The Pax Romana

By Melissa Dulberg

The Pax Romana was said to be a peaceful time of prosperity in Rome. But was all of it really peaceful? No, although Rome wasn’t fighting any wars, they still had internal struggle as an empire.

After the Civil Wars, Rome went through 27BC-180AD, which is a 200-year period called the Pax Romana, which means peace. There were a lot of good and bad things that shaped Rome and the world into what it is today.

The positive aspects of the Pax Romana mostly had to do with trade. Rome traded with the Han Dynasty through the Silk Road. The trade helped their prosperity. Rome had lots of towns and a few large cities. Theses cities were sometimes referred to as “mini-Rome’s”. Rome allowed people to join their empire as citizens as long as they served for them in the Army. This helped increase population to about 60-80 million people! There were some positive aspects of the Pax Romana.

There were many negative things that happened during the Pax Romana. 90% of the population were farmers. But since Rome had a large army to feed, along with 60-80 million people, there was never a surplus of food. Also, people could own slaves so patricians no longer needed the plebeians to work for them. Unemployment and poverty were high although Romans tried to hide it. The majority of the people had many problems with employment and poverty, so the government came up with Bread and Circus. The government distributed free grain and entertainment for those in need. This helped distract the people from their problems. But this was only given to men and many animals died because that was the entertainment. Women couldn’t get jobs so they turned to prostitution. There was also a huge gap between rich and poor. When the Romans forced the Jews to worship Roman Gods, they refused. The Ten Commandments told the Jews worship God and nothing else. Since they refused to worship the Roman Gods, The Romans killed about a million Jews. They tortured them to death. This shows that the Pax Romana was not all that peaceful.

The Pax Romana had many positives and many negatives. Although it was believed to be a peaceful and prosperous 200 years, it really wasn’t. Do you believe the positives weigh out the negatives? Or do you believe it was a truly terrible time?

Sources:
www.ushistory.org/civ/6c.asp
Robinson handout