a final battle there shattered the last remaining forces of the Romans.¹

Only one success had been won by the Empire, and this had not been due to the regular army. A large squadron of Huns, under some of their most brilliant commanders, had been detached from the main body of the army to invade Lower Moesia. This force collected a large quantity of booty and a considerable number of captives before it approached the small but powerful town of Asemus, which lay on the frontier between Oescus and Ad Novas, where the little river Asemus (modern Osma) flows into the Danube at a point nine miles east of the Utus (Vid). The citizens boldly undertook their own defence, and resolved not to rely on the strength of their moat and walls. Accurately informed by spies of the movements of the enemy, now gravely handicapped by the weight of their booty and the number of their captives, the men of Asemus fell upon them when the Huns believed themselves secure. Although outnumbered, the citizens succeeded in killing a considerable number of the enemy with slight loss to themselves, and rescued the Roman prisoners.²

This was a purely local success, and, after the defeat in the Chersonesus, Theodosius had no option but to beg for terms. The negotiations were entrusted to Anatolius, who had successfully closed the recent war with Persia and had been Master of the Soldiers in the East since 438. The terms granted by Attila, who had little to gain by prolonging the war, were harsh, but considerably less so than might have been expected. The fugitives were to be handed over at once. The arrears of tribute were calculated at 6,000 lb. of gold, and this sum was to be paid without delay. In addition, the annual tribute paid to the Huns under the Treaty of 435 was to be trebled, and Attila was now to receive 2,100 lb. of gold per annum. Further, every Roman prisoner who escaped from the Huns was to be ransomed at 12 *solidi* a head in place of the 8 *solidi* stipulated in 435. No fugitive from the Hun empire was in future to be received by the Romans.³ This treaty was provisionally signed before

¹ Priscus, p. 282. 25.

² *Ib.*, p. 284. 9-15. Note the valour of Asemus in A.D. 593: the citizen militia mentioned in Theophylactus, vii. 3, may have been first organized in the days of Attila.

³ Priscus, pp. 282. 26-283. 3. Theophanes, p. 103. 4, gives the amount of the annual tribute as 1,000 lb. of gold: but Priscus was his source! He agrees with his source as to the sum of 6,000 lb.

27 August 443, for on that date Theodosius returned from Asia Minor to Constantinople, which he would scarcely have done if hostilities had still been in progress in the neighbourhood of the capital.¹

When the terms of the treaty had been arranged, Scotta, one of the most eminent lieutenants of Attila,² came to the Eastern capital to receive the gold and the fugitives. He was given the gold, but the Romans had massacred all the fugitives who had expressed unwillingness to return north of the Danube. Scotta appears to have shown no resentment at this, although some relatives of Attila, who refused to recognize his overlordship, had been among the slain. Scotta announced, however, that he had been instructed to add one to the number of articles in the treaty: the men of Asemus were to be surrendered together with all their prisoners, whether Roman or barbarian.³ Otherwise, the Hun army would not be withdrawn and the treaty would not be ratified. Anatolius, who was being assisted in the conduct of these negotiations by Theodulus, the Master of the Soldiers in Thrace, did not feel himself in a position to refuse this request. The two Romans did indeed attempt to persuade Scotta to forgo the demand, but their efforts only revealed the complete willingness of Attila to continue the war. They therefore wrote to the citizens of Asemus, instructing them either to hand over the Roman prisoners whom they had rescued or to pay 12 *solidi* for each of them, for Attila was willing to accept ransom money at the new rate. They also instructed them to set free any Huns whom they had captured. To this letter the men of Asemus replied that the rescued Romans had now dispersed to their homes and could not be reassembled, and, further, that they had already massacred the Huns whom they had captured, with the exception of two. They had retained these two with the intention of exchanging them for some children whom the Huns had captured outside the walls of their town. Attila, when he heard of this, made a search for the children in question, but could find no trace of them. The men of Asemus accepted his assurance that they were genuinely missing, and returned the two Huns whom they had spared. The first Peace of Anatolius was thereupon ratified in the autumn of 443.⁴

¹ *Chron. Pasch.* i, p. 583. 18, Bonn; Marcellinus, s.a. 443.

² On the λογέταις of Attila see pp. 163 ff. below.

³ Priscus, p. 284. 1-9.

⁴ *Ib.*, pp. 284. 26-285. 28.

V

No real tranquillity descended upon the Eastern Empire. Attila sent another embassy to Constantinople raising some difficulty about the return of the fugitives. This embassy was followed by a second and a third and a fourth. On each occasion Theodosius' ministers presented the envoys with the handsome gifts which it was customary to bestow on ambassadors,¹ but insisted that none of the fugitives now remained on Roman soil. This was probably the truth, for Attila merely sent the embassies so that those of his followers who served on them might reap the rich harvest of costly presents which the Roman government found it expedient to supply. One pretext after another brought fresh ambassadors to the capital. Innumerable minor complaints of the Hun were examined by Roman officials, and Attila's lieutenants amassed greater and greater riches.

At precisely this time the East Roman frontiers were disturbed along their entire circuit. The Persians, although they had withdrawn from Armenia in 442, still kept their forces massed on the frontier, and since Anatholius had only succeeded in arranging a single year's truce with them, hostilities might well break out anew. To make matters worse, the defences of the frontier of Armenia had been weakened by the action of the local landlords, who had usurped some Imperial estates in the neighbourhood, so that bodies of men who had formerly garrisoned the frontier were now constrained to work the landowners' newly acquired estates.² Somewhat to the west of Armenia lived the nation of the Tzanni, ideally placed to overrun the Roman territory around Trapezus. Their land was barren, and, we are told, they lived only upon what they could steal. They were now raiding.³ The Isaurians had also broken out of their inaccessible mountains in the south of Asia Minor and were plundering the surrounding country-side. Saracen tribes from the desert were menacing some of the Eastern provinces, and trouble was expected even from the Ethiopian kingdom of Axum.⁴ Apart from the Persians' failure to demobilize their

¹ Cf., for example, Malchus of Philadelphia, frag. 3, p. 389. 9 ff., Dindorf.

² *Nov. Theod.* v. 3, of 26 June 441.

³ Marcellinus, s.a. 441, cf. Procopius, *BP.* i. 15. 21.

⁴ E. Stein, i, p. 436, takes τὰ Αἰθιοπικὰ ἔθνη of Priscus, p. 286. 16, to be the Blemmyes and Nobadae who lived south of Egypt; but in frag. 21 Priscus refers to these peoples by their correct names, and there seems to be no reason why he should call them Ethiopians here.

troops, none of these incidents formed a serious threat to Theodosius' security. But most of them demanded the presence of troops on the respective parts of the Roman frontier. And throughout 444, while Attila's ambassadors came swarming to Constantinople, Roman forces were being dispersed to every corner of the Empire, and the government's capacity to adopt a firm attitude towards the Huns was correspondingly weakened.¹

In these difficult circumstances, Theodosius took what measures he could to ensure the future safety of the northern frontier. On 12 September 443, within a month of the end of the fighting, stringent orders were given to Nomus, the Master of the Offices and one of the most trusted ministers of the Emperor, to fortify the exposed frontier along the Danube where Attila had won his initial successes in 441, to repair the fortresses there, and to bring all military detachments posted in that area up to their full strength.² That these tasks were carried out during the year 444, to the satisfaction of the Emperor would seem to be indicated by the fact that Nomus was appointed to the consulship for 445. But while his work was still in progress, the government could do nothing save receive the unending stream of Attila's ambassadors, reward them with handsome gifts, and deal with each irritating complaint as best they could.

After the conclusion of the Peace of Anatolius the plans and movements of the Huns are exceedingly obscure, for the relevant portion of Priscus' work has not survived. That internal dissensions of a most far-reaching character had broken out among their leaders is proved by the murder of Bleda, who fell by his brother's hand sometime in this period. Our various authorities date the event to 444, 445, and 446, but there can be little doubt that Attila murdered his elder brother in the year 445.³ Of the origin of the dispute we know nothing. Its result was that the peoples formerly governed and exploited by Bleda now came under the direct control of Attila.⁴ From 445 until his death he

¹ Priscus, frag. 6.

² *Nov. Theod.* xxiv.

³ So Marcellinus, s.a. Prosper, *Chron. Min.* i, p. 480, dates the murder two years after the invasion of the Eastern Empire, which he records s.a. 442; but, since that

⁴ Prosper, l.c. 'cuiusque [i.e. Bleda's] populos sibi parere compellit'; Jordanes, *Get.* xxxv. 181 'Bleda . . . interempto, qui magnae parti regnabat Hunnorum, universum sibi populum adunavit'.

had no rival among the Huns. He seems to have found it expedient, however, to base his supremacy on the solid foundations of his followers' superstition,¹ and for this purpose he had recourse to an old sword which had recently been discovered by one of his followers. A herdsman noticed one day that one of his cattle was lame and that its foot had been cut. Following the trail of blood to its source, the herdsman found an ancient sword buried in the grass. He pulled it up and brought it to Attila, who was not slow to observe its uses. It was the sword of the war-god, he declared; it was honoured by former leaders of the Huns, but had been lost long ago; now it would bring him success in his wars and make him triumphant over all his foes.² Anyone who questioned his right to unite the position of Bleda with his own would have to fight, not only himself, but the divine powers as well.

Otherwise the Huns remained at peace in these years, and one of their Roman prisoners could tell Priscus a short while later of the idle carefree life of the Huns in peace-time, 'with each man enjoying his present blessings and neither causing trouble nor suffering it', a very different life, he thought, from that of the Romans at peace.³

A random fragment of Priscus preserves some information about one of the Roman embassies which were sent out to Attila in these years.⁴ Theodosius, we are told, sent out to the Huns the ex-consul Senator, one of his closest advisers, who appears as a patrician when he attended the Council of Chalcedon in 451.⁵ Nothing is said as to the purpose of his embassy, but Priscus tells us with some scorn that he was afraid to go to the Huns by land. Instead, he sailed up the Black Sea to Odessus (Varna), where he found Theodulus, whom we have already met assisting Anatolius in the negotiations of 443, and who was probably Master of the Soldiers in Thrace.⁶ The fragment

¹ So E. Trolong, p. 546.

² Priscus, p. 314. 12 (from which it is clear that in 449 the sword had only recently been discovered); Jordanes, *Get.* xxxv. 183 (= Priscus, frag. 10). Although Priscus has in mind Herodotus, iv. 62, the truth of his story cannot be doubted.

³ Priscus, p. 306. 16 ff.

⁴ Frag. 4, which appears misplaced in Müller and Dindorf. It occurs between frags. 1 and 8 in the *De Legat. Romanorum*, and can therefore refer to any time between 435 and 449.

⁵ For his career see Seccck, P.-W. s.v.

⁶ Priscus, p. 284. 32, with which cf. p. 346. 30. Ensslin, P.-W. (*ζω. R.*), v. 1966, thinks he was only a Dux.

there breaks off, so that we hear no more of Senator's travels, but the fact that he was journeying northwards by sea suggests that he, like the historian Olympiodorus before him (p. 34 above), was making for a Hun encampment north or north-west of the Black Sea. Attila, then, seems to have moved into the interior of his dominions at this time.

VI

The Huns invaded the East Roman Empire for the second time in 447. Our sources tell us not a word as to why they did so or what pretext they used. That a continuous intake of plunder was a social necessity for them, as they were organized under Attila, will become apparent later. Of only one other thing can we be certain: the peace was broken through no fault of the Roman government. If it had been, Priscus would beyond doubt have drawn attention to the government's error at considerable length, and some indication of his indictment of Theodosius would surely have reached us in the narratives derived from his. The East Romans had trouble in plenty without inviting an invasion by the nomads. The winter following the ratification of the Peace of Anatolius had been exceptionally severe. Snow lay on the ground, we are told, for almost six months, and thousands of men and cattle died from the cold. In the following year tremendous rain-storms devastated Bithynia, and entire towns and *praedia* were washed away by floods and overflowing rivers. In 445 riots in the Circus at Constantinople resulted in many deaths, and large numbers of the citizens perished in a plague. The calamities continued through 446. In that year the food-supplies of the capital failed and their failure was followed immediately by another plague.¹ Theodosius' ministers were in no position to take risks on the northern frontier.

Whatever the pretexts and preliminaries, Attila, who was now at the height of his career, launched his second invasion in the spring of 447. The attack was planned on an even bigger scale than that of 441—*ingens bellum et priore maius*, says a chronicler.² It was carried out, not only by the Huns themselves, but also by contingents of the subject races. The Gepids were led by their king Ardaric and the Goths by Valamer, and there were others

¹ Marcellinus, s. aa. 443, 444, 445, 446.

² *Ib.*, s.a. 447.

whose names have not been recorded.¹ The assault was directed through the provinces of Lower Scythia and Moesia, that is, farther to the east than in 441, so that the new fortifications built under Nomus' direction were by-passed. Furthermore, it seems to have been the first and only occasion on which the Huns attacked the undivided forces of the Eastern Empire, for we have no report that trouble on any other front distracted the armies of Theodosius.

As the Hun squadrons prepared to move, a disaster of the first magnitude befell the Romans. The series of earthquakes which shattered the Eastern Empire for four months beginning on 26 January 447 were, in the belief of Evagrius, the worst in its history. Entire villages were swallowed up and countless disasters occurred both on land and sea. Thrace, the Hellespont, and the Cyclades all suffered. For three or four days after the earthquakes began, the rain poured from the sky, we are told, in rivers of water. Hillocks were levelled with the ground. Countless buildings were thrown down in Constantinople, and, worst of all, a stretch of the massive walls of Anthemius, including no less than fifty-seven towers, fell to the ground.² It seemed as though nothing could now save the great city. To crown all, so many of the inhabitants were buried under the ruins of the numerous buildings which collapsed inside the city that plague soon made its appearance again, and thousands of the citizens died. Yet, after a momentary panic, the men of Constantinople showed themselves equal to the crisis. Led by the Circus parties and directed by the praetorian prefect Flavius Constantinus, they managed to restore the walls in their entirety within sixty days of the calamity, when Attila's forces were already swarming forward. Constantinus was not content merely to restore the wall of Anthemius: he also built a second wall in front of it, so that the city was now defended by a triple line of defence. 'The fortifications', writes a modern inquirer, 'rose tier above tier, and combined to form a barricade 190-207 feet thick, and over 100 feet high.'³ A bilingual inscription commemorates the achievement of Constantinus in verses scarcely worthy of the occasion:

¹ Jordanes, *Rom.* 331.

² Priscus, frag. 43 = Evagrius, *HE.* ii. 14; Theophanes, *A.M.* 5930; Malalas, p. 363; Marcellinus, *s.a.* 447.

³ A. van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople* (London, 1899), p. 46; cf. Marcellinus, *s.a.* 447; Preger, *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum*, pp. 150, 182.

Constantinus ovans haec moenia firma locavit:
Tam cito tam stabilem Pallas vix conderet arcem.

Ἡμασιν ἐξήκοντα φιλοσκήπτρῳ βασιλῆϊ
Κωνσταντῖνος ὑπαρχος ἐλείματο τείχει τείχος.

These two couplets can still be read on the wall of Theodosius. A third has survived in the *Anthology*:

Θεωδόσιος τόδε τείχος ἀναξ καὶ ὑπαρχος ἐφάσ
Κωνσταντῖνος ἔτευξαν ἐν ἡμασιν ἐξήκοντα.¹

The defence of the capital was entrusted to Flavius Zeno, an Isaurian, at the head of a large body of his countrymen. How these Isaurians came to be entrusted with so vital a charge is unknown, for throughout the fifth century they had hitherto appeared consistently among the bitterest foes of the Empire.² Zeno's defence did not inspire the plague-stricken population with complete confidence. We are told, indeed, that 'the majority' of the inhabitants fled as the Huns drew nearer, and doubtless many did so; but, when another authority tells us that Theodosius himself made preparations for flight, we may suspect him of some prejudice, for Attila's attack had not caught the Emperor unprepared.³

Near the river Utus (Vid) in Dacia Ripensis Attila was engaged by the Imperial army which had marched out of Marcianople to meet him. The Romans were commanded by the German Arnegisclus. He had distinguished himself in 441 by the murder of the Vandal John, whose post of Master of the Soldiers in Thrace he still occupied. Whatever his faults—and he had been among the commanders so soundly beaten in the campaign of 443⁴—he now seems to have provided a more obstinate resistance to the Huns than they had yet encountered from the Romans. He staked everything on one pitched battle, and he lost. His horse was killed beneath him, and our authorities unite in emphasizing the courage with which he was fighting when he himself fell. Although the victory lay with Attila, his losses had been severe.⁵ Indeed, had a detailed account of the engagement survived, we might well find that the battle

¹ Dessau, *ILS.* 823; *Anth. Pal.* ix. 690.

² Priscus, p. 320. 5. This problem and the career of Zeno are discussed in *Hermathena*, lxxviii, 1946, pp. 18–31.

³ Callinicus, *op. cit.*, p. 139. 21 ff.; Nestorius, *op. cit.*, p. 366 f.

⁴ Theophanes, p. 102. 20.

⁵ Marcellinus, s.a. 447 *plurimis hostium interemptis*; cf. Jordanes, *Rom.* 331.

of the river Utus caused irreparable damage to the strength of the Huns. The fact remains that this was the last of Attila's victories over the Romans.

An immediate result of the battle was the fall of Marcianople, Arnegisclus' base, the capital of Moesia Secunda and the largest city of Thrace. It lay desolate until Justinian restored it a hundred years later.¹ The Huns do not appear to have struck out now for the capital: the walls had been fully restored, and against them the arrows of the nomads were helpless. But they devastated the Balkan provinces with terrible ferocity, and Jordanes² lists Illyricum, Thrace, and both provinces of Dacia, together with Moesia and Scythia, as having suffered grievously. The invaders then sought out new areas of plunder: like Zabergan a hundred years later they drove straight down southwards into Greece and were only held at Thermopylae.³ Nothing is known of the further course of this invasion, about which we are even less well informed than about that of 441/3.

The terrors of the war, however, have been in some measure recorded for us by Callinicus in his life of S. Hypatius, who was still living in Thrace at the time.⁴ 'The barbarian nation of the Huns', he writes, 'which was in Thrace, became so great that more than a hundred cities were captured and Constantinople almost came into danger and most men fled from it. . . . And there were so many murders and blood-lettings, αμαρτεκχυσίαι, that the dead could not be numbered. Ay, for they took captive the churches and monasteries and slew the monks and maidens in great numbers.' Perhaps the holy writer has exaggerated somewhat in saying that a hundred towns were captured; at any rate, the writer of the Gallic Chronicle of A.D. 452 is content to put the figure at 'not less than seventy'. But his words contain a phrase of such interest that they may be quoted in full: 'nova iterum Orienti consurgit ruina, qua septuaginta non minus civitates Chunnorum deprædatione vastatae, cum nulla ab Occidentalibus ferrentur auxilia.'⁵ What is the meaning of these last words? We can only conclude that there were men in the West who believed that Aetius should not have stood idle when the East was being ruined. East Rome often came to the

¹ *Chron. Pasch.*, p. 586. 4, Bonn; Jordanes, *Get.* xvi. 92; Zosimus, iv. 10. 3; Procopius, *De Aed.* iv. 11. 20, p. 148.

² *Rom.* 331.

³ Marcellinus, s.a. 447.

⁴ *Vita S. Hypatii*, p. 139. 21 ff.

⁵ *Chron. Min.* i, p. 662: see p. 210 below.

assistance of West Rome—though not for altruistic reasons—even when such help was almost beyond her strength. This is our only hint that some men believed that the debt should be repaid, and that the Old Rome should carry aid to the New.

Finally, we may notice the words of Count Marcellinus, who lived in the East many years later, for in his entry under the year 447 he writes with a vigour which he rarely displays elsewhere: 'paene totam Europam excisis inuasisque civitatibus atque castellis [Attila] conrasit'—'Attila ground almost the whole of Europe into the dust.'

V

PEACE ON THE DANUBE FRONTIER

THE three years following the great invasion of 447 were filled by diplomatic encounters between the Huns and the Romans, for the latter, having no military resources left, could now rely only on the skill of their diplomats. Even so, their subtlety and patience brought them greater successes than they probably expected. The story of the diplomatic history of these years is better known to us than that of any other similar period in ancient history and forms a striking contrast to the obscurity of the war itself. Our good fortune is due solely to the fact that Priscus himself served on the chief Roman mission of the year 449, and devoted a quite disproportionate amount of his book to a narrative of what he saw and did. But before we consider this narrative we must recount another campaign of Attila, the last which he fought in eastern Europe.

I

No nation as predatory as the Huns could remain at peace for long, and in the season following that of 447 we find them engaged in a new struggle. Their victims on this occasion were an obscure but valiant people called the Acatziri.¹ Who precisely they were we do not know for certain, although several conjectures have been offered: they were the Agathyrsi of Herodotus, or the Khazars, or the Magyars, and so on.² These conjectures should be rejected: Priscus tells us that they were a tribe of Huns, and we have no reason to doubt him (p. 11 above). The area in which they lived can only be fixed very approximately. Jordanes tells us that the Vidivarii lived at the mouth of the Vistula: to the east of them on the Baltic coast dwelt the Aesti, and to the south of these, *quibus in austrum*, was settled the nation of the Acatziri. Consequently Marquart locates them around the site of the modern city of Korosten.³

¹ I date this war to 448, because it is clear from Priscus, p. 298. 25, that it had only recently ended in 449; cf. the order in which the invasion of 447 and this war are mentioned at p. 306. 10. Priscus called them the Ἀκάτιροι, cf. Marquart, *Streifzüge*, p. 41, n. 1, who shows that the form Ἀκάτιροι is due to the copyists.

² See Marquart, *op. cit.*, pp. xxi ff., 40 ff.; Toynbee, p. 132; Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturica*, ii, s.v. 'Akatziri'.

³ Jordanes, *Get.* v. 36; Marquart, *l.c.*, p. xxii.

But Priscus says that the Acatziri inhabited τὴν πρὸς τῷ Πόντῳ Σκυθίαν, which would seem to indicate an area nearer the Black Sea than Korosten.¹ Many years later, when certain Asiatic peoples were driven into Europe, the Acatziri were the first tribe to endure their onslaught, and a further passage of Priscus gives us reason to believe that they were not entirely remote from the approaches to the Persian empire.² All this suggests that a people who may have lived on the Baltic coast in the days of Jordanes' authority—though his statement as to their position should perhaps be rejected outright—had emigrated there from the far south-east before 448 and in that year were living near the eastern shore of the Black Sea or the Sea of Azov. On only one point do scholars show unanimity: Tomaschek, Marquart, and Kiessling agree that the name is Old Turkish and means 'Waldleute',³ but whether the philologists of the future will show the same harmony remains to be seen.

Jordanes, or his authority, was impressed by the valour of the Acatziri, for they are described as *gens fortissima*. They knew nothing of agriculture, he tells us, and were nomads, living off their flocks and herds and by hunting. We learn further that they were organized in clans and tribes, each tribe and clan being led by its own chieftain.⁴ It is fairly clear then that, like the Huns of Attila, they belonged in point of material civilization to the lower stage of pastoralism. How they had survived the expansion of the Huns under Bleda and Attila in the thirties of the fifth century and had retained their independence we do not know, but it seems probable that the conquerors had not come so far east.

However that may be, the Acatziri were living on friendly terms with the Huns until somewhat after the time of Bleda's murder. Theodosius realized their strategic importance as an independent power lying on Attila's rear, and it was—or soon became—a tradition of East Roman diplomacy that such powers should be bound as closely as possible to the Empire, so as to threaten the rear of the hostile nations who lay immediately beyond the Roman frontier. The Emperor therefore sent gifts

¹ Priscus, p. 310. 31.

² *Ib.*, pp. 341. 15, 346. 7.

³ Tomaschek, P.-W. s.v. 'Acatziri'; Marquart, *op. cit.*, pp. xxiv. 41; Kiessling, P.-W. viii. 2604, and cf. now K. H. Menges, *Byzantion*, xvii, 1945, p. 261.

⁴ Jordanes, l.c.; Priscus, p. 298. 29.

to the chieftains of the Acatzirian tribes and suggested that they should renounce their alliance with Attila and enter upon a treaty with himself.¹ Unhappily for him, the envoy sent to bring about this change in the political relationships of the Acatziri was not adequately acquainted with the social organization of the people with whom he had come to deal. One of their chiefs, Curidachus by name, ranked higher than the chiefs of the other tribes, a fact which seems to have been unknown to the East Roman envoy. Curidachus should have been the first to receive Theodosius' gifts, but in fact he received them second. He felt himself slighted and deprived of his prerogative, and turned in anger to Attila, calling upon him to attack his fellow chieftains among the Acatziri who had usurped his position.² Attila did not delay in sending the required forces, and after a succession of battles³ he reduced the whole race to subjection. He then summoned Curidachus to his presence, but Curidachus was somewhat suspicious of his benefactor's intentions, and sent back a message saying: 'It is difficult for a man to gaze upon a god; for if it be impossible to look full upon the orb of the sun, how could one behold the greatest of the gods without injury?' His caution brought its reward: he was left to rule his particular tribe, but Attila sent his own eldest son Ellac to govern the rest of the Acatziri.⁴ Theodosius' hopes of winning a friend in the rear of the Huns thus came to nothing, and we hear of no further attempts by the East Roman government to regain its influence among the Pontic peoples.

II

In 448 peace was restored on the northern frontier.⁵ We have no information as to the precise course of the negotiations by which this peace was brought about. We know, however, that the chief negotiator on the Roman side was that same Anatolius to whom it had fallen to conclude the war of 443.⁶ The most important of the terms of this second Peace of Anatolius was one which shows that the treaty as a whole was much harsher than that of 443. Attila demanded that a wide belt of country south of the Danube should be completely evacuated by the

¹ Priscus, p. 298. 30 ff.

² *Ib.*, p. 306. 10 μόχαις.

³ *Ib.*, p. 299. 1-18, cf. p. 310. 29. For the name of Attila's eldest son cf. Jordanes, *Get.* I. 262.

⁵ Marcellinus, s.a.

⁶ The reference in Priscus, pp. 296. 15, 327. 3, can scarcely be to the peace of 443.

Romans. This strip of land was to stretch from Singidunum on the frontier of Pannonia to Novae, a distance of some 300 miles, and was to be five days' journey in depth, that is, about 100 or 120 miles. In other words, all Dacia Ripensis and parts of three other provinces were to be abandoned and the new frontier was to run through Naissus. The Danube, with all its fortifications and great frontier cities, which now lay in ruins, was no longer to be the boundary of the Eastern Empire.¹ We know none of the other terms of the treaty save one: the tribute was to be continued, but at what rate we have no means of saying.² For the next two years Roman diplomacy was directed towards the aim of securing some mitigation of these terms.

In the spring of 449 one of Attila's most powerful lieutenants, Edeco by name, arrived in Constantinople. He had apparently been there in the preceding year also, in connexion with the negotiations which had resulted in the signature of the second Peace of Anatolius. Himself a Hun (p. 11 above), he now came attended by another of Attila's *λογῶδες*, Orestes, who, surprisingly enough, was a Roman, having been born in Pannonia. Orestes had married the daughter of a certain Romulus, after whom he was to name his son, the last Emperor of the West.³ On being introduced into the palace Edeco delivered a letter from Attila, and made some verbal announcements, which were translated to the Emperor and his ministers by Bigilas,⁴ an interpreter attached to the *scrinium* of the Master of the Offices.⁵ This Bigilas, who was to play a major part in the events which followed, had already acted as Anatolius' interpreter in the negotiations of 448.⁶ That a man so unsuited to the niceties of diplomacy was so often employed by the Eastern government in their dealings with the Huns is to be explained by the extreme difficulty of finding suitable persons with a knowledge of the

¹ Priscus, pp. 286. 32-287. 7; E. Stein, *Geschichte*, p. 439.

² Stein, p. 439, says that the amount of the tribute was not raised. This may be, but I do not know that there is any evidence for the statement.

³ Priscus, pp. 301. 32; 302. 5. For a full account of his career see Ensslin, P.-W. xviii. 1012 f. Romulus Augustulus was, of course, a usurper.

⁴ Historians sometimes call him Vigillus, Vigilans, or Vigilas: see Gibbon, ch. 34; Dindorf, *Hist. Gr. Min.* i, Index, s.v.; Alföldi, *Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie*, xlvii, 1932, p. 237, &c. It is safer to retain Bigilas with Bury, op. cit. i, p. 279; Guldennpenning, p. 351, n. 102 b, says that the name is Gothic, and it should be noted that Jordanes, *Rom.* 336, speaks of a Gothic chief called Bigelis.

⁵ Priscus, p. 289. 5; Not. Dign. Or. vi. 52, p. 33 Seeck.

⁶ Priscus, pp. 293. 32; 296. 15.

Hun language. In all the pages of Priscus we meet with only one other man—in addition no doubt to Aetius—who could speak it. This was Rusticius, a native of Upper Moesia, who had lived among the Huns as a war prisoner since the campaign of 441.¹ At any rate, Bigilas had no doubt experienced to the full the contempt in which the later Romans held their interpreters,² and his constant intercourse with such dignitaries as Anatolius and Maximinus seems to have lent an aggressive and tactless character to his behaviour.

The letter which Edeco delivered suggests that the Romans had been as tardy in carrying out the terms of the second Peace of Anatolius as they had been in 435. Attila accused them of withholding some fugitives from his dominions and of failing to evacuate the belt of land south of the Danube. If these two conditions of the peace were not promptly carried out, he threatened an immediate renewal of the war. He further demanded that the Roman government should send him ambassadors to discuss all outstanding points of difference between himself and the Eastern Empire, and insisted that these ambassadors should be no minor officials but ex-consuls of the highest rank. He concluded by declaring that, if such men were sent to him, he would cross the Danube and go as far as Sardica (Sophia) to meet them.³ It is clear from this letter that he was repeating the policy of blackmail which he had pursued with such persistence after the peace of 443 (p. 87 f. above). But now the Roman government had decided on a drastic plan by which to free themselves.

When Edeco had delivered his letter to the Emperor and had added some verbal explanations through Bigilas, he left the palace accompanied by the interpreter and was brought to another mansion, where he met Theodosius' most powerful minister, the eunuch Chrysaphius, surnamed Tzumas or Ztommas.⁴ He appears to have had complete control over

¹ *Ib.*, pp. 294. 32; 312. 1; 318. 26.

² Procopius, *BG.* viii. 11. 9; *BP.* ii. 28. 42.

³ Priscus, pp. 286. 22–287. 12.

⁴ Theophanes, p. 100. 16; Malalas, p. 363. 4. Helm, p. 415, takes the *ἐντοπι οἶκος* of Priscus, p. 287. 16, to be the quarters, *μητῆρα*, assigned to Edeco as an ambassador by the *Magister Officiorum*; but they are doubtless merely the residence of Chrysaphius: so Hodgkin, p. 57. Chrysaphius did not hold the highest office open to a eunuch, that of *praepositus*; he was content to remain *primicerius sacri cubiculi* (Nicephorus Call. *HE.* xiv. 47). But through his influence the responsible functions of *spatharius* were now attached to this office, and Chrysaphius is usually referred

Theodosius' government since the fall of the prefect Cyrus (p. 77 above) and the Empress Eudocia, that is, since about the time of the first Peace of Anatolius in 443/4: in fact, it was he who had ruined Cyrus.¹ He was now at the height of his power, although his entanglement in the ecclesiastical policies of his godfather, the heretic Eutyches, was soon to weaken his position. It was whispered that he employed his vast influence with the Emperor to increase his personal wealth by unscrupulous means;² but the charge was one levelled at all the prominent statesmen of the later Empire, and we may believe that in this respect he was better than his reputation, but considerably less than innocent. There could be no difference of opinion as to the skill with which he maintained his position, but his foreign policy, which will occupy us in a later chapter, was the subject of bitter controversy and led to his outright condemnation in the historical tradition.

When Edeco had been introduced to him, the Hun expressed his astonishment at the splendour of the Imperial palaces in the capital. Bigilas translated his words. The eunuch replied that Edeco, too, could be the master of great riches and of mansions with gilded ceilings if he would abandon the Scythians and attach himself to the service of the Romans. Edeco naïvely replied that he could not do this without his master's permission. Chrysaphius asked him if he had free access to Attila's person and whether he possessed any real authority among the Huns. Edeco replied that he did: as one of Attila's lieutenants, *λογάδης*, it was his duty to guard his master's person in arms for a specified part of each day. The eunuch thereupon told him that, if given an oath of secrecy, he would make him a proposal which would be very much to his interest, but that he must have time to think it over. He suggested therefore that Edeco should return alone to dine with him, without the company of Orestes and the others who had come to Constantinople with him. To this Edeco agreed.³

to as *spatharius* by our authorities: Stein, i, p. 445 f.; cf. *Coll. Avell.* 99. 5 (p. 441. 12, ed. Günther), *Chron. Pasch.* i, p. 590. 6, Bonn; *Vita S. Daniel. Styl.* 31, and that is the meaning of *ὑπασπιστής* in Priscus, p. 287. 17, and Evagrius, ii. 2 (p. 39. 3), who characteristically avoid the technical term.

¹ *Vita S. Danielis*, 31.

² John of Antioch, frag. 191; Suidas, s.v. Θεοδόσιος (both from Priscus).

³ Priscus, pp. 287. 12-288. 6. Priscus' source was doubtless Bigilas, cf. p. 11 above.

He returned later to Chrysaphius' mansion and dined alone with the eunuch and Bigilas, who again acted as interpreter. Chrysaphius declared on oath that the proposal, which he was about to make, would bring no harm to his guest, but rather the very greatest of blessings. Edeco swore that, whatever it was, he would keep it secret. Then at last Chrysaphius made his proposition: if Edeco would return north of the Danube, murder Attila, and make his way safely back to Constantinople, he would live a life of ease and of great riches for the rest of his days. Edeco accepted the proposal—perhaps a little too readily—but said that he would require money, about 50 lb. of gold, in order to ensure the loyalty of the Huns whom he governed. Without hesitation Chrysaphius offered to supply him with the money at once, but the Hun objected. He suggested that he himself should be sent away immediately to tell Attila the result of his mission, and that Bigilas should be sent with him to hear Attila's answer on the problem of the fugitives, about whom he had been complaining. Edeco would be informed by Bigilas as to how the money was to be sent out. He could not bring it himself, he explained, for Attila always made a point of inquiring very closely into the amounts of money which his emissaries received at Constantinople, and it would be impossible to conceal such a sum as 50 lb. of gold from him—or, indeed, from Orestes and the others who would be travelling with him. Chrysaphius approved of this amendment, and they finished their dinner.¹

The eunuch hurried at once to the Emperor, who summoned Martialis, the Master of the Offices (a sort of Foreign Secretary), and all three discussed the agreement made with Edeco. They made one alteration of the suggestions put forward by the Hun. It would be advisable to deflect Attila's attention from Bigilas. In addition to him, therefore, they would send out Maximinus on a sham embassy to interview Attila, and Bigilas should travel with him unsuspected, in the guise of nothing more than a mere interpreter. Maximinus should know nothing of the plot to murder Attila, but should merely deliver the Emperor's reply to Attila's letter, which Edeco had just brought. The terms of the Emperor's letter were also agreed upon at this meeting. It should begin by stating that Bigilas was only an interpreter, whereas Maximinus was a man of high rank and noble birth,

¹ *Ib.*, p. 288. 6-31.

and was very close to the Emperor. The letter would go on to state that the Romans had given Attila no reason to invade their territories, for, in addition to the fugitives restored earlier, the Emperor had now sent back the last seventeen in his possession. Theodosius and his two ministers further agreed that Maximinus should tell Attila orally that he ought not to ask for the presence of ambassadors of the highest rank; this had not been customary in his earlier dealings with the Romans nor had other rulers of Scythia made any such request—they had been content with any random soldier or secret-service agent who had happened to be at hand.¹

Why was this last matter not included in the letter? Why was it merely to be pointed out orally by Maximinus? The fact was that this argument contained an obvious falsehood. Men of the highest rank, that is, *virii illustres*, had, in fact, conducted negotiations with Attila before this: we have already met the Master of the Soldiers Anatolius and the ex-consul Senator. Theodosius' reluctance to send a *vir illustris* again was doubtless due to his fear that, if the attempt on Attila's life miscarried, no important Roman personage would ever return safely from Hun territory in the future. In these unflattering circumstances the Emperor sent Maximinus.

III

The company that set out from the Eastern capital on horseback² sometime in the early summer of 449 was led by the ambassador himself. This Maximinus, a man of considerable distinction although not a *vir illustris*, first appears in history with the rank of *Comes* in the month of December 435, when he was a member of the commission appointed to draw up the Theodosian Code.³ He evidently won speedy promotion, for when the commission is mentioned three years later he is no longer a member of it,⁴ being presumably engaged on higher duties. We do not know why his name suggested itself to Theodosius and his two advisers when they decided to send him to

¹ Priscus, pp. 288, 32–289, 32. The ἀγγελισφόροι are the *agentes in rebus*, also called *μαγιστρίωνοι* because they were under the direction of the *Magister Officiorum*.

² For other cases of Roman ambassadors travelling on horseback cf. Plintha and Epigenes, p. 74 above; Priscus, p. 277, 7; Menander, frag. 20, &c.

³ *CTH*. i. i. 6, 2, where he is described as 'spectabilis comes et magister sacrorum scriniorum'. On the identification see Ensslin, *Byz.-neogr. Jahrb.* v, 1926–7, pp. 2–3.

⁴ *Nov. Theod.* i. 7 (15 Feb. 438).

Attila in the dangerous company of Bigilas. They probably considered him to be an able, if uninspired, civil servant, who would not be likely to lose his head in a crisis. However that may be, we have good reason to congratulate ourselves on their choice and on Maximinus' willingness to accept the commission; for as soon as he heard of his appointment, he approached his friend Priscus, the historian, and earnestly requested him to accompany him on his long journey.¹

We know nothing of Priscus before he received this invitation of Maximinus. On the way he seems to have occupied a position which placed him in a personal rather than an official relationship with the ambassador,² and it has been plausibly suggested that the historian had served in one of the *scrinia* directed by the Master of the Offices.³ In this position he will have become known to Maximinus, who then made him his *de facto*, if not *de jure*, adviser and counsellor. Now, it was a frequent custom in the later Empire to attach a philosopher or sophist to an embassy so as to furnish the ambassadors with a ready and eloquent speaker.⁴ It may be then that Priscus was asked to accompany Maximinus because he had already made a considerable reputation in the schools: perhaps he had published some of those *μελέται βητορικά* which Suidas ascribes to him and of which we otherwise know nothing.

The news that the party was to travel into Hun territory happened to come to the ears of Rusticius, who had a matter of personal business to transact with one of Attila's Roman secretaries, and who obtained permission to travel in the ambassador's company. He was a useful member of it, for, apart from Bigilas, he was the only Roman present who understood the Hun language: he was a native of Moesia who had lived among the Huns as a war-prisoner for many years (p. 99 above).⁵ The rest of the party comprised the interpreter Bigilas, the Hun Edeco—these two alone knew of the plot to murder Attila—Orestes, who had come to Constantinople with Edeco, and some unspecified Huns of minor importance who had also accompanied Edeco.⁶ Priscus

¹ Priscus, p. 290. 4. Similarly, Plintha had nominated Epigenes in 435, p. 74 above. It would be interesting to know who had nominated Olympiodorus in 412.

² On the semi-official relationships of the *assessores* to their superiors see Seeck, P.-W. i. 424.

³ Ensslin, *ib.*, p. 8.

⁴ Amm. xvii. 5. 15 *ut opifex suadendi*; Priscus, p. 276. 29; Procopius, *BP.* ii. 24. 4. *BG.* v. 3. 30, &c.

⁵ Priscus, pp. 295. 1 ff., 312. 1, 318. 26.

⁶ *Ib.*, p. 288. 5 τῶν ἄλλων συμπεσθευόντων.

scarcely deigns to mention the servants who waited on the principals, and the drivers who looked after the pack-animals.¹ These animals carried, not merely presents to be distributed when the party reached the Huns' encampment, but also food, for Roman ambassadors, travelling abroad, were provisioned by their own government, not by that through whose territory they passed.²

Thirteen days' journey brought the travellers to Sardica, which had been ruined in the war of 441. Here Maximinus decided to entertain Edeco and the more prominent Huns to dinner. The inhabitants—for a few were still living on the site—sold him some sheep and cattle, which his servants slew and cooked. But an unfortunate incident marred the humour of the party as they sat drinking after the meal. When the barbarians toasted Attila and Maximinus proposed the name of Theodosius, Bigilas, with his customary tactlessness, protested that a god (he meant Theodosius) should not be mentioned in the same breath as a mere man (that is, Attila). The remark was so indiscreet that, in Hodgkin's opinion (p. 62), it 'can only be accounted for by supposing that he had plied the wine-cup too freely'. At any rate, the Huns showed signs of warm displeasure, and Maximinus and Priscus hurriedly diverted the conversation and passed the bottle round.³ After the dinner Maximinus found it expedient to present Edeco and Orestes with a gift of Indian pearls⁴ and some pieces of silk. But the evening contained a further perplexing moment. After receiving his gifts, Orestes waited behind until Edeco had left, and, approaching the Roman ambassador, paid a tribute to his cleverness: he declared that Maximinus had not been guilty of the same error as some of the Imperial officials, who had invited Edeco alone to a dinner and had presented him with gifts. Maximinus was mystified by his words, and asked him in what way he considered that he had been slighted and Edeco unduly honoured. But Orestes merely turned on his heel and left without a word. The ambassador and Priscus were at a loss to explain his behaviour, and, when they resumed their journey on the following

¹ Priscus, p. 305. 9 ὑπηρέταις, p. 295. 31 οἱ μετὰ τῶν ὑποζυγίων. On such servants see Helm, p. 403, who overlooks the present case.

² *CTh.* vii. 1. 9; xii. 12. 2, &c.; Helm, p. 413.

³ Priscus, p. 290. 18 ἡμῶν δὲ ἐξ ἑτέρα τρεψάντων τὸν λόγον καὶ φιλοφροσύνῃ τὸν σφῶν αὐτῶν κατασπαρνάντων θυμὸν.

⁴ Cf. *CQ.* xli, 1947, p. 62.

day, they mentioned the incident to Bigilas and told him of the dark words of Orestes. Bigilas suspected nothing. He said at once that Orestes had no business to feel angry if he was not shown the same honour as Edeco: he was merely a servant and a secretary of Attila, while Edeco was a Hun and one of his greatest warriors. Having said this, he went straight over to Edeco, who was riding a little way off, and spoke to him for a few moments in an undertone. Returning to the ambassador, he said that he had told Edeco of what Orestes had said and had scarcely been able to calm the Hun's anger. Did the truth not occur to the interpreter? Was it not clear that Orestes had at least suspected something? In fact, the position was worse than anything Bigilas can have imagined: Edeco had revealed the entire plot to his companions, and Orestes had intended to compliment Maximinus on his show of knowing nothing about it.¹

Many years later, after Theodosius, Attila, and Maximinus were dead, Priscus gave it as his opinion that Edeco had revealed the secret either because he had never seriously intended to murder Attila or because he was frightened by the suspicions of Orestes: he was afraid that Orestes would inform Attila of his solitary dinner with Chrysaphius. At any rate, at the earliest possible opportunity, he had found means to let his master know of the plot to take his life and of the amount of money which he himself was to receive from the eunuch. He had also discovered the contents of the Imperial letter which Maximinus was carrying to Attila, but the manner in which he had done this must remain a mystery.²

When the company arrived at Naissus, the Roman officials had an opportunity of seeing for themselves the results of nomadic warfare. The city was desolated. The buildings, with which Constantine had once adorned his birthplace,³ had been wrecked and lay in masses of rubble on the ground. The population had disappeared, save for a few sick persons who lingered on in the Christian hostels⁴ of the town. Six years had passed since the Huns had captured Naissus, but no effort had yet been made to bring back life to the ruins. The ambassador and his party did not even try to pitch their tents inside the wall, and, since the river bank immediately outside it was covered

¹ Priscus, pp. 290. 5-291. 9.

² Anon. Vales. 2.

³ *Ib.*, p. 294. 9-16.

⁴ Cf. *CQ.* *ib.*, p. 63.

with the bones of those who had been slain in the fighting, they went upstream a short distance until they found a clear space where they might encamp.¹ On the following day they fell in with Agintheus, the Master of the Soldiers in Illyricum, and instructed him to hand over five of the seventeen fugitives of whose retention Attila had complained and whom the Master had in his possession. Agintheus handed them over with a few kind words to them on parting.

The next day the party reached the Danube and were ferried across in boats hewn out of tree-trunks, in company with a number of Huns whom they had encountered earlier in the day. These had been making preparations for Attila to cross the river and hunt in the territories which he had newly acquired on the southern bank. On a plain seventy stades beyond the great river the Romans were ordered to halt until some of the Huns, who were in attendance on Edeco, could go on ahead and announce the ambassador's arrival to Attila. Late that same evening, as they sat eating their dinner, they heard the sound of horses approaching, and two Huns galloped up and told them to prepare to meet Attila. The Romans invited them to share their meal, and the two Huns dismounted and did so. The next day they guided them towards Attila's encampment, and the Romans, standing on a hill, saw a cloud of Hun tents pitched on a plain below. But when they prepared to encamp where they were, for it was already the ninth hour of the day, the two Huns checked them: they could not pitch their tents on a hill, they said, when the tents of Attila lay on the plain beneath. The Romans therefore went down to the plain, but before they could encamp they were met by Edeco, Orestes, Scotta, and others of the great lieutenants of Attila, who asked them roughly what they hoped to achieve by their mission. The Romans were astonished at the blunt question and looked at each other in silence.² The Huns became insistent and pressed their question with an angry clamour. Maximinus answered that the Emperor had instructed him to speak to Attila and to no one else. Scotta angrily shouted that Attila himself had ordered them to ask the question: otherwise they would not have troubled to come at all. Maximinus replied that this was no

¹ Priscus, p. 291. 9-15.

² *Ib.*, p. 292. 32 ἡμῶν δὲ τὴν ὀλιγον ἀποθανυσθέντων ἐρώτησιν καὶ ἐς ἀλλήλους δρώντων.

way to treat an official envoy: no ambassador could be expected to answer questions about the purpose of his mission if he never even saw the man with whom he had come to negotiate. The Huns themselves were very well aware of this, he said, for they had often come on embassies to the Emperor and so were familiar with diplomatic usages. He insisted on fair treatment and declared that on no other terms would he mention the purpose of his mission.¹

His firm words silenced the Huns, who mounted their horses and rode back to their master. Shortly afterwards they returned and Bigilas may have been momentarily disturbed to notice that Edeco was no longer with them. To the amazement of Maximinus and Priscus, the Huns now proceeded to recite to them the precise instructions which the government had given to Maximinus and the exact contents of Theodosius' letter, and then roughly ordered them to go back to the Roman frontier unless they had something further to say. The ambassador and his friend were quite unable to understand how the Huns had been able to find out the secret decisions of the Emperor. They decided, however, that they must persist in refusing to discuss the purpose of their mission, and Maximinus therefore replied that, whether his reasons for coming were such as they had described or not, he would speak of them to no one save Attila. The Huns curtly ordered him and his party to be gone.²

There was nothing for it but to prepare for the return, and while Maximinus gave instructions to his servants, Bigilas turned on him and abused him for making such a reply to the Huns; it would have been far better to tell them a lie than to return with his mission unachieved. 'If I had a chance of speaking to Attila,' said he, 'I could easily have persuaded him to abandon his dispute with the Romans. I became a friend of his,' he added, little knowing the truth, 'when I was serving on Anatolius' embassy.' Evidently it had not yet occurred to him that Edeco might have betrayed him.³ The packs were now strapped to the horses; for, although night was falling, Maximinus thought it best to go at once. But before a start could be made, some Huns whom they had not seen before rode up and, saying that Attila would allow them to remain until morning, produced an ox and some fish which, they said, were gifts from

¹ *Ib.*, pp. 291. 15-293. 13.

² *Ib.*, p. 293. 13-26.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 293. 26-294. 1.

their master. The Romans consequently expected better treatment on the morrow, but they were disappointed. The same Huns returned and declared that unless they had something to say beyond what Attila already knew, they must depart. The Romans made no answer and prepared for the journey. Bigilas protested again. He insisted that Maximinus should say that in fact he *had* other things to speak of; but this the ambassador, who was in great dejection, refused to do.¹

Priscus noticed his friend's melancholy and decided to act on his own initiative in an effort to break the deadlock. Taking aside Rusticius, who knew the Hun language (p. 99 above), he approached Scotta and promised him very considerable gifts from Maximinus' store if he would arrange an interview between his master and the Roman ambassador. He insisted on the advantages which a peace settlement would bring to Scotta, and ended by saying that he had heard a report to the effect that Scotta had great influence with Attila, but that he could not fully persuade himself of the truth of this report unless he saw him exercise his influence in practice. Scotta resented the slur on his authority, and, interrupting Priscus angrily, declared that no one in the camp had greater influence with Attila than he, and, to prove his words, mounted his horse and galloped off. Priscus hurried back to Maximinus, whom he found lying disconsolately on the grass and talking to Bigilas. As soon as he heard what Priscus had done, the ambassador jumped up with a word of gratitude for his initiative and shouted to his servants, who were already setting off with the pack-horses, to come back. Shortly afterwards Scotta returned and told them to come to Attila's tent.²

A throng of guards stood outside their master's tent, but Maximinus and his friend were admitted at once, and found Attila sitting on a wooden chair. When Maximinus strode forward with Bigilas, Priscus and one or two others who had come with him stood at a respectful distance, and the historian had his first opportunity of studying the Hun leader. He observed the short, squat body and the huge face, with its small, deep-set eyes, and found little to admire in the flat nose and the few straggling hairs which took the place of a beard.³ As he watched, Maximinus greeted the barbarian, handing him the

¹ Priscus, p. 294. 17-31.

² *Ib.*, pp. 294. 31-296. 3.

³ Jordanes, *Get.* xxxv. 182.

Emperor's letter and declaring that Theodosius prayed for the well-being of the king and his men. Attila darkly replied that the Romans would have the same fate as they wished him to have; but Maximinus missed the point of this salutation, for he still knew nothing of the murder plot. Before he could say more, Attila turned in anger towards Bigilas, and, calling him a shameless beast, asked him why he had come when he knew that it had been agreed in Anatolius' treaty that no Roman ambassadors should be sent out until all the fugitives had been handed back to the Huns. Bigilas replied that there were no more fugitives in the hands of the Romans: they had all been surrendered now. Attila's anger grew visibly. With the utmost abuse of Bigilas, he shouted that he would have had him impaled and flung out as food for the birds, were it not that he was protected by the rank of ambassador. He insisted that there were still many Hun fugitives in the Roman Empire, and he called to his secretaries to read out their names. When this had been done, he ordered Bigilas to leave, and said that he would send Esla, Rua's old ambassador, to Constantinople with him in order to negotiate a final settlement on all the Huns who had deserted since the time when Actius' son Carpilio had been a hostage among the Huns. He could not allow his slaves, as he called them,¹ to enlist in the Roman army and fight against him—though, he added grimly, it was not likely that they would be of much service to the Romans if he went to war again, as he most certainly would do if the deserters were not restored. He then dismissed his audience, telling Maximinus not to leave his dominions until he had received an answer to the Emperor's letter. So ended the first interview with Attila: apart from his unfortunate greeting at the beginning, the ambassador had said nothing whatever.²

Back in their tent, the Romans reviewed the conversation. Bigilas confessed himself quite unable to understand why Attila had abused him so bitterly, for he had been exceedingly mild and calm when they had met in Anatolius' company. Priscus suggested that Attila must have heard of his unfortunate remark at the dinner at Sardica, when he had called Theodosius a god and the Hun a mere man. Maximinus also thought this a likely explanation, but Bigilas remained unsatisfied. As they talked,

¹ Priscus, p. 297. 2 τοὺς σφετέρους θεράποντας.

² *Ib.*, pp. 296. 4-297. 13.

Edeco appeared in the doorway of the tent and called Bigilas outside. Still pretending to have kept the secret, he told the interpreter to bring out from Constantinople the 50 lb. of gold which it had been agreed that he should distribute to his followers. He then went away, and Bigilas, going back into the tent, said that Edeco had told him that he, too, had been the victim of Attila's rage in the matter of the fugitives. Some Huns arrived from Attila at this moment and said that the Romans were to buy nothing when in Hun territory except food—it will be remembered that Roman ambassadors had to buy their own food (p. 104 above)—until all points of difference had been settled between their government and Attila. This was a trap for Bigilas. If, before going back to Constantinople with Esla, he knew that he could buy nothing when in Hun territory, how would he be able to explain away the 50 lb. of gold which he was to bring out to Edeco? The Huns further said that Maximinus was to wait in Attila's dominions until Onegesius returned to camp.¹ This Onegesius, a brother of Scotta,² was the chief lieutenant of Attila, and, after him, the most powerful man in the empire of the Huns.³ He was at present absent from the camp, having gone away to install Attila's eldest son Ellac as governor of the Acatziri, who had been subjected the year before. While Maximinus waited for his return, Bigilas set off for Constantinople, still convinced that the plot to murder Attila would succeed if only he could bring back the 50 lb. of gold.⁴

On the following day the Huns struck camp and moved northward. The Roman ambassadors did not travel with the main body of their hosts, but were guided by a different route, for Attila wished to visit a certain village where he intended marrying the daughter of one Eskam, of whom we know nothing.⁵ The Romans accordingly travelled on over a great plain and crossed several navigable rivers which cannot now be identified.⁶ They came to many villages on their journey, passed a lake,

¹ Priscus, pp. 297. 13–298. 25.

² *Ib.*, p. 295. 15.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 303. 24. See Appendix G.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 298. 23–7; p. 299. 18–22.

⁵ The old view (e.g. Herbert, p. 381 n.) that ἑσκάμ in Priscus, p. 299. 30, is accusative and that Attila married *his own* daughter is impossible: this would not have been κατὰ νόμον τῶν Σακκῶν, as Priscus puts it, a phrase in which he refers simply to the polygamy practised by the Huns, or at any rate by their rulers.

⁶ See Appendix F.

where they almost lost all their possessions in a violent storm which broke over them at night, and were entertained in a village ruled over by a woman—one of the wives of Bleda—who offered them, not only food, but also comely women; the latter they refused. In return for her hospitality they presented the lady with gifts of three silver goblets, some furs, a quantity of pepper from India,¹ dates, and other edibles which the Huns prized. Seven days later they were instructed by their guides to halt at a village so as to allow Attila's cavalcade to pass on to the road ahead of them. In this village they fell in with some West Roman ambassadors, who were also trying to secure an interview with the Hun leader. In a later chapter we shall consider the purpose of this Western embassy; but here we must note that the envoys included Romulus, the father-in-law of Attila's lieutenant Orestes, who, as we saw, was a Roman of Pannonia and was later to become the father of Romulus Augustulus. They also included Promotus, governor of the province of Noricum, for, despite the storms of the early years of the century, Noricum was still part of the Western Empire, as it long continued to be.² They had with them an army officer called Romanus, and Tatulus, Orestes' father, who was making the journey in order to see his son, and finally a certain Constantius, whom Aetius had sent to Attila to act as his secretary.³

The East and West Romans joined company, and, when Attila had passed on to the road ahead of them, travelled on together, crossing many rivers, and at last reaching the headquarters of the nomads. This was a village larger than any through which they had yet travelled. It stood in the midst of a wide, treeless, and stoneless plain where cavalry could manœuvre freely and where no one could hope to surprise it. Inside the village, Attila's houses were more elaborately constructed than the rest, and were built of planed and polished boards. They stood on a natural mound and were enclosed in a wooden palisade ornamented with wooden towers. This

¹ The northern barbarians prized pepper very highly, and in his treaty with the Romans in 408 Alaric demanded 3,000 lb. of it, Zosimus, v. 41. 4.

² Priscus, p. 301. 29 τῆς Νορικῶν ἐρχων χώρας, Eugippius, *Vita S. Severini*, 20, &c.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 299. 23–302. 6. On Constantius see below, p. 127. There is little likelihood in the view of Gibbon, iii, p. 436, and Hodgkin, p. 73, that Attila arranged this meeting for scenic effect, so that he 'might enjoy the proud satisfaction of receiving, in the same camp, the ambassadors of the Eastern and Western Empires'.

palisade, despite its towers, was not intended as a military defence—in fact, it would merely hinder the movements of the nomads' cavalry—but was designed only for ornament. At some distance from Attila's houses, but still inside the village, stood another palisade, also of wood, but without the decorative towers. This second palisade encircled the buildings of Onegesius, the most powerful of the *λογάδες*. His buildings included one which immediately struck the eye of the Romans, for it was built of stone and was, in fact, a bath-house. The stone had been brought with immense trouble from the Roman province of Pannonia, for there was none to be found in the immediate neighbourhood of the village, and the bath-house had been erected by an architect who had been among the prisoners taken when the great city of Sirmium had fallen in the campaign of 443. He had hoped to gain his freedom by constructing this building for Onegesius, but, in fact, he had only succeeded in ensuring his continued slavery among the barbarians, for Onegesius, highly pleased with his craftsmanship, had now made him his bath-man, and the architect still waited upon him and his friends as they enjoyed their baths. The road which led into the village ran straight through Onegesius' palisade, which therefore had two entries, and continued through the village for a considerable distance before it reached the huts of Attila. The huts of the more humble members of the community were probably made, as Gibbon (iii, p. 437) suggested, of mud or straw, since there was no timber or stone in the vicinity.¹

The Romans were present when Attila entered this village. He rode into it between several lines of barbarian girls standing beneath canopies of fine, white linen, held over their heads by other Hun women. The girls walked beside Attila's horse singing songs in the Hun language. When Attila was in the midst of Onegesius' buildings on the road to his own enclosure, Onegesius' wife came forward with her handmaids and offered him dainties to eat and a silver goblet of wine. To honour the wife of his lieutenant, Attila accepted the gifts, and tasted the food and wine while still sitting on his horse, and then rode on

¹ Priscus, pp. 303. 12–304. 2. The view of Attila's 'camp' adopted here is that suggested in *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, lkv, 1945, pp. 112–15: see also Bibliography IV. Those scholars who suppose that the whole village was surrounded by a palisade (for which there is no evidence in Priscus) have mistaken the nature of Hunnic warfare.

towards his own palisade. The Romans watched him depart, but themselves remained among the houses of Onegesius, who had now returned from his mission among the Acatziri. He had, in fact, failed to install Ellac as their king, for on the journey to their territory the young man had chanced to slip and break his right wrist. Onegesius was at present making his report to his master, and it was his wife who entertained the Roman ambassador and his party. After they had been refreshed the Romans pitched their tents not far outside Attila's palisade, so as to be close at hand in case he should call for them.¹

The next day Maximinus sent Priscus to Onegesius to give him the gifts which the Emperor had sent for him, and to learn when he might be interviewed. Priscus found the gates of Onegesius' palisade closed, and, as he waited outside, he was surprised to be greeted in Greek by a stranger whose appearance suggested that he was a Hun. Priscus had already noticed that Hunnic and Gothic were the usual languages in the camp, although those of the barbarians who had had dealings with the West Romans had picked up some Latin.² Greek, on the other hand, was heard only from the lips of the prisoners whom the Huns had carried away from Thrace and Illyricum. Yet this man, who had just said 'χαίρε' to him, did not look like one of the prisoners, who were easily recognizable from their tattered clothing and squalid appearance. The man before him, on the contrary, appeared to be one of the ruling Huns, with his neat dress and his peculiarly Hunnic hair-style.³ It was with some curiosity then that Priscus asked him who he was and how he had come to the dominions of the Huns and adopted their way of life. The man asked him why he wanted to know. Priscus confessed that his curiosity had been aroused by hearing the Greek language in such an unexpected place. The stranger laughed. He admitted that he came from Greece;⁴ but the conversation which ensued was of such extreme interest, and the report of it in the pages of Priscus throws so much light on

¹ Priscus, pp. 304. 2-305. 3.

² *Ib.*, p. 305. 19, does not warrant us to follow Alföldi, *Menschen die Geschichte machten*, p. 231, and others, in believing that Latin was, with Hunnic and Gothic, a third 'Umgangssprache' in the camp.

³ On this see Procopius, *HA.* vii, p. 44 f., Haury.

⁴ Priscus, p. 305. 32 τότε ἀὶ γὰρ εἶπεν ὁ Γραικὸς μὲν εἶναι τὸ γένος. The word Γραικός here means a native of Greece proper.

so many relevant issues, that we must reserve it for separate discussion later on.¹

When at last the gates of Onegesius' palisade were opened, Priscus hurried in, and, after a slight delay, was introduced to Onegesius himself. The Hun accepted the gifts and promised to come to Maximinus at once. When he entered the Roman ambassador's tent he thanked him immediately for the presents and asked him of what service he could be. In the name of Theodosius, Maximinus invited him to come to Constantinople to discuss all outstanding questions with officials of the Roman government. If he could arrange a settlement, said the ambassador, he would bring great blessings on himself and his family, and he and his children for ever would be the friends of the Roman Emperor. Onegesius asked if Maximinus were suggesting that he should betray his master Attila and abandon his life among the Huns, and his wives and children. If so, he declared in advance that he would not do so, for it was better to be a slave with Attila than a rich man among the Romans. With these words he withdrew. He was even less corruptible than Edeco.²

The following day Priscus was sent to bring gifts to Attila's wife Hereca,³ the mother of Ellac, and thus had an opportunity of inspecting the buildings inside Attila's palisade. He made his way through a throng of Huns into Hereca's tent, and found her reclining on a soft rug laid on the felt with which the floor was covered. Her handmaids sat on the ground in front of her, embroidering linen with threads of many colours to serve as clothing for some of the Huns. Priscus' interview was brief. He merely approached, greeted Hereca, presented his gifts, and withdrew. Outside, he continued his inspection of the buildings, hoping that he might see Onegesius, who was again in conference with Attila, and find out if it was worth Maximinus' while to stay in the camp any longer.⁴ He wandered about as he pleased, for Attila's guards now knew him by sight and did not interfere with him. At last he saw a great throng of Huns all running towards one point with a confused clamour: Attila himself had walked out of his hut, and Priscus had another

¹ Priscus, p. 305. 12-32: see below, pp. 184 ff.

² *Ib.*, pp. 309. 12-310. 26.

³ On the form of her name, which is printed as *Κρεκα* in the editions, see J. Markwart, p. 89, n. 1.

⁴ Priscus, p. 312. 5 ff.

opportunity of studying him. He noticed his arrogant walk and his insolent glance from side to side, as he listened to the complaints and disputes of his followers who were crowding around him, and he gave them his rough justice on the spur of the moment as he stood among them at the door of his hut. But he soon went inside again, and Priscus learnt that he was about to hear an embassy from some barbarian people which had recently arrived in the village.¹

Priscus still waited for Onegesius, and whiled away his time chatting to the West Roman envoys, who approached him as he lingered. They asked him whether Maximinus had been dismissed from the village or was compelled to stay longer. Priscus replied that this was precisely what he hoped to find out from Onegesius. The conversation turned to the violent temperament of Attila. Romulus, the leader of the West Romans and a man for whose judgement Priscus clearly had the utmost respect, declared that Attila would no longer listen to any plea, however just, unless he considered that it would conduce to his own profit. No one, he said, who had ever ruled Scythia—or indeed anywhere else—had achieved so much in so short a time, and it was likely that, in order to increase his power, he would now attack Persia. Someone interrupted to ask how he would be able to reach Persia, and Romulus recalled the history of Basich and Cursich to show that that country was by no means inaccessible to the Huns (p. 30 f. above). Attila, he thought, would have very little trouble in passing over the same route and would easily succeed in reducing Persia to a tributary state. Priscus and one or two others expressed the hope that Attila would, in fact, turn against the Persians and thereby give the Romans some respite, but Constantiolus, another of the West Romans, declared that, if Persia were to collapse, the outlook for the Roman Empire would be very black, for he doubted if Attila would allow them to maintain an independent existence once Persia had fallen. Moreover, the recent discovery of the sword of the war-god seemed to portend an immediate increase of his power.²

At last Onegesius came out. The Romans approached him

¹ *Ib.*, pp. 310. 26–311. 29; with p. 311. 24 cf. *Jordanes, Get.* xxxv. 182 'erat [sc. Attila] namque superbus incessu huc atque illuc circumferens oculos ut elati potentia ipso quoque motu corporis appareret'.

² *Priscus*, pp. 311. 30–314. 16. On this sword see p. 89 above. Constantiolus must have been a pagan.

and tried to tell him their business, but he merely spoke to some of the Huns around him. Then, turning to Priscus, he reopened the question of the East Romans sending an ambassador of consular rank: he told Priscus to go to Maximinus and find out which consular would be likely to be sent. Priscus went and brought back the message that the Roman government would like Onegesius to visit Constantinople, but, if that were impossible, they would send any ambassador the Huns might choose. Onegesius evidently considered this concession to be of the utmost importance. He at once had Maximinus summoned and brought him to Attila. Priscus was not invited to accompany them, but when Maximinus returned he said that Attila had requested the presence of Nomus or Anatolius or Senator, all of whom had negotiated with him earlier, as we have seen. He had declared with some emphasis that he would be prepared to receive no others than these three, and that war would be the answer to any quibbling. Maximinus gave this account of the interview to Priscus as they walked back to their tent. When they arrived there, Tatulus, the father of Orestes, joined them with the news that Attila required their presence at a banquet that evening.¹

The two Romans, with their companions from the Western Empire, stood upon the threshold of the banquetting-hall inside Attila's palisade at the appointed time, the ninth hour. According to the Hun custom, they were given a drink before they sat down, and, when they were seated, Priscus had an opportunity of studying the banquetting-hall. Along both sides stood the chairs upon which the Huns and their guests sat, and out in the middle of the room was the couch of Attila, facing the door through which they had entered. Behind him was another couch, but this was unoccupied, and Priscus does not appear to have been able to discover its purpose. Behind this again were a few steps leading up to a bed on a raised dais, and this bed was screened off with embroidered linen curtains from the rest of the room. The truth is, despite the doubts of some scholars, that the Hun lord slept in his dining-room.²

The chair directly to the right of Attila was the seat of honour, and this was now occupied by Berichus, one of Attila's chief subordinates. We might have expected Onegesius to occupy it,

¹ Priscus, pp. 314. 17-315. 10.

² *Ib.*, p. 315. 11-25: see *JHS*. l.c.

for we are explicitly told that, after Attila, he was the most powerful man in the camp;¹ but, in fact, he was seated at Berichus' right hand. The Romans had to be content with the place of second honour, directly on Attila's left. Two of his sons sat immediately in front of him with their eyes fixed on the ground in fear of their father. When all were seated, a wine-bearer entered and handed a goblet of wine to Attila. He took it and toasted Berichus, who at once rose to his feet, for it was the custom that the person toasted thus by Attila should not resume his seat until he had either tasted the wine or drunk it outright and handed the goblet back to the wine-bearer. When Berichus had sat down again, each of the other guests, including the Romans, honoured Attila likewise: the Hun saluted them, they took the goblet, and tasted the wine. When this ceremony had been completed, tables were brought in—one to every three or four of the guests, in the Roman fashion—loaded with meat, bread, and dainties, ὄψα, served on silver platters, the plunder of some Roman city. It seemed a very worthy banquet to the Romans, but they noticed that Attila himself was served off wooden plates and ate only meat. His drinking-cup was of wood, though his followers drank from looted silver and gold. He alone had no sword girt to his side, and his shoes were not studded with gold or precious stones like those of his followers.² When the food was finished, further quantities were brought in, and the salutations of Attila were repeated. What followed may be described in Priscus' own words:

'When evening began to draw in, torches were lighted, and two barbarians came forward in front of Attila and sang songs which they had composed, hymning his victories and his great deeds in war. And the banqueters gazed at them, and some were rejoiced at the songs, others became excited at heart when they remembered the wars, but others broke into tears—those whose bodies were weakened by time and whose spirit was compelled to be at rest.'³

The tension was broken. When the singers had ended, a madman was brought in, speaking wild, unintelligible words that drew shouts of laughter from the feasters.⁴ Then came Bleda's

¹ Priscus, p. 303. 24.

² On the 'polychrome' style of decoration described by Priscus, p. 316. 32, see Alföldi, *Germania*, xvi, 1932, p. 136, and *Funde*, pp. 12 ff., who states that it was very widespread in Europe at this time; but we need not believe that it was the work of the Huns themselves.

³ Priscus, pp. 315. 25–317. 20: see Appendix A.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 317. 20–3.

buffoon Zerco. Bleda had given him the wife he had so much desired, but, after Bleda's murder, Attila had presented the dwarf to Aetius, who had in turn given him to Aspar. He had now come back to the Huns, for he had been forced to leave his wife behind when he had gone to the West. At Edeco's suggestion he had approached Attila directly: the lord had angrily rejected his plea. But Zerco hoped that he would change his mind, if only he could amuse him. He succeeded in raising loud shouts of applause from the other Huns by means of his curious dress and his quaint mixture of the Latin, Gothic, and Hunnic languages. The hall re-echoed with peals of laughter; but throughout it all Attila remained indifferent. His face was sullen and unsmiling. He neither moved nor spoke, until suddenly the door of the hall was opened and Ernac, the youngest of his sons, stood on the threshold. The young man walked forward and stood beside his father. With the shouts and laughter of the banqueters ringing in his ears, Priscus watched the scene intently. He saw Attila's hard eyes soften, as he turned to his son and stroked his cheek.

The Roman was astonished at this hint of tenderness, for Attila had treated his other sons with unmistakable contempt. His curiosity induced him to turn to the Hun sitting beside him, who, he had discovered, understood Latin. He asked him the meaning of what they had just witnessed. The barbarian first swore him to secrecy, and then explained that soothsayers had informed Attila that his family would fall from its greatness, but would be restored by this young man, Ernac, the youngest of his sons.¹

The banquet continued all night, but the Romans withdrew long before it was over, because, according to Priscus, they did not wish to persist with the drinking for long.²

The following morning they went to Onegesius and told him frankly that they felt themselves to be wasting their time and wished to be allowed to depart. Permission to go was granted at once, for the Romans had given way on the question of the personnel of their next embassy, and Onegesius, after conferring with the other *λογάδες*, composed a letter to Theodosius, which was written down by Rusticius. That day the Romans were entertained by Attila's wife Hereca in company with some of

¹ Priscus, pp. 317. 23-318. 17.

² *Ib.*, p. 318. 18 ἐπὶ πολὺ μὴ βουλευθέντες τῷ πότῳ προσκαρτερεῖν.

the *λογέταις*, and at the end of the entertainment each of the Huns present handed a goblet of wine to the Romans, and as they drank it embraced and kissed them. On the following evening Attila entertained them again at a banquet similar to the first one. It passed off without incident, but it was noticed that the place of honour at Attila's right hand was now occupied, not by Berichus, but by Attila's paternal uncle Oëbarsius. We do not know why Oëbarsius had not reigned with his brothers Rua, Octar, and Mundiuch, but his survival until 449 suggests that he was considerably younger than they. At any rate, on this occasion Attila spoke to Maximinus throughout the meal and pressed the claims of his Roman secretary Constantius to the hand of a wealthy woman of Constantinople, the daughter of one Saturninus. The conversation was a long and intricate one, and cannot but have been of extreme tedium to Maximinus.¹

Three days later the Romans were presented with gifts and set out on the long journey to Constantinople. Attila had appointed Berichus to travel with them in order to confer with the Emperor's officials and to collect the customary gifts. The journey was not uninformative. In one village they came to they found that a 'Scythian' spy, sent out from Roman territory to secure information about the Huns, had just been captured and on Attila's orders was about to be impaled. On the following day they passed through other villages and saw two slaves of the Huns with their hands tied behind their backs, charged with having killed their masters, who had taken them prisoner in war. These two were crucified. While the Romans were still in Hun territory, they found Berichus a quiet but sociable companion. But when they crossed the Danube his behaviour changed after a dispute about their servants. When they had departed from the Hun encampment Attila had instructed each of his *λογέταις* to present the Roman ambassador with a horse, and Berichus had done so with the others. But he now demanded the return of his horse, and refused to ride beside his companions or to share their meals. When they arrived at Adrianople the Romans taxed him with his change of attitude, told him that they had done him no wrong, and invited him to eat with them. But it was only at Constantinople that he explained the reason for his anger. It appears that Maximinus had

¹ *Ib.*, pp. 318. 20-320. 20.

told him that the Germanic commanders of the East Roman army were in disgrace and that Aspar and Areobindus had no longer any influence with the Emperor. What reason Berichus found in this for his anger we do not know.¹ At any rate, the party returned safely by a different route from that by which they had gone out, and reached the capital after passing through Philippopolis and Adrianople.² They had conducted their impossibly difficult mission with tact, firmness, and dignity.

IV

As Maximinus and Priscus rode along the highway from Philippopolis to Adrianople they met Bigilas the interpreter, who was now returning to Attila's chief village with the 50 lb. of gold by means of which he hoped to induce Edeco's men to murder Attila. After a few questions as to what had happened after he had left the encampment, the interpreter passed on, still without an inkling that the plot had long ago been betrayed and that he was entering the trap which had been laid for him.

In company with the 50 lb. of gold he eventually reached Attila and was arrested at once. The money was discovered and taken from him, and he was led to Attila, who asked him why he was carrying so large a sum. He had his answer ready. He was bringing this money, he said, so as to buy food for himself and his servants, and to purchase replacements if any of his horses or pack-animals should be worn out by the long journey. Furthermore, he declared that many persons in the Empire, whose relatives had been captured in the recent war, had given him money with the request that he should ransom their friends if he could. 'You foul beast,' roared Attila, 'no quibbles will save you from justice; you have no excuse for escaping your punishment, for your money is far too much for your expenses and for the horses and pack-animals that you propose to buy, and for the ransoming of prisoners which I forbade when you came here with Maximinus' (p. 110 above). Bigilas had made the mistake of bringing his young son with him on this second journey to the Huns. When Attila had finished speaking he ordered this son to be stabbed with a sword if his father would not say to whom he was bringing the money and for what purpose. The boy was brought forward, and Bigilas broke down. With tears

¹ Priscus, pp. 320, 21-322, 5: this remark of Maximinus is discussed in *Hermathena*, lxxviii, 1946, pp. 22 ff.

² Priscus, p. 321, 21.

and lamentations he shouted out that they should direct the sword towards himself, and not at the young lad who had done them no harm. Then, without hesitation, he told the whole story of the plot hatched between Edeco, Chrysaphius, and the Emperor, and begged insistently that he himself should be slain and the boy set free. Attila knew from what Edeco had already told him that Bigilas was telling the truth at last. He ordered him to be kept in chains until his son should go back to Constantinople accompanied by Orestes and Esla, and bring out an additional 50 lb. of gold as his ransom.¹ He instructed Orestes to carry around his neck the purse, in which Bigilas had brought the original 50 lb. of gold, and to show it to the Emperor and Chrysaphius and ask them if they recognized it. Esla was to tell Theodosius that Arcadius, the Emperor's father, had been a noble man, and that Mundiuch, Attila's father, had been noble also: but whereas Attila had preserved the generous qualities of his father, Theodosius had fallen away and had become Attila's slave and paid him a tribute of money. He did not act justly towards his master, but attacked him secretly, like a wicked slave. He would only be forgiven, the message concluded, if Chrysaphius were delivered over to the Huns for punishment.²

This last demand was particularly embarrassing in that another of Chrysaphius' enemies was demanding his life as the price of peace at this very time. We have seen that Zeno the Isaurian had defended Constantinople in the crisis of 447 (p. 92 above). Zeno was rewarded for the defence of the capital with the consulship for 448, and in 449 we find him holding the powerful office of Master of the Soldiers in the East. He now felt himself strong enough to challenge his most powerful opponent under the Emperor, the eunuch Chrysaphius. It will be recalled that throughout his second banquet Attila had insisted to Maximinus that his Roman secretary Constantius must obtain in marriage the wealthy daughter of a Roman called Saturninus. This Constantius had come to Constantinople in the spring of 449 with Edeco and Orestes, and Theodosius had agreed to give him Saturninus' daughter. But before the bargain could be carried into effect Zeno had stepped in, carried the lady away from the fortress in which she was confined, and married her off to one of his henchmen called Rufus. Constantius

¹ *Ib.*, pp. 320. 21-323. 14.

² *Ib.*, pp. 325. 29-326. 17.

had complained bitterly to Attila of the abduction of his bride and demanded that the Emperor should be compelled to give him another, who would bring him as great a dowry as that of Saturninus' daughter.¹ Attila accordingly had insisted to Maximinus during the banquet that Constantius must be provided with a wife. He went on to say that, if the Emperor was not strong enough to rescue Saturninus' daughter from Zeno, he would himself be willing to make an alliance with Theodosius aimed at the destruction of Zeno. It is calamitous that we know so little of this extraordinary proposal, which, if Theodosius had been so rash as to accept it, might have led to Attila's conducting a campaign *inside* the Eastern Empire against the forces of the Master of the Soldiers in the East.²

Zeno's wanton interference in Chrysaphius' negotiations with Attila—which were difficult and dangerous already—seems to have been due to nothing else than a desire to embarrass the eunuch. At any rate, Theodosius angrily blighted the happiness of Rufus by confiscating the property of his newly won bride. Zeno concluded, doubtless correctly, that the hand of Chrysaphius was behind this move, and he therefore followed the example of his enemy Attila by demanding the death of the eunuch, against whom all his machinations appear to have been directed.³

Faced with this double threat, from the Huns without and the Isaurians within, Chrysaphius decided to settle with the stronger of his enemies first. Attila had made it clear to Maximinus (p. 116 above) that in future he would only be prepared to negotiate with either Anatolius or Nomus or Senator, a choice of which we shall examine the significance in a later chapter. The Roman government had conceded the point, and Chrysaphius now decided to send him Anatolius and Nomus. His instructions to them were that they should calm Attila's anger and induce him to keep the peace on the conditions negotiated in 448; in return they were to promise that Constantius should receive a wife no less noble and wealthy than the daughter of Saturninus. In connexion with this last matter they were instructed to draw Attila's attention to the fact that among the Romans it was not lawful to marry a woman against her will—presumably the point required explanation because the contrary was the case

¹ Priscus, pp. 319. 27–320. 13.

² *Ib.*, p. 326. 19–26.

³ *Ib.*, p. 326. 17 ff.

among the Huns. Further, Chrysaphius personally sent a sum of gold to Attila to induce him to forget his demand for his life.¹

In the spring of 450 Anatolius and Nomus set out accompanied by the son of Bigilas, who was bringing the extra 50 lb. of gold necessary to redeem his father. They crossed the Danube into Hun territory, and to spare them the fatigue of the long journey Attila came southwards as far as the unknown river Drecon to meet them; he was evidently pleased that these two men had been chosen to come to him. True, he spoke to them arrogantly enough when they first met, but soon their rich gifts and soft words so calmed him that the ambassadors were able to win such a resounding diplomatic success as was rarely obtained by a Roman government. They induced Attila to swear an oath to maintain the peace on the conditions laid down in the treaty of 448. This alone meant that they had achieved what Chrysaphius had ordered them to accomplish. They further induced Attila to swear that he would trouble Theodosius no more with the charge of receiving fugitives from the Hunnic empire, unless the Roman government should admit any in the future. But their greatest success lay in persuading Attila to retire from the whole strip of territory south of the Danube which in 448 he had ordered the Romans to evacuate completely. Not content with these major successes, Anatolius and Nomus also saw to it that Bigilas was released. The demand for Chrysaphius' life was withdrawn, and with rare tact neither side appears to have mentioned the late murder plot. Finally, as a special and personal favour to the two Romans, Attila agreed to set free the majority of his Roman prisoners without any ransom whatever. Before the ambassadors left him he presented them with some horses and a quantity of the skins and furs which the Hun rulers liked to wear. Constantius accompanied them on their homeward journey in order to receive his bride, and Theodosius selected for him a rich and nobly born lady, the widow of a son of that Plintha who had signed the Treaty of Margus with the Huns in 435. Her husband had died after a successful campaign in Cyrene, and she did not see fit to reject the Emperor's persuasions that she should marry Constantius.²

The third treaty negotiated by Anatolius was a brilliant

¹ *Ib.*, frag. 13.

² *Ib.*, pp. 327. 22-328. 22.

success for the East Roman government, although, as we shall see, circumstances were more favourable to them than they probably knew. Many an inhabitant of the Eastern Empire must have been convinced in the early summer months of 450 that peace on the northern frontier was now assured, and such convictions must have been confirmed when Attila's new plans were announced in June. But on 26 July, when hunting near the river Lycus not far from his capital, the Emperor Theodosius fell from his horse and injured his spine. Two days later, on 28 July, he was dead.¹

¹ Malalas, xiv, p. 366.

VI

THE DEFEATS OF ATTILA AND THE COLLAPSE OF HIS EMPIRE

OUR narrative has now carried us through the major fragments of Priscus, and little remains of the rest of his work to illuminate the subsequent movements of the Huns. But the last episodes in Attila's life were also the most striking, and it is calamitous that, in proportion as our curiosity grows, so his career is more and more closely enfolded in the gloom of the Dark Ages. It may be, as we have suggested (p. 63 above), that Priscus knew little about the far West; yet nowhere in our study shall we have more cause than here to deplore the loss of his *Byzantine History*. For the student of the mid-fifth century there can be no substitute for Priscus.

I

Attila's relations with the West during the years which followed the defeat of Litorius at Toulouse in 439 are a subject of the utmost obscurity. It is certain, however, that after the massacre of Litorius' Huns he supplied Aetius with no further army; and the cause of the landlords in Gaul therefore suffered several reverses. In the thirties of the century the Burgundians, the Visigoths, and the Bagaudae of the *tractus Armoricanus* had been their chief foes, and all three continued to occupy Aetius' attention in the forties. He settled the remnants of the Burgundians in Savoy in 443, but we know nothing of the political and social significance of that action. The rôles played by the Visigoths and the Bagaudae, although desperately obscure, must occupy us here, for both figured in the calculations of Attila on the eve of his march westwards. The scantiness of our information prevents us from analysing their relations with the Huns in any detail: what must be said must perforce be said briefly.

It will be remembered that in 433 Aetius had fled to the Huns because of the attacks made on his life by the Empress Placidia and by Sebastian, the son-in-law and successor of his old enemy Boniface (p 63 f. above). This Sebastian had had a chequered career in the meantime, but, although he was now exiled from

Rome and from Constantinople alike, his hostility towards Aetius had never relented. When we find the Visigothic king Theodoric entertaining him at his court towards the year 440 and putting him in a position to capture Barcelona, we cannot doubt that Theodoric's enmity towards the patrician was fully maintained even after the treaty of 439.¹ Nor can we doubt that this enmity still continued in 446, when we hear of a body of Goths assisting the Suevi in plundering Spain: they could hardly have come there without Theodoric's permission—and in 449 the Suevian king Rechiarus married Theodoric's daughter.² The devastation of considerable areas of Spain up to that date must have been at least approved by Theodoric. It is essential to bear in mind the continued, though perhaps not overt, hostility of Aetius and the Visigoths as late as 449 and even after.

The defeat of the Bagaudae by Litorius' Huns in 437, as we have already pointed out, did not alter the fundamental economic facts of the later Empire: the Bagaudae continued to be as active as ever. Spain was racked by the struggles of the central government against the peasants of that province throughout many of these years, and we soon hear again of their comrades in Gaul. In 442 Aetius had settled a body of Alans near Orleans so as to keep an eye on the neighbouring territory of the *tractus Armoricanus*, and almost at once, *offensus superbae insolentia regionis*—it may have been now that they threatened Tours³—he gave permission to these Alans under their king Goar to attack the Bagaudae, but the attack was called off on the intervention of Germanus, bishop of Auxerre. A few years later the Bagaudae rose once again, and their leader on this occasion was none other than that same Tibatto who had commanded them in 435–7: apparently he had escaped from his captivity in the meantime.⁴ We do not know how the rising ended, although the result was certainly disastrous for Tibatto personally.⁵ The most interesting piece of information about

¹ On the date 440 see J. de Lepper, *De rebus gestis Bonifatii*, p. 110 f.

² *Chron. Min.* ii, p. 24, s.a. 446; p. 25, s.a. 449; see Seeck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 303.

³ Sidonius, *Carm.* v. 210.

⁴ See Constantius, *Vita Germani*, 28. 40, passages which are carefully discussed by W. Levison, 'Bischof Germanus von Auxerre und die Quellen zu seiner Geschichte', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, xxix, 1903, pp. 97–175, at pp. 133 ff. Levison concludes that Constantius made a slip when he mentioned Tibatto, but to the present writer this seems unlikely.

⁵ Constantius, op. cit. 40 'qui [Tibatto] tamen pro calliditate multiplici brevi poenas perfidae temeritatis exsolvit'.

the Bagaudae at this time, however, comes from that same Gallic chronicle which told us of Tibatto's earlier revolt. Its entry runs thus: 'Eudoxius, arte medicus, pravi sed exercitati ingenii, in Bagauda id temporis mota delatus ad Chunos confugit.'¹ The name is Greek—perhaps Eudoxius was the son of one of those Syrian traders who were to be found in every city of Gaul at the time. He was certainly no slave, for physicians were an exceptionally privileged class in the urban life of Gaul in the fifth century.² The fact that such a man is found assisting the Bagaudae recalls Salvian's statement that some of those who fled to the 'rebels' were 'non obscuris natalibus editi et liberaliter instituti'.³ But somebody betrayed him and he fled. Now comes the surprise: in his peril he fled to the Huns. This suggests a very striking change of attitude and policy on the part of Attila. The Huns, who assisted Aetius and Litorius in the thirties, did so at Attila's direction, and they had massacred the Bagaudae. But now the Bagaudae trust Attila, and in a moment of danger one of their leaders flees to him for refuge. When and why this change had come about cannot even be guessed, for an interesting chapter of Hun history has been lost here. Only one thing is clear: along the banks of the Loire many eyes are turned in hope towards the east. Attila, it seems, will not want for allies if he comes to Gaul.

Two of Aetius' earlier enemies, then, the Visigoths and the Bagaudae, are his enemies still towards the close of the forties. But the friendly relations which had existed for so long between him and Attila seemed on the surface to have suffered no interruption until the affair of Eudoxius. Somewhat before Maximinus' embassy in 449, Aetius had sent an Italian called Constantius to the Hun to act as his Latin secretary.⁴ This was not the first secretary he had sent him—as well as being tokens of friendship, such men were doubtless useful in keeping him informed of the intentions of the barbarians.⁵ It was during his Gallic campaigns of the thirties that Aetius had sent Attila the

¹ *Chron. Min.* i, p. 662, s.a. 448.

² *CTh.* xiii. 3, &c.

³ *De Gub. Dei*, v. 21.

⁴ *Priscus*, pp. 295. 4; 301. 31; 319. 25. Seeck, P.-W. iv. 1102, believed the Italian tombstone of *Constantius dux* (Bücheler, *Carm. Epigr.* ii. 1335) to have belonged to this Constantius; but the words *Pannoniis gentibus horror erat*, though doubtless a reference to the Huns, can scarcely be applied to a man of whom we only know that he served Attila in the capacity of a secretary. The stone is agreed to date from the early fifth century, but the name was then a very common one.

⁵ So Herbert, p. 376 n.

first of these secretaries whose name has survived. He was a Gaul and, curiously enough, was also called Constantius; but he had fallen into trouble in circumstances which we shall discuss in a moment, and had been crucified while Bleda was still alive, that is, sometime before the year 445.¹ After the murder of Bleda, Aetius and Attila were still on friendly terms: Aetius had sent out the second Constantius and had been presented with Bleda's dwarf Zerco.² This friendship had its more practical side. Attila was given the rank of Master of the Soldiers in the Western Empire. He did not intend, of course, to assume command of Roman troops, nor did Aetius suppose that he would. But this office brought with it a high rate of pay, and the Master received large quantities of grain for the maintenance of his soldiers. Consequently the title was often conferred honorarily on foreign rulers.³

In 449, however, the friendship was no longer running on a smooth course, and the West Roman envoys, whom Priscus met in Attila's headquarters, had come in order to restore good relations and to calm Attila's anger.⁴ The Hun had found a pretext for a dispute in an incident which had taken place long before. When the great city of Sirmium had been threatened in the campaign of 441, the Gallic secretary Constantius had struck a bargain with the bishop of the place before it actually fell. The bishop entrusted him with some gold plate, the property of his church, on the understanding that, if Sirmium were taken and he himself led away captive, Constantius should use the plate to ransom him; but if the bishop were killed, then Constantius should ransom as many of the townsfolk as the plate would buy. In fact, when the city had been stormed and the citizens enslaved, Constantius had done neither. He had gone to Rome on a business matter shortly after, and had pawned the gold vessels with a banker called Silvanus. On his return to Hun territory, Bleda and Attila suspected him of treacherous activities in other directions and crucified him. Subsequently, after Bleda's death, Attila had found out the fate of the gold vessels, and had demanded that Silvanus should be handed over to him on a charge of possessing stolen property which by right belonged to himself. It was with a reply to this

¹ Priscus, p. 302. 10. 27.

² *Ib.*, p. 313. 30 ff., cf. *CTh.* vi. 22. 4; viii. 5. 44, &c.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 302. 7.

² *Ib.*, p. 325. 19.

demand that Romulus and the other West Roman ambassadors were travelling to the Huns when Priscus and Maximinus met them in the summer of 449. They had been sent by Aetius and Valentinian III—Priscus significantly names the patrician before the Emperor—and they had been instructed to tell Attila that Silvanus had merely lent money to Constantius and had received the plate as a pledge, not knowing that it had been stolen. In fact, he had sold the plate to certain Roman priests, for it was considered impious to use for one's own service vessels which had been dedicated to the service of God. The ambassadors were to add that, if Attila would not abandon his claim, Silvanus would be persuaded to send him the equivalent of the plate in cash: but the Roman government would certainly not hand over a man who had done no wrong.¹

The affair had not been settled when Priscus left the headquarters of the Huns. In his conversation with Romulus and the others (p. 115 above) the historian had been careful to ask how their negotiations were going, and was told that Attila was holding fast to his original position: war would ensue if Silvanus were not handed over.² We do not know what was the final outcome of the matter, for, as Hodgkin (p. 100) says, 'after wearying us with the details of this paltry affair, History forgets to tell us how it ended'. It is clear at any rate that there was now an additional cloud on Aetius' horizon. The friction caused by the gold vessels of Sirmium might be a trifling affair designed merely to lead to the recovery of the gold and no more. But students of the diplomatic methods of the Huns could see that it might be much more: it might be the beginning of a series of pin-pricking complaints such as the Eastern government had had to endure in the years following the first Treaty of Anatolius (pp. 87 ff. above).

In so far as we can reconstruct it then the position in the spring of 450 was this. Attila had secured his rear by the third Treaty of Anatolius; so long as Theodosius lived—and he was not yet fifty—there was no reason to expect any hostile movement on the Danubian frontier of the Hun empire. With regard to the West, Aetius was as hostile both to Theodoric and to the Bagaudae as ever he had been, but Attila had had no relations, known to us, either friendly or unfriendly, with the Visigoths since the foundation of the kingdom at Toulouse. His attitude

¹ *Ib.*, pp. 302, 7-303, 9.

² *Ib.*, p. 312, 10.

towards Aetius and the Western government was complex. He had been their consistent friend since 434, but now he had produced some cause for displeasure. This cause, however, was such as could easily be removed, provided that it was not a mere pretext for further demands. A symptom of hostility, which must have been considerably more disagreeable to Aetius than the demand for the surrender of Silvanus, was the readiness with which Eudoxius had fled for refuge to the Huns. If Attila proposed to support the Bagaudae, the senatorial estates in Gaul would experience a speedy change of ownership; but the patrician's reflections on this possibility are hidden from us.

In all, a contemporary observer, if he had had at his disposal no more information than is available to us now, could scarcely have foretold in the spring of 450 what Attila's objective would be twelve months later. But how much information was in fact at the disposal of contemporaries? It is very possible that in the spring of 450 no mystery whatever enveloped the plans of the Huns.

II

In the light of what happened subsequently—the invasion of Gaul in 451 and of Italy in 452—it is easy now to see why Attila had been so lenient to Anatolius and Nomus in their negotiations with him. He had already made up his mind to launch an attack in Gaul, and he wished to safeguard his rear when he was engaged in the West. Anatolius had negotiated in very favourable circumstances, and the Eastern government must have been well pleased when, in the early months of 450, Attila gave out that he was about to attack the Visigothic kingdom centred around Toulouse and that he intended to do so as Valentinian's ally.¹

If we can accept Attila's word, if in fact he did intend to march as the ally of the Western court (as distinct from Aetius), it does not follow that Romulus and his companions had brought their negotiations concerning Silvanus to a successful conclusion. If this demand were still outstanding, Aetius and Valentinian would be somewhat less likely to interfere with anything distasteful that might be done in Gaul. A more immediate problem is, when had Attila taken the decision to turn westwards? We

¹ I take the embassy to Valentinian mentioned in Jordanes, *Get.* xxxvi. 185, to be earlier than the Honoria affair, cf. Prosper, s.a. 451 (*Chron. Min.* i, p. 481).

only know that shortly before the spring of 450 Geiseric in Vandal Africa had been instigating him to undertake a campaign against the Visigoths. But the idea had already occurred to him even before Geiseric suggested it to him: in fact, it would seem that a plan to fight in the West had long been in his mind.¹ What had put it there? We must confess bluntly that we do not know: our authorities give us no hint, and nothing that we hear of the politics of the time seems to have called for such a surprising step. There was certainly plenty of wealth in the Eastern Empire which Attila could have continued to extort in the years that followed. It may indeed be that the Balkan provinces were drained of plunder, but plunder was of less importance to the Huns than tribute, and Marcian was able to leave 100,000 lb. of gold in the treasury at his death six years later.² How was Attila to know that Theodosius would die a few months after he had taken his decision to turn westwards?

Nothing in our authorities permits us to believe that in the early months of 450 Attila had already planned an eventual campaign against the Western Empire as a whole. The Visigoths of Toulouse were his sole military objective at this time, and their destruction could bring nothing but profit to the Western landowners.³ When Attila stated that he was marching as Valentinian's ally—*tanquam custos Romanae amicitiae*, as a contemporary puts it⁴—we have little reason to doubt his word. But if he were still the friend of Valentinian, it by no means followed that he was still the friend of Aetius. We are told that his plans could not be realized unless Aetius were first removed.⁵ His original intention may have been to remove Aetius as the champion of the West, and to make a reality of the office of Master of the Soldiers which had already been bestowed upon him (p. 128 above). If the Western government were to recognize Attila, in place of Aetius, as their champion in Gaul, the Hun could control the Western Empire *from the inside*. But it

¹ Jordanes, *Get.* xxxvi. 185 *dudum bella concepta*.

² John Lydus, *De Mag.* iii. 43, p. 132 Wuensch. *Contra*, Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, i, p. 290; E. Stein, *Geschichte*, i, p. 494.

³ Seeck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 301, believes that by invading Gaul Attila hoped to cut off the Visigothic kingdom as a source from which the armies of West Rome could be recruited. But, while Aetius lived, is it likely that a single Visigoth fought in the Imperial armies?

⁴ Prosper, l.c. After the events of 451 and 452 it was inevitable that this should be disbelieved.

⁵ John of Antioch, frag. 199 *ad fin.*

must be emphasized again that we simply have not sufficient materials to enable us to understand Attila's motives.

We cannot believe, at any rate, that the Huns' attack on the Visigothic kingdom was intended as nothing more than a mere service to Valentinian or Geiseric. It was not the manner of the Huns to endanger their entire position in Europe merely to please a foreigner. Their real reason for marching can only be conjectural. Furthermore, even before they set out on their long journey, their relations with the Western court had undergone a dramatic change. Having formed his plan to attack the kingdom of Toulouse and having received encouragement from Geiseric to carry it out, Attila, at about the time when he was negotiating with Anatolius and Nomus, sent a message to Valentinian III assuring him that he had no quarrel with the Western Romans (of Actius he said nothing) and that his forthcoming campaign was aimed at the Visigoths alone. At the same time, he directed Theodoric to denounce the insecure treaty with West Rome which Avitus had negotiated in 439.¹ At this point came the celebrated affair of Justa Grata Honoria.

Honoria, the sister of Valentinian III, had a residence of her own at Ravenna, probably inside the palace, and this establishment was managed by a steward called Eugenius.² In the year 449 Honoria allowed herself to be seduced by Eugenius—indeed it was said in Constantinople that she had become pregnant³—but her intrigue was discovered and Eugenius put to death. The princess was forcibly engaged to a respectable and wealthy senator named Herculanius, who could not possibly be suspected of rebellious tendencies or of designs upon the throne.⁴ Honoria, enraged beyond measure at her dismal fate, resolved upon a drastic plan to escape it. In the spring of 450 she sent one of her eunuchs, Hyacinth by name, to Attila, to beg him, in return for a sum of money, to rescue her from her intolerable marriage. She gave her ring to Hyacinth to hand to Attila, so that the barbarian might be assured of the authenticity of the message. Honoria's motives had been political from the first. Her plan was to make Eugenius Emperor and to reign as his empress.⁵

¹ Jordanes, l.c.: see p. 68 above.

² See Bury, *JRS.* ix, 1919, pp. 1-13.

³ Marcellinus, s.a. 434; but John of Antioch, frag. 199 (i.e. Priscus) says nothing of this.

⁴ On Herculanius see Seeck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 466 (n. on p. 298. 8).

⁵ John of Antioch, frag. 199 τὸν βασιλικὸν καὶ αὐτῇ ἔχουμένη σκήπτρον.

There is no reason to doubt that her offer to Attila resulted from similar motives and was intended to result in her reigning in Gaul, if not in Ravenna, as Attila's consort.

The news of what Honoria had done came very soon to Valentinian's ears. Hyacinth was arrested as soon as he returned, and, put to the torture, he revealed the whole story before he was beheaded. Theodosius wrote at once from the East advising Valentinian to hand over Honoria to the Hun and so give no pretext for further demands on his realm. But Valentinian decided otherwise. Honoria's mother Placidia—who had herself married a barbarian chieftain, the Goth Athaulf, thirty-five years before—begged that the princess should be handed over to her keeping. Valentinian consented, and the subsequent fortunes of Honoria remain unknown.¹ Whatever the princess's fate, Attila welcomed the opening which she had given him; he at once claimed Honoria as his wife. His position, on any interpretation of the evidence, was strengthened immeasurably by her invitation.

His position grew more complicated as the summer of 450 wore on. Hyacinth had come to him in the spring bearing Honoria's message and her ring. The Hun then heard that Theodosius had died on 28 July, and that on 25 August Marcian had been crowned Emperor of the East. He heard further that Marcian had not hesitated to announce a radical change in the foreign policy of the Eastern Empire. One of the first acts of the reign was the execution of Chrysaphius, the minister who, more than any other, had been responsible for the policy of concessions and tribute to Attila. Marcian lost no time in announcing that the payment of tribute had now come to a stop: no more gold would be sent out from New Rome to the Huns.

Faced with this altered situation on the Danube, Attila dispatched two embassies, one to Ravenna and one to Constantinople. The Western government was instructed to do no harm to Honoria: she was Attila's bride, and he would avenge her if she suffered wrong and if he did not receive half of the Western Empire as her inheritance.² But the embassy was fruitless. Valentinian's ministers replied that Honoria could not be given

¹ *Ib.*, cf. Bury, *art. cit.*, p. 12. The other sources for Honoria's action are Marcellinus, s.a. 434, and Jordanes, *Rom.* 328, *Get.* 224.

² Priscus, pp. 328. 28–329. 3, cf. p. 330. 6–10.

to him in marriage, for she was already pledged to another man. Further, the government of half the Western Empire did not belong to Honoria: inheritance of the throne was through the male, and not the female, line in the Roman Empire.¹

The purpose of Attila's second embassy was to direct Marcian to resume payment of the tribute to which Theodosius had agreed. The Eastern government adopted an even stronger attitude than the Western. It would on no account resume Theodosius' tribute. If the Huns remained at peace, Marcian would give them 'gifts', but if they threatened war, he would meet them with a force quite equal to their own.²

Towards the end of the year yet another complication arose. This was a dispute with the Western government concerning the succession to the leadership of the Riparian Franks. The Frankish king had recently died and a quarrel had broken out among his sons. The elder had appealed to Attila for an alliance, while the younger had had recourse to Aetius. Priscus, who was at Rome towards the end of 450, saw the young man there and noted the long, golden hair which streamed down over his shoulders.³ Aetius adopted the prince as his son and joined with Valentinian in heaping gifts upon him, and the alliance which the young man sought was readily granted. It is clear that Aetius and the Western government were now—about November 450—resigned to a complete and open breach with the Huns, and were seeking allies wherever they could find them.⁴ Valentinian showed no sign of jettisoning Aetius. Yet, although their relations with Attila had reached breaking-point, it did not follow that war was inevitable or that it was regarded as such by either side.

The immediate question to be decided by Attila was whether he should start his operations by accepting Marcian's challenge and smashing the East Romans. The Hun, as we have seen, had determined on a Western campaign before Marcian came to the throne; but the new Emperor's blunt refusal of the tribute and his tactless pronouncements on the military preparedness of his government invited Attila's attention. We are told that he had great difficulty in making up his mind as to the direction

¹ Priscus, p. 329. 9 οὐ γὰρ θηληδών, ἀλλὰ ἀρρένων ἡ τῆς 'Ρωμαϊκῆς βασιλείας ἀρχή.

² *Ib.*, p. 329. 3-14.

³ For the long hair of the Merovingian princes see Agathias, p. 144. 19 ff.; Greg. Tur. iii. 18, vi. 24, viii. 10.

⁴ Priscus, pp. 329. 23-330. 1.

in which he should launch his attack, but that he eventually decided to undertake the more exacting campaign first when his forces were unimpaired.¹ It is difficult to avoid the impression that Marcian's display of audacity was to the last degree untimely. Within a few months of his accession he had brought the East Romans to the edge of the abyss, and all but lost what Theodosius had won by eleven years of patient, exacting, and costly effort. Attila did not forget his effrontery.²

Having reached the decision to continue with his original plan of attacking the Visigoths in Gaul, Attila surveyed the position at the end of the year 450. What had at first been planned as a campaign against the Visigoths at Toulouse now involved the Franks also, for it would seem that the late king's elder son, who had appealed for help to the Huns, possessed few followers among his nation. The Ripuarian Franks as a whole had therefore to be counted as enemies.³ On the other hand, it was not even yet certain that a fight with the West Romans was unavoidable, and when he was actually entering Gaul Attila seems still to have been proclaiming that he had come *tanquam custos Romanae amicitiae*.⁴ Yet he cannot but have reckoned on the possibility of meeting with opposition from the government at Ravenna. Finally, Geiseric in Africa, the subtlest statesman of the century, would certainly be more than glad to see a blow dealt to the Visigoths,⁵ but he gave no practical support in dealing it. Apart from the aid given voluntarily or otherwise by the subject nations, then, Attila set out from his log huts on the Hungarian plain without foreign allies.

III

It must have been soon after the new year that the Huns left Pannonia⁶ and started on their journey to the West. Terrified contemporaries put the number of the army, which Attila gathered as he went, at half a million men, a figure which testifies to their panic.⁷ This panic is clearly reflected in the description of the army which is given us by the Gallic landlord

¹ *Ib.*, p. 329. 14-17.

² For a different judgement of Marcian's policy see, for example, Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, i, p. 290. ³ Priscus, p. 329. 19. ⁴ Prosper, s.a. 451.

⁵ Jordanes, *Get.* xxxvi. 184.

⁶ Greg. Tur. ii. 6 *Chuni a Pannoniis egressi*.

⁷ Jordanes, *Get.* xxxv. 182, but he adds *ferebatur*, an indication of Priscus' caution.

Sidonius Apollinaris, who assuredly had nothing to gain and a vast amount of property to lose if the invasion were not repelled. His lines run thus:

subito cum rupta tumultu
barbaries totas in te transfuderat Arctos,
Gallia. pugnacem Rugum comitante Gelono
Gepida trux sequitur; Scirum Burgundio cogit;
Chunus, Bellonotus, Neurus, Bastarna, Toringus,
Bructerus, ulvosa vel quem Nicer alluit unda
prorumpit Francus.¹

In terrified recollection of the event Sidonius even conjures up half-forgotten tribes to fight among the squadrons of Attila. The Bastarnae, Bructeri, Geloni, and Neuri had disappeared hundreds of years before the times of the Huns, while the Bellonoti had never existed at all: presumably the learned poet was thinking of the Balloniti, a people invented by Valerius Flaccus nearly four centuries earlier. But when Sidonius names the Burgundians as being among the host of Attila he perhaps preserves, more by accident than by design, a fact of some interest. We have seen that some of the Burgundians had remained east of the Rhine when the bulk of the nation had fled into Gaul, and that this remnant had defeated the troops of Attila's uncle Octar (or Uptar). It would seem then that in the meantime the Huns had taken their revenge and had brought these eastern Burgundians at last under their sway. There is certainly no reason to doubt that Sidonius is correct in his references to the other peoples whom he catalogues in his poem: the Rugi, Gepids, Sciri, and Thuringi will beyond doubt have marched with their masters. The Ostrogoths, although unmentioned by the poet, were there too, led by their king Valamer and his younger brothers Theodimer and Vidimer.² What are we to say of the Franks, that is, the Ripuarians? Before he started the campaign Attila had certainly looked upon them as enemies:³ presumably Aetius had won a diplomatic success among them and had established as their king the young man who had appealed to him. Now, although Sidonius' mention of the Neckar does not by itself indicate that Attila's route lay in the neighbourhood of that river, the Hun is exceedingly

¹ Sidonius, *Carm.* vii. 319 ff.; see A. Loyen, p. 52.

² Damascius *ap.* Cober's Diogenes Laertius (Didot), p. 126.

³ Priscus, p. 329. 19.

unlikely to have disregarded an ally of Aetius lying on his flank. We may take it then that his first objective in the campaign was the Riparian Franks, and that, after conquering these, he compelled some of their warriors to march in his ranks side by side with the other subject nations.¹ It may well be, then, as has sometimes been suggested, that the host crossed the Rhine in the neighbourhood of Neuwied, north of Coblenz, after cutting down the trees on the river's bank so as to build rafts.²

While already on the march Attila had taken a step which was to cost him dear.³ The West Romans, as we have seen, had refused to hand over Honoria and had explained that, even if they had been willing to do so, her husband, in Roman law, would not inherit half of the Western Empire (p. 134 above). Attila was not satisfied with this reply, and now, when his army was actually marching on the Visigoths of Toulouse, he sent another embassy to the court at Ravenna. The envoys stated bluntly that Honoria was engaged to marry Attila and as proof of their words they produced the ring, which Attila had given them for the purpose. They also insisted on the curious legal claim: Valentinian was to retire from one half of his kingdom, for Honoria, they said, had inherited the sovereignty of half the West from her father, but had been robbed of her inheritance by Valentinian. These demands were rejected outright by the Western government, and Attila therefore continued on his march, collecting his forces as he went.⁴ The West Romans still did nothing: they hoped even yet that the Hunnic attack might be restricted to the Visigoths. They found it necessary to abandon this hope when Attila sent them his final message.

In the pages of John Malalas, who is faithfully and even verbally echoed by the author of the *Chronicon Paschale*, we read the following story:

In the reign of Valentinian III and Theodosius II Attila with an army of many tens of thousands of men made a campaign against Rome and Constantinople. A Gothic ambassador, sent by him to Valentinian, declared, 'Attila, my master and thy master, hath ordered thee through me that thou shouldst make ready for him thy palace.' At the same time Attila sent a similar message by a

¹ Note Priscus' phrase τοῦ πρὸς Θράγγους πολέμου πρόφασις, p. 329. 23, and see Mommsen, p. 542.

² Schmidt, *Geschichte*, i, p. 245; Sidonius, *Carm.* vii. 325 f.

³ Priscus, p. 330. ἰ τὴν ἐκστρατείαν ποιοῦμενος.

⁴ *Ib.*, frag. 16.

Gothic ambassador to Theodosius at Constantinople. But Aetius, the foremost senator at Rome, when he heard the surpassing audacity of this insane demand, went to Alaric in Gaul, who was an enemy of the Romans, and induced him to help repel Attila.¹

Now, this story as it stands makes nonsense; but if, ignoring one or two minor points, we substitute the names of Marcian and Theodoric for those of Theodosius and Alaric, it becomes coherent at once. There can be little doubt that we should make this substitution. The author of the story, as Gibbon (iii, p. 446, n. 2) says, 'may have anticipated the date; but the dull annalist was incapable of inventing the original and genuine style of Attila'. If then the Hun had sent his previous message *while actually on the march*, as an impeccable authority tells us,² this final and forthright command must have been dispatched as the army was in the neighbourhood of the Rhine or actually engaged in crossing it. In any event, it is clear that Attila sent an abrupt message which induced Valentinian and Aetius, almost at the eleventh hour, to take the momentous decision to resist the impending invasion of Gaul, and, with that end in view, to seek an alliance with the Visigoths, Aetius' lifelong enemies. The consequences of Attila's acceptance of Honorius's ring had become clear at last: his campaign was now directed against all the organized armies of Western Europe.

While all this had been happening, the Visigoths had been quite resigned to shouldering the burden of the war alone. Aetius' hostility towards them for the previous twenty years had left them with no hope of assistance from him, and indeed with no desire for it. Theodoric received the news of Attila's approach with fortitude: 'quamvis infletur de diversis gentium victoriis,' he is reported as saying, 'norunt tamen Gothi confligere cum superbis.'³ Aetius then was faced with no mean task when he sought an alliance with the king. The problem, which perplexed him gravely, was twofold. First, he had to induce Theodoric to forget the politics of the last two decades and to join forces with the Western Romans. Secondly, he had to persuade him to extend the field of his operations. The Goths were confidently awaiting Attila's onset in their own country:

¹ Malalas, xiv, p. 358; *Chron. Pasch.* i, p. 587: they also transfer the battle from the Loire to the Danube.

² Priscus, l.c.

³ Jordanes, *Get.* xxxvi. 189 (from Priscus, cf. Mommsen, *praef.*, p. xxxvi), cf. Sidonius, *Carm.* vii. 333 *prope contemptum hostem*.

their purpose was to defend their kingdom centred on Toulouse. But it was Aetius' business to save Gaul as a whole. He had therefore to induce Theodoric to march northwards and fight Attila as near as possible to the frontier. In view of his past record it would be hopeless for him to ask personally for any such agreement; but in 439 Theodoric had been induced by Avitus to sign a peace, and perhaps Avitus could persuade him again (p. 68 above). The future Emperor set off carrying a letter from Valentinian and accomplished his difficult task successfully: Theodoric undertook to join forces with the man whom he had spent his life in fighting, and Aetius prepared to repulse Attila, his lifelong friend.¹

It was now almost too late. The Gallic cities were already going up in flames when Aetius set out from Italy:

et iam terrificis diffuderat Attila turmis
in campos se, Belga, tuos. vix liquerat Alpes
Aetius, tenue et rarum sine milite ducens
robur in auxiliis.²

His position had been weakened by the famine which was ravaging Italy in these very months.³ A famine, of course, could not have stopped him from going ahead with his diplomatic arrangements, but it prevented him from mustering a considerable army when at last he set out. In fact, he could do no more than bring a few auxiliary troops with him, and when he finally joined Theodoric and the Visigoths—perhaps towards the end of April or the beginning of May—he set out northwards to meet the enemy at the head of a very motley host. Jordanes has preserved a curious list of the peoples whose warriors comprised it.⁴ The Liticiani and Olibriones are quite unknown. The Burgundians, whom Aetius had settled in Savoy in 443 after his Huns had crushed them a few years earlier (p. 65 above), now fought for their conqueror, although their fellow tribesmen from beyond the Rhine were marching with Attila (p. 136 above). The Riparian Franks were also present—presumably many of them had escaped after Attila had fallen upon them in the early stages of the campaign. They were joined by some

¹ *Ib.*, 332 ff.; Jordanes, *Get.* xxxvi. 187–8. Sidonius' enthusiasm for his father-in-law grows as his poem progresses, and in *vv.* 352, 547 ff. he seems to imply that the Goths intended to stay neutral until Avitus induced them to fight. This is contradicted by Jordanes-Priscus and by Sidonius himself, *v.* 333.

² Sidonius, *Carm.* vii. 327–30.

³ *Nov. Valent.* 33.

⁴ *Get.* xxxvi. 191.

Salian Franks, a people who had been settled inside the Roman frontier for the best part of a century. By *Sarmatae* Jordanes may mean us to understand the Alans who had refrained from striking at the Armorican Bagaudae a few years previously, and now, as we shall see, their behaviour was more than ambiguous. The list contains two other names. The Saxons may already have established some settlements north of the Loire and received recognition from the Roman government:¹ contingents of them now came to Aetius' help. The last name is surprising: it is that of the Armoricans. How had they come to fight for their old foe against the man to whom Eudoxius had fled for refuge in 448? We do not know, and cannot even guess. Our only information is Sidonius' none too trustworthy remark that it was his father-in-law Avitus who roused them to battle.² No problem connected with this famous campaign is more baffling than that concerning the attitude of the Armoricans.

Many cities fell to Attila when he crossed the Rhine, and it is not impossible that some opened their gates to him in the belief that he came as a friend.³ On 7 April Metz fell, and Attila then made for Orleans. This move was incited by Sangibanus, Goar's successor as king of those Alans who had been settled in Gaul in the expectation that they would act as a check on the Bagaudae of Armorica (p. 126 above). Sangibanus had entered into a secret correspondence with the Huns and had promised to betray Orleans to them if they approached it.⁴ A report of this agreement had come to the ears of Aetius and Theodoric, and it now became their first object to seize Orleans before Attila could reach it. They were almost too late. The Huns besieged the place with vigour and actually entered it before the approach of the allies forced them to withdraw.⁵ The citizens were greatly heartened by St. Aignan during their ordeal, but how exactly the Huns were compelled to retire we do not know. Whatever happened, it can scarcely be doubted

¹ So Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, i, p. 292, n. 1.

² Sidonius, *Carm.* vii. 547. He tells us that some three or four years later Armorica was suffering from Saxon sea-raiders, *Carm.* v. 369. F. Lot, *Les Invasions germaniques* (Paris, 1945), p. 108, doubts whether in fact the Armoricans took part in the battle at all.

³ *Vita Lupi* 5 (p. 297) 'cum diversa urbium loca simulatae pacis arte temptaret', which seems likely enough, although the source is all but valueless.

⁴ Jordanes, *Get.* xxxvii. 194.

⁵ Sidonius, *Ep.* viii. 15. 1 'Aurelianensis urbis obsidio oppugnatio inruptio nec direptio', *Vita S. Aniani*, 9 ff.

that Attila suffered a major reverse before the city, and he fell back to what were then called the Catalaunian Plains, a term which probably denoted almost the whole of Champagne.¹ The precise spot where the two armies met cannot now be decided, although the question, despite its unimportance, has been endlessly discussed. On any supposition it is clear that the engagement took place on ground admirably suited to the manœuvres of the Hun cavalry at an unknown place called Maurica (or the like) which was said to lie five miles from Troyes.² The date of the battle is as obscure as its site, but if, as the author of the *Vita S. Aniani* implies, Attila was repulsed from Orleans on 14 June, Bury may be right in suggesting 20 June as the approximate date of the engagement.³

The battle opened at about the ninth hour of the day with an effort by both sides to occupy a hill which dominated the battle-field. This struggle was indecisive. Each army succeeded in posting a force on part of the hill, but the summit was left unoccupied. On the plain below, the Goths, with the aged Theodoric at their head, were assigned to the right of the allied line, while Aetius and the Romans held the left. Between them they placed Sangibanus and the Alans whose loyalty was so dubious, for, as a Gothic historian puts it, one readily admits the necessity of fighting when it is difficult to run away.⁴ Attila took the centre of his own line, facing the wavering Sangibanus, and the various nations of his subjects stood on either flank, the Gepids and Ostrogoths facing their kinsmen the Visigoths. The Huns started the battle by losing the entire hill of which they had earlier occupied a part.⁵ There followed, says Jordanes, a *bellum atrox multiplex immane pertinax*, but of the precise course of the fighting we know nothing. The Gothic king Theodoric was among the slain, and his body was only found on the following day. In the end, after fighting into the night, Attila retreated into the circle of wagons which he had drawn up behind him. Jordanes asks us to believe that 165,000 men fell on either side, but historians have declined to do so. Nor is his information

¹ So Bury, *op. cit.* i, p. 293, n. 1.

² The ancient evidence for the site of the battle is conveniently set out in Bury's *Gibbon*, iii, Appendix 28: but in his *Later Roman Empire*, i, p. 293, n. 1, Bury rightly says that there is no evidence for connecting the skeleton found at Pouan in 1842 with the battle against Attila. See the relevant works listed in Bibliography V above.

³ *Vita S. Aniani*, 7, p. 113; Bury, *l.c.* i, p. 292, n. 5.

⁴ Jordanes, *Get.* xxxvii. 196 ff.

⁵ *Ib.*, 198, 200 f.

made any more credible when he adds that this figure excludes 15,000 men who fell in an engagement between the Gepids and Aetius' Frankish allies on the night before the main engagement.¹ Not many years later it was believed in the East that the fighting was so severe 'that no one survived except only the leaders on either side and a few followers: but the ghosts of those who fell continued the struggle for three whole days and nights as violently as if they had been alive; the clash of their arms was clearly audible'.²

In fact, however, a less impressive incident took place in Aetius' camp on the day after the battle. The Goths, enraged by the death of their king, were eager to resume the struggle and to blockade Attila in his wagon-camp with a view to starving him out. Now it seems that their chances of success were bright, and Aetius concluded that the Huns might in fact be utterly destroyed. Indeed, the Goths afterwards said that Attila had prepared a funeral pyre from his followers' saddles and had made up his mind to throw himself upon it if the enemy succeeded in breaking in among his wagons. This was precisely what Aetius wanted to avoid. The Huns had been his lifelong friends, and it was by means of a mercenary force supplied by them that he had been able to keep the Visigoths in check. He still hoped, amazing as it may seem, that the Huns might be induced to serve him similarly in future. At any rate, if they were wiped out now, the Western Empire would be hard put to it to defend itself against the kingdom of Toulouse. He therefore suggested to the late king's son, Thorismud, that he should at once return to Toulouse so as to prevent his brothers from seizing the throne in his absence. Thorismud took the advice given him, and led his men away.³ The patrician then turned his attention to the young Frankish king whom he had befriended. He pointed out to him that Attila's homeward route would take him close to the land of the Franks: if the main Frankish army were away from home, the Hun would have no difficulty in maintaining as king the elder brother who had appealed to Attila the previous year. He therefore advised the young prince to return home without delay. This advice too was accepted,⁴ and Aetius accordingly allowed Attila to retreat

¹ *Get.* xii. 217. I doubt if Attila could have fed an army of even 30,000 men.

² *Damascius, I.c.* (see p. 136, n. 2), § 63.

³ *Jordanes, Get.* xii. 215 f.

⁴ *Chron. Min.* i, p. 302.

from Gaul at his leisure. Of the patrician we can say this at least: when once he had decided to support a social order of which the economic foundations had long since passed away, honest political methods were no longer adequate. The wisdom of his duplicity was revealed the following year.

IV

In 451 the Danube frontier was not as quiet as Attila had hoped it would be, when he concluded his treaty with Anatolius and Nomus in the spring of the previous year. Despite the Hun's threatening embassy (p. 134 above) Marcian had persisted in his resolution not to pay Theodosius' tribute. In reply to Attila's threat of war he sent him as ambassador a certain Apollonius, a follower of the Zeno who had so nearly ruined Chrysaphius' negotiations a year or two previously (p. 121 f. above): in fact, Apollonius was a brother of that very Rufus who had eventually married Saturninus' daughter. Despite the high office he held—he was *Magister militum praesentalis*—he crossed the Danube to no purpose: Attila refused even to grant him an interview. The Hun, who was now about to set out for Gaul, was in great anger when he heard that Apollonius had brought no tribute, but had merely come to negotiate, and the refusal to interview him was intended as a public slight on Marcian. Attila sent an abrupt message to the ambassador ordering him to hand over whatever 'gifts' he had brought from the Emperor, and threatening him with death if he refused. Apollonius was not dismayed. He said proudly that he would hand over the gifts if he were received as an ambassador ought to be; if he were killed, the Huns would have them, but they would no longer be gifts—they would then be spoils stripped from a dead man. Attila allowed him to go without ever having seen him.¹ East Roman relations with the Huns had deteriorated drastically since Anatolius had received presents from Attila only a year before.

In September 451 Attila gave a foretaste of what his answer was to be. A small band of Huns was launched on a plundering raid upon eastern Illyricum: its purpose was merely to remind Marcian of what lay in store for him when the campaigning season came round. The new Emperor's anxiety as to his northern frontier prevented him from holding his great Council

¹ Priscus, frag. 18.

at Nicaea, as he had originally planned, and the bishops had therefore to assemble at Chalcedon instead.¹ Even then Marcian was unable to give them his undivided attention, for, although the plundering band sent across the frontier by Attila cannot have been a large one, Marcian decided to take the field against it in person. Whether or not he succeeded in intercepting it we do not know: but he certainly was pleased with the result of his excursion.²

Yet, when the summer of 452 arrived, Attila once more delayed his projected assault on the dominions of Marcian. He intended to postpone it only for a year, but in fact he postponed it for ever.

His precise motives in undertaking the campaign in northern Italy in 452 are not at all clear. We can only be certain that he felt himself under no obligation to Aetius for allowing him to escape from Gaul the previous year. Indeed, he began the campaign in Italy in bitter anger against the Western Romans upon whom he actually laid the blame for his disaster in Gaul.³ It is also known that he welcomed the separation of the Roman and Visigothic armies, and felt that he could easily defeat them piecemeal.⁴ Whatever his motives, he assembled as large an army as that which he had led in 451, marched through the Pannonian provinces, and crossed the Alps into Italy at the opening of the campaigning season of 452.⁵

Rarely in history has a statesman been caught so completely off his guard as was Aetius in the spring of 452. There can be little doubt that he was convinced of the success of his ambiguous conduct in Gaul on the morrow of the Catalaunian Plains: he expected that he had merely to open negotiations with Attila and the Huns would readmit him to their friendship. Consequently no garrisons had been posted in the passes of the Julian Alps, although the Hunnic cavalry could easily have been checked in mountain warfare, as indeed a contemporary writer points out. Attila crossed entirely without opposition, and the news of his arrival in Italy must have struck the

¹ Seeck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 273.

² *Ib.*, p. 301, citing Mansi, vi, pp. 557 d, 560 c.

³ *Chron. Min.* i, p. 662 'insperata in Galliis clade accepta furatus Attila Italiam petit'.

⁴ Jordanes, *Get.* xlii. 219.

⁵ *Chron. Min.* i, p. 482 'Attila redintegratis viribus, quas in Gallia amiserat, Italiam ingredi per Pannonias intendit'. The season is conjectural; Seeck, *op. cit.*, p. 311, supposes that he crossed the Alps in winter, which seems very unlikely.

patrician with the violence of a thunderbolt. When he recovered from his astonishment he could form only one plan: he decided to take Valentinian with him and abandon Italy altogether.¹

Attila's first operation, when he descended into the plains, was one of the most difficult he had ever undertaken. It was often said that, in all the years of its long history, the city of Aquileia, though often besieged, had never been stormed and never forced into capitulation.² The first assaults of the Huns were beaten back from its walls despite the vigour with which they had been pressed home, and so little progress was made that murmurs soon began to be heard in the camp that the attack should be called off. It would seem, however, that Attila sent back for those of his subject nations who were more skilled in siegecraft than were his own horsemen, and that these constructed the siege-engines before which the city eventually fell. But, to explain the pause in the attacking operations and the renewal of the assaults, a pretty story was invented of the kind which we have learned to associate with the history of Priscus when he had no genuine information to retail. It was said that, as Attila rode round the great walls one day, doubtful as to whether he should strike camp or press on with the siege, he saw a flock of white storks, which had built their nests in the roofs, rise up with their young into the sky above Aquileia and fly away from the doomed city. He accepted the omen gladly, and continued his attacks with eventual success. However that may be, Aquileia was cruelly plundered and razed to the ground, from which it never rose again. The destruction of this great city was long remembered among men, and in the sixth century it was a difficult task even to trace out the site where once it had stood.³

After their first victory the Huns galloped on, and city after

¹ *Chron. Min.* l.c. 'nihil duce nostro Aetio secundum prioris belli opera prospiciente, ita ut ne clusuris quidem Alpium, quibus hostes prohiberi poterant, uterentur, hoc solum spebus suis superesse existimans, si ab omni Italia cum imperatore discederet' (Prosper).

² *Amm.* xxi. 12. 1.

³ *Jordanes, Get.* xlii. 219-21. The siege is also mentioned by the writers of the *Chron. Gall.* a. dxi and the *Addit. ad Prosp. Haun.*, *Chron. Min.* i, pp. 663, 302; by Count Marcellinus, *ib.* ii, p. 84, Cassiodorus, *ib.* ii, p. 157, Procopius, *BV.* i. 4. 30-5, and later writers. For the legend of the chaste Digna who killed herself somewhat dramatically rather than allow the barbarians to lay hands on her, see Paul, *Hist. Rom.* xiv. 9.

city opened its gates in terror at their approach.¹ As they rode southwards Concordia and Altinum fell before them. A change had come over the relations of the Romans with the barbarians since a Roman poet had written these lines:

Aemula Baianis Altini litora villis
et Phaethontei conscia silva rogi . . .
Et tu Ledaeco felix Aquileia Timavo,
hic ubi septenas Cyllarus hausit aquas:
Vos eritis nostrae requies portusque senectae,
si iuris fuerint otia nostra sui.

The next of their conquests was Patavium, where Livy had been born half a millennium before. All these cities were burnt and razed to the ground, and their inhabitants led away into slavery: they had been too terrified to resist. *Per Venetum civitates Hunni bacchantur*. Turning westwards they stormed Vicetia, Verona the city of Catullus, Brixia, and Bergomum, and so arrived at Milan. Both Milan and Ticinum were taken, but for some reason were not plundered nor were the citizens massacred.² In connexion with the capture of Milan another of those stories is told which smack of the historical methods of Priscus. In the palace there, it is said, Attila saw a picture representing the Emperors of the East and of the West seated on their golden thrones, and, lying before them on the ground, the bodies of some slain Scythians. The Hun compelled a local painter to draw a picture of Attila himself sitting upon a throne and before him the two Roman Emperors holding a sack and pouring out gold from it at his feet.³

Yet a third of these tales has come down to us, and this one is explicitly ascribed to Priscus. To an inhabitant of the Empire it must have seemed strange beyond measure that Attila, after devastating the plains of northern Italy, did not cross the Apennines and plunder Rome itself as Alaric had done before him. According to this third story, he did in fact propose at first to march on the ancient capital, but his followers dissuaded him by reminding him of that same Alaric and how he had died almost immediately after sacking the great city. They warned Attila that his fate might well be similar.⁴ But, as it happens,

¹ *Chron. Min.* i, p. 662 'quam [sc. Italiam] incolae metu solo terribi praesidio nudavere'.

² Paul, xiv. 11; Jordanes, *Get.* xlii. 222; *Chron. Min.* i, p. 302.

³ Suidas, s.v. Μεταίολονον, cf. id., s.v. κόρυκος.

⁴ Jordanes, *Get.* xlii. 222 *ut Priscus istoricus refert*.

we know why the Hun retreated from Italy without ever crossing the Apennines, and sentiment did not enter his calculations.

Aetius had abandoned his scheme of deserting Italy and leaving her to her fate. The plan, it seems, was not merely disgraceful; it was also dangerous.¹ The patrician therefore decided to beg for peace from the Huns without further ado.² It was a curious embassy that met Attila on the banks of the Mincius, and unfortunately no eyewitness's account survives to tell us how it was received. The embassy was headed by none other than Pope Leo himself. Why the Pope should have been sent is not clear, for, as Bury puts it,³ 'it is unreasonable to suppose that this heathen king would have cared for the thunders or persuasions of the Church'. None the less, Leo went, and was accompanied by the ex-prefect Trygetius, who had already had experience of diplomatic encounters with a barbarian chief: in 435 he had signed away a considerable tract of Africa to the Vandals.⁴ The third member of this *legatio placidissima* was Gennadius Avienus, the consul of 450, a man of vast wealth, whose energy in promoting the interests of his immediate relatives aroused unfavourable comment among contemporaries. His opinions, which he was always painfully ready to advance, were, in the judgement of those who knew him, singularly worthless.⁵

Attila concluded peace with this trio. That it was they who induced him to leave Italy was the pious belief of Prosper, but we know from another source, also contemporary, the real reasons which compelled the Huns to withdraw north of the Alps. It will be recalled that, at the time when Aetius was setting out for Gaul the previous year, Italy was being devastated by a famine (p. 139 above). The crops were no better now, and the devastations of the Hun invasion did not improve the harvest. Consequently the lands through which the invaders rode in the summer of 452 were lands ravaged by famine and its inseparable companion, pestilence. It was idle for Attila to endanger his men in such a country. Whatever the figures of the slain at the Catalaunian Plains, the Huns had lost cruelly;

¹ Prosper, s.a. 452 'cum hoc plenum dedecoris et periculi videretur', &c.

² *Chron. Min.* i, p. 482.

³ *Later Roman Empire*, i, p. 295. For other examples of clerical embassies see Helm, p. 398, n. 3, and above, p. 68.

⁴ *Chron. Min.* i, p. 474.

⁵ Sidonius, *Ep.* i. 9. The embassy is reported by Prosper, *Chron. Min.* i, p. 482; Jordanes, *Get.* xlii. 223; Paul, xiv. 11.

and their man-power was always weak. If the plague once laid hold of the forces in Italy, their position in Europe would soon become desperate—and the first cases of sickness had already been reported. It would have been folly in these circumstances to cross the Apennines, even if the Danube frontier had remained at peace. But in fact Marcian had seen and grasped his opportunity. After the public affront shown to his ambassador Apollonius (p. 143 above), he must have been waiting for some such chance as now presented itself. North of the Danube the Germanic nations groaned under the ruthless exploitation of their masters; but the flower of the Hunnic army, in so far as it had survived the Catalaunian Plains, was now far away. In these circumstances, an East Roman force crossed the Danube under the command of an officer who, curiously enough, bore the name of Aetius.¹ He had taken part in the Council of Chalcedon the previous year as Count of the Domestics, and for his services in 452 was appointed Eastern consul for the year 454. This Aetius was successful in his enterprise. He routed the Hun force which had been left behind to safeguard their territories, and Attila, hard pressed by both human and natural forces, retired from Italy without ever setting foot south of the Po. His empire had been shaken to its foundations.²

V

It must have seemed that nothing could save Marcian when the campaigning season of 453 came round. For two years Attila had delayed his destruction in vain attempts to settle his own affairs in the West. His first act when he regained his log huts on the Hungarian plain was to send Marcian a message of which the terms were not ambiguous: he stated bluntly that, since the tribute agreed upon with Theodosius had not been sent out, he proposed to make war upon the Eastern Empire and to enslave its inhabitants.³ But the blow that he longed to deal was never delivered.

Before the campaigning season began he decided to add yet

¹ On him see Seeck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 469 (n. on p. 312. 10).

² Hydatius, *Chron. Min.* ii, p. 26 f. 'Huni, qui Italian praedabantur, aliquantibus etiam civitatibus inruptis, divinitus partim fame, partim morbo quodam plagis caelestibus feriuntur: missis etiam per Marcianum principem Aetio duce caeduntur auxiliis pariterque in sedibus suis et caelestibus plagis et per Marciani subiguntur exercitum, et ita subacti pace facta cum Romanis proprias universi repetunt sedes.'

³ Priscus, frag. 9; Jordanes, *Get.* xliii. 225.

another to the long series of his wives.¹ On this occasion his bride was Ildico. Her name, if it has not been corrupted in the tradition, would seem to betray her Germanic origin, and we are told that she was a girl of great beauty. Beyond that we know nothing of her, and cannot say whether the marriage had any political implications. After the wedding Attila drank far into the night, and, when much of the following day had passed and he did not reappear, his servants shouted loudly outside the door of his room and eventually forced an entry. They found their master dead and his bride weeping beside him, her face covered with her veil. Attila had bled heavily through the nose during the night (as, indeed, he had often done before), and being heavily drunk had been suffocated in his sleep. His body bore no trace of a wound.² The Huns were dumbfounded. They cut off their hair and slashed their faces with their swords, so that 'the greatest of all warriors should be mourned with no feminine lamentations and with no tears, but with the blood of men'.³

Attila's body was laid in a silken tent pitched on the plains over which he had so often led his men to war. While the mass of his followers gazed on him in wonder, horsemen chosen for their extreme skill from the whole nation galloped wildly around him, *in modum circensium*, so as to gladden the heart of the dead chieftain.⁴ The song that was sung over the body has been preserved by Jordanes. He found it in the Greek of Priscus and translated it after his fashion. Priscus doubtless had it from a Goth, who rendered the words of the original Hunnic. Yet, though the song has survived at least three translations, it retains a rhythmical beauty in the humble prose of Jordanes:

Praecipuus Hunnorum rex Attila,
patre genitus Mundzucō,
fortissimarum gentium dominus,
qui inaudita ante se potentia
solus Scythica et Germanica regna possedit
nec non utraque Romani urbis⁵ imperia
captis civitatibus terruit, et
ne praedae reliqua subderentur,

¹ *Ib.*, xlix. 254 'post innumerabiles uxores, ut mos erat gentis illius'.

² *Ib.*, *sine ullo vulnere*. Jordanes expressly names Priscus as his source in this passage.

³ *Ib.*, 225.

⁴ Cf. Schröder, p. 242, with Jordanes, *Get.* xlix. 256.

⁵ v.l. *orbis*.

placatus praecibus annuum vectigal accepit:
 cumque haec omnia proventu felicitatis egerit,
 non vulnere hostium, non fraude suorum,
 sed gente incolume
 inter gaudia laetus
 sine sensu doloris
 occubuit.
 quis ergo hunc exitum putet,
 quem nullus aestimat vindicandum?¹

In the meantime, his barrow had been heaped up, and, when the lamentations were over, the Huns celebrated his burial with wild revelry, mixing their grief with joy in a manner that amazed the Gothic monk.² When night fell the body was removed from the tent and laid in the barrow. They covered it first with gold and silver, then with iron. It was said afterwards that the precious metals indicated that he had received the tribute of both empires, and the iron that he had conquered all the nations. The arms which he had stripped from his enemies, along with gems and other treasures, were placed in the barrow; and those who laid him to rest were slain over his body and rested beside him.³

No part of these rites can be claimed as Germanic. The similarities between them and those described in *Beowulf* are striking, but scarcely more so than the differences. Some writers have supposed a common origin for both sets of ceremonies, and one student has been so bold as to suggest that both the Anglo-Saxons and the Huns derived them from Homer, the Huns having studied Homer, no doubt, in the intervals of tending their flocks outside Olbia. We shall rather agree with that great scholar who pointed out that the similarities must be explained in terms of the uniform social background of the Heroic Age.⁴ A further point in Jordanes' account of the burial

¹ Jordanes, *Get.* xlix. 257. Attempts to reconstruct the Gothic (which of course was not the original) are ridiculed by Schröder, p. 243 f. For an example see F. Kluge, pp. 157-9. F. Klaeber, p. 259, thinks that the song is a composition of Priscus or even Jordanes, which is surely impossible. ² Jordanes, l.c., 258.

³ *Ib.* The symbolic significance assigned to the metals may be due to Priscus or his informants.

⁴ H. M. Chadwick, *The Heroic Age*, p. 53. For similar rites among the Bulgars see Marquart, *Streifzüge*, pp. 205 ff., and for the unhappy picture of the Huns as Homeric scholars see the *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, xxv, April 1922, pp. 340 ff. The suggestion is not rejected by Klaeber, p. 263. It is to be observed that Jordanes does not profess to give a complete account of the funeral, *Get.* xlix. 256 'pauca de multis dicere non omittamus'.

has some interest. Of the entire Hun language, of all that vocabulary in which they called to their herds, planned their campaigns, and sought to placate the angry spirits of the steppe region, only a solitary word has survived: *strava*, 'funeral'. How Jordanes came to know it we cannot tell. All that can be said is that a single word does not enable us to classify the language of the Huns, and *strava* has been variously claimed as Germanic, Slavic, and Turkish.¹

It was not long before it began to be whispered that Attila had not died a natural death, but had been struck down as he slept by his new bride Ildico. The circumstances of his death were such that these reports were inevitable, and the chronicler Count Marcellinus, writing a century later, quotes the view that the great conqueror was murdered by a woman, no doubt the bride whom he had married a few hours before his death.² In some Nordic saga we read that Attila was slain by his wife in revenge for her two brothers whom he had treacherously murdered. The rumour, though it may have begun to circulate within a few days of the chieftain's death, was none the less false:

Loke, Attila, the grete conquerour,
Deyde in his sleep, with shame and dishonour,
Bledinge ay at the nose in dronkenesse;
A capitayn shoulde live in sobrenesse.³

We can readily imagine that the news of the chieftain's death spread with great rapidity to every corner of Europe, bringing delight to all nations alike and not least to the Romans.⁴ The

¹ References in Maenchen-Helfen, p. 255. Jordanes, *Get.* lii. 269, also tells us that the Huns called the Dnieper (or more probably the Danube—see Macartney, p. 108) *var*, and in Mommsen's Index to his Jordanes we read (s.v. 'Danaper'): 'vocabulo *var* pro fluvio Hungari adhuc utuntur', but the point is much debated.

² *Chron. Min.* ii, p. 86: the tale reappears in the *Chron. Pasch.*, p. 588. 3, Bonn. See Chadwick, *op. cit.*, p. 37 f. and *The Growth of Literature*, i, p. 185 f.

³ *The Pardoner's Tale*: the story doubtless arrived at Chaucer from Priscus via Cassiodorus, Jordanes, Paulus Diaconus, and Landolfus Sagax, *Hist. Misc.* xv. 8. The circumstances of Attila's death excite those who believed the rumour. It is not easy to see what excuse can be devised for those recent writers who suggest that, since Attila and Ildico so closely resemble Holophernes and Judith, the entire tradition must be suspected: see Klaeber, pp. 257-8, Maenchen-Helfen, p. 244. That Priscus should have turned to Herodotus and Thucydides when he had no information as to the movements of distant tribes or the course of obscure battles was natural enough by the standards of his time. But that he should have failed to find out the circumstances of Attila's death and should instead have introduced into his work the story of Judith and Holophernes is incredible.

⁴ Jordanes, *Get.* xlvi. 253.

news, we are told, actually came to Marcian before the event itself had occurred. On the very night of the Hun's death—and Priscus swore in his *History* that he was reporting the mere truth—on that very night a divine figure had stood beside the Emperor as he slept and had shown him the bow of Attila broken apart.¹ Perhaps the blame for the tale lies upon Marcian rather than the historian: some exuberance was justifiable when the almost incredible news was brought to him that the bow of Attila was broken asunder. Certainly it was not the only legend about himself that he found it politic to invent.²

VI

After Attila's death his sons divided up the subject nations equally among themselves, so that, as a shocked Goth puts it, 'ad instar familiae bellicosi reges cum populis mitterentur in sortem'.³ We do not know how many sons there were: we only have Jordanes' statement that 'per licentiam libidinis pene populus fuit'. At any rate, this was the only occasion in Hun history, so far as we know, when a father's kingdom was thus shared out by his sons. It will be noted too that they did not parcel out the land over which Attila had ruled but the peoples who occupied that land: land without men was of no interest to the Huns now. Beyond doubt, the sons did not intend to cut themselves off completely from each other: Attila and Bleda before them seem never to have undertaken separate campaigns. But the experience of Octar pointed to what was to come: when the new rulers retired each to his own domains, each with his own followers, concerted military action at short notice by the united Hun forces became impossible.

It was not many months after their father's death that they began to quarrel. As to the cause of their quarrel, it would seem that one or more tried to dispossess the others from their share of the inheritance,⁴ and that several great battles were fought between them as a result.⁵ At any rate, it is clear that their military strength was impaired and the way prepared for a rebellion of the subject nations. Poor as our sources have been for the history of the last few years, they are poorer still

¹ Jordanes, l.c., § 255 'hoc Priscus istoricus vera se dicit attestacione probare'.

² Cf. the story in Evagrius, *HE.* ii. 1, designed to explain his policy of non-interference in Africa.

³ Jordanes, *Get.* l. 259.

⁴ *Chron. Min.* i, p. 482 'certamina de optinendo regno exorta sunt'.

⁵ *Ib.*, pp. 185, 482; Jordanes, *Get.* l. 259; *Vita S. Severini*, 1.

now. The embers of the historical tradition flicker once or twice before going out, and by their light we catch dim glimpses of tremendous struggles on the steppe and movements of peoples, but the details are utterly lost.

The rebellion was started, it seems, by a number of the Ostrogoths in the Theiss valley, whither they had been moved by their masters long before.¹ But this was only a preliminary: the great revolt of the Germanic peoples was led and inspired by Ardaric, the king of the Gepids, who had been a confidant of Attila. It was he above all others who raised the hearts of the Germans *ad helaritatem libertatis votivam*.² After a succession of bloody battles, the decision was reached, probably in 455, in a great conflict at the unknown river Nedao in Pannonia.³ The Ostrogoths, who seem already to have been free, took no part in the battle—a fact by which they later won the hostility of the Gepids—and some of the subject nations still thought fit to support their masters.⁴ But the Gepids were joined by the bulk of the subjects, including most of the Sciri, Rugi, Suebi, and Heruls. Their victory was as complete as it was unexpected, and in their jubilation they claimed to have slain the impossible figure of 30,000 Huns and allies, among them Attila's eldest son Ellac, whom we have met as the governor of the Acatziri.⁵ His surviving brothers with the remnants of their followers fled across the Carpathians to the shores of the Black Sea, where, eighty years before, the Huns had signalized their arrival in European history by crushing the Ostrogoths.

But they were not content to remain there: they, or some of them, soon began to filter back again across the Carpathians to their old homes in the Theiss valley.⁶ Their hatred of the Ostrogoths, who had started the series of campaigns which culminated at the Nedao, must have been boundless, and we soon find them seeking to restore their fortunes by falling upon Valamer (p. 136 above) and his followers. The Ostrogoths had

¹ Cf. Paulus Diaconus, *Hist. Rom.* xv. 11, and see Ensslin, *Dyz-neugr. Jbb.* vi, 1927-8, pp. 151 ff.; Macartney, p. 112.

² Jordanes, *Get.* l. 263.

³ *Ib.*, 262 *multos gravesque conflictos*: for a discussion of the name Nedao see Diculescu, pp. 64 ff.

⁴ Jordanes, l.c. *'aliarum gentium quae Hunnis ferebant auxilium'*: it would seem from § 265 f. that these included some of the Sciri, Alans, Rugi, and perhaps Ostrogoths, cf. Ensslin, art. cit., p. 150.

⁵ Jordanes, l.c. *inopinata victoria*.

⁶ *Ib.*, 264 *'(Gothi cernentes) Hunnorum populum suis antiquis sedibus occupare'*; see Macartney, pp. 107 ff., who rightly, I think, takes *suis* here to refer to the Huns.

been isolated politically: there was marked tension between them and the Gepids, and, as they had not supported the Gepids at the Nedao, so now they had to stand alone.¹ The Huns attacked them 'quasi desertores dominationis suae, velut fugacia mancipia requirentes', and managed to surprise Valamer before his brothers could come to his aid. But the result was another shattering defeat for the Huns, only a fraction of whom escaped from the battlefield under Ernac, Attila's favoured younger son, to take refuge with Marcian's permission at the confluence of the Danube and the Theiss.²

For the rest, we hear of nothing save occasional raids by isolated Hun bands and of the settlement of Huns on the soil of the Eastern Empire by Marcian. Some Huns, for instance, were settled in company with a body of other barbarians in the neighbourhood of Castra Martis, which had fallen to Uldis long ago.³ Emnetzur and Ultzindur, two otherwise unknown *consanguinei* of Attila's sons, were settled in Dacia Ripensis and controlled the fortresses of Utus, Oescus, and Almus.⁴ The dates of these settlements are quite unknown, and we have no chronological information as to Jordanes' statement that, besides these, 'many of the Huns rushed into *Romania* everywhere and gave themselves up; of these some are even now called Sacromontisi and Fossatisii'. Not all of them came peacefully. In the middle of the sixties Anthemius, the son-in-law of Marcian and future Emperor of the West, won distinction against one of their bands. The leader of this *Scythicae vaga turba plagae*, as Sidonius, our sole authority, calls it,

feritatis abundans,
dira, rapax, vehemens, ipsis quoque gentibus illic
barbara barbaricis,

was called Hormidac, whose previous and subsequent career is unknown.⁵ They had launched so unexpected a raid that the city of Sardica (Sophia) had been unable to close its gates in time and had fallen into their hands. Anthemius besieged them

¹ Jordanes, *Cet.* lii. 268, cf. 264, and see Ensslin, art. cit., p. 152.

² Jordanes, l.c. 269, reading *Danubii* or the like (with Macartney, p. 108) for Mommsen's *Danabri*—the bulk of the manuscripts are against Mommsen here. For the natural strength of this region Macartney compares Amm. xvii. 4.

³ Jordanes, l.c. 265; see p. 29 above.

⁴ See Mommsen's note on Jordanes, op. cit. 266.

⁵ Sidonius, *Carm.* ii. 239 ff. Seeck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 358, dates the incident to the winter of 466/7.

there in circumstances of considerable hardship, for it appears that his troops were continually short of food and drink—the devastation of the surrounding country-side must have been very severe. But Hormidac's position was equally grave, for he eventually came out and offered battle in the hope of breaking up the siege. At the first onset the Roman officer commanding Anthemius' cavalry deserted to the enemy. His name is not recorded, but, being a cavalry officer, it is not impossible that he was himself a Hun. At any rate, Anthemius fought on with the infantry and in the end scored a victory. He made peace with Hormidac on condition that the traitor was handed over to him.¹

In the wild confusion of the generation which followed Attila's death we catch an occasional glimpse of one or two of the *λογάδες*. Indeed, the fortunes of one of them are well known. There is little need, however, to recount here the story of Orestes and how he returned to the Western Empire, where he eventually rebelled against the Emperor Julius Nepos and set upon the throne his own son Romulus, named after the Romulus with whom Priscus had spoken in Attila's encampment a quarter of a century before. But when the young Romulus had sat dimly upon the throne for only a year or so, he and his father were overthrown by Odoacer. Now, by a strange irony, Odoacer, the first barbarian king of Italy, appears to have been the son of that very Edeco who had travelled to Constantinople with Orestes in 449 and had undertaken to murder Attila. At any rate, we hear that Odoacer was the son of a certain 'Idico', as John of Antioch calls him, or 'Aedico', as the Anonymus Valesianus has it,² and from the days of Valesius and Tillemont scholars have agreed to identify this Idico or Aedico with the Edeco of Priscus.³ Jordanes gives us some information about the activities of Edeco—he calls him Edica—after the death of Attila.⁴ He and one of his sons—not Odoacer, but another who is significantly named Hunoulphus—joined in a great con-

¹ Sidonius, *op. cit.* 269 ff.

² John, *frag.* 209 (source not Priscus); Anon. Vales. 45.

³ To the names of those who have accepted the identification cited in Reynolds and Lopez, p. 48, n. 40, add those of Seeck, *P.-W.* v. 1939 (cautiously); Gildenpenning, p. 350; L. Schmidt, *Geschichte*, p. 298; E. Stein, *Geschichte*, p. 440; and W. Ensslin, *P.-W.* xvii, 1888, s.v. 'Odoacer', who says that the identification 'can now scarcely be doubted'. But Reynolds and Lopez alone draw the necessary conclusion that Odoacer was a Hun: see their suggestive article *passim*.

⁴ *Get.* liv. 277.

federacy of nations who aimed at the final and definitive destruction of the Ostrogoths. The age-old hatred of the Huns for the Ostrogoths still lived on in Edeco. The Gothic king Valamer was now dead, but his younger brothers Theodimer and Vidimer utterly routed the confederates on the unknown river Bolia in Pannonia. Edeco may have fallen in the rout, for we never hear of him again.

We learn something also of two sons of Attila called Dengizech and Ernac—the latter had been seen by Priscus during the first banquet given to the Roman ambassador in the log hut of Attila.¹ Ernac had settled, with Marcian's permission (p. 154 above), at the confluence of the Danube and Theiss. Dengizech appears to have stayed in the Theiss valley until, hearing that the Ostrogoths were attacking an unknown people called the Sadagi, he assembled the few tribes who still remained under his control and whose names are given as the Ultinzures, Angisciri, Bittugures, and Bardores. Coming to Bassiana, a city of Pannonia lying to the east of Sirmium, these Huns began to devastate the country-side, but the Ostrogoths fell upon them with such effect 'ut iam ex illo tempore qui remanserunt Hunni et usque actenus Gothorum arma formident'.² For many years Dengizech drops out of history, but he reappears towards the end of the sixties. We are told that, in the year 468-9, an embassy arrived in Constantinople from 'the children of Attila'. Its purpose was to clear up the differences which existed between the East Roman government and themselves—evidently some fighting had taken place—and to negotiate a peace treaty which would reopen the market towns along the Roman frontier to the Huns (see p. 179 f. below). But the envoys achieved nothing: the Emperor Leo (457-74) saw no reason why the benefits of Roman trade should be given to men who had done so much harm to the Empire. When the children of Attila heard of the failure of the embassy, our source goes on, they disagreed among themselves. Dengizech wished to declare war upon the Romans—and it is clear that he had often done so before—but his brother Ernac refused to join him: he declared that the wars already going on inside his own dominions occu-

¹ See p. 118 above. On the name Dengizech—Jordanes, *Get.* liii. 272, has *Dintzic*—see Markwart, p. 83, who believes it to be a Turkish diminutive, but is unable to identify it.

² Jordanes, *Get.* liii. 272 f. The names of the Ultinzures (on which see below, p. 182) and Bittugures are known to Agathias, pp. 201. 6, 365. 9, Dindorf.

pied him sufficiently.¹ Thereupon Dengizech undertook the campaign alone. He appeared upon the bank of the Danube and was met by the Master of the Soldiers in Thrace, Anagast, the son of that Arnegisclus who had so often fought Attila. Anagast sent some envoys to ask Dengizech what he wanted: the Hun contemptuously sent them back without an answer, and himself sent an embassy direct to Leo declaring that, if the Emperor would not give land and money to him and his followers, war would result. Leo listened to the ambassadors and was clearly not unwilling to enlist the barbarians in his army;² but the negotiations broke down and Dengizech invaded the Roman provinces. It was his last campaign. He was defeated and killed by Anagast in 469, and his head was brought to the Eastern capital, where it was carried in procession along the street called Mesé, and fixed on a pole at the Xylokerkos Gate. The whole city turned out to look joyfully upon it, and to prove incidentally the terror which a Hun raid could still inspire in Constantinople.³ The fate of Ernac remains unknown, but the oracle, which foretold that he would restore the fallen fortunes of Attila's descendants, proved wrong after all, and it has been plausibly suggested that he died an obscure mercenary in the service of the Eastern Empire.⁴ The last raid carried out by Huns during the fifth century on the lower Danube provinces was launched over an unguarded part of the river in the early days of the Emperor Zeno (474-91), whose generals seem to have beaten it back without much trouble.⁵

The main strength of the Huns, such as it was, remained then on the lower Danube during the reigns of Leo and Zeno, but they did not all play the part of plunderers of the Roman dominions: some, as Ernac may have done, were glad to take service in the Imperial armies. At the time of Dengizech's death, or a little earlier, we hear of a certain Chelchal, who was serving under Anagast against an army of Goths supported by yet another company of Huns.⁶ Chelchal summoned the Gothic commanders to his presence during a truce, and declared to them that Leo would be willing to grant them land, but that in

¹ Priscus, frag. 36.

² *Ib.*, frag. 38.

³ *Chron. Pasch.*, p. 598. 3, Bonn; Marcellinus, s.a. 469.

⁴ Macartney, p. 113; see p. 154 above.

⁵ Evagrius, *HE.* iii. 2, but the chroniclers do not think it worthy of mention.

⁶ Diculescu's opinion (p. 63), that these Goths, here found collaborating with the Huns, had also fought for them at the Nedao, is not impossible.

doing so he intended to benefit only the Huns serving in their ranks. He went on to emphasize the immeasurable hatred which every Goth felt for them: in the days of their ancestors, he said, the Goths had sworn to avoid all treaties with Huns. He finally stated that, although himself a Hun, he had told them of Leo's intentions because of his love of truth. This reason would not have satisfied every Roman, but the Goths believed his words, and suspected the loyalty of their Hun comrades. They therefore gathered them together and tried to massacre them. Anagast was delighted with the trickery of his subordinate, which could not have been bettered by the most skilled East Roman, but the combatants soon saw that their struggle benefited no one except the enemy. They therefore came to terms again with one another and resumed their struggle with the Imperial forces. Chelchal's deceit had not been so successful as he and Anagast had hoped.¹

Companies of Huns are also found in the service of the Western Romans very soon after the battle of the Nedao. In 457 Huns were enlisted in the motley army which Majorian had assembled for his projected campaigns in Gaul and Africa.² Majorian had reason to regret hiring his Hun mercenaries, for, as he was about to set out from Italy, they alone of this multinational army mutinied:

Obsequium gens una negat, quae nuper ab Histro
rettulit indomitum solito truculentior agmen
quod dominis per bella caret, populoque superbo
Tuldila plectendas in proelia suggerit iras.

Tuldila bears a Germanic name, so that it would seem that these unruly Huns were incited to mutiny by a Goth. At any rate, we know nothing more about him except the fate of the mutiny which he incited:

Tu tamen hanc differs poenam, sed sanguinis auctor
maioris, dum parcis, eras. non pertulit ultra
hoc pro te plus cauta manus vestrumque pudorem
sprevit pro vobis; primi cadit hostia belli
quisque rebellis erat.³

Other Huns too were enlisted to take part in Majorian's planned invasion of Africa. Part of Majorian's plan of campaign in 461 was that the famous Marcellinus, Count of Dalmatia,

¹ Priscus, frag. 39.

² Sidonius, *Carm.* v. 475.

³ *Ib.*, 485 ff., 499.

should occupy Sicily so as to shield the island from the descents of the Vandals by sea. The army which Marcellinus brought with him included a very considerable band of Huns, but they were as faithless to him as Tuldila had been to the luckless Emperor. Ricimer, who was presumed to be the friend of Majorian, bribed these Huns to leave Marcellinus in the lurch, and Marcellinus could do no more than retire from Sicily, and allow Geiseric to devote his undivided attention to Majorian.¹ Treachery and mutual divisions are as strongly marked a characteristic of the Huns in their latest days as in their earliest.

VII

It is not known whether such war-lords as Dengizech and Edeco believed that they could one day restore the great empire which Attila had ruled. Whatever hopes they may have had of uniting the Huns once more into a confederacy and dominating the steppe were ruined by the events of the sixties of the fifth century.

It has been said that the last paragraph of Priscus' thirtieth fragment 'is certainly one of the most important [passages] for the ethnographer to be found in ancient literature, for it is the sole record of one of those great race movements which have been such important factors in rearranging the ethnographic distribution of man'.² In it Priscus tells us that in the middle of the sixties ambassadors arrived in Constantinople from the people of the Saraguri,³ the Uguri, and the Onoguri. These nations had been driven out of their homes by the Sabiri, who had themselves been set in motion by a nation whose name is now mentioned for the first time, the Avars. What had set the Avars on the move? The peoples living beyond them on the shore of the Ocean, says Priscus, had themselves been driven from their homes by an inroad of the sea, and, so the reports said, by a ferocious brood of griffins who were only destined to stop devouring the human race when not a man was left alive. So as one nation set its neighbour in motion, the Saraguri had

¹ Priscus, frag. 29. Seeck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 350, and Ensslin, P.-W. xiv. 1447, seem to be certainly right in taking these 'Scythians' to be Huns.

² Howorth (1889), p. 722.

³ This nation is only known from Priscus, frags. 30, 41 (cf. Suidas, s.v.) and Zachariah of Mitylene, p. 328. Bury, ed. of Gibbon, iv. Appendix 17, p. 538, n. 5, is tempted to suppose that Priscus has erred and that the Koriguri are meant. This is hazardous.

at last been thrown on the Acatziri, whom Attila had subjected in 448 (pp. 95 ff. above) and who had since regained their freedom. They were now conquered again after a succession of battles and their conquerors had come to Constantinople to win the friendship of the Eastern Romans. This in fact they secured. But they were only the forerunners of the nations pressing westwards behind them. A dozen years after Attila's death the steppe was drenched by floods of new and warlike nomadic barbarians.¹ So Dengizech, Ernac, and the others were compelled to stay in the Roman Empire or on its immediate borders: for them there was no retreat into the open steppe.

Priscus' reference to the 'ocean' has been taken to mean that this vast movement of peoples originated in the regions lying north and north-east of the Altai in eastern Siberia.² On this we may reserve our opinion: perhaps the movement started no farther away than the shores of the Aral Sea. In any case, the steppe was now crowded with military nations among whom the pitiful remnants of the Huns played nothing more than the rôle of minor robbers and cattle-raiders.

¹ The doubts of de Boor as to the authenticity of the extract from Suidas printed in Priscus' frag. 30 at p. 341. 6-14, Dindorf, carry little weight, as was shown by Moravcsik, *Ung. Jbb.* x, 1930, pp. 53 ff.

² Moravcsik, art. cit., p. 58.

VII

HUN SOCIETY UNDER ATILA

THE isolated bands of nomads whom we sought to describe in Chapter III could never have reared up that vast empire which covered central Europe in the middle of the fifth century if their society had remained always as it had been at the end of the fourth. But their society, like all others, did not remain stationary. We have seen how, as wealth grew, kingship made its appearance among them. We have now to inquire into what happened when wealth began to accumulate on the steppe in even larger masses.

I

About the year 430 Rua made a treaty with the Romans of the East by the terms of which the Emperor undertook to pay him a tribute of 350 lb. of gold per annum.¹ In 435, under Bleda and Attila, this tribute was doubled and thenceforth the Huns received 700 lb. of gold a year.² After the battle in the Chersonesus in 443 Anatolius signed his first treaty with the Huns. By its terms 6,000 lb. of gold were to be paid in a lump sum as arrears of tribute, and the annual payment trebled, that is, the Huns now received 2,100 lb. of gold every year.³ As early as the days of Uldis we find the Huns selling off their prisoners at 1 *solidus* a head (p. 33 above). In 435 they had the right of disposing of their Roman prisoners at 8 *solidi* a head, and this was raised to 12 *solidi* in 443. An occasional windfall would bring them far larger sums. For instance, the wife of one Sulla who had been captured in Ratiaria in 443 brought in no less than 500 *solidi*.⁴ Stringent precautions were taken to ensure that no prisoners escaped without payment of the ransom money. The money was to go to those who captured the prisoner, but the tribute was paid directly τοῖς βασιλεῦσι Σκόθαις, that is, to Bleda and Attila, and after 445 to Attila alone.⁵ Also, when a city was captured the booty was not distributed evenly to all the Huns: the most powerful of them received a disproportionately large share.⁶ In addition to all this, the Huns

¹ Priscus, pp. 276. 13, 277. 23: see p. 74 f. above.

² *Ib.*, p. 282. 25-30: see p. 85 above.

³ *Ib.*, p. 277. 15 and 22.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 277. 21.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 319. 5.

⁶ *Ib.*, p. 306. 7.

obtained enormous quantities of plunder during their many raids on the Roman provinces and especially during the two great invasions of 441/3 and 447. What was the effect on Hun society of this influx of huge sums of money and limitless quantities of plunder, and how was the money spent?

Bleda and Attila ruled jointly. They were the sons of Munduch,¹ the brother of Rua and Octar, all three of whom had held the leadership of the confederacy simultaneously. Attila handed down the sovereignty of his empire to his numerous sons *ad instar familiae*. It is evident then that one family had succeeded in making of the military leadership an hereditary office held by successive generations of brothers, and a Roman can refer to Attila's πρόγονοι as ruling the Huns.² This is an entire innovation in Hun society and implies that an hereditary nobility has made its appearance. The leaders differ now from the *primates* of Ammianus' day in that they derive their authority, not from military prowess, which cannot be inherited, but from wealth, which can.

Attila is shown in the pages of Priscus to have been an entirely autocratic khan even in peace-time. He appears among his people amid the shouts of their applause;³ but their respect is based on fear, and we are assured by Priscus that the entire πᾶσις of the Huns was pervaded by terror of him.⁴ There is no hint in any of our authorities that he felt the slightest limitation on his power either in war or in peace. He plans and conducts campaigns and negotiations apparently without any consultation with, or advice from, his followers. In peace-time he administers justice: standing at the door of his log hut, a crowd of disputants hears and accepts his judgements without protest and, it seems, with complete submission. The judgements are delivered by Attila on the spur of the moment after hearing the contending parties, without reference even to Onegesius, who is standing beside him.⁵ He has the power of life and death over all his followers.⁶ Nothing could be farther removed from the *primates* of the fourth century. Attila has emancipated himself from tribal obligations and from the limitations which a tribal society imposes upon the excessive

¹ Priscus, p. 326. 9. Theophanes, p. 102. 15, calls him Μούνδιος, but Jordanes, *Get.* xxxv. 180, xlix. 257, has *Mundzucus*. Müllenhoff *op. Mommsen's* Jordanes, Index s.v. (p. 152), derives the name from the Germanic *Mundvechum*, but this is very doubtful.

² Priscus, p. 289. 30.

³ *Ib.*, p. 311. 22.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 298. 28.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 311. 26.

⁶ *Ib.*, p. 298. 1.

growth of any one individual's power. Neither the tribe nor even the entire nation can control him. He can murder members of his kin without retribution;¹ he has slain even his own brother. His followers regard him as a god, and his subjects find it convenient to address him as such (pp. 97, 104 above). This is a state of mind which Attila has reinforced among his rude followers by the use he has made of the sword of the war god (p. 89 above). In a word, the growth of wealth has revolutionized Hun society.

II

In this autocratically governed community there seems to be no room for the *primates*, who, as we saw, owed their war-time position less to wealth than to military prowess. We hear instead of Attila's λογάδες or ἐπιτηδείοι, as they are sometimes called. Edeco belonged to their number because of his outstanding successes in warfare.² On the other hand, Berichus, who was also ἀνὴρ τῶν λογάδων,³ owed his position to his noble birth,⁴ which probably means that his family in the preceding generation had won distinction in the field and, in doing so, had acquired considerable wealth from plunder and the like. At least one of the λογάδες, admittedly a minor one, was not a Hun at all but a Roman: this was Orestes, the father of the last Emperor of the West, Romulus Augustulus.⁵

What were the functions of these λογάδες? They went on diplomatic missions for their master on very numerous occasions, and sometimes they negotiated with foreign ambassadors who came into the steppe to see Attila.⁶ The ulterior motive of their frequent visits to Constantinople was the collection of the rich harvest of gifts which every ambassador received there.⁷

¹ See p. 77 above, cf. p. 86.

² Priscus, p. 286. 22 ἀνὴρ Σκύθης, μέγιστα κατὰ πόλεμον ἔργα διαπραξάμενος, p. 291. 4 'Ελέκωνα δὲ τὰ κατὰ πόλεμον ἔριστον. He, like Onegesius, is called ἐπιτηδείος or λογάς without distinction: cf. p. 287. 30 with p. 292. 30, and p. 304. 15 with p. 306. 6, 9.

³ Ib., p. 320. 25. The only other λογάδες whom we know by name are Onegesius, Scotta his brother, Orestes, and Edeco, but there were more, cf. p. 292. 30.

⁴ Ib., p. 315. 28.

⁵ In the Anon. Vales. 38 we read: 'Orestes Pannonius, qui eo tempore quando Attila ad Italiam venit se illi iunxit et eius notarius factus fuerat.' This cannot refer to the invasion of 452: when had Attila been in Italy before? Perhaps with Aetius in 433: see p. 64 above.

⁶ For the former see Priscus, pp. 286. 6, 328. 2, &c., and for the latter pp. 292. 30, 318. 24.

⁷ Ib., p. 286. 6.

Again, they were called upon to guard Attila's person, and each of them accompanied his master in arms for a specified part of the day, a fact which gave them ready access to his person and conversation.¹ Although they regarded this task as δουλεία, 'slavery',² they were capable of the greatest loyalty in carrying it out.³ Edeco was perhaps corrupted by Chrysaphius, but he confessed to Attila almost at once, and Priscus suggests that he may never have intended murdering his master at all (p. 105 above).

A far more important duty concerned the government of the rest of the Huns. A portion of the horsemen seems to have been under the direct orders of Edeco, and, when the murder of Attila was suggested to him, his first thought was to assure the co-operation of the men under his immediate command.⁴ It is clear that, although each of the *λογάδες* was assigned a military force of his own, that force was well aware to whom it owed its first loyalty. With this military support the *λογάδες* ruled over specific portions of the great empire which Attila, Rua, and their predecessors had built up. We are told that Berichus was 'the ruler of many villages in Scythia',⁵ and doubtless Onegesius, Edeco, and the others were so too. In this they resembled Attila's own sons: it will be recalled that, when the brave and powerful nation of the Acatziri was subdued, Attila appointed his eldest son Ellac to rule over it.⁶ It seems reasonable to suggest that the *λογάδες* corresponded to the *οἰκῆται καὶ λοχαγοὶ* of Uldis (p. 58 above), and that they commanded during a campaign, not only the specific squadrons of the Huns assigned to each of them, but also the contingents of subject warriors provided by the districts which they governed. We know further that a sort of hierarchy existed among them, which was indicated by the seats allotted to them when they sat down to feast with their master: Onegesius sat at Attila's right hand and Berichus at his left, and Attila's paternal uncle was similarly honoured.⁷ Again, the Roman Orestes ranked much below Edeco, because the latter was τὰ κατὰ πόλεμον ἄριστος καὶ τοῦ Οὐννου γένους.⁸ All this perhaps allows us to conclude that the territories over which they ruled were unequal in area, population, wealth, and strategical importance.

¹ Priscus, p. 287-32, cf. p. 311. 20.

² *Ib.*, 14-18.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 288. 18.

⁵ *Ib.*, pp. 299. 17, 320. 25; see p. 97 above.

⁷ *Ib.*, pp. 315. 25, 319. 22.

² *Ib.*, p. 310. 18.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 320. 25.

⁸ *Ib.*, p. 291. 3.

Apart from keeping order among the subject nations, the *λογάδες* had a further duty: they had to collect tribute and food-stuffs from them. Chelchal, in his solitary appearance in history (p. 157 f. above), said to certain Goths, in reference to the days of Attila, that the Huns, who themselves despised agriculture, descended upon the Gothic food-supply and snatched it away like wolves, so that the Goths had the status of slaves and laboured for the sustenance of the Huns; to this relationship he assigned the bitter enmity of the two races.¹ Whether the Goths were able to produce a sufficient surplus of food to support both themselves and their parasitic masters may be doubted—and more than doubted. At any rate, it was not the Huns who went short, even though they had to import grain to supplement their supplies. It was certainly this collection of Gothic food which enabled the Huns to concentrate larger armies now than when they had first appeared in Europe and were dependent exclusively on their own products. We have no details as to the manner in which they extorted the grain from their subjects or as to the amount taken. Nor have we any information as to how they enrolled their subjects into their forces. We know, however, that the Huns had compelled their subjects to fight for them as early as 375, when we find the newly conquered Alans heading the attack on the Ostrogoths, and in 408 Uldis had invaded Thrace with a body of Sciri in his army (pp. 23, 29 above). We may take it as certain that Attila rarely went on a campaign without bringing with him considerable numbers of his subjects: they helped to swell his numbers, and it would have been dangerous to leave them behind when the main Hun forces were far away. All this brutal treatment was precisely reflected in the attitude of the Huns towards their subjects. Again and again our sources tell us that the Huns regarded their subjects as nothing more than slaves. The successors of Attila sought out the Goths *velut fugacia mancipia requirentes*, and we have abundant evidence to show that their attitude was merely traditional.²

It is clear that the *λογάδες* were the hinge upon which the entire administration of the Hun empire turned. The Latin secretaries sent to Attila by Aetius (p. 127 f. above) were of quite

¹ *Ib.*, p. 348. 8.

² Jordanes, *Get.* lii. 268, cf. l. 260, 263; Priscus, pp. 326. 25, 348. 10. Attila even compares Theodosius to a slave, *ib.*, p. 326. 13.

minor importance, their chief functions being merely to compose letters which Attila wished to send to one or other of the Roman Emperors, and to keep a few documents and records of various kinds.¹ But without the *λογάδες* Attila could not have administered his domains at all.

It is to be noticed that Berichus, although 'ruler of many villages in Scythia', was absent from his dominions in 449 and was found by Priscus at Attila's camp; thereafter he was able to serve on an embassy to Constantinople. This would seem to suggest that the military force by means of which he kept his portion of the conquered peoples in subjection was very considerable: he could not have absented himself thus unless he had been absolutely assured of the safety of his garrison troops and of their wives and children from the bitter hostility of the subject population, who with hungry eyes saw their grain carried off year by year to feed their masters. But, as we saw in an earlier chapter, there is no reason to believe that the Huns were very numerous; it was impossible for the *λογάδες* to garrison the entire enormous empire. Hence some of the subject peoples continued to be ruled directly by their own native kings or chiefs, who were, however, far more the slaves of Attila than were the *λογάδες*. But the favoured Ardaric, king of the Gepids (who afterwards headed the allies at the river Nedao), and Valamer, the senior king of the Ostrogoths, seem to have been almost on a par with the *λογάδες* themselves. Of Ardaric Jordanes reports that 'ob nimiam suam fidelitatem erga Attila eius consiliis intererat'.² It is difficult to avoid the impression that, although Ardaric incited the great rebellion after Attila's death, he must have welcomed the state of affairs existing in his lord's lifetime. True, he was not entirely independent; but, on the other hand, his position was guaranteed so long as he retained the confidence of the Huns—no enemy, either internal or external, could rise up effectively against him if Attila continued to be his friend. To a considerable extent, in fact, the continued existence of the Hun empire must have been a vested interest in the Germanic world of Ardaric as it certainly was in the Roman world of Aetius (p. 142 above). Not all German kings received the favour which Ardaric enjoyed. Of the mass of minor princes and chieftains Jordanes writes sorrowfully as follows: 'reliqua autem, si dici fas est, turba regum diversarum-

¹ Priscus, p. 296. 26.

² *Get.* xxxviii, 199.

que nationum ductores ac si satellites notibus Attilae attendebant, et ubi oculo annuisset, absque alia murmuratione cum timore et tremore unusquisque adstabat, aut certe, quod iussus fuerat, exequabatur.' Even the Gothic kings did not hold a particularly dignified position: 'ita tamen, ut saepe dictum est, imperabant ut ipsi Attilae Hunnorum regis imperio deservirent . . . ; necessitas domini, etiam parricidium si iubet, implendum est.'¹ But, although food might be short, it was not the king who went hungry; and whatever the discontent of his followers, they could do nothing as long as Attila lived.

It seems reasonable to conclude that, just as the Huns had defeated Ermanarich's followers in the first place with the co-operation of their subjects (p. 55 f. above), so in part they kept them in subjection by co-operating with the Gothic rulers. Even before the fourth century came to a close, the Huns ruled the Goths, according to Jordanes, 'ita ut genti Gothorum semper proprius regulus, quamvis Hunnorum consilio, imperaret'.² It may not have been an heroic life, but at least it was a safe one. In the case of the Romans it was the poorer classes who welcomed the invaders; among the Germans it may have been the kings who filled this role.

III

Before considering the factors which led to the downfall of Hun society we must digress—if it is a digression—and consider the position which women held in this community of plunderers. For the period before Priscus we have practically no information. Ammianus merely mentions the women living in the wagons which formed the headquarters of the various groups of nomads: in these wagons, he says, they spent their time in stitching together the crude garments worn by their menfolk and in bearing their children. This picture, such as it is, suggests the desperately hard conditions of life which are the customary lot of women on the steppe,³ and, if we possessed no further evidence, we might conclude that the Hun women suffered the cruel fate which is usual in primitive nomadic societies. But if so, we should be wrong. Ammianus does not prepare us for the information offered by Priscus.

It will be recalled that, when Attila rode into his chief village, the Hun women ran from all sides to catch sight of him: some

¹ *Ib.*, 200; xlviii. 253. ² *Ib.*, 249. ³ See, for example, Peisker, pp. 34 f.

of them formed up in a choir about his horse, and sang songs of welcome to him.¹ This action does not suggest the seclusion of the womenfolk which Ammianus' words might have led us to expect. On that same occasion, when Attila had gone a little farther along the road, the wife of Onegesius came out of her hut with a throng of her handmaids and offered food and drink to the chieftain. He accepted the gifts, still sitting on his horse, because, says Priscus, 'he wished to please the wife of his lieutenant'.² On this occasion, too, the women appear in public and rub shoulders in the throng, not only with their own menfolk, but with strangers and foreigners, like Priscus, who was himself standing there watching. Again, the historian had no difficulty in entering Hereca's tent, in looking at her handmaids busy with their embroidery, and in speaking to the queen herself.³ But the most surprising fact of all is still to be recalled. One of the villages through which the ambassador and his party journeyed was actually ruled by a woman, a wife of Bleda.⁴ Whether she ruled only this one village, or whether the village was the capital of a considerable area, we have no means of saying. We hear of no other women rulers among the Huns themselves, but the Utiguri, a nation closely akin to the Huns of Attila, knew at least one female tribal leader,⁵ while in the time of Justinian the Sabiri, who were also considered to be Huns (p. 159 above), were led by a woman called Boärex, who took command of her tribe on the death of her husband Balach.⁶ Considering that the Huns were a race of pastoral nomads, we can only conclude that women held among them a position of unexpected dignity and respect: there is, as Hodgkin (p. 82) points out, no trace of Oriental seclusion about their treatment. It is well worth recalling Fox's words (p. 43) about the early Mongols, particularly when we have the case of Boärex before us:

'When a man died leaving his children still in infancy, the widow assumed all the rights of her husband, including even the leadership of the clan or tribe, until such time as her children grew to manhood and married. Among both Mongols and Turks the position of the widow was one of great importance. In some cases she might become the ruler of a great empire.'

¹ Priscus, p. 304. 2 ff.: see p. 112 above.

² *Ib.*, p. 304. 15.

³ *Ib.*, p. 311. 5 ff.: see p. 114 above.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 301. 1: see p. 111 above.

⁵ Menander Protector, frag. 43 (p. 85. 15, Dindorf).

⁶ Malalas, p. 430. 20 ff.; Theophanes, p. 175. 12 ff., de Boor.

The little evidence that we possess, and particularly the status of Bleda's widow, seems to indicate that to some extent this holds good of the Huns also.

Onegesius lived in a group of huts enclosed within a palisade. He did not live alone there with his wife and servants: he also had the company of 'those who were related to him κατὰ γένος', and the number of slaves and servant girls resident in his huts was very considerable.¹ There seems to be no reason why we should not generalize from what we know about Onegesius, and suppose that this extensive household organization was the rule among the Huns. With this we must closely associate the polygamy practised by them, which, it would seem, was not restricted merely to the rulers.² Bearing both these phenomena in mind, we may conclude with some assurance that the Huns were organized in what Lewis Morgan called 'patriarchal families'. Morgan points out that, in this organization of the family, 'the chiefs, at least, lived in polygamy; but this was not the material principle of the patriarchal institution. The organization of a number of persons, bond and free, into a family, under paternal power, for the purpose of holding lands'—this point would not, of course, apply to the nomads—and for the care of flocks and herds, was the essential characteristic of this family. . . . Authority over its members and over its property was the material fact.'³ A very significant feature of the patriarchal family is the exclusive domination of the male within it, for tending the flocks and herds is essentially the male's work and the female is economically quite dependent. But the women of the Huns have not yet suffered the full degradation which the growth of property in a primitive society usually entails.

IV

The growth of wealth and the influx of money, then, had not yet radically affected the position held by women in Hun society. Let us consider now the position of the military leader in the new conditions.

¹ Priscus, p. 304. 12, 24.

² Jordanes, *Get.* xlix. 254 'post innumerabiles uxores, ut mos erat gentis illius'; Priscus, p. 299. 31 (quoted on p. 110, n. 5), where Σαρκινόν does not denote the rulers alone, one would think; cf. Salvian's *Chunorum impudicitia, de Gub. Dei*, iv. 68. We have direct testimony to the polygamy of Attila (Priscus, p. 299. 30), Bleda (*ib.*, p. 301. 2), and Onegesius (*ib.*, p. 310. 16).

³ Lewis H. Morgan, *Ancient Society* (New York, 1877), p. 465 f.

Attila only had followers because he could reward them well. In the conditions of pastoralism on the steppe, as Fox (p. 49) says, 'a generous lord had many followers, a weak or unsuccessful one'—such as Uldis had become in 408—'soon had none'. Hence the chieftain had continually to bestir himself to keep his rude followers well supplied and to present them with the costliest gifts. He gave them the best share of the booty,¹ and sent them on embassies to Constantinople so that they might enrich themselves at the Emperor's expense.² Attila never failed, until the last two years of his life, to supply endless booty and a huge quantity of money. Thus we find the *λογέταις* owning, or receiving as gifts, silk and Indian pearls,³ gold and silver platters,⁴ silver goblets and trays,⁵ bridles studded with gold and precious stones,⁶ beds covered with linen and variegated hangings.⁷ To eat they have Indian pepper, dates, and other delicacies.⁸ At the feast which he gave for his followers and the Romans Attila supplied meat, *σῆτος*, *ῥφα*,⁹ and other edibles.¹⁰ On the steppe the Huns had only eaten meat 'on festive occasions or as a consequence of a visit of special honour'.¹¹ It would seem to be quite a customary dish now, at least for the ruling stratum. There was wine to drink at the banquet, although the Huns had now become acquainted with several varieties of Germanic beer as well—both *medus* (mead) and *camum* are specified.¹² Even an East Roman can refer to the feast as *πολυτελῆ δεῖπνον*.¹³ It began about the ninth hour and went on all night.¹⁴ There were tables,¹⁵ chairs, and couches of the Roman fashion.¹⁶ The Roman influence is very clear in the arrangement of the tables, each of which was set before three or four of the guests.¹⁷ The large huts of Attila and Onegesius illustrate the difference between Attila's Huns and those of Ammianus' day, who lived in horse-drawn wagons and feared to enter a Roman or Gothic dwelling.¹⁸ All these possessions

¹ Priscus, p. 306. 8.² *Ib.*, p. 286. 6 *et al.*³ *Ib.*, p. 290. 22.⁴ *Ib.*, pp. 316. 24, 27, 304. 17.⁵ *Ib.*, pp. 301. 17, 311. 32, 304. 17.⁶ *Ib.*, p. 317. 1.⁷ *Ib.*, p. 315. 23, cf. 311. 8: they have an abundance of linen, p. 304. 4, 8.⁸ *Ib.*, p. 301. 17.⁹ *Ib.*, pp. 316. 20, 317. 2, cf. p. 304. 12: they also had fish, p. 294. 23.¹⁰ *Ib.*, p. 317. 9.¹¹ Peisker, p. 340.¹² Priscus, p. 300. 9, 11; on *camum* see *CQ.* xli, 1947, p. 63.¹³ Priscus, p. 316. 23.¹⁴ *Ib.*, pp. 315. 10, 318. 18.¹⁵ *Ib.*, p. 316. 15, 22.¹⁶ *Ib.*, p. 315. 20, 21, 30, &c.¹⁷ *Ib.*, p. 316. 16.¹⁸ Amm. xxxi. 2. 10 *carpenta*, cf. § 4.

and luxuries have one negative quality in common: not a single one of them could have been made or produced by the Huns themselves, so small was their productive power. Further, although they were all in such obvious display at Attila's banquet, it may be doubted whether they were enjoyed by the Huns at large: they were more probably confined to the rulers. At any rate, some minor Huns out on the steppe as late as 449 could provide the Roman ambassador with no σῆτος, but only with κέγχρος.¹ Hun society, in the form which it had attained under Attila, could only continue in existence if supplies of these luxuries continued; but before we consider that point it is necessary to examine a source of supply which we have hitherto overlooked, but which is of fundamental importance.

v

'Gifts', tribute, and plunder were not the only sources from which the luxuries of the λογάζες were derived. It is time now to approach the vitally important question of trade. Scholars are agreed that a nomadic society existing exclusively on its flocks and herds without any contacts with settled agricultural communities is only a theoretical conception: there is no evidence that it has ever existed in practice. Exchange with settled populations is essential for the nomads' existence, and it was above all else the need for exchange that compelled the Huns in the first place to come into contact with the border towns of the Roman Empire.² The omission of this fact is the most serious weakness in the accounts of the nomads which have survived from ancient times; both Ammianus and Nestorius (p. 62 above) say nothing of it whatever.

For the period before Attila our sources tell us nothing about trade except for Ammianus' remark that 'they buy and sell when seated on their horses'. Of the Altziagiri somewhat later Jordanes has the following significant statement: 'iuxta Chersonam Altziagiri (sc. sedes habent), quo Asiae bona avidus mercator importat', and we have already quoted his words on the skin trade of the Hunuguri.³ Their internal trade was of little importance, for one Hun community can have had but little to exchange which another wanted, since all alike were restricted to the one productive technique and the same limited

¹ Priscus, p. 300. 9.

² Cf. Fox, p. 9.

³ Amm. xxxi. 2. 6; Jordanes, *Get.* v. 37; see p. 42, n. 2 above.

material resources. Indeed, it is a common feature of all nomadic peoples of the steppe that they have practically no internal trade, although their external trade is quite brisk.¹ We have indicated above some of the articles which had to be imported into the steppe in the earliest days of the Huns. A clear example is their linen clothing: this continued to be worn by Attila and his grandees in Priscus' time, but the historian speaks of the precious skins which they also liked to wear.² Arms too were certainly required on a large scale, not merely because the extremely primitive steppe society has always been deficient in providing itself with weapons, but also because the steppe is treeless—hence the use of horn and bone in the making of bows.³ Accordingly, even if the conditions of their society had allowed them sufficient time and technique to make their own weapons, the raw materials were lacking. But in fact they had insufficient technique. Even the Mongols of the twelfth century, a military nation if ever there was one, had to import their weapons, chiefly from China and Khorasan. In normal times they could make their own bows and arrows, spears and lances, 'but as soon as they began to make war on a large scale their slender productive resources failed them and they were forced to rely on other countries for their weapons'.⁴ This fact is not explicitly mentioned by any ancient authority in the case of the Huns; nevertheless, it was well known in the fifth century and we shall see presently that it had not escaped the vigilant eyes of the East Roman government. It is to be noted, too, that Menander Protector indicates the early Turks' inability to arm themselves, and he stresses their difficulty in obtaining adequate supplies of iron.⁵ We know that the Avars suffered likewise, for when their ambassadors reached Constantinople in 562 they made it their business to purchase a supply of weapons from the Imperial factories: they were contemplating an immediate campaign against the Romans themselves. But the Romans, after accepting payment for the arms, promptly arrested the envoys and took the weapons from them.⁶ The significance of these points must be emphasized and a distinction drawn. Germany imported large quantities of Roman weapons: 'there is scarcely a single deposit of antiquities dating from the first four centuries,

¹ See Lattimore, pp. 68–70.

² Lattimore, p. 64; cf. *Amm.* xxxi. 2. 9.

³ p. 50. 1 ff., Dindorf.

⁴ Priscus, p. 316. 29, 328. 7.

⁵ Fox, p. 41 f.

⁶ Menander, frag. 9.

not only in the south and west of Germany but even in Denmark and other Baltic lands, which does not contain a large proportion of Roman articles . . . , above all, armour and weapons.¹ Yet the Germans, with the resources of their forests and mines at their disposal, could have fared reasonably well without such imports. Again, about 330, when the Persian king wished to increase his striking power, he sought to import iron from the Roman Empire.² But even without imported iron he was strong, as many a Roman had reason to know. Such cases as these must be distinguished from those of the Huns, Avars, Turks, and other steppe peoples. These *could not arm themselves at all* for purposes of large-scale offensive operations without the assistance of imported weapons.

To linen and weapons we may confidently add grain. That the Huns ate grain even in their earliest days is shown by Honorius' importation of it from Dalmatia into Italy for their use in 409 (p. 47 above). Claudian, however, says that they did not eat it, and since Peisker (p. 340) observes that bread is a luxury for the nomad horsemen, we may conclude that in general the poet is speaking of the masses of the population and that the grain was mostly consumed by the *primates*.³ Indeed, bearing in mind that the trading was carried on mostly by the chiefs,⁴ we may believe with some assurance that the purchased or bartered goods—the iron swords, the linen clothing, the grain, and some miscellaneous luxuries of a primitive kind—were pretty nearly restricted to the *primates*, at any rate in the early days when even the necessities of life were only obtained with difficulty. In return for their imports the Huns will have given what the steppe nomads have always been able to supply to settled agricultural societies—horses, meat, furs, and slaves. Even in Attila's day, when the Huns had found other means of paying for their imports, they expected the Roman ambassadors to be anxious to purchase slaves, horses, and furs when they visited their dominions.⁵

By the time of Attila the trade in luxuries had grown out of all recognition and had become a basic factor in the maintenance of his empire. The reader who fails to grasp the importance of this luxury trade will not understand the social organization of

¹ Chadwick, *Heroic Age*, p. 444.

³ Claudian, *In Rufin.* i. 327 *vitanda Ceres*.

⁵ Priscus, pp. 298. 16, 328. 7.

² Libanius, *Or.* lix. 66.

⁴ Lattimore (1938), p. 12.

the Huns. It is known that, when essentials have spread more or less universally within a steppe society, there succeeds an imperative demand for luxuries from outside the range of steppe production as an altogether necessary method of distinguishing between the greater and the lesser people, between the *λογέδες* and the humbler horsemen.¹ Hence Attila's endless demands that Hun ambassadors should be received with 'gifts' at Constantinople is not merely to be ascribed to a *politique de prestige* on his part, as Alföldi believes;² it was a vital support of the social order then prevailing among the nomads. The *λογέδες* owed their allegiance to Attila alone, but they gave it to him solely because he could provide such gifts on a larger scale than anyone else. The Huns have now travelled a long way from the days when there was no leisured class among them and they were ruled *nulla severitate regali*. The growth of wealth has split their ranks.

We shall see presently that the East Roman government was very well aware that its bitterest foes were not only militarily dependent on the produce of the Empire, but also economically and socially. For the Huns carried on their trade almost exclusively with East Roman merchants and market towns. Indeed, it seems to have become unnecessary for large areas of Danubian country to maintain their long-established trade with the Western Empire. A survey of Roman coins found in Rumania yields an interesting result. Coins of all Aurelian's successors down to Theodosius I have been found there, a fact which shows that trade with the West was as lively in that period as trade with the East. But after the reign of Theodosius I a peculiar phenomenon is noticeable: a great number of gold pieces have been found in Rumania which were struck by Arcadius, Theodosius II, Marcian, and Leo I, but those of contemporary Western Emperors are extremely rare.³ It is reasonable to conclude that the Huns traded exclusively with the East Romans, or, to put it in other words, the East Romans had obtained a monopoly of trade with the Huns. Doubtless the same state of affairs prevailed in the more western Danubian lands, although perhaps to a lesser degree. When the time came, the East Romans knew how to make the most of the advantages of their economic position.

¹ Lattimore, p. 69.

² *Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie*, xlvii, 1932, p. 237.

³ Moisl, p. 208, who gives a different interpretation of the evidence.

Unhappily, it is impossible to say what role this trade between the Huns and the Eastern Empire played in the rise of the earlier confederate kings, Uldis, Donatus, and the rest, or in the process by which the *primates* developed into the *λογάδες* of Attila. Lattimore (p. 519 f., *et al.*) is emphatic in believing that the very existence of trade flowing between nomads and non-nomadic communities 'must repeatedly have suggested the use of nomad military power first to govern the profits of trade with non-nomads and then to exact tribute'. Our Greco-Roman authorities allow us to say little on the subject; but it seems legitimate to draw one or two conclusions as to the East Roman point of view. It is certainly likely, for instance, that the more settled conditions in Europe brought about by the domination of the Huns would be welcome to merchants. It is difficult to resist the impression that the huge dimensions of the trade must have been very profitable to the market towns concerned as well as to individual traders who went among the nomads. The renegade Greek with whom Priscus spoke in Attila's encampment had been a merchant in Viminacium, but found himself much better off among the Huns. We do not know whether his increased prosperity was due to increased facilities for trading, but this may have been the case. A more significant figure in this connexion is 'Eustace, a merchant of Apamea', who, about the year 484, long after Attila was dead, is found accompanying a band of Hun marauders in the role of their chief adviser on a plundering expedition against Persia.¹ If we could accept Hirth's conclusions with safety, we should have evidence for enormous trade relations between the realm of Ernac, Attila's son, and its eastern neighbours as far as the borders of China, and proof of the existence in considerable numbers of merchants and traders in his dominions in the years immediately following Attila's death. But Hirth's conclusions are more than doubtful, and cannot be utilized here.² More valuable is Jordanes' statement, quoted above, that the Altziagiri dwell near the Crimea 'quo Asiae bona avidus mercator importat'.³ That so few traders are mentioned and so little is said in our sources of the commerce between the Eastern Empire and the Huns is, of course, not in the least surprising:

¹ Zachariah of Mitylene, p. 152.

² See Macartney, p. 113, n. 4; Hirth in Bibliography VIII above.

³ *Get.* v. 37.

the historical writers are practically all out of sympathy with the trading class. In fact, the wonder is that the merchant of Viminacium, Eustace of Apamea, the skin trade of the Hunuguri, and so on are mentioned at all. Even if their names were not recorded, we could still safely conclude that the trade in question existed on a vast scale: modern study of nomadic societies of the steppe has not been barren. And the fact remains that the great bulk of the coins sent out by Theodosius' government must have come back to the Empire by way of trade. Where else could the *λογόλας* have expended them? Why else should they have needed them at all? It is difficult to resist the impression that the continued existence of the Hun empire must have been recognized by many Roman subjects as essential to their prosperity. The traders in the frontier towns, the wandering merchants—or should we call them peddlars?—like Eustace, and the importers of slaves, furs, and skins, must all have reaped an acceptable profit—and the profit doubtless took the form of those very coins which Theodosius paid over to Attila with so much reluctance and humiliation.

It will have been clear from the narrative in earlier chapters that this trade left its mark on the politics of the times. As early as Rua's day the Romans had been forced to provide markets for the Huns, and trade figured prominently in Attila's politics. In his first treaty with the Romans, in 435, he insisted that all Roman markets hitherto open to the Huns—the matter had been the subject of negotiation previously—should continue to be so, that the terms prevailing there should be fair, and that access to these markets should be attended with no danger to the Huns.¹ In 448 Attila, who had evidently been reasonably satisfied with the trading arrangements in the meantime—nothing was said of them in the Peace of Anatolius in 443—again raised the question of his people's facilities for trading with the Empire. He now insisted that the chief market town should be moved from Illyria to Naissus (Nish).² The primary aim of this was to advance the frontier of the Hun dominions, or at any rate to compel the Romans to evacuate the powerful fortifications of the Danube line, but doubtless also much greater quantities of goods were available at the new site, despite its recent devastation. At any rate, the arrangements now reached

¹ Priscus, p. 277. 18: see p. 74 above.

² *Ib.*, p. 287. 3: see p. 97 f. above.

must have remained in force for several years, for we do not hear that Attila raised any further question about them. He can hardly have guessed how important the matter would become after his death.

VI

Hun society, then, when Priscus visited it in 449 was a parasitic community of marauders. In view of their acute shortage of man-power, which we shall discuss in a moment, it seems unlikely that they were still nomadic pastoralists. There is no indication in our sources that in the days of Attila the Huns still drove flocks and herds from summer to winter pastures and back again. Instead of herding cattle they had now learned the more profitable business of herding men. Sharp differences of wealth have appeared among them, though not perhaps differences of class. Their society could only be maintained as long as Attila was able to supply the mass of his men with the necessities of life and a few luxuries, and his *λογάδες* with those additional goods and facilities which served to mark them off from the humbler horsemen. Attila extorted these goods and facilities, which formed the corner-stone of Hun society as it was organized in his time, from the subject peoples and from the Eastern Empire by means of his military strength, and by that means alone. What tie would hold the community together if he or his successors could no longer induce the Imperial government to supply them with lordly gifts and revenues, with trading facilities, and even with weapons?

The most immediate source of weakness was the great dispersal of Hun military strength entailed by their vast conquests—Attila's empire stretched from the Caucasus to the confines of France and Denmark. The most striking symptom of his weakness in this respect is the fact that he found it necessary to retain Ardaric and a legion of other kings in their posts. If he could have administered their peoples directly by means of his *λογάδες* and garrisons of Huns, he would certainly have done so. In the exceedingly great dispersal of the Hun warriors entailed by the collection of food and tribute and by garrison duties we probably have the explanation of Attila's peculiar insistence that the Romans should at once restore all the Hun prisoners and fugitives whom they had taken. He made few treaties and sent few embassies in which this demand was not

urged with particular vigour. On one occasion the prisoners numbered 17, on another only 5: yet he had a list of their names prepared so that none should be kept back without his finding it out.¹ The current view is that he went to such pains so as to keep recruits out of the Roman army. This doubtless is a part of the truth, although Attila had a very low opinion of the value of such troops to the Romans,² as he was careful to inform their ambassadors: naturally he did not mention his major reason for the repeated demands.

The Huns had to garrison, not only the peoples whom they found in the steppe as their conquests developed, but also the new-comers whom they themselves introduced there. Jorga (pp. 61, 62) was the first, I think, to suggest that among those demanded back were many Roman subjects brought forcibly by Attila to his territories so as to serve as agricultural workers. There is no direct evidence in our authorities to show that this is so,³ but it is all but certain that Jorga is right in believing that the Huns imported agricultural workers into their dominions. Such has always been the custom of the steppe nomads when they have sufficient power to carry it out, not merely because the imported agricultural workers were more skilful than they themselves could possibly be, but also because the exploitation of foreigners left the fabric of the steppe society itself as far as possible intact. 'When nomad chiefs patronize agriculture', writes Lattimore, 'it is a subject agriculture that they prefer, exploited under their military protection and practised by imported peasants, between whom and the dominant nomads there is an emphatic social distinction.'⁴ We have already seen that as early as 395, when considerable areas of Syria were devastated, troops of captives were led off north of the Caucasus and large districts were left depopulated.⁵ Since the majority of those carried away must have been poor peasants, who could provide no hope of ransom, they were presumably destined for the most part to be put to work on the land. Again and again we hear that the inhabitants of the Balkan cities were similarly carried off during the great invasions of 441/3 and 447. They too can scarcely have had much value as potential sources of

¹ Priscus, p. 291. 19.

² *Ib.*, p. 297. 3 f.

³ Ticheloiu, pp. 84 ff.

⁴ Cf. Lattimore, pp. 71, 210, 519 *et al.*; Stein, *Geschichte*, I, p. 435.

⁵ See p. 27 above and cf. especially Joshua Stylites, cap. 9 (p. 7, Wright); cap. 18 (p. 12).

ransom. Their fate was almost certainly to be put to work on the land. However that may be, the ever-repeated demand that all Hun prisoners of war should be returned by the Romans would seem to indicate that Attila himself was not completely unaware of the insecurity of his position.

Despite his victory on the river Utus in 447, Attila suffered bloody losses in the battle there. He was heavily defeated in Gaul in 451, and in 452 he was repulsed from Italy by plague and famine. The following year he died, and his empire was divided among his sons. They at once quarrelled among themselves. After internal struggles they engaged in a series of costly battles with their subjects, and were routed in the struggle on the river Nedao. Our authority exaggerates greatly when he puts the number of the Hun dead at 30,000; none the less, a very considerable number of them must have been wiped out. Since the rulers could no longer provide the *λογίζαι* with their social needs, the latter separated with all their dependants and retainers and sought each to build his own fortunes.

What part did Marcian's government take in this final chapter of Hun history? It may well be that it instigated and supported the uprising of the subject peoples after Attila's death. We have no direct evidence to this effect, but it is very unlikely that the Emperor made no move whatever to follow up the raid carried out by his general Aetius in 452 (p. 148 above): indeed, the primary object of that raid must have been to stimulate the Germanic peoples to act for themselves. Certainly, in the period of confusion and defeat which followed, the East Roman government struck two blows at the Huns which showed clearly how well they understood the economic weaknesses of the nomads' society. The first of these blows is revealed to us by an invaluable fragment of Priscus which relates an incident in the careers of two of Attila's sons.¹ We are told that in 468/9 the children of Attila sent an embassy to Leo to demand from the Roman government that the old markets should be restored along the Danube so that the Huns and Romans could mutually trade their surplus goods; Leo saw no reason why a people who had done so much damage to his territories should have the benefit of Roman exports, and the embassy was a failure. The demand that the markets *should be restored* gives us information which we learn from no other source: at some date before 468 the East

¹ Priscus, p. 345. 25 ff. See p. 156 above.

Roman government had felt itself strong enough to shut the market towns to the Huns, and had thereby dealt a deadly blow at the continuance of Hun society in the form which it had reached under Attila. The necessities of life could no longer be supplied to the Huns at large, and the λογίζες—so far as they survived—could no longer retain the outward marks of their social superiority. The precise date of this measure cannot be recovered with certainty, but it is not likely to have been entirely unconnected with a second and not dissimilar blow, which was certainly delivered by Marcian. We have seen above that the Huns, once they began to fight on a large scale, were unable to supply themselves with weapons and that they therefore found it necessary to import arms of all kinds (p. 172 above). By a law dating from 455/6—the morrow of the battle of the Nedao—Marcian forbade the export of all weapons to the barbarians and of all materials for making weapons, and specifically mentioned bows, arrows, and spears.¹ This enactment is addressed to the praetorian prefect of the East, who included in his dominions the countries most exposed to the raids of the Huns: Thrace and Lower Moesia. Although the law was afterwards applied to other nations, there is little reason to doubt—considering its date—that, when first published, it was primarily directed against the Huns. When the result of the battle of the Nedao became known, then, the East Roman government felt itself in a position to make use of its knowledge of the Hun economy. It therefore closed the market towns and cut off the enemy's supply of weapons. With these measures we may date the end of the period of nomadic domination.

Such were the stages of the ruin of the Huns. But it may be asked, in connexion with the first of these stages, whether a mere personal quarrel between the sons of Attila would be likely to set in motion the momentous series of events which destroyed an empire covering the whole of central Europe. Unhappily we are unable to trace in the last years of Attila's reign or during the rule of his sons those conflicts between the different groups which made up Hun society and which Lattimore analyses in his brilliant account of the break-up of an imperial nomadic community. Attila, in so far as we can tell, was not at all in doubt whether his real interests lay in war and the con-

¹ *CJ*. iv. 41. 2, with Kruger ad loc., and Seeck, *Regesten*, p. 124. 27. The law was still in force under Justinian, cf. Procopius, *HA*. xxv. 2 f.; *BP*. i. 19. 25 f.

quest of new territories, or in the collection of revenues from the peoples whom he had already subjected; nor did the antithesis between those of his followers who garrisoned the agricultural subject peoples and those who stayed with him as a sort of military reserve become in any way apparent. In the present state of the evidence we must be content with stating the contradictions which were obvious enough in the fabric of Hun society in the time of Attila and perhaps before it. On the one hand, as essential goods and some luxuries became readily available to the mass of the horsemen, it became more and more imperative to provide greater and greater quantities of more costly luxuries for the *λογέταις*, so as to distinguish them from their humbler comrades. This was a social need of the utmost importance, as we have already seen (p. 177 above). On the other hand, the effort involved in providing these goods became so great, and the conquest of such vast territories became so imperative, that the man-power of the Huns, which was always weak, became extended to its limits, and even then was unequal to the task of policing the vast number of the subject peoples. We have also guessed that the Huns so dispersed their forces in their effort to guard their subjects that they found it necessary to abandon their pastoralism (p. 177 above). In other words, the productive resources of the Huns had been exceedingly primitive when they first appeared in Europe; in the days of Attila, as a result of the manner in which their society had developed, they had no productive resources of their own at all—they depended entirely on their subjects and on the Eastern Romans. The more they tried to satisfy their major social need, the weaker became their military strength, on which their continued existence as a nation depended. But this social need could of its very nature never be satisfied completely, so that when their strength finally became so dispersed that their subjects were able to throw off their yoke, the Huns had no longer any sources of food-supply at all, and Dengizech had to beg on the Roman frontier for land and for money with which to stock it.¹

When Attila was dead and his sons defeated, the old turmoil and insecurity of nomad life returned to the steppe, bringing greater chaos than ever before. Each petty chief sought to attract as many followers as he could, so as to subdue others and

¹ Priscus, frag. 38.

make them his vassals. As among the Mongols before the rise of Chinghis Khan, 'the old society had been destroyed, life was a series of wild forays, of continual desertions' (cf. Chelchal), 'of the splitting up of groupings' (cf. Dengizech and Ernac), 'a constant struggle'.¹ We have a vivid picture of the fate of a descendant of Attila in the sixth century. Jordanes writes thus in his quaint Latin of a Hun called Mundo:

'nam hic Mundo de Attilanis quondam origine descendens Gepidarum gentem fugiens ultra Danubium in incultis locis sine ullis terrae cultoribus divagatus et plerisque abactoribus scamarisque² et latronibus undecumque collectis turrem quae Herta dicitur super Danubii ripam positam occupans ibique agresti ritu praedaeque innectens vicinis regem se suis grassatoribus fecerat. Hunc ergo pene desperatum et iam de traditione sua deliberantem Petza subveniens e manibus Saviniani eripuit, suoque regi Theodorico cum gratiarum actione fecit subiectum.'

Mundo was lucky, however. After Theodoric's death he managed to join the Roman military service, and, as Master of the Soldiers in Illyricum in 530, he drove off a band of Huns and other raiders.³ Not many of Attila's descendants can have been so fortunate as he.

Clearly the Huns have now reverted to a type of society closely resembling that which Ammianus knew, and the tribal organization based on blood relationship still continues in existence, although higher forms of organization, such as the confederacy, have entirely disappeared. Peisker (p. 334) points out that, even when a confederacy disintegrates and disappears, 'the camp, the clans, and in part the tribes also, retain an organic life', and their deep roots survive among the people: indeed, Peisker even speaks of the 'indestructibility' of the clans and camps. We have explicit mention of them among the followers of Dengizech shortly after his father's death, for his men comprised the tribes called Ultinzures, Angisciri, Bittugures, and Bardores (p. 156 above). Now, a point of interest arises in connexion with the first of these, the Ultinzures. It will scarcely be denied that this tribe took its name from Ultzindur, the *consanguineus* of Attila whom we have already met

¹ Fox, p. 106.

² For this word see Eugippius, *Vita S. Severini*, x. 2 *latrones quos vulgus scamaras appellabat*, with the references collected by Knoell in his index s.v.

³ Jordanes, *Get.* lviii. 301. See Enslin, P.-W. xvi. 559 f., on Mundo, but I see no reason to believe him to have been of mixed Hunnic and Gepid blood.

(p. 154 above). According to Peisker (l.c.), tribal names arose very frequently on the steppe from the names of celebrated war heroes, real or legendary, a process which can be illustrated from the Ottoman Turks, the Seljuk Turks, the Chatagai Mongols, and the Nogai Tartars, among others.¹ Here we have an example of the process. Ultzindur, as a *consanguineus* of Attila, must have been a distinguished man in the Hun empire, although we happen to hear of him on only one occasion. As soon as Attila is dead, Ultzindur gives his name to a tribe. He has built up a following, and his men are prepared to trust him to restore their fortunes. And although he disappears and his men transfer their allegiance to Dengizech, the name which he gave them lives on.

We may conclude then that successful petty chieftains eventually created new clans and new tribes, so that before long the steppe once again swarmed with such overbearing lords, like Attila's sons and Edeco and Chelchal and Mundo, each as wretched and as quarrelsome as his neighbour, and each struggling with the Empire or with other barbarians, or enlisting himself and his men as mercenaries in the Roman or barbarian service, as we see so often in the pages of Procopius. But no new Attila and no new confederacy arose, because of the tremendous influx into eastern Europe of new and powerful nations in the sixties of the fifth century and during succeeding decades (p. 159 f. above).

¹ Cf. Reynolds and Lopez, p. 44.

VIII

ROMAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE HUNS

ON earlier pages we have tried to trace the varying attitudes of various Romans towards the Huns, and we shall gather up our results later. What we cannot do is to trace the reactions of the Roman government in the early days of the Huns. Our sources are too fragmentary to allow us to hazard even a single sentence as to the outlook of the ministers of Theodosius I and Arcadius on the new invaders. It is not until we come to the forties of the fifth century that the surviving extracts of Priscus' work allow us to catch an occasional glimpse of the motives which inspired the policies of the various governments controlling the East. But if we are to form a reasonably accurate estimate of the two Emperors, Theodosius II and Marcian, who bore the brunt of the conflict and guided East Rome through the great storms of the mid-fifth century, we must not accept the judgements of Priscus uncritically. The historian undoubtedly provides us with an accurate record of facts; but what of his interpretation of those facts? We have no reason to suppose that he achieved an impartiality and objectivity which were beyond the powers even of Thucydides. Indeed, it would be very surprising if Priscus, alone among ancient historians, were the victim of no prejudices and no partialities. Only an examination of his own words can supply us with an answer to our question, What is the value of his interpretation of the facts which he records?

I

Social and political views were so closely intertwined in the days of the later Roman Empire, as indeed they still remain, that we cannot hope to understand the one without some inquiry into the other. Now, Priscus' social views are clear enough owing to the fortunate survival of his account of a curious incident which took place when he was in Attila's encampment (p. 113 above). One day, as he waited to interview Onegesius, he was accosted by a man who, in spite of his Hun clothing, addressed him in Greek. He was, in fact, a native of Greece who had settled as a merchant in Viminacium.

He had prospered there for a considerable time and had married a wealthy wife, but had been ruined when the city fell to the barbarians in 441. It was a Hun custom that their leading men should take the wealthier among the captives who fell into their hands, because these brought in a larger ransom than the poorer ones: and our merchant had been given to Onegesius. He had fought well for his new master in battles against the Romans in 443 and 447 and against the Acatziri in 448, and had purchased his freedom with the booty he took. He had married a Hun wife and was the father of several children by the time Priscus met him. He shared Onegesius' table and lived in greater comfort among the Huns than he had enjoyed as a prosperous merchant in Viminacium. Now, he pointed out to the historian that, were he still living in the Empire, his lot would be very different. In war-time, he said, a Roman was bound to perish owing to the incompetence of the army leaders and because the great mass of the inhabitants of the Empire were never armed to fight the invaders; hence no resistance was ever shown by the population as a whole. Yet peace was even more wretched and miserable than war owing to the pitiless collection of the taxes and the helplessness of the citizens before wealthy law-breakers: while the latter could easily escape punishment, the poor man was powerless in the law-courts. He had inevitably to endure the full rigours of justice—or injustice. His only hope was to die before a decision was given, for lawsuits dragged on endlessly and vast sums had to be paid out by the litigants as bribes.

The humble merchants and traders of the later Empire rarely speak to us. It is charming to find that, when their voices can be heard, their words are so effective. Priscus was faced here by the most crucial problems presented by Roman society in his day—the insecurity of life due to the oppression of the tax-gatherers, the incompetence of the army, and the corruption of the courts. Our estimate of his ability to understand the most fundamental issues of contemporary society must be based on the answer which he made to this renegade merchant. Ammianus and Olympiodorus before him had protested with bitter anger against the social injustices of their times: what is Priscus' attitude? His reply, which Gibbon (iii, p. 429) justly calls 'a feeble and prolix declamation', consists of almost incredibly unreal and pedantic phrases from the philosophical schools. He said that the men who had framed the Roman

constitution were wise and good. They had ordained that part of the population should be the guardians of the laws, part should exercise the profession of arms, and part should devote themselves to agriculture so as to feed those who defended them. The law-courts were scrupulously fair, and the protracted nature of lawsuits was due solely to a desire on the part of the judges to avoid a hasty or unfair decision. It was absurd to assert that justice was weighted in favour of the wealthy—even the Emperor was subject to the laws. It may be observed that the Emperors themselves had pretended to admit this last point, and, only twenty years before the date of Priscus' conversation with the renegade, Theodosius had stated that 'digna vox maiestate regnantis legibus alligatum se principem profiteri: adeo de auctoritate iuris nostra pendet auctoritas'.¹ Yet Priscus' contemporary, the bishop Theodoret, takes a more realistic view. 'Children are terrified by the boggy-man,' he writes, 'youths by pedagogues and schoolmasters, but to a man the most terrifying thing in the world is a judge, the law court, the heralds, etc.; and if the man be poor, his terror is doubled.'² However, this was not Priscus' opinion. The Romans, he went on, treat their slaves more humanely than the Hun ruler treats his subjects. The Romans, in fact, behave towards their slaves like fathers or teachers, and correct their faults as they would those of their own children. On this point the historian is at one with the bishop. Masters, according to Theodoret, are the 'benefactors' of their slaves, and Nature bids slaves defend their masters as children would their parents.³

As Hodgkin (p. 79) says: 'It is easy to see that Priscus felt himself to be talking as sagely as Socrates, upon whose style his reply is evidently modelled; but that reply has the fault so common with rhetoricians and diplomatists, of being quite up in the air, and having no relation to the real facts of the case.' Priscus may have had misgivings about the conditions obtaining in the Empire; but, if so, he has not included them in this frigid composition. Speaking to one who had first-hand experience of the upheavals of the fifth century, Priscus is complacent and content with the *status quo*. He is a 'safe' citizen, and would

¹ *CJust.* i. 14. 4 (A.D. 429).

² *Ep.* 32, Sakellion.

³ *De Prov.* i. init., ap. Migne, *PG.* lxxxiii. 556 f. There is a translation of this passage of Priscus (p. 307. 7 ff.) in A. J. Toynbee, *Greek Civilization and Life* (London, 1924), pp. 130-6.

have found favour with Augustus, who is reported to have said, 'quisquis praesentem statum civitatis commutari non volet, et civis et vir bonus est'.¹ Whatever the validity of this attitude in the first century of the Empire, it was indefensible in Priscus' time. The fact that he held it throws a sinister light on his ability to record with understanding the history of his age.

II

Such being his outlook on social questions, let us try to find out if his political opinions offer any parallel. We must proceed by considering the judgements made by him in the fragments which are certainly authentic. These judgements are not very numerous, and owing to the character of the *Excerpta de Legationibus* of Constantine VII, in which they are mostly preserved, they unfortunately do not deal directly with the internal politics of East Rome. Yet, such as they are, they seem to point clearly enough in one direction.

Senator, consul in 436, is known to have attended the Council of Chalcedon in 451 as a patrician and to have been a correspondent of Theodoret, who professes to rejoice that the Saviour continually heaped high office upon him. The chapel which he built to the archangel Michael in Constantinople, however, was considered by Justinian to be much too small and badly lighted to be suitable for an archangel.² Despite his high place in the cubiculum of Theodosius, Priscus shows considerable contempt for him, because, although he had the rank of ambassador, he was not possessed of sufficient courage to visit Attila's camp by land: instead, he went by sea to the military commander at Odessus (Varna), whose name was Theodulus.³ This Theodulus and his associate Anatolius are clearly condemned for what Priscus considered to be their craven attitude towards Attila when negotiating the treaty of 443.⁴ Now Anatolius, the signatory of three major treaties with the Huns, was Master of Soldiers in the East in 438, and, apart from concluding a peace which terminated a war with Persia, he had built a stoa in Antioch which long continued to bear his name.⁵ He went on

¹ Macrobius, *Sat.* ii. 4. 18, whose banqueters, as one might expect, have no fault to find with the sentiment.

² Theodoret, *Ep.* 44; Procopius, *De Aed.* i. 3. 14.

³ Priscus, p. 282. 17 ff.; see p. 89 above.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 285. 4 κατὰ τὴν φύσιν: see p. 86 above.

⁵ Evagrius, *HE.* i. 18.

to win further distinctions as consul in 440, patrician, *Magister militum praesentalis*, and a zealous adherent of orthodoxy at Chalcedon. None the less, Priscus implicitly criticizes the mission of Anatolius and Nomus to Attila in the spring of 450,¹ and here again his reason is the ambassadors' attitude to the Hun, whom they heavily bribed into keeping the peace—or so the historian would like to suggest. This Nomus, consul in 445 after laying down the great post of Master of the Offices, is described by a nephew of Cyril of Alexandria as having, in 444, 'held in his hands the control of the world'.² Of Theodulus nothing is known beyond what Priscus himself tells us; but it is clear that the others had vast influence at Theodosius' court, and wielded only less authority than the eunuch Chrysaphius himself. When the people of Edessa wished to call upon the greatest powers in the Eastern Empire, they shouted the names of Zeno (the enemy of Chrysaphius: p. 121 f. above), Anatolius, Nomus, Chrysaphius, Urbicius, who is otherwise unknown, Senator, and the Emperor.³ The ambassadors attacked by Priscus were all close associates of the eunuch Chrysaphius and were clearly representatives of a policy of appeasing the foreign enemies of the Eastern Empire—and as such Attila looked upon them.⁴ It is precisely for this policy that Priscus blames them; in each case he draws attention to what appeared to him to be their lack of courage in dealing with Attila. He nowhere dwells upon the results of this policy, which, at the end of Theodosius' reign, had issued in a state of affairs far from unsatisfactory to the Romans. The whole administration of Chrysaphius is censured for this 'timidity' in face of the foreign enemies of East Rome in a curious passage where Priscus says that the government 'obeyed every instruction of Attila, and considered what he commanded as the orders of a master'.⁵ But here the historian is fair enough to go on to point out the tremendous difficulties under which Theodosius' ministers were carrying on their negotiations with the Huns. The Eastern Empire, he admits, was at this time threatened by the Persians, the Vandals, the Isaurians, the Saracens, and even the Ethiopians (p. 87 above). But the very catalogue of the troubles of the govern-

¹ Priscus, p. 327. 9 ff., 19 f.

² See Mansi, vi, p. 1024 b τότε τὰ τῆς οἰκουμένης ἐν χειρὶ ἔχοντι πράγματα.

³ See J. Fleming, 'Akten der ephesinischen Synode vom J. 449', *Abh. d. Ges. d. Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, xv. 1, 1927, p. 15.

⁴ Priscus, p. 315. 1: see p. 116 above.

⁵ p. 286. 8, cf. 283. 7 f.

ment reads suspiciously like an indictment of the policy which had allowed so many crises to arise simultaneously; and the words in which the historian sums up his description of the state of affairs, διὸ δὴ τεταπεινωμένοι τὸν Ἀττίλαν ἐθεράπευσεν, certainly do not spare the government.¹

To all this there is a converse. Apollonius, a friend of Zeno, is praised in warm terms for his courageous answer to Attila's threats during his fruitless embassy in the autumn of 450 (p. 143 above). The historian's admiration for the men of Asemus, who were actually bold enough to attack and defeat a body of Attila's Huns in 443, is testified to by the disproportionately long account of the exploit in his pages.² Nor is this attitude confined to those who made a bold stand against the barbarians in the East. Priscus cannot hide his approval of the heated words addressed to Geiseric by a bishop called, curiously enough, Bleda.³ He also has a proud word to say of Aegidius, whose stubborn defence of the Western Empire against Gothic encroachments won his admiration.⁴ But the warmest words of praise in the whole of his extant work are given to Euphemius, the Master of the Offices under Marcian and perhaps a relative of the Emperor. This eulogy can scarcely be ascribed altogether to the fact that Priscus himself had been Euphemius' *assessor* and therefore had close personal ties with him; the panegyric goes beyond what such a relationship would have demanded. The historian says that under Marcian Euphemius had a general supervision of the entire policy of the government, and had personally initiated the many beneficial measures which marked that Emperor's reign.⁵ It is inconceivable that Priscus was not partly thinking of the new foreign policy initiated at the beginning of the reign, whereby the policy of Chrysaphius, who was himself put to death, was reversed: payments and subsidies to the Huns were stopped and a more warlike attitude was adopted.

Finally it should be noted that the δόλος καὶ ἀπάτη, the trickery and deceit, by which Anagast and Chelchal set the Goths and Huns at each other's throats is greeted with no criticism by our historian.⁶ It is even more revealing to find that, throughout the entire narrative of Maximinus' embassy and its antecedents and aftermath, Priscus utters no word of disgust

¹ *Ib.*, p. 286. 17.

² Priscus, p. 336. 1 ff.

³ *Ib.*, p. 337. 19.

⁴ Frag. 5: see p. 85 above.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 340. 6.

⁶ *Ib.*, p. 348. 26: see p. 157 f.

either at the concealment from Maximinus of the ulterior purpose of his mission, or at the immorality of the planned assassination of the man with whom the diplomat was to negotiate. Most striking of all, Priscus all but openly expresses his approval of the view of the men of Aseumus, 'that to swear a false oath for the sake of the safety of men of one's own race is not perjury'.¹

It would seem then, at any rate on a superficial view, that Priscus was a strong patriot. Whoever faced the barbarians, either in the West or in the East, with boldness and courage, and was prepared to answer them in their own coin, won his warmest admiration, while those who adopted the opposite attitude stand condemned in his pages. So strongly did he feel on the subject of resolute behaviour towards the Huns that, like another great historian of the later Empire,² he was prepared to condone and perhaps even approve practices which Roman authors of a less decadent day would have rejected—at any rate on paper—as unworthy of the Empire.

III

Can we carry our inquiry farther? What is the basis of this patriotism? Light has recently been thrown on the whole question of the social relations existing in the later Empire by the discovery that the Green and Blue factions in the circus of Constantinople and other cities represented, not merely rival companies of sportsmen, but two distinct social strata: the Blues in general were supported by the landowning aristocracy and its dependants, while the Greens consisted rather of the merchants, traders, craftsmen, manufacturers, shippers, and the like.³ Now we know that Theodosius II was so enthusiastic an adherent of the Green faction that his partisanship was vividly remembered by the populace at Constantinople for many generations. Indeed, the Greens induced the Emperor Maurice on 4 August 583 to name his son after Theodosius, although the Blues wished the child to be called Justinian.⁴ On the other hand, Marcian

¹ Priscus, p. 285. 27.

² Ammianus: see J. Mackail, *Classical Studies* (London, 1925), p. 182.

³ See Manojlović, pp. 617 ff. His article, and the literature to which it has given rise, are of fundamental value for the study of the social history of the later Empire.

⁴ See the scholium to Procopius and Theophylact printed by P. Maas, *BZ.* xxi, 1912, p. 29, n. 1, and reprinted by Y. Janssens in *Byzantion*, xi, 1936, p. 500. Theodosius and the Greens: Malalas, p. 351. 5; his partisanship was probably displayed only during his last years, i.e. when Chrysaphius was his leading minister.

was a confirmed upholder of the Blues,¹ a fact which can be traced clearly in his legislation; for his administration strongly favoured the landed aristocracy. True, Marcian himself in the second of his Novels states his ideal of an Emperor's duty thus: 'curae nobis est utilitati humani generis providere.' But he attached a somewhat restricted meaning to the term *humanum genus*, for Evagrius tells us bluntly that Marcian made it his policy τοῖς πολλὰ κεκτημένοις ἀσφάλῃ παρέχειν τὸν πλοῦτον.² In fact, his legislation was aimed almost exclusively at furthering the interests of the landed gentry. He restricted the number of senators liable for the expensive office of the praetorship, and he abolished the *foliis*, the tax on the property of senators, to mention only two of his measures. It seems regrettable then that recent historians have not disagreed with Bréhier's conclusion that Marcian 'se révéla comme l'un des meilleurs empereurs qui ait régné à Constantinople'.³

Now it is all but certain that the ill repute in which our extant authorities hold the government of Theodosius II is derived almost exclusively from the *Byzantine History* of Priscus. He too was responsible for the view, reported by later writers, that the reign of Marcian was another golden age,⁴ as indeed for the landowning senate it probably was. On the other hand, we have seen above that the persons who are likely to have benefited from Theodosius' policy of subsidies to the Huns were the merchants, traders, and the like⁵—in other words, the very people who supported the Greens. But Chrysaphius, whose foreign policy Priscus condemns, was not only a warm partisan of the Greens, but was actually their *πάτρων καὶ προστάτης*, their patron and champion, a fact to which his vast power seems to have been due.⁶ Bearing in mind the importance and the all-embracing nature of the social struggle, which found its expression in the conflict of the rival circus factions, it would seem *a priori* likely that Priscus' condemnation of the eunuch and his foreign policy was largely due to his social attitude.

¹ Malalas, p. 368. 13; *Chron. Pasch.*, p. 592. 10.

² *HE*. ii. 1.

³ *Stilideu Žbornik* (Zagreb, 1929), p. 88.

⁴ Theophanes, A.M. 5946 καὶ ἦν ἐκεῖνα τὰ ἔτη κυρίως χρυσᾷ τῇ τοῦ βασιλέως χρηστότητι. John Lydus, *De Mag.* iii. 43 (p. 132) Μαρκιανὸν τὸν μέτριον.

⁵ See p. 176 above. It seems to have been in their interests that Theodosius made his repeated attempts to win back North Africa from the Vandals: see Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, ed. 1 (1889), vol. 1, p. 162.

⁶ See John Malalas, pp. 363. 7; 368. 8: in the former passage he says καθήρχε πάντων τῶν πραγμάτων . . . ἦν γὰρ πάτρων καὶ προστάτης τῶν Πρασίνων.

Do the hints which have survived in his fragments support this view?

A passage of the utmost importance for the understanding, not only of Priscus' outlook, but also of the social basis for Chrysaphius' policy, has fortunately survived in the fifth of the historian's fragments. Priscus comments here on the taxes which Theodosius was compelled to levy after the great Hun raid of 441/3 in order to pay the sums pledged to Attila by Anatolius' Treaty of 443.¹ The historian contemptuously remarks that the government pretended to make this treaty voluntarily, but in fact did so on compulsion and owing to a crushing fear of its foes. The taxes had to be extracted more strictly than ever, he says, because of the foolish way in which the revenues were expended—much of the money, for instance, was squandered on shows in the hippodrome and the amphitheatre.² Everyone had to pay, says the historian; but he goes on to lament only the hardships of those who had been released from the land tax by Imperial favour or by a decision of the law-courts. He bewails still more the fact that all senators were compelled to contribute a fixed sum of gold over and above their regular taxes. The effect of the severe taxation on the landed gentry is the only point against which Priscus really protests. There were striking changes of fortune, he says, for the tax-gatherers inflicted every indignity when collecting the money, so that those who had long been wealthy, οἱ πάλαι εὐδαίμονες, had to sell their furniture and the jewellery of their wives in the market-place. This calamity, he goes on, befell the Romans—he means οἱ πάλαι εὐδαίμονες among the Romans—in addition to the hardships caused directly by the war, so that many had recourse to suicide, by starving or hanging themselves.

Now it would appear certain that Priscus has greatly overdrawn the sufferings of the senatorial class in this highly coloured, rhetorical picture. The amount which Theodosius undertook to pay to Attila in 443 in a lump sum was 6,000 lb. of gold,³ and it was presumably this amount which the senatorial *ordo* was called upon to find. That the payment of such a sum should have brought the senatorial class to the verge of ruin, as Priscus would have us believe, is all but incredible. We

¹ Priscus, p. 283, 5-32.

² With this assertion cf. Socrates, *HE.* vii. 22, 12 and 15.

³ Priscus, p. 282. 27.

may suggest that there were approximately 2,000 senators in the Eastern Empire at this time—the same number, in fact, as there were in the West at the same date¹—and that the incomes of some of them, although admittedly very few, can scarcely have fallen very far short of the figures given by Olympiodorus for the incomes of Western senators a few years earlier, namely, 10, 15, and even 40 *centenaria* of gold per annum. Perhaps we should halve these figures. Perhaps Eastern senators numbered even less than a thousand, and perhaps their highest incomes amounted to not much more than 15 *centenaria* of gold. Even so, it would appear that an *ordo* containing such men would have been able to find 6,000 lb. of gold, that is, 60 *centenaria*, without being reduced to selling their furniture and their wives' jewellery. It was rumoured² that Cyril of Alexandria could afford to disburse 2,000 lb. of gold in bribes to state officials, and, although the rumour was doubtless false, it would have defeated its own purpose had it named an utterly impossible sum. Was the Patriarch then in control of riches equal to one-third of the entire capital possessed by the whole senatorial *ordo*?

The sums paid by Theodosius to the Huns must be compared with those which other emperors of the same period judged it expedient to pay to other barbarians. We hear that Leo I (457–74) undertook to pay 2,000 lb. of gold per annum to Theodoric Strabo in 473, and we are not told that there was any outcry in Constantinople when the agreement was made known.³ Again, in 478 Zeno (474–91) consented to give Theodoric 2,000 lb. of gold and 10,000 lb. of silver in a lump sum, as well as 10,000 *solidi* per annum thereafter.⁴ Although the treasury had then not yet recovered from Basiliscus' disastrous expedition against the Vandals in 468, we hear again of no outcry. From these examples it would seem that when Anatolius, in his first treaty with Attila, undertook to pay 2,100 lb. of gold per annum (p. 85 above), he stipulated a sum which was quite usual in the treaties struck between the Eastern emperors and their northern neighbours. It should also be remembered that Marcian was not opposed to subsidies as such. We know him to have paid out considerable sums on his eastern frontier,⁵ and we have seen that he was willing to present money to Attila,

¹ J. Sundwall, *Weströmische Studien* (Berlin, 1915), p. 151.

² Nestorius, p. 350.

³ Malchus, p. 387. 23, Dindorf.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 406. 10.

⁵ See J. Marquart, *Bränjaar*, p. 105.

provided only that it was regarded as a gift and not as tribute (p. 134 above). It is very tempting to believe that what Priscus objected to was not the payment of money to the Huns, or even the size of the sums paid, but the manner in which the necessary amounts were raised inside the Empire.

Another argument can be drawn from what we know of the expenses incurred by Leo's great expedition against the Vandals in 468, which cost the treasury more than 100,000 lb. of gold, that is, 1,000 *centenaria*—δρας θαλάσσης . . . καὶ ποταμούς χρημάτων, in the words of a poet.¹ This expenditure reduced the State almost to bankruptcy for nearly a generation, but the money simply could not have been raised at all if the senatorial class was as poverty-stricken in 443 as Priscus wishes to suggest. Indeed, considering Marcian's abolition of the *foliis* and his remission of arrears of taxes (a procedure, incidentally, which always favoured the wealthy), it seems scarcely credible that he should have left over 100,000 lb. of gold in the treasury at his death, if the treasury had been empty and the upper classes drained dry at his accession.²

We have repeatedly had occasion to observe that Priscus' *Byzantine History* is primarily a literary effort, and not a scientific history. His indictment of Theodosius' taxation policy contains one of those *flosculi* against which we have had continually to be on our guard. He states that the senators, in order to raise the sums demanded of them by the Emperor's tax-gatherers, had to sell, not only their *ἐπιπλά*, but also τὸν κόσμον τῶν γυναικῶν. I believe this statement to be nothing more than an illustration of Priscus' appreciation of Eunapius. The phrase, like the account of the Huns' manner of crossing into the Crimea at the outset of their career, is something which Priscus found in the work of Eunapius and took over with little change into his own book. For Zosimus, in a chapter where he is paraphrasing Eunapius and wishes to indict the financial policy of Theodosius I, writes as follows of that Emperor's exactions: οὐ γὰρ χρήματα μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ γυναικεῖος κόσμος καὶ ἐσθῆς πᾶσα . . . ὑπὲρ τῶν τεταγμένων ἐδίδοτο φόρων.³ The phrases in their contexts

¹ Constantine Manasses, 2904.

² John Lydus, *De Mag.* iii. 43 (p. 132). My conclusion in these paragraphs coincides in general with that of Papparegopoulos, ed. 5, vol. II, ii, p. 251 f. The opposite view is maintained, among others, by Andreades, p. 83, n. 1 (Bibliography VI above), but I have not found his arguments convincing.

³ Zosimus, iv. 32. 3.

are too similar to allow us to suppose that the likeness between them is a mere coincidence. The fact is that Priscus knew and valued his Eunapius, the Eastern senators remained in possession of their valuables, and their wives continued to enjoy their trinkets.

The policy of Theodosius and Chrysaphius in raising money to meet Attila's demands in 443 struck at the pockets of the senatorial class; but, at their expense, it showed some regard for the well-being of the taxpayers as a whole. How else could the money have been raised without causing universal hardship in the Eastern provinces?

There is an excellent parallel to such a reaction on the part of the large landowning class towards a similar policy of buying off the barbarians by means of a capital levy rather than by engaging in a war: it too was a case in which the issue of the war would have been doubtful, and the expense involved would have been much greater than the capital sum whose payment made the war unnecessary. In 408 Alaric sent an embassy to Rome demanding payment for his recent services. The treasury was empty and the sum demanded by Alaric could not be raised at once out of the regular taxes. Hence, since peace at that time was altogether essential, Honorius' government considered it necessary to exact a contribution from those who possessed ready money, that is, the senators. The matter was put before the Senate and the question whether war should be declared upon the Goths was debated at Rome. During the debate the war party in the Senate asked Stilicho why he was refusing to fight, and why he was willing to purchase peace with a money payment to the disgrace of Roman honour. Stilicho defended his policy to such effect that, in the words of a Greek historian, 'since everyone was convinced that he had made out a just case, the Senate resolved to pay Alaric 4,000 lb. of gold so as to preserve the peace; the majority voted, however, not from choice, but because they were afraid of Stilicho. Indeed, Lampadius, a man of high birth and rank, shouted out in Latin, *non est ista pax sed pactio servitutis*'.¹ Now the fact that the matter was debated in the Senate indicates that everyone knew beforehand that the senators would have to bear the expense if Alaric's terms were accepted. Hence their patriotic and warlike phrases merely concealed their anxiety for their

¹ Zosimus, v. 29. 5 ff., from Olympiodorus.

purses.¹ We can scarcely be wrong in supposing that many Eastern senators saw the justice of Theodosius' case in 443, but only voted for it because they were afraid of Chrysaphius: 'et aequum postulare videtur, et ego tamen non censeo quod petit tribuendum'. The only difference was that the policy of 443 was supported by a handful of comparatively high-minded senators, Anatolius, Nomus, Senator, and the others, who themselves stood to lose by the policy which they advocated. Their opponents have found a mouthpiece in Priscus.

It is clear then that we must modify our statement that Priscus was a warm patriot. He disliked the seemingly timid foreign policy of Chrysaphius because the social class with which he sympathized stood to lose by that policy. He was loyal, not to the Empire as a whole, but to a single class within it. It is difficult to avoid the impression that in this respect he marks a retrogression from the outlook of Olympiodorus, who was sharply critical of the grossly unequal distribution of wealth prevailing in the Empire of his day, and even from that of Ammianus, who, despite his ties with some members of the Senate, was more than uneasy at their grotesquely large fortunes and the political use which they made of their economic power. Priscus' outlook approximates rather to that of his successor in the series of late Greek historians, Malchus of Philadelphia, who bitterly attacked the financial policy of Leo I,² largely because he paid subsidies to the barbarians so as to preserve peace;³ yet Malchus seems to have admitted that Leo won great posthumous fame among *οἱ πολλοί*.⁴

It seems fair to conclude then that a study of Priscus' character and outlook, in so far as they can be reconstructed from the remains of his work, reveals that his attack on the financial policy of Theodosius II and Chrysaphius results from prejudice and unfair partiality. This policy, as we have seen, was calculated to lay the exceptional financial burdens of the Empire upon those who could best afford to sustain them. Priscus, a supporter of the senatorial *ordo*, misrepresents the endeavour of the Emperor, exaggerates the burden shouldered by the senators, and implies that the entire population of the Eastern provinces was oppressed. It is sufficient to bear in mind that, if Theo-

¹ I accept in general Seeck's interpretation of this incident, cf. his *Untergang*, v, p. 382.

² p. 388. 5 f., Dindorf.

³ *Ib.*, e.g. p. 387. 23.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 388. 4.

dosius and his ministers had in fact been oppressive tyrants, the Emperor's name would not have been a symbol vividly remembered by the Greens in 583, over 130 years after his death.¹ Indeed, Priscus himself, in a curious passage of his work, seems to have been compelled to admit the wide support enjoyed by Chrysaphius. In the crisis of the eunuch's career in the autumn of 449, when his life was being demanded, not only by Attila, but also by the Isaurian Zeno, the Master of Soldiers in the East (p. 121 f. above), Priscus tells us explicitly that 'everyone gave him good wishes and support'.² It is not our business to ask here why the historian felt it necessary to make this admission; it must have gone a long way towards destroying the case which he had been trying to build up in the earlier books of his history. It is only necessary to point out that, coming as it does from an enemy of Chrysaphius, its significance could scarcely be exaggerated.

IV

It may be objected, however, that Theodosius should not have remained content to buy off Attila. Why did he not face him boldly and put a stop to his exaction of tribute by firm military measures? Those who believe that Theodosius' government should have endeavoured to destroy the power of the Huns in a series of military campaigns have overlooked, I think, the essential nature of a conflict carried on by a settled, agricultural society, like that of the Romans, against a mobile, nomadic one, such as that of the Huns. Yet even as early as the fifth century B.C. the difficulties of such a struggle were fully realized by Herodotus, who writes (iv. 46. 3): τοῖσι γὰρ μήτε τεῖχεα ἢ ἐκτισμένα, ἀλλὰ φερέοικοι ἔόντες πάντες ἕωσι ἱπποτοξόται, ζῶντες μὴ ἀπ' ἀρότου ἀλλ' ἀπὸ κτηνέων, οἰκήματά τε σφι ἢ ἐπὶ ζευγέων, κῶς οὐκ ἂν εἴσαν οὔτοι ἀμαχοί τε καὶ ἄποροι προσμίσγειν; In other words, the entire population and all the property of a nomadic community are so mobile that it causes them little trouble to disappear entirely out of the way of an approaching hostile army. Also, the cost of equipping a punitive expedition against a nomadic community is far greater than any return that could be expected from booty, captives, or the like. The Chinese court was racked for long ages by debates as to whether

¹ Cf. the scholium printed in Maas, l.c.

² Priscus, p. 326. 32 πάντων δὲ αὐτῷ εὐνοίαν τε καὶ σπουδὴν συνισφερόντων.

the Hsiung-nu should be fought or placated with 'gifts', and the wisest counsellors would ordinarily never countenance a policy of military expansion into the domains of the nomads. And so we find that throughout the entire history of the Huns no Roman government, either in the East or in the West, ever dispatched a punitive force against them—except once, and this one case is the exception that proves the rule: Marcian sent an army into Hun country in 452 when the bulk of the Hun forces was engaged in Italy, and it seemed possible to induce the subject Germans to rise against the small garrison which had been left to watch them (p. 148 above). When did such an opportunity present itself to Theodosius? If we blame the 'feeble and timid' Theodosius for sending out no such expedition, we leave ourselves open to the objection that we have overlooked the realities of the position in which he found himself. The cost of such an expedition would have been enormous, the results negligible, and the damage to the Huns minute. It is true that Attila, especially in his later years, had sacrificed some of his mobility. He derived tribute and food-supplies from fixed areas of central Europe, and therefore could not profitably have abandoned it.¹ Nevertheless, a temporary retreat, if he had been so minded, from part of it would have brought him comparatively little loss, while on the open plains of the steppe he would have had an excellent opportunity of destroying an entire Roman army. On the other hand, if we blame Theodosius for sending out no punitive force, we must remember that a nomad retaliatory expedition is apt to be conducted with such ferocity that the depopulation of large territories and even the destruction of agriculture itself might well be the only reward reaped in return for the expense of the original punitive campaign.²

It is scarcely a digression to indicate briefly here the difficulties in which the Romans found themselves when Hun prisoners fell into their hands. Their position is illuminated by a passage of

¹ The loss of his chief encampment, which Priscus visited, would have cost him little, for it was much less elaborate than is commonly supposed: see Thompson, *JHS* lxxv, 1945, pp. 112 ff. Some nomadic peoples even possessed towns of their own, e.g. Βακάθ of the Onoguri (Theophylact, vii. 8. 13), Βαλαύ of the Kidarite Huns (Priscus, p. 349. 32).

² The point is excellently argued by Lattimore in several passages of his *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, esp. pp. 330 ff.; cf. *idem*, *Geogr. Journ.* xci, 1938, p. 15, to both of which works I am heavily indebted here.

Sozomen referring to the campaign of Uldis in Thrace in 409.¹ It will be recalled that the Huns on that occasion were supported by a large company of the Sciri, many of whom were captured by the Romans in the rout. Sozomen tells us the fate of the prisoners. They were a nation of nomads and presented the Eastern government with a pretty problem, for, being nomads, it was not easy to know what to do with them in captivity. It was impossible to leave them concentrated in Thrace, whence they could easily break out and recross the Danube. The government therefore sold some of them at a cheap rate—presumably no buyers could be found who were prepared to pay heavily for nomadic *coloni* (if the phrase be allowed). The government accordingly was compelled to give others away gratis, merely binding the owners not to keep them in Constantinople or indeed in Europe: they were to be shipped across the sea. Even so, an enormous multitude of the Sciri could not be disposed of: landowners would not accept them even as a free gift, and the ecclesiastical historian saw numbers of them scattered over the foothills and spurs of Mount Olympus in Bithynia, presumably acting as shepherds on Imperial estates. We have no such description of the fate of Hun prisoners, but it cannot be doubted that they presented their captors with precisely the same puzzle. They were of practically no use on the land; the only hope was that they would be willing to join the Imperial army and serve as mercenaries against their fellow countrymen. This hope apparently did not exist for the men of Aemus when they captured some of the Huns who assailed their city. It is significant to read that, as soon as they captured them, they put them to death.²

In all, it is idle to speak of the 'weakness' of Chrysaphius' policy on the Danube frontier. No other course was open to him than a policy of subsidies, and the 'strength' of Marcian in 452 was derived from an entirely new situation which arose in the Hun empire shortly after his accession. As for Marcian's policy in 451, we have already seen that it was characterized less by strength than by folly. It is true, of course, that the policy adopted by Theodosius' government was not always successful: it failed to avert the great invasions of 441-3 and 447. In 441 the policy which the Emperor afterwards pursued had

¹ Sozomen, ix. 5, cf. *CTH*. v. 6. 3: see p. 29 above.

² Priscus, p. 285. 12: see p. 86 above.

not yet been initiated.¹ The government, accustomed only to comparatively minor raids, had not yet fully realized what war with the nomads meant: hence their hesitation about surrendering the Hun subjects who were alleged to be in the Imperial service, and about handing over the bishop of Margus. The exaction of a capital levy from the senators illustrates the desperate anxiety of the government to maintain peace and prevent a repetition of the events of 441-3: the great invasion had shown them the correct policy to pursue. Within a few weeks of the restoration of peace Theodosius took steps to ensure that a similar invasion could never take place again, and we have a vivid memorial of his efforts in the *Novel* of 12 September 443 addressed to *Nomus*, a man who was henceforth to be so closely identified with his policy (p. 88 above). It is extremely unfortunate that, owing to the loss of the relevant part of Priscus' work, we do not know why the invasion of 447 was launched by Attila, but we have seen reason (p. 90 above) to suspect that the blame did not lie on Theodosius and his ministers.

It is not difficult then to see why the financial and military policies of Theodosius and Chrysaphius have been misrepresented by our primary authority. Priscus' close association with Maximinus and especially with Euphemius, the powerful Master of the Offices, who reversed every aspect of the preceding administration's policy, would seem to indicate that, although he himself was not a member of the highest society in Constantinople, yet he certainly shared its outlook and resented its being called upon to endure alone the financial burden which Chrysaphius' policy imposed. Secondly, his inadequate understanding of military affairs rendered him both incapable of seeing the necessity for that policy and also unsympathetic to the group of comparatively enlightened senators whose understanding of the military position was greater than his. Chrysaphius' policy, which they supported, was calculated to save from increased financial hardship the great mass of the population of the East, which was suffering severely in these years from bad harvests, epidemics, and earthquakes.¹

V

A final point calls for elucidation. If Theodosius' government, when directed by Chrysaphius, had in fact had the interests of

¹ See p. 90 above, and cf. Nestorius, quoted on p. 202 below.

the majority of the Eastern population at heart, why is it that the historical tradition is almost unanimous in condemning the eunuch? The answer is not difficult to find. Although other historians narrated the history of this administration, the *Byzantine History* of Priscus was universally recognized as the standard authority for the events of the years in question. This standard authority was biased and contained unfair judgements, as we have seen. Now the subsequent historians, whose works have survived, were in almost all cases orthodox Christian writers who, even before they read Priscus, were prejudiced against Theodosius and his minister on sectarian grounds; for Theodosius, in his later years, and especially Chrysaphius, the godson of Eutyches, were ardent and notorious heretics. Consequently, when these historians read Priscus' harsh strictures on the Emperor and the eunuch, they accepted them gladly and uncritically, and incorporated them in their own works. At the same time, it is worth pointing out that the contemporary ecclesiastical historian Socrates is warm in his praise of the Emperor. Admittedly it would have been unsafe for Socrates to publish a work which openly criticized Theodosius; but, if his attitude were critical, he could at least have removed the warmth from his eulogies.¹

That Nestorius condemned Theodosius severely and for very personal reasons was to be expected. But he also draws our attention to a fact which helps us to understand the attitude of the orthodox Christian writers. In order to obtain money with which to pay Attila,² Theodosius, acting through Chrysaphius,³ compelled the Church to contribute, and Flavian, the Patriarch of Constantinople (447-9), made his offering to the welfare of his flock with the utmost ill will. The Emperor commanded, writes Nestorius (p. 342),

'that *whatever was due* should be exacted with insult⁴ and that no respite should be granted unto him [Flavian], so that he was consequently constrained to send word unto the Emperor that he had not possessions of his own, because he was poor, and that not even the possessions of the church, if they were sold, would suffice to pay the quantity of gold which was being exacted of him. But he had the holy vessels of the church, which he and the emperors his

¹ Cf. esp. Socrates, vii. 22.

² So Seeck, *Untergang*, vi, p. 258. 32, who on this point is certainly right.

³ Evagrius, *HE*. i. 10.

⁴ Cf. Priscus, p. 283. 26 μετὰ αἰσχροῦ.

ancestors had placed therein, and he said, "I must melt them down, because I am driven to do so by force". But the Emperor then said, "I want not to know this, but the gold I do want in any way whatsoever".¹

Since he sought only *what was due*, the Emperor's reply was not inapt. Flavian, however, proceeded to have the church vessels melted down in public so as to cause as much ill feeling as possible. Whatever the tactlessness of Theodosius' procedure, one would have thought that he had some moral claims upon the wealth of the Church, for, as Nestorius (p. 363) himself admits, the people 'had been worn out with pestilences and famines and failure of rains and hail and heat and marvellous earthquakes and captivity and fear and flight and all kinds of ills. . . . A twofold upheaval on the part of the barbarians and the Scythians, who were destroying and taking everyone captive, had shaken them and there was not even a single hope of rescue', a passage in which the heresiarch refers to Attila's two invasions of 441-3 and 447.

These factors account for the unfavourable picture of Theodosius and Chrysaphius drawn by most of our orthodox Christian authorities. On the other hand, the Monophysite Zachariah of Mitylene mentions Theodosius often, always with respect and never with criticism; his abuse is reserved for Marcian. The humble John Malalas, also apparently a Monophysite, although he had Priscus' work to hand, thought so well of Theodosius that he writes: 'The Emperor Theodosius was held in high repute, being loved by all the people and by the senate.' His enthusiasm leads him into exaggeration in these last three words: the majority of the landowning class had little reason to love Theodosius.¹

It is difficult to see how we can subscribe to Priscus' judgement on Chrysaphius, whom Theodosius loved, says John Malalas, ὡς πᾶσι εὐπρεπὴ ὄντα. He was the 'patron and champion' of the Green faction, which was so bitterly opposed to the landowners; and in the end he lost his life not merely because he was charged with extortion—considering what his policies had been, this was inevitable as soon as a 'senatorial' Emperor came to the throne. Charges against him could easily be found, for, in Bury's words, 'the system of raising revenue in the later Roman Empire was so oppressive that there is perhaps no

¹ Malalas, p. 338. 5, Bonn.

Emperor'—and no minister, we may interpolate—'whom a hostile critic could not have made out a case for charging with a deliberate design to ruin his subjects'.¹ But Chrysaphius was not merely executed for extortion; he was put to death also ὡς προστάτην καὶ πάλτωνα τῶν πρασίμων.² His policies were correspondingly popular. His financial policy aimed at the welfare of other elements in the population than the land-owners. The failure of his religious policy marked an important stage in the process by which the Empire lost the affections of the great masses of the Eastern provinces for ever and prepared the way for the Arabs. The humble tradesmen and artisans of the capital remembered his master with affection until at least the end of the sixth century. It is essentially because of the anti-senatorial character of their administration that our authorities paint so dark a picture of the attitude of Theodosius and Chrysaphius towards the Huns. Not the least portion of the blame must be borne by Priscus.

¹ *Later Roman Empire*, ii, p. 348.

² Malalas, pp. 363. 7, 368. 3.

IX

CONCLUSION

WE have now tried to reconstruct the story of the political and military activities of the Huns between the time of their first assault upon the Ostrogoths and the disappearance of Attila's sons in the confusion which followed their father's death. We have also tried to describe the form of society in which the Huns lived and the changes which transformed that society and eventually brought about its downfall. In both efforts, however, we have been gravely handicapped by the deplorable state of the evidence. In the first case, for instance, we are completely ignorant of the extent and organization of the Hun empire in the years immediately before Bleda and Attila became its leaders, and we have no precise information as to the part played by Attila, still less by Rua, in building up that empire and in expanding it. When we turned to discuss Hun society, we found that only an occasional and incidental phrase survived to throw a dim light on a few of their institutions. Were it not for two or three passing words of Priscus, for example, we could say nothing whatever as to the type of family organization which existed among the Huns. A sentence placed by the same author in the mouth of one of his characters is the sole direct evidence that the Huns extorted supplies of food from their subjects—though admittedly in this case we could have inferred the practice even in the total absence of any direct testimony.

It is very improbable, however, that any new literary evidence will make its appearance, and, since few startling revelations can be expected from the archaeological material, at any rate in the immediate future, it may be desirable to set down one or two conclusions of a general nature. We shall first discuss the current belief that, in some sense or other, Attila was possessed of genius, that he was, in fact, a 'great man', and that it was only his outstanding personality that kept the Hun empire together. Then we shall turn to the question of the general significance of the achievements of the Huns for the development of Europe. How would European history have been affected if the Huns had never come in contact with the Goths and

Romans, and had instead directed their attention towards, say, the Persians or the Indians?

I

A view generally, if not universally, held by historians of the later Roman Empire is that the ascendancy of the Huns was entirely dependent on the genius of Attila. Without him, it is said or implied, there would have been no Hun empire comparable to that which he ruled; and when he died, the immediate collapse of the empire was inevitable.¹ Neither proposition, in my opinion, can be maintained.

The first is certainly false, because there was in fact an enormous Hun empire before Attila. We are explicitly assured that Attila ruled over more peoples than any of his predecessors, but the very source which mentions this implies simultaneously that the realm of Rua and Octar was by no means a small one, but was indeed comparable to his.² In fact we find that, a few years after Octar had been engaged somewhat to the east of the Rhine, Rua was interfering in Italian politics and threatening the East Romans on the Danube. Their sphere of activity was obviously enormous. Attila therefore differs from Chinghis Khan in that he received his empire ready-made—or almost so—from the hands of his predecessors, whereas the Mongols of Chinghis' youth and even middle age were still the same petty, disunited pastoral tribes they had always been. It is regrettable that we know nothing of the process which united the Hun tribes into the confederacy which Attila subsequently led. Perhaps the founders of the confederacy were Rua himself and his brothers. If so, their services to Attila were as great as those of Chinghis to his successors, and entitle them to a measure of fame—or notoriety—greater than Attila's.

The second of these propositions, that the collapse of the empire was inevitable as soon as Attila died, is disproved by the very fact that Chinghis had successors as capable as himself. There is no inherent reason why a nomadic empire should not outlive its founder. To those who try to explain the Hun empire in psychological terms, a sufficient answer is that there was no

¹ Those who approach the Huns from the steppe rather than from the Roman Empire do not agree: see, for example, Lattimore, p. 513.

² Jordanes, *Get.* xxxv. 180 'is namque Attila pater genitus Mundzucio, cuius fuere germani Octar et Roas, qui ante Attilam regnum tenuisse narrantur, quamvis non omnino cunctorum quorum ipse'.

psychological reason why Attila should not have been succeeded by an Ogdai or a Kublai Khan or a Tamburlaine. In a word, the circumstances of neither the beginning nor the end of the Hun ascendancy depended exclusively or even mainly on the personal character or abilities of any one individual.

What reason is there then to speak of the 'genius' of Attila? Was he a military genius? It may be doubted. True, he was able easily to defeat the East Romans in 441-3. But in 441 he penetrated their defences when there was nobody present to resist him,¹ and in 443 he merely defeated troops who had been hastily transhipped from Sicily, where they had been out-maneuvred by the Vandals and had subsequently had their morale sapped by living in idle, passive conditions for several years on end. In 447, when Attila engaged the unimpaired forces of the East, he won a victory only at the cost of bloody losses. The one sentence of an ancient author which relates to the circumstances of the battle on the river Utus does not suggest that the victory was won by a military genius.² But let us waive these considerations. Let us suppose that, in fair and open fight, Attila twice trounced the armies of Eastern Rome. Was he therefore a military genius? Two victories over an army whose basis rested on the colonate and whose rear was no more hostile to the enemy than to its own forces do not entitle him to the term 'genius'. The true measure of his generalship is revealed by his fortunes in Gaul, when he fought the Western Germans whose society was not yet riven by such class struggles as paralysed the Romans. The saddles heaped into a funeral pyre on the plains of Champagne—even if the anecdote is mythical—are a symbol of his utter failure. On ground of his own choosing, with his forces at the peak of their success, facing disunited and suspicious allies, his generalship succumbed to the courage of a free peasantry.

Perhaps, then, when historians speak of the genius of Attila, they refer to his diplomatic abilities? Surely the judgement must be reversed. Success in the West in 451 was not impossible. Given a correct diplomatic preparation, Visigoths and West Romans alike could very probably have been overcome. Three

¹ Procopius, *De Aed.* iv. 5. 6.

² Marcellinus, *Chron. Min.* ii, p. 82, s.a. 447 'Arnigisclus magister militiae in ripense Daciae iuxta Utum amnem ab Attila rege viriliter pugnans plurimis hostium interemptis occisus est.' Marcellinus readily admits the great defeats suffered by the East Romans on other occasions, cf. his entries s.aa. 441, 443, &c.

conditions should have been fulfilled by a general in Attila's position in the summer of 449, and all three were brushed aside by him.

First, the Visigoths and West Romans should have been tackled separately. Attila seems at first to have been aware of this. It was his original plan to settle with the Visigoths while still claiming to be the friend of Ravenna. From his own point of view, it was of great importance to adhere strictly to this plan, for, whatever the limitations of Aetius in other respects, he was clearly a general of unusual ability. But, in fact, Attila allowed his plan to become obscured when he received the invitation of Honoria. His clumsy handling of her appeal united the West against him. Indeed, when we consider what the relations of Ravenna and Toulouse had been in the decades preceding 451, we may fairly conclude that only a bungler of the first order could have thrown Aetius and Theodoric into each other's arms. This indeed was a *coup de maître*.

Secondly, more use should have been made of Geiseric. For one reason or another the Vandal was very anxious that Attila should attack the Visigoths. Naval descents on Italy in 452, if not on Gaul in 451, should therefore have accompanied Attila's own thrusts on land. Yet we hear of no effort to stir Geiseric into activity, although he had spent his life in attacks on the Western Romans. History knows of few commanders who have thrown away so willing and so efficient an ally.

The third reason why it seems impossible to agree that Attila was a diplomat of exceptional ability is the most compelling of all, and can be stated very briefly. It is this: that after his flight to the Huns in 448 we hear no more of Eudoxius (p. 127 above). If Attila had put himself at the head of the Bagaude, Visigoth and Roman alike could have been swept out of Gaul in a few months; but, in fact, the Armoricans are listed among Aetius' allies at the Catalaunian Plains.

Clearly the case has now been reduced *ad absurdum*. Attila could not possibly have appeared as the champion of a revolted peasantry. Parasitic marauders, such as the Huns, have other uses for peasants. In Attila's eyes the followers of Tibatto and Eudoxius were no different from the followers of his subjected German kings: they were simply potential suppliers of grain and livestock to feed his men. It is inconceivable that he should have used them as allies. Their purpose was to overthrow the

landlords of Gaul. Attila had no desire to overthrow landlords as such: he was himself the largest landowner in Europe. The abilities of Attila, then, were limited by the limitations of the society which produced him. The Huns could never have produced a diplomat of genius, because the organization of their society was such that they could never really possess a true ally, and no one in Europe, not even Aetius himself, can have seriously believed that they could.

If we insist, then, that so striking a figure must have had some measure of greatness, we may turn to an observation of Mommsen's. Mommsen gave it as his opinion that Attila's greatest achievement was probably his strengthening of the central authority among the Huns.¹ Of this, to be sure, we cannot be entirely certain: we do not know to what extent the position of the military leader inside the confederacy had altered between the days of Rua and those of Attila. Nevertheless, it seems highly probable that in this matter Attila marked a distinct advance on his predecessor. Until the closing years of his life Rua had been content to rule only a portion of the Huns: his brother Octar, and doubtless Mundiuch too, had shared his power. But even when he became sole ruler on Octar's death in 430, he had been unable to compel *all* the Hun tribes to give him their allegiance.² The tribal leaders of the Amilzuri, Itimari, Tunsures, Boisci, and the others (p. 71 above) sought to preserve the independence they had enjoyed before the days of Rua's confederacy. They resisted the forces which were making for unity on the steppe, and Rua died before he could impose his authority over them. On the other hand, Attila's power was subject to no limitation after his murder of Bleda in 445, and we have seen that in 449, when Priscus visited him, his authority was absolute and autocratic (p. 162 above). It is difficult to believe that, as early as Rua's day, the Huns had surrendered their rude liberties so completely. We may agree then with Mommsen. Attila's greatness lay in his remarkable insight into the potentialities of Hun society. He saw the direction in which the changes taking place in that society in his day were tending. He realized more clearly than any of his predecessors that, if all the tribes could be united under an unquestioned and absolute leader, the Huns would form an unparalleled instrument for the exploitation of the peoples of

¹ *Ges. Sehr.* iv, p. 539.

² Priscus, frag. 1 *init.*

central Europe. Without unity and a strong central power the Huns would have disappeared with as little stir as many a 'Scythian' people before them. Not only did Attila realize the potentialities of his people, but he also proved able to put his ideas into practice. It is unlikely that he instituted the *λογάρι*, for Uldis seems to have had similar subordinates (p. 58 above), and Berichus' father would appear to have been something like a *λογός* in the generation before Attila (p. 163 above). But it seems very probable that Attila developed the institution and gave it its final form. Instead of relying on the unruly and divided tribal chiefs, he based his power on vassals like Onegesius and Berichus and Edeco, who were bound to him personally by an inviolable allegiance without the handicap of tribal obligations.

In the complete absence of a description of Hun society under Rua, no argument on these lines can be at all certain. Yet it is unlikely that Mommsen's judgement was far astray. But even if we subscribe to his view of Attila, we must admit that Rua had laid the foundations of his nephew's greatness.

II

Let us turn to the Huns as a whole. Before discussing the permanent effects of their ascendancy upon the future course of European history, it may be worth while emphasizing a fact which forced its attention on us more than once in earlier pages of this book: the continued existence of the Hun empire very quickly became a vested interest in many parts of Europe. In the West, Aetius, the champion of the landed aristocracy, maintained himself between 425 and 439 solely by means of Hunnic auxiliaries supplied by Rua and Attila, and continued to be on friendly terms with the Hun rulers until the eve of the campaign in Gaul in 451. Even after that, he seems to have thought it incredible that the Huns should undertake hostilities against him and his friends in Italy. He was probably looking forward to years of co-operation with Attila even after the Catalaunian Plains: otherwise he could scarcely have made the grotesque mistake of leaving the Alpine passes unguarded in the spring of 452. There can be no doubt that the great landowners, whose position was upheld by Aetius, entertained a similar attitude towards the Huns. True, Avitus disliked their unruly behaviour on his estate at Avitacum in 436 (p. 67 above) and the invasion

of 451 was altogether terrifying, but who else, save the Huns, could have safeguarded his property from the encroachments of the Visigoths, Burgundians, and Bagaudae? It seems reasonable to suppose that in the thirties and forties of the century the landed aristocracy of the West were disposed to favour the continuance of a Hun empire which would lend them military support whenever they found themselves in difficulties. But, it may be pointed out incidentally, there were men in the West who felt differently. Aetius, naturally enough, made no attempt to create a diversion in the rear of his Hun friends when they attacked the Eastern Empire in 447. But we have already seen that he was criticized for his inaction (p. 93 f. above). Some men evidently felt that he had missed an excellent opportunity of ridding Europe of these barbarians for ever. It would be of profound interest to know who precisely these critics were. They were busy again, it seems, when Attila crossed the Julian Alps in the spring of 452 without meeting opposition,¹ and their general attitude may well have coincided with that of Salvian, who makes it perfectly plain that, in his opinion, it was better to live as an exile among the Huns than as a poor man in the Empire of Aetius.²

In the East it was not the landowning class that stood to gain from the existence of the empire of the Huns. On the contrary, the landowners did their utmost to induce Theodosius to fight Attila, and, when Marcian succeeded to the throne and made it his policy *τοῖς πολλὰς κερτημένοις ἀσφαλῆ παρέχειν τὸν πλοῦτον*, direct military action was taken almost immediately to overthrow the Hun domination of central Europe. In the East, as we have seen, it appears to have been the merchants, traders, and manufacturers who supported Theodosius. Such a conclusion should occasion no surprise, for, in his analysis of the forces which maintained Chinghis Khan's empire, Fox writes thus (p. 132, cf. pp. 67, 106):

'Nor must we leave out of account the influence of the merchants who flocked to Mongolia from Central Asia and the border regions of the Great Wall as soon as a stable state had been created by Chinghis. These merchants . . . were quick to see the great advantage which would come to them if a man of [Chinghis's] genius were to establish a firm rule over Northern China.'

¹ See Prosper, s.a., quoted on p. 145, n. 1 above.

² *De Gub. Dei*, v. 36, *et al.*

It is difficult to resist the impression that the same held good of the East Roman merchants in the days of the Huns. Even before the arrival of the latter, the frontier towns on the Danube had plied a considerable trade with the Visigoths who then lived directly north of the river. In fact, without this trade the Visigoths could scarcely live at all, for, after Valens' three campaigns in 367-9 Athanaric was ready to capitulate, we are told, 'quod commercii vetitis ultima necessariorum inopia barbari stringebantur'.¹ But the Visigoths can have had very little to offer in return to the traders of these cities in comparison with the Huns of Attila's day, who were receiving 2,100 lb. of golden Roman coins every year from Theodosius. Consider Eustace again, the merchant of Apamea (p. 175 above). In the days of Perozes or Firuz, king of Persia (453-84), he was reduced to throwing in his lot with a small band of Huns on the Persian border, presumably in the hope of receiving some pickings from the plunder taken by his companions. In the peaceful days of Attila he would have been able to travel quietly and trade his Syrian wares anywhere he chose between the Caspian and the Rhine. As it was, we know that his life was one of risks and hazards; he must certainly have regretted the collapse of Attila's empire.

Finally, we have considered the possibility that some of the Germanic kings were comparatively well satisfied with their position under Attila. This, of course, can be no more than a suggestion, but if in fact they were dissatisfied, we can only say that they were peculiarly blind to the advantages of their bondage.²

In all this it will be observed that the arrival of the Huns released no new social or productive forces that might have transformed the condition of the Roman Empire. It was not possible for them, as it was for some of the Germanic kings³—and indeed for the Eastern Emperors themselves in the long run—so to alter the position of the peasantry as to make possible their eventual liberation. None the less, further research into the social history of the Eastern Empire may well show that, at a critical time, they played an important, if unwitting, part in

¹ Amm. xxvii. 5. 7.

² Cf. the intimacy of Ardaric and Attila, Jordanes, *Get.* xxxviii. 199, quoted on p. 166 above.

³ See on this point F. Engels, *Origin of the Family*, p. 177 f.

the preservation of the East. One of the greatest dangers in all ancient societies was the fact that, owing to the low productive methods available, land had an inevitable tendency to concentrate rapidly into a very few hands, and we know that the paralysis of the West in the fifth century was largely due to this extreme concentration of land. The estate-owners were so strong that the government stood powerless before them. In the East, however, the landlords were opposed, as they were not in the West, by a comparatively powerful and wealthy class of merchants, traders, craftsmen, and the like. We have seen reason to suppose that the existence of the Hun empire, and the policy adopted by Theodosius and Chrysaphius towards that empire, tended to strengthen this class of merchants and craftsmen at the expense of the landed aristocracy. When the social relationships existing within the Eastern Roman Empire have been more fully analysed, it may well appear that the ascendancy of the Huns was thereby an important factor in postponing the struggle between the government and the landowners which racked Constantinople at a later date and finally, after many vicissitudes, resulted in the victory of the landlords. Of course, the issue was not without its complications. The merchant of Viminacium had little reason for gratitude towards Theodosius, and the wars of 441-3 and 447 caused untold damage and loss to the traders of the frontier towns. Yet that same merchant had prospered during the thirties in Viminacium, which he certainly would not have done had Marcian succeeded to the throne twenty years earlier and had begun his provocative measures when Attila was still a young man. And despite the devastation of the frontier towns, their trade must have continued, for, as we have seen, the Huns would have perished without it. In the present state of our knowledge, no certainty can be attained on considerations like these. But the sceptical may be asked: In the long run who was it that benefited from the 2,100 lb. of gold that reached the Huns every year? After all, the Huns extorted the money because they wanted to spend it.

III

The question of the results and significance of the Hun ascendancy has been discussed by Bury, whose conclusions are accepted by Alföldi and others.¹ Bury argues that the existence

¹ Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, i, p. 297 f.; Alföldi, *Untergang*, ii, p. 88,

of the Hun empire 'helped to retard the whole process of the German dismemberment of the Empire', and that it did this in two ways. In the first place, the Huns, by conquering the Germanic peoples of central Europe and holding them in check, eased the pressure on the Roman frontiers for many years. True, the Huns themselves devastated the Roman provinces both in the East and in the West on several occasions, but, in Bury's opinion, these devastations were no worse than those which would have been carried out by the Germans if the Huns had not been there. In fact, soon after the beginning of the fifth century Italy was almost completely free from barbarian attacks launched from the Danube basin. It was only in 452 that such attacks were renewed. Again, we know that after the death of the usurper John in 425 the plundering raids of the Germans into Gaul were considerably restricted, and this was certainly due to the Huns' conquest of the Germans who had hitherto been pressing on the Roman frontier. In the second place, both the Eastern and particularly the Western Empire were provided with considerable numbers of Hunnic auxiliaries, who, whatever the social implications of their activities, were, as Bury says, 'an invaluable resource in the struggle with the German enemies', such as the Visigoths and Burgundians.

It will be noticed that, in one important respect, this view coincides with the conclusions reached in the previous section: it was Bury's opinion that the Huns, so far from hastening the collapse of the Roman Empire, actually delayed it. We came tentatively to this conclusion by examining the Huns in relation to the *internal* condition of the Eastern, but not the Western, Empire; Bury reached it after a consideration of the *external* relations of the Empire as a whole. Yet it may be suggested that Bury's view should be modified. Granting that the Germans were held in check when Attila was leader of the Huns, the same cannot be said of the periods before and after his career. It is difficult to imagine that, if the Huns had never appeared, any such cataclysms would have shaken Europe as were caused by the two great westward drives of the nomads *c.* 376 and *c.* 405. These two dates are landmarks in the process by which the Empire fell. When the Goths crossed the lower Danube and fought at Adrianople, and when the Vandals, Alans, and Sueves crossed the Rhine, the Roman Empire very quickly became something basically different from what it had been, say, in the

time of Julian (361-3). These two westward thrusts of the Huns drove the Germans far deeper *and far earlier* into Gaul, Spain, and even Africa than would have been possible for them if the Huns had not been at their heels. Take the case of Alaric. Can we suppose that he would have been content with a miserable career as half-friend and half-foe of the Romans, half in their pay and half cheated out of it, if the rich lands of the Danubian plain had been available to his men? He has caught our imagination by his capture of Rome in 410; but we must not forget that throughout his career he was a man for whom retreat was impossible. In his search for land, upon which his followers could settle and grow their crops in peace, he never dared to turn towards the north, and he died with his problem still unsolved. Again, in the years which followed Attila's death the Ostrogoths were reduced to outright starvation as a result of their experiences at the hands of the Huns. They were compelled by their sheer want of food to obtain land and money from the Romans. How different their history would have been if they had been allowed to live on peacefully north of the Danube and in southern Russia, where they might have continued for many years to exploit the numerous races included in the empire of Ermanarich.

Hence, even if the Germanic invasions were retarded between 430 and 455, they were accelerated both before and after those dates. Without the appearance of the Huns there would have been no Visigothic kingdom of Toulouse, no Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy, no Vandal kingdom in Africa *as early as in fact there were*. That Germans would eventually have set up their kingdoms in Gaul, Italy, and Africa is of course undeniable; but without the Huns they would have done so at a more leisurely pace.¹

The Huns played an important role in European history for less than a hundred years. But we have seen that, despite its brevity, their appearance had profound consequences for the subsequent development of western Europe and may have had

¹ I say nothing of the part which the Huns play in Bury's theory of the contingent events by which he seeks to explain the fall of the Roman Empire (ib. i, p. 311 f.), for that theory has not won acceptance. It should also be observed that he does not overlook the importance of the events which followed the year 376. See also his judicious remarks on the significance of the battle of the Catalaunian Plains and of the Nedao, ib., p. 294, and *The Invasion of Europe by the Barbarians* (London, 1928), pp. 149 ff., 155 f.

considerable influence on the East. But the effects, which we have tried to trace, were all indirect. They were caused by the displacement of other peoples and by the trade of the Romans. Did the Huns make no *direct* contribution to the progress of Europe? Had they nothing to offer besides the terror which uprooted the Germanic nations and sent them fleeing into the Roman Empire? The answer is, No, they offered nothing. Their society was such that they could make no contribution like those of the Germans, the Persians, and the Arabs. They were mere plunderers and marauders. A character in Priscus briefly and admirably describes what they did: 'Being themselves contemptuous of agriculture,' he says, 'they descended upon the Gothic food supply and snatched it away like wolves, so that the Goths occupied the position of slaves and toiled for the sustenance of the Huns.'¹

¹ Priscus, p. 348. 8-11.

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