

We Can All See It Now

By Robert Minor

"I looked up page 309 of Engel's book Anti-Duhring that you quoted from in your column about Luigi Antonini (Friday, June 9) and you got it all wrong. When Engel said 'men with full consciousness, will fashion their own history,' he was talking about what would be under Socialism. And you got them doing it under Capitalism. You better quit trying to be so simple. You can't explain dialectics with a little boy pushing over a cradle.—Educated Marxist."

IT MIGHT have been Tom Sawyer that wrote me this anonymous letter. Tom Sawyer, the immortal character created by Mark Twain, was a philosophical idealist. He lived in a comfortable home and could afford to be.

Huckleberry Finn, on the other hand, was a dialectical materialist, and had to be; he lived in a barrel in the woods to keep out of the way of his drunkard father. And as



Engels said, an instinctive form of dialectical materialism is to be found among men and boys (or girls) like Huck Finn, and in all of the greatest writers such as Shakespeare, Cervantes and Mark Twain.

You remember Mark Twain's inimitable classic, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In it a runaway slave, Jim, and his friend Huckleberry Finn take the famous voyage down the Mississippi River on a raft, thinking they will turn northeast up the Ohio River when they get to it, and make for free territory. But they miss the mouth of the Ohio and wind up in the deep South with Jim recaptured and locked up in a woodshed on a plantation.

By strange coincidence Tom Sawyer shows up suddenly in the very same spot in the deep South, and he and Huck Finn undertake the problem of liberating their friend, the captured slave. In the night they sneak up to the rickety wood shed in which Jim is locked with a rusty padlock on the door, a strip of wood nailed across the window in the rear and a chain on Jim's ankle looped around the wooden leg of the bed on which

he sleeps. Huck Finn, the materialist, starts to yank the board off the window.

But Tom, the idealist, insists that it isn't done that way. He sticks by his philosophy (as previously stated in the story): "Because it ain't in the books so—that's why . . . Don't you reckon the people that made the books knows what's the correct thing to do?" They must dig Jim out from the dungeon, just like they do it in the books. Huck gives in to his idealist pal. He steals a pick and shovel from the barn; but Tom refuses to use these tools, saying the only proper way is to dig the prisoner out with table knives. Huck thinks that's foolish when there are a pick and shovel handy, but Tom says:

"It don't make no difference how foolish it is, it's the right way—and it's the regular way. And there ain't no other way that I ever heard of, and I've read all the books that gives my information about these things."

So they dig away with case-knives till they blister their hands, whereupon Tom gives up and says to Huck:

"I'll tell you, it ain't right, and it ain't moral, and I wouldn't like it to get out; but there ain't only just the one way: we got to dig him out with picks and let on it's case-knives."

When they get the hole dug and are inside the woodshed, Huck is about to lift the bed and slip the chain off of it, when Tom interrupts.

"No, the way all the best authors does is to saw the bed-leg in two, and leave it just so, and swallow the sawdust, so it can't be found. . . ." And the prisoner must leave a note behind (although he can't write), and it must be written by the prisoner with his blood for ink, because "The Iron Mask always done it that way."

Mark Twain shrewdly winds up the story with Huck Finn himself learning how to read books—and even to write them. Huck got to understand books bet-

ter than Tom did, because in making use of the rich store of the experience of mankind that is found in books, he kept his eyes open for woodsheds and did not imagine castles where woodsheds were, not woodsheds where castles were.

But the moral of the tale is this: Life never turns out exactly as foreseen in books; and that the biggest fact of present history is that capitalist states are able, within certain limits, to enter a sphere that Engels foresaw as possible for a socialist world only: the sphere in which "men's social organization" on a world scale will "become the voluntary act of men themselves," and "men with full consciousness, will fashion their own history. . . ." That is Teheran.

The capitalist world, alone, could not have made the Teheran treaty. Capitalism following the policy of the past, directed against Russia—could produce only, as at Munich, another world war with a still more colossal ruin of the human race. But the capitalist system of the United States, Great Britain and other capitalist countries, solve the problem of "peace for many generations" because of the peculiar turn in history by which they become friends of the Socialist State to cooperate in making peace a new extension of world economy.

It is true that Engels did not mean that a capitalist world could do this. But Engels could not foresee that Socialism would come about in one country, that it would grow to be the most stable and unassailable state in the world; Lenin saw that. Nor could he foresee that in the greatest capitalist democracies and the unprecedented socialist democracy would find a way together to keep the peace and vastly to expand the world market, for "many generations," Stalin saw that.

From a completely different ideological approach, Roosevelt and Churchill saw it.

Worth Repeating

WARREN H. ATHERTON, National Commander of the American Legion in a cable to the National Legionnaire on D-Day: The pick of our people have accepted the supreme hazard of battle. They know that for which they fight. They endure the terribleness of modern battle for you folks at home. You are their cause. You must be worthy of their confidence. Rededicate yourselves on D-Day. Take inventory of your patriotism, your Americanism.