



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

*Ben Lewis*

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**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 In this poignant and historically revealing book, rare and previously unpublished archive material, including cartoons, caricatures, photographs, and oral transcripts take the reader on a unique journey through the real experience of the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 b&w illustrations

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