

**SOURCE 4** From *I Write As I Please*, 1935, by Walter Duranty. Duranty was an American journalist who was in Russia during the NEP

“Moscow had changed during my three weeks’ absence. Everywhere run-down and half-ruined buildings were being refurbished and restored. Shops, cafes and restaurants were being opened in all directions . . . The city was full of peasants selling fruit, vegetables and other produce . . .

To the Communists NEP was doubtless repugnant, but to the mass of the workers it brought jobs that would be paid in money instead of valueless paper or mouldy rations, and the certainty that with money they could buy the food and necessities of life . . .

To the traders, NEP meant opportunity and the dawn of better days. Until August 9th (1921) it was technically a crime to possess goods of value . . . and a crime to buy and sell anything. The NEP decree changed all that . . .

At the top of my street, I saw a man selling flour, sugar and rice on a little table . . . At the end of a week he was selling fresh eggs and vegetables . . . By mid-November he had rented a tiny store . . .

By the following May he had four salesmen in a fair-sized store, to which peasants brought fresh produce each morning.

After a year’s trading . . . he made \$20,000 to \$30,000 clear profit, but the point is that his enterprise stimulated scores of peasants to fatten chickens or little pigs or plant vegetables. The same thing was being done all over Russia and the effects were amazing. In a single year the supply of food and goods jumped from starvation point to something nearly adequate, and prices fell accordingly.”

Our poverty and ruin are so great that we cannot at one stroke restore large-scale socialist production . . . we must try to satisfy the demands of the peasants who are dissatisfied, discontented and cannot be otherwise . . . there must be a certain amount of freedom to trade, freedom for the small private owner. We are now retreating, but we are doing this so as to then run and leap forward more vigorously.

Lenin, introducing the NEP at the Party Congress, 1921.

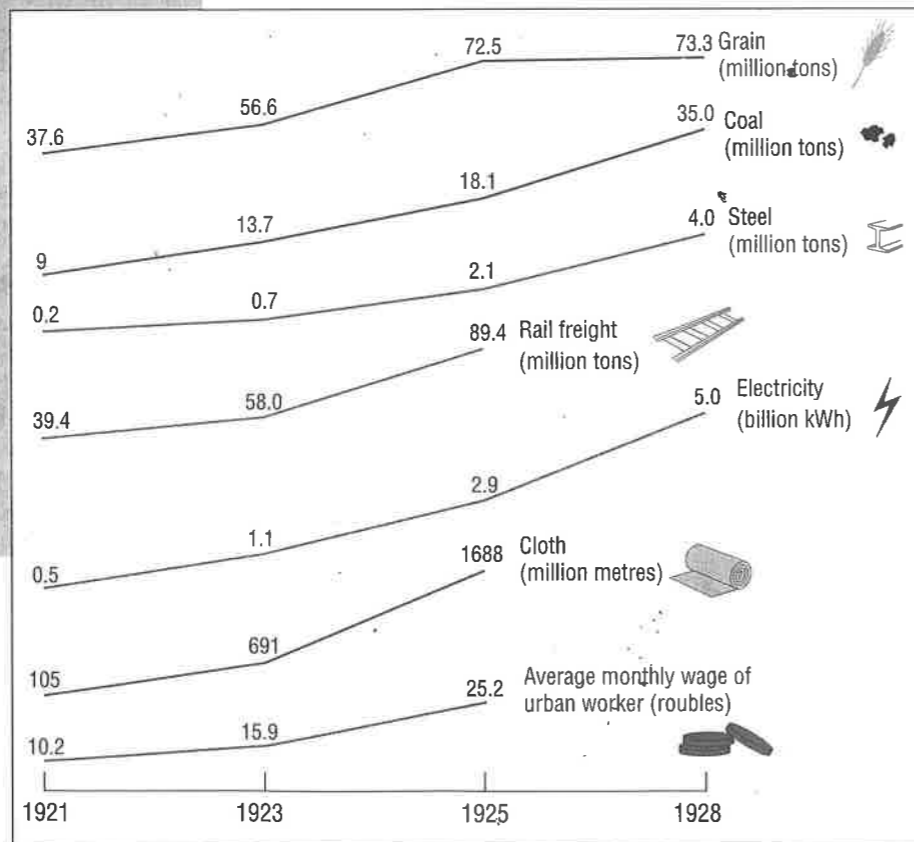
**SOURCE 5** From a 1923 report by Walter Duranty

“Living conditions in Russia have enormously improved in the past two years.

The condition of Moscow may be reckoned as 25 per cent ahead of the rest of Russia, but similar, if slower, improvement is visible everywhere. The essential fact is that everyone is so infinitely better off than during the ‘black years’ of 1920 and 1921 that present conditions seem paradise by comparison.

The industrial workers are relatively better off although hit by high prices and short time in many industries . . . at least they get paid regularly now . . .

The industrial workers of Moscow grumble about the overcrowding and the luxury displayed by the ‘Nepmen’, the newly rich traders and speculators . . . It is estimated that upward of 250,000 private traders have migrated to Moscow since the NEP began, two years ago. They crowd the restaurants where it costs \$25 a head for dinner with French wine . . . and lose a thousand or so an evening at baccarat [cards] without turning a hair.”



**SOURCE 6** Agricultural and industrial production, 1921–28

**SOURCE 7** General Grigovenko of the Soviet army recalling the time

“Never did I live as well as I did in the NEP years, not even when I became a general.”

**SOURCE 8** Anna Strong, a Communist

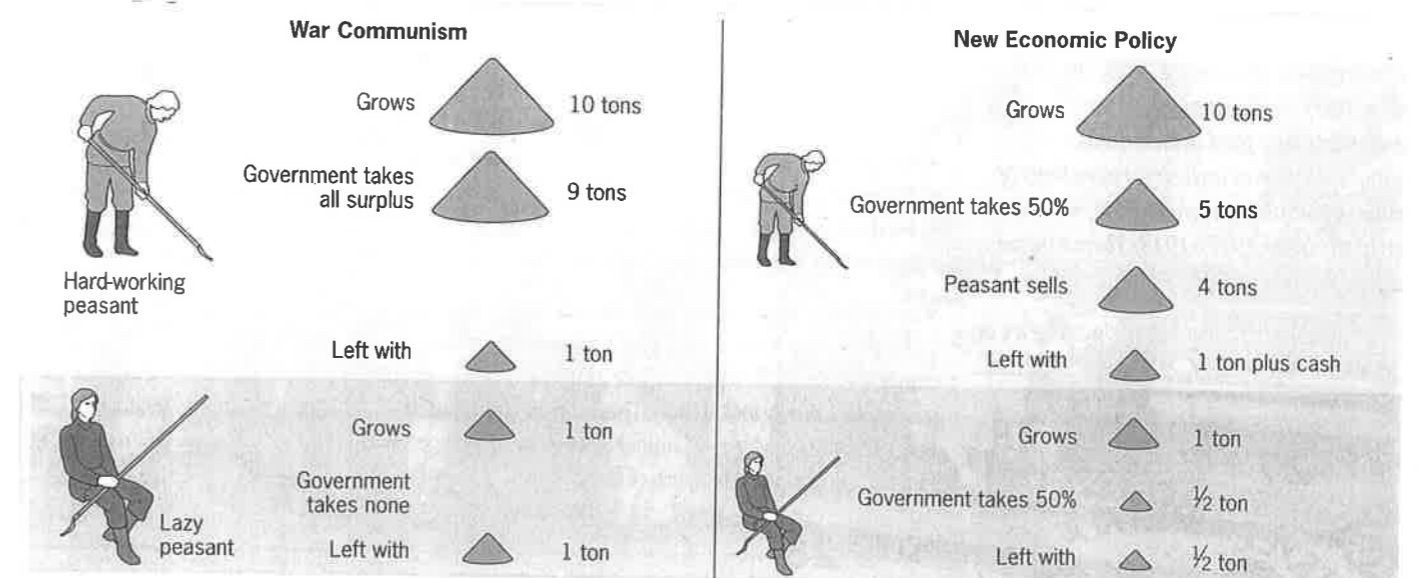
“In my few short trips into Moscow during the winter of 1921–22, I had been disturbed by the growing private trade. To me each seems a step of defeat . . . There’s a horrible new rich set growing.”

Poor, starving old Russia, Russia of primitive lighting and the meal of a crust of black bread, is going to be covered by a network of electric power stations. The NEP will transform the Russian economy and rebuild a broken nation. The future is endless and beautiful.

Bukharin, speaking in 1922. He was a leading Bolshevik and a strong supporter of the NEP.

In 1925 the Soviet Commissar for Finance admitted that the pay of miners, metal workers and engine drivers was still lower than it had been before 1914. This in turn meant that workers’ housing and food were poor. The factory committee of a cement works in Smolensk reported, for example, in 1929: ‘Every day there are many complaints about apartments: many workers have families of six and seven people, and live in one room.’

Some problems identified by Soviet observers in the 1920s.



How the NEP differed from War Communism.