

Sacrificing for 'Great Russia'

There was no joy in this year's pre-Easter message from the Soviet government to the population of Russia and the peoples of the empire's Captive Nations. Czar-President Mikhail Gorbachov, sitting in the Kremlin, in a moment of profound inspiration generated by the "New Thinking," had, dialectically of course, devised a "solution" to the Russian empire's systemic crisis. Being a Czar, he had of course access to the Czarist archives, and, looking in the subject catalogue under the heading, "Systemic Crisis solutions," found what he sought. It was, frankly speaking, not a very original solution, but it was traditional, in the Great Russian autocratic tradition. And for a modern-day Czar what could be more important?

The solution was that prescribed by pre-1917 Czars, and rediscovered by those post-1917 holders of eternal wisdom, Vladimir Lenin and Josef Stalin. Czar Gorbachov's "solution" is to have his subjects, led by the Great Russians, sacrifice under a brutal austerity program so that, through their "patriotic" blood, sweat, and tears, Russia may resurrect itself and remain a "Great Power."

Czars being Czars, the "mission" of conveying this latest flash of "New Thinking" to the population, in case its implementation should produce a revolt, was relegated to a court servant; in this case, U.S.S.R. Deputy Prime Minister Leonid Abalkin, who delivered his address on Palm Sunday, April 8. Abalkin announced that price con-

trols will be lifted starting this year, making all items much more expensive than they now are. However, Imperial proclamations cannot be framed in mundane words like "price increases." The poor subjects must be told that their misery is serving noble causes. To quote Abalkin, "austerity" has been regally named "Economic Revolution": "The Economic Revolution will be painful and difficult . . . but without such a transition, the country has no future as a Great Power. . . . We have to sacrifice, but there is no other option . . . [otherwise] we will deprive ourselves and our children of the benefits of a Great Power."

However, will Russians really listen to an Abalkin, a mere economist, and a Communist Party member? The Czar did not overlook this problem. Every Czar has at least one Rasputin for such emergencies, and Czar Gorbachov is no exception. His new Imperial ruling body, the Presidential Council, contains Valentin Rasputin, the Russian chauvinist writer who is not a Communist Party member, who was placed on the Council, in his own words, "because I represent Russia."

So, for those Russians who would ignore a "patriotic" appeal to sacrifice, coming from Abalkin, an authentic "Voice of Mother Russia," as authentic as, say, Fyodor Dostoevsky, has been provided by His Majesty, to ensure compliance with the sacrificial requirements of the systemic crisis. The requirements, according to Rasputin, are: "An end to the consumer society," which is a "Western" evil imposed upon Russia, and with this end, a "re-birth of Russia," freed from "Western influences." Abalkin's price increases will ensure the "end of the consumer society." Rasputin's job is to make sure it happens without a revolt. Will he succeed and save the throne and empire? The last Rasputin didn't.

canals would have to be built to create direct links between the mountainous regions of the north and the central plains regions and between the Danube and all parts of the country. This would also enhance the export possibilities for Hungarian agricultural products. List also called for a program of land reclamation in the swampy areas.

List realized that feudal privileges would have to be significantly curtailed and a system of taxation established also for the nobility, in order to create a financial basis for these projects. The Hungarian Company should also be granted state-guaranteed loans from the Austrian government to initiate its projects. The program called for the exploitation of the bituminous coal deposits and iron ore which were to be found in the country. The increased skill levels of the labor force which such a program would require demanded the

improvement of the national education system.

The Listian program received little immediate response from the imperial bureaucracy, whose failure to act undoubtedly contributed to the outbreak of the 1848 Revolution. When the Dual Kingdom of Austria-Hungary was established in the aftermath of that revolution, the Listian program was by and large implemented, under different conditions, creating the infrastructural basis for Hungary's industrial development 20 years later.

Then as now, Hungary's future lay in the implementation of a Listian development program, rather than British "free market" follies. In that respect, a Hungarian connection today to the Central European railroad triangle would provide the only workable basis for its national industrial development.