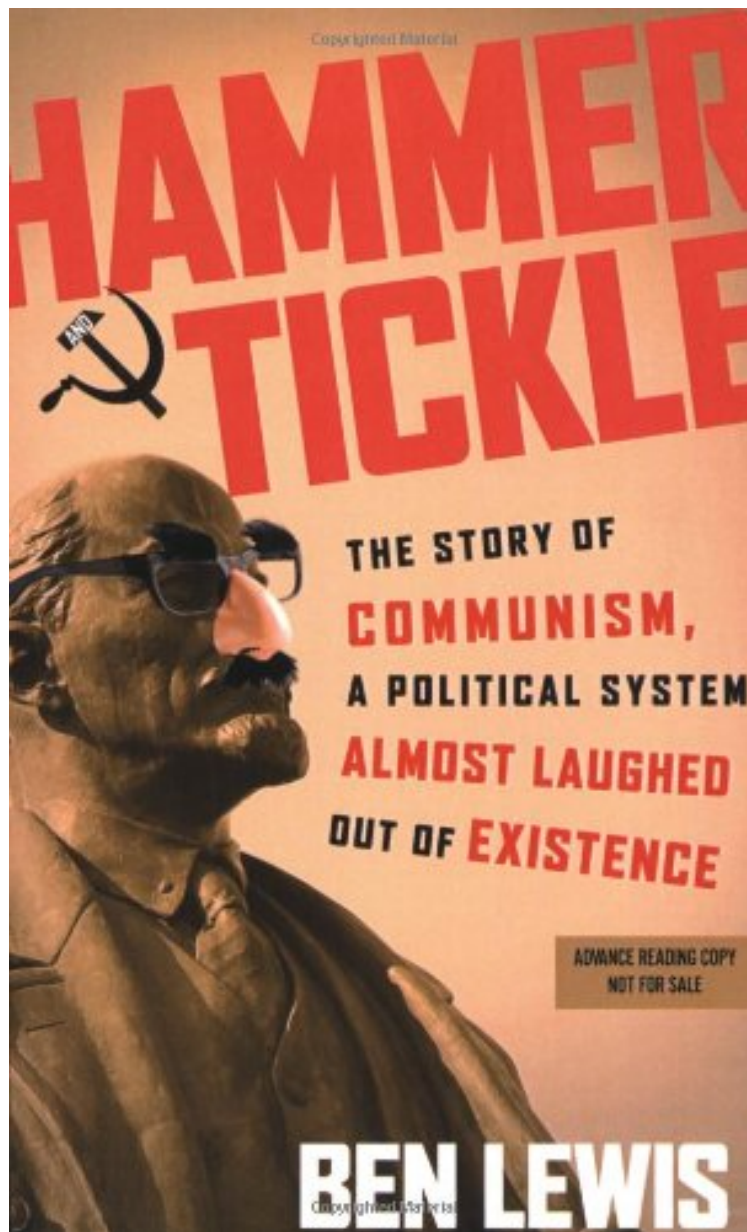


(Online library) Hammer and Tickle: The Story of Communism, A Political System Almost Laughed Out of Existence

Hammer and Tickle: The Story of Communism, A Political System Almost Laughed Out of Existence

Ben Lewis

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Ben Lewis : Hammer and Tickle: The Story of Communism, A Political System Almost Laughed Out of Existence before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hammer

and Tickle: The Story of Communism, A Political System Almost Laughed Out of Existence:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Worth the read
By Lafcadio Koizumi
After seeing of the videos on the internet I decided to pick up a copy of the book which I rather enjoyed. It's somewhat of stretch to ascribe the downfall of communism to humor but I enjoyed Ben Lewis's personal journey as he set off through Eastern Europe to work on his theory. There are also, needless to say, many funny jokes in the book - a kind of humor which has largely disappeared since the fall of the Berlin Wall.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Was it really subversive humor that brought down the USSR? See for yourself ...
By Michael Stern
An uproarious romp through the history of underground humor in the Soviet Union, East Germany, Poland, and other Eastern Block countries, replete with an excellent assortment of political jokes. Example: "Question: What's the intermediate step between Socialism and Communism? Answer: Alcoholism!" In all seriousness, Lewis does critically and thoroughly examine the claims made by some in the West that it was this subversive humor that ultimately helped bring down the Soviet regime.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. very good humor
By Gitau Irungu
I loved every minute of reading it. good read, at this point am just write so i can submit one more word...there!

Q: Why, despite all the shortages, was the toilet paper in East Germany always two-ply? A: Because they had to send a copy of everything they did to Moscow. Communist jokes are the strangest, funniest, most enchanting and meaningful legacy of the eighty years of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe. The valiant and sardonic citizens of the former Communist countries? surrounded by secret police, threatened with arrest, imprisonment and forced labor, a failed economic system, and bombarded with ludicrous propaganda? turned joke-telling into an art form, using them as a coded way of speaking the truth and coping with the absurdity of the system. In this poignant and historically revealing book, rare and previously unpublished archive material, including cartoons, caricatures, photographs, and oral transcripts take the reader on a unique journey through the real experience of the Communist era. 25 bw illustrations

From Publishers Weekly
This often enjoyable but flat-footed compilation and study of jokes from the Soviet bloc has a hard time justifying its existence. Journalist and documentarian Lewis (who made a film of the same title for the BBC) started by imagining Communist jokes as a subversive critique that undermined the totalitarian state, but concludes that they were a politically irrelevant distraction. He looks to them as a window into Communist society, but discovers that most probably they originated long before Lenin appeared. If truth be told, Communist jokes are often pretty lame. For every clever one-liner—capitalism is the exploitation of man by man, while communism is the exact opposite—Lewis unearths 10 clunkers like, Why are the East Berliners dumber than the East Friesians? They built a wall and placed themselves on the wrong side. Lewis's explications of jokes are more interesting than the jokes, as are his fencing sessions with unapologetic ex-Communist apparatchiks and with his artist girlfriend, a humorless nostalgist for East Germany. The rueful punch line Lewis leaves us with, almost despite himself, is that Communism was no laughing matter. Photos. (Aug.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Marvelously original... a fine tribute to the joyous, humane anarchy of laughter, whose nearest political analogue is that ramshackle, chaotic system of political wishful thinking called democracy. And their favourite joke? "What stage comes between socialism and communism? Alcoholism." (Christopher Hart, Sunday Times [London]) "An entertaining and thoughtful study. (George Walden, Evening Standard [London]) "We find at long last the jokes only communism could produce. And while they may not have brought it down, they can still tell us something important about why it fell. (Sunday Telegraph) "Wonderful... this isn't just a joke book. Instead, Lewis embarks on a deeply scholarly examination and analysis of the communist joke... an excellent job. (Martin Rowson, New Statesman) "An excellent anthology of anecdotes knowledgeably linked into the history of the Soviet period... very enjoyable to read. (Elaine Feinstein, Daily Telegraph [London]) "Gives a good flavour of that socialist-era humour. (Morning Star [London]) "Explores the wealth of subversive humour during the long, bleak decades of communism. (Irish Independent) "Ben Lewis's grimly entertaining study is no mere joke compendium. (George Walden, The Scotsman) "Charming, highly original, elegantly written and valuable piece of cultural history... This is a very funny book. Like the best Communist jokes, it is funniest when it is grimmest. (Victor Sebestyen, The Spectator) "A fascinating attempt to get to grips with communism's rise and fall in Europe through its funny bone... their cultural significance shouldn't be underestimated. (Metro [UK]) "About the Author
Ben Lewis is a columnist for Prospect magazine. His award winning film Hammer and Tickle appeared on the BBC in 2006. He lives in London.