

THEY NEVER SAID IT



*A Book of Fake Quotes, Misquotes,
and Misleading Attributions*

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Review in 1955, accompanied by the words: "Peaceful Co-existence. . . . BUNK!"¹²⁵

INVECTIVE-SLANDER-SMEAR QUOTE "Destroying all opposition by invective, slander, smear, and blackmail is one of the techniques of Communism."

Featured in one of evangelist Billy James Hargis's publications back in the 1960s, the invective-slander quote seems to have been as much Hargis's as Lenin's brainchild. Soviet experts at the Library of Congress could find "no information about this quotation." And Julian Williams, Research Director for Hargis in the 1960s, admitted that the quote "looks to be one of those occasions where someone made up a Lenin remark to fit one of Communism's tactics. Lenin just didn't spell things out that clearly." Fair enough.¹²⁶

OVERRIPE-FRUIT QUOTE "First, we will take eastern Europe, then the masses of Asia, then we will encircle the United States which will be the last bastion of capitalism. We will not have to attack. It will fall like an overripe fruit into our hands."

This particular quote—wording and punctuation vary with usage—has for decades been one of the most popular Lenin quotes ever to surface, and it was quoted by President Ronald Reagan in the spring of 1985. Years before, in an effort to track down its source, Harry and Bonaro Overstreet went through Lenin's *Selected Works*, but found nothing resembling the statement. Then they consulted people who were familiar with Lenin's *Complete Works* in Russian, and learned that research scholars at Stanford University had attempted to locate the "strategy" quote, as it is sometimes called, but without success. The curator of the Slavic Room of the Library of Congress, too, had labored in vain to authenticate it.

Sometimes the date 1924 is given for the overripe-fruit

quote. But since Lenin died in January 1924, after a long illness, it is unlikely he said much of anything in 1924, and even less likely that he suddenly formulated a general plan for world conquest that year. In testimony before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee on July 14, 1954, Nicholas Goncharoff, a Russian defector, apparently made the first use of the overripe-fruit statement, and it soon passed into general circulation. But when it appeared in *The Blue Book of the John Birch Society*, compiled by JBS founder, Robert Welch, in 1958, Louis F. Budenz, famous American ex-Communist, called the statement one of the "many questionable quotations from Lenin and Stalin that are floating around in ill-informed anti-Communist circles."

But the overripe-fruit quote continued to float. In May 1988, just before President Reagan left for a summit meeting in Moscow with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, a group of Soviet journalists interviewed him in the White House and one of them asked about the Lenin quotes. "Soviet specialists, as far as I know," he told the President, "in the American press and workers in the Library of Congress, qualified people, studied all the writings of Lenin and did not find one single similar quotation or something even close. Therefore, I'd like to ask you what you read from the works of Lenin and where did you get the quotations you've used." "Oh, my!" exclaimed the President. "I don't think I could recall and specify here and there. But, I've had a—I'm old enough to have had a great interest in the Soviet Union. And I know that in the things I studied in college, when I was getting my own degree in economics and sociology, that the declarations of Karl Marx, for example—that Karl Marx said your system, Communism, could only succeed when the whole world had become Communist. And so the goal had to be the one-world Communist state. Now, as I say, I can't recall all of the sources from which I gleaned this. And maybe some things have been interpreted differently in modern versions. But I know that Lenin expounded on that, and said that that must

be the goal. . . . For example, here, in our Government, we knew that Lenin had expressed part of the plan that involved Latin America and so forth. And the one line that sounded very ominous to us was when he said that: 'The last bastion of capitalism, the United States, would not have to be taken; it would fall into their outstretched hand like overripe fruit.'" The quote itself was also surely overripe by this time; and will doubtless continue to fall obligingly into outstretched hands for years to come.¹²⁷

PIE-CRUST QUOTE "Promises are like pie crust, made to be broken."

Lenin did make use of these words in an article he wrote in 1905, but he was quoting what he called "an English proverb" (actually written by 18th-century English satirist Jonathan Swift) in order to criticize some of his Socialist adversaries in Russia. But the words were attributed to him and used widely as a Leninism in reputable, as well as disreputable, circles in the United States.¹²⁸

ROAD-TO-PARIS QUOTE "The road to Paris leads through Peking."

Lenin's supposed statement about Paris and Peking became popular in the 1950s. It was conservative California Republican Senator William Knowland's favorite quote. As his wife once explained: "In college, Billy studied Russian and came across Lenin's now famous sentence: 'The road to Paris is through Peking.' He pondered, and realized what this meant. . . . Most everything he has done since has been intended to block that road to Paris."

But there is no evidence Lenin ever made the Paris-Peking statement, though in 1923 he did declare: "In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, and China, etc., constitute the overwhelming majority of the population of the Globe. And it

is precisely this majority of the population that during the past few years has been drawn into the struggle for its emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest shadow of doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. . . ." It is worth noting that after President Richard Nixon went to China in 1972 to lay the groundwork for establishing diplomatic relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China, the road-to-Paris quote gradually fell into disuse.¹²⁹

SOCIALIZED-MEDICINE QUOTE "[National health insurance] is the keystone in the arch of the socialized state."

Early in 1949, when President Harry Truman proposed legislation providing for national health insurance, the National Physicians' Committee, bitterly opposed to Truman's proposal, came up with this kiss-of-death quote from Lenin to discredit it. In August, however, Democratic Congressman Andrew J. Biemiller of Wisconsin called the quote an "unwritten or unuttered quotation from an incorporeal source," and revealed that researchers at the Library of Congress, after an exhaustive search, had been unable to locate the statement in any of Lenin's public utterances and writings. Biemiller acknowledged that Lenin probably favored health, but he asked: "Does this mean . . . that because Lenin was for health, we must be for sickness?"

But the phantom quote, which apparently first appeared in Lawrence Sullivan's *The Case Against Socialized Medicine* (1948), continued on its way. It was used in a pamphlet, circulated in huge quantities by the American Medical Association, entitled *The Voluntary Way Is the American Way*, and it was quoted innocently enough by Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York in 1949. (Dewey's citation led someone to remark: "The statement attributed to Lenin is not one of his. It is strictly Nicolai Dewey.") And in 1950, when Democratic Congressman George A. Smathers was campaigning in