# The 'New Economic Policy' in Russia.

# By S. P. BUNTING.

under the 'new economic policy,' a new generation the peasants became discontented. of profiteers grow up and make money while we, who thought we had fought down profiteering for good and all, live but little better than before:"

## "COMMUNIST CONSUMPTION."

on the "consumer" aspect, to consider "profit" as lowing to the deliberate counter-revolutionary destrucwhat the shopkeeper makes, to dwell on distribution tion of railways, factories, mines, machinery and and forget production. It was no doubt possible and even raw material, and, on the top of all this, to the necessary as a temporary war measure to seize and famine. It was, as it still is, clearly impossible distribute whatever consumables came handy. But it had never even been thought possible—for the p Communism involves not just " having all things in | State in these circumstances to run all the exprocommon," but producing them. War-time product printed concerns itself: it could only concentrate on tion, such as it was, was not normal production; the most essential and the easiest. Food was then rather it precluded the possibility of it. The "War | first necessity. Hence, in the absence of adequate | Communism." fleshpots to which (poor as they were) | State production of articles exchangeable for corn, ). some in Russia still look back with regret, did not the stimulus of free exchange and an open market imply "putting on flesh," They meant little more was re-introduced, coupled with revival of currency. than spending the country's resources. That could payment of wages according to work done, and denot last. Everybody was nominally given some sort control of many undertakings, the State aiming for of a job and got some sort of a ration, clothing and the present at retention of large or key industries shelter; but that, in the disorganised condition of only, taking care, however, "to prevent decontrolled then at last become apparent to all. things inherited from Tsarism and the Great War, industries from developing to the detriment of genand intensified by the Allied attacks which have only | eral principles"; and of a prospective complete just ended (temporarily at least), did not mean that socialiastion in the fulness of time. Thus even now t everybody was really producing his whack and earn- the concerns not directly (like the railways) adminis- , ing his salt, or that what he produced was useful. | tered by the State still consist predominantly of con- | On the contrary, in Russia, as in other countries in cerns run or controllingly influenced by "asso-1 war time, the bulk of war products necessarily went | ciated individuals" (to quote the Communist Manihorrow a sixpence.

# PRODUCTION THE PROBLEM.

The Communist Manifesto says one of the first | -. duties of a victorious proletariat is the concentration. of all instruments of production in the hands of the 1, proletarian state and the rapid increase of produc-1, tive forces. But how was this possible in the devas-1. lating circumstances of the time? How could Socialist production be suddenly introduced out of the chaos taken over from Kerensky: To take food pro-1, duction in particular, elimination of landowners does 1. not of itself bring about socialist agriculture; on the owner of all land. contrary, it left most agriculture in the same petty.] backward state as before. Besides, although all human activity may be reduced to terms of a simple) pretty nearly destroyed altogether. The dramatic tralised; the rouble has become very much more satisfied and the material elements available. the midst of civil war, a.

WAR COMMUNISM.

### WHAT THE "N.E.P." COMES TO.

It was not until the latter half of 1921, when comparative peace had at last been secured, that the Soviet Government felt able to tackle, or at least to such talk reflects the common tendency to dwell face, the position, greatly worsened as it was Concerned, etc.—and only to a small extent and on a l I small scale of individual private enterprises; and, as l private enterprise, the Government itself is a shopkeeper on a large scale, competing successfully with private shops and preventing them from profiteering) lespecially in bread and other prime necessaries. Moreover, the Government retains complete control of foreign trade and itself conducts the bulk of it, thus checking the danger of capitalist ascendancy from that quarter. And of course the State remains i

# "HEAVY ENDUSTRY"; THE KEY.

without "heavy industry" to produce the plant, else it would be strange indeed if in Russia of all able ultimately to absorb all the rest, and the Soviet

"Well, if I had known that private trading and the pre-existing collapse of transport and industry. | buyer being the State, or things requiring much (chine), just as a ruling bourgeoisie can concede rehire of labour were going on I should never have was, it seems, still very active. But as the civil capital to produce. Now it is just in "heavy in-forms to Labour without endangering its power, so come to Russia," said recently a Johannesburger war and foreign attack thickened it stopped, the dustry" that capitalism elsewhere finds its power. The proletarian power can make certain concessions, just arrived in Moscow. He expressed what to one private employers and managers, "not taking us Simple production, e.g., of corn or rice, although it including the right to make profit, to the bourgeoisie who had not closely followed the course of events to seriously," as Trotsky says, threw up their job, and constitutes the bulk of human production, is in gen-land yet remain secure in the saddle. date in Russia was a natural misconception in view the Government had to take over one concern after eral not so directly amenable to capitalist control: of the somewhat Utopian propaganda about Russia another more than it could chew, dislocating the lit is too scattered, and goes too direct from hand to which most of us, especially in distant countries, correct Communist Manifesto policy, namely, after to mouth (and for the same reason it will probably to trade, but rather an excessive technical backhave been parties; but a misconception still held seizing power to wrest all capital from the bour- be the last form of production to be socialised). It wardness, resulting in slackness and venality-all also by some earnest Communists who have been geoisic "by degrees." The ensuing War Community also by some earnest Communists who have been geoisic "by degrees." The ensuing War Community and characteristics of the old regime which it right through the fire of the last five years in Russia ism might indeed have developed into real com- mercial undertakings that Big Business, with its takes time to abolish. The main army of Tsarist was not the revolution to abolish exploi- munist production had other countries, and Germany steel kings, gold bugs, coal barons, oil magnates, officials had necessarily to be kept on for lack of tation, trade and profit, and introduce co-operative in particular to begin with, followed the example merchant princes, shipping rings, and so on, is en- competent and loyal substitutes, while of the example production for common use? And did it not in fact of the November revolution as was hoped at the time abled to control the world. For heavy industry, perts and professional technical men some sulked do so? At any rate, did not we in Russia enjoy | -and it was on such hopes that much of our Uto- | therefore, as contrasted with smaller undertakings and ran away, others remained to sabotage. This Communism for several years—not generous rations, pian propaganda abroad was based. As it was, even (many of which the State could not be bothered to is where education is looked to, and rightly, both to but equal for all: Why should we now have to see, rural production sagged for want of stimulus, and conduct at all), "proletarian state capitalism" (with combat the "N.E.P.man's" tainted ideology and to the working class as its own owner-capitalist) is the re-man the whole State economic apparatus with a only possible policy for Soviet Russia. To heavy sympathetic, efficient and honest communist perindustry as its Palladium the Workers' Republic sonnel. There will be black sheep still, but the stuwill cling with the utmost tenacity. To recondition dents of to-day are such a keen, intelligent lot, and and restart it, and at the same time to retain it in so well steeped in communist politics and economics, State hands, is a crucial link in the chain of Soviet that the "government service" they are destined development to-day. And so, though money is very soon to fill will be the finest and cleanest in the tight, and though heavy industry has actually de- world, just as the Red Army personnel is already clined right up to date, yet " concessions " have gone the finest and cleanest in the world, because it underonly a negligible distance. There are many Urqu-stands the fine and clean cause it has to fight for. harts eager to enter the field, but the Government Of course it is necessary, as Lenin says, that many prefers slowly and painfully to accumulate the ne-young Russians should learn "business," by excessary capital itself, in competition with such ur-perience, even at the feet of bourgeois instructors, gent needs as military and (since Lausanne) naval and this may sorely try their communist faithfulexpenditure, and at the expense even of education, ness. But hence all the more the lavish attention even though this reluctance to "attract capital" is paid to "the youth" and the Young Communist responsible for the comparatively slow progress of organisations, and the seizure of every opportunity Russian industry to-day. However, when large scale to propagate among the young people a healthy conindustry, and the consequent maximum circulation tempt for bourgeois "morals," and a burning patriotof commodities," eventually get going at full swing, ism for the communist system as the necessary the justification of the New Economic Policy as the foundation of a higher ethical standard. link between industry and peasant production will

A TRANSITION POLICY. There is nothing reactionary, then, in the mere capitalism a proletarian class-consciousness was Trevival of buying and selling. Sociálists have often learnt empirically from the mere presence of the pointed out that it is not in the market so much as a at the point of production that the capitalist shoe with private exploitation eliminated, with the workwas time, the book of the countries covered festo again).-by co-operatives, workers' unions or pinches. In the present transitional regime private ing class growing only richer, not poorer, and the this with huge war loans, Soviet Russia could not groups, "trusts nominated by Government with trading is after all only an incident. The predomi- foundation of society becoming only stronger, not the approval of the employees and industrial unions nant feature is "State Capitalism ander proletarian weaker, as this "state capitalism" develops, and control"—contemplated by Lenin as far back as hence with no purpose served by striking, etc., the 1918; or, as Trotsky describes it, "State Socialism young worker who has grown up during the revoregards shopkeeping, which is the main direction of using the methods of the capitalist market for its lution, but knows little about it, must be expressly swork." Perhaps the N.E.P. may be classed as one taught about man's place in the universe, the strucfof those measures which "appear economically" (much as the "United Front" may to some appear sent and future position in it, the functions of capipolitically) "insufficient and untenable, but which alism, imperialism, religion, and so on, before he in the course of the movement outstrip themselves, can properly understand the workshop. "It is the and are indispensable as a means of revolutionising question of the life or death of a whole class, of the the whole mode of production "- to quote once more people. Great sacrifice, great class intensity, is from the Communist Manifesto, which, be it noted, needed to attain Socialism. Here and now, while never even suggests the abolition of trade as such. the painful "first socialist accumulation" is going As Lenin says, trade is no further from Communism on, our working class must consciously realise that than is the petty peasant patriarchal agriculture here on earth paradise is to be attained. Education, Results, in spite of an increased inequality of in- prevalent throughout most of Russia. It is all a education!" concluded Trotsky: "let your young quest for food, clothing and shelfer, yet this quest in comes, have justified this policy. Light industry, question of (post-revolutionary) stages. "It is absorbed the hard granite of education, all the more guise to the whole machinery of organised i.e., the production of necessaries and goods for lutely wrong," says Trotsky, "to suppose that a because our situation is bad and blinds us to the industry, transport, distribution and exchange, not which there is an immediate market and demand, socialist economy can be inaugurated in accordance class birth of the State. In the years-before us workto mention general-amenities, all of which the revo- has "rapidly increased"; the general minimum with a priori statistics that we can simply blue- ing class youth must work intensively as the advance butionary government found in a state of consider- standard of living has risen and is still rising ac- pencil capitalist methods and then juggle Socialism guard of the working class when the struggle exable collapse, and the counter-revolutionary wars cordingly; the peasants' disaffection has been neustroke of a revolution, dethroning the capitalist dic- stable than the mark; and the State Treasury has An incipient socialist economy has to work with of Russia and of the world revolution." And the store of a resolution, action still to be been appreciably enriched. Nor has the compara- capitalist means." Of course there are risks about deafening response of that great concourse of "young tatorship, leaves the task of socialisation still to be the concourse of the compara- capitalist means." tively small class of private tradesmen or employers it. Much depends on the activity and loyalty of the men and maidens " (like the huge demonstration that begun, and although obviously it cannot even be beuegun, and armougn outloomed. (of course disfranchised), though "making good" to industrial unions, which play a most important part followed on 7th November) seemed to promise that gun until the capitalist class has been dethroned. (of course disfranchised), though "making good" to industrial unions, which play a most important part followed on 7th November) seemed to promise that gun until the variance with the disgust of many proletarians, acquired the slight- in Russian economy. Ultimately it all depends on they felt equal to their task: that with their help yet no mere dramatic stroke of itself can accomplish the disgust of many proletarians, acquired the slight- in Russian economy. Ultimately it all depends on they felt equal to their task: that with their help yer no nerv uranian every survey always backward, and in est political influence or impaired the absolute the persistence and spread throughout the world of and pressure the "siege tactic" of the N.E.P. will it, least of all in a country always backward, and in his total the absolute the persistence and spread throughout the world of and pressure the "siege tactic" of the N.E.P. will be a second to the persistence and spread throughout the world of and pressure the "siege tactic" of the N.E.P. will be a second to the persistence and spread throughout the world of and pressure the "siege tactic" of the N.E.P. will be a second to the persistence and spread throughout the world of and pressure the "siege tactic" of the N.E.P. will be a second to the persistence and spread throughout the world of and pressure the "siege tactic" of the N.E.P. will be a second to the persistence and spread throughout the world of an accountry always backward, and in the persistence and spread throughout the world of an accountry always backward, and in the persistence and spread throughout the world of an accountry always backward, and in the persistence are always to the persistence and spread throughout the world of a second to the persistence and the persistence are always to the persistence and the persistence and the persistence are always the persistence and the persistence are always to the persistence and the persistence are always to the persistence are always to the persistence are always the persistence are always to the persistence are alway working-class control of the State. However, "light the revolution in general, As for that, Trotsky re-Inot weaken but strengthen the movement towards industry" cannot get along in civilised communities marks that with capitalism crumbling everywhere Communism, until organised communist industry is

#### THE NEW GENERATION.

Russia's chief weakness to-day is not the "retreat"

# "BITING THE GRANITE."

At a Young Communist gathering last October in Moscow, Trotsky pointed out that whereas under boss, making theoretic schooling superfluous, now . on the other hand, with the workers' state as "boss," ture of society and the State, the workers' past, pre-· young people's organisation hangs the life or death