

WILL YOU TRY AGAIN, MR. HOWARD?

By ALAN MAX

BACK IN THE EARLY part of the year—when the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party was still young—the editors of the Scripps-Howard chain

of newspaper and myself had had a brief but interesting debate. There has been a new development in the matter we were debating—transition to socialism in the United



States by constitutional means—and I suggest the discussion should now be resumed.

Readers of this column may recall that on Feb. 28 the New York World-Telegram, Washington News and other Scripps-Howard papers carried an editorial titled "Khrushchev vs. Supreme Court."

The editorial took issue with a column that I have written on Khrushchev's opening report to the 20th Congress in which he spoke of the possibility in this period of the parliamentary

transition to socialism. I had said that American Communists had for several years been discussing the peaceful transition to socialism. Since the government refused to accept at face value the writings of American Communists but always countered with some quotation from Lenin dealing with another time or another country, I insisted that Khrushchev's remarks had a direct bearing on the Smith Act cases.

Whereupon, something ludicrous happened. The World-Telegram insisted that it was a far more faithful student of Khrushchev than I was and accused me of falsifying the Soviet leader's report. To cap it, here was the editor of the Scripps-Howard papers maintaining in effect that peaceful transition to socialism was really not possible in this country while the managing editor of the Daily Worker was insisting that it was.

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Said the World-Telegram: "What Max—and even many non-Communists—are overlook-

ing" is a passage from Khrushchev which the W-T proceeded to quote as follows:

"In the countries where capitalism is still strong (U. S. and Britain) . . . the transition to socialism (communism) will be attended by sharp, class, revolutionary struggle."

The editorial finished off with this challenge:

"Comrade Max—try again."

I did, in fact, try again. I pointed out that the W-T editors wrote the word "communism" into the quotation themselves. This in itself was of no importance. But of considerable significance was the fact that the phrase "U. S. and Britain" was also inserted by the editors and not by Khrushchev.

I added, moreover, that I did not know exactly what Khrushchev had in mind, since the passage was ambiguous and that, in any case, American Communists would be the judges of the situation in their own country. It was their conviction, I said, that under the

conditions that will prevail when the majority of Americans want socialism, and given a series of previous sharp successful struggles against the monopolists, peaceful transition will in fact be possible.

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NOW FOR THE new development.

The Soviet publication "International Affairs" carries an article "Some Forms of Transition From Capitalism to Socialism" by A. Sobolev, a Soviet theoretical writer (May issue, No. 5). The magazine is published in English and is sold in English-speaking countries.

Sobolev discusses the development of the theory of peaceful transition by various Communist parties and the generalizations by Khrushchev. Curiously, Sobolev makes no mention at all of the special conditions which Khrushchev said would make peaceful transition impossible and which the World-Telegram saw as referring to the United States and Britain.

I grant it is difficult to make a case out of what someone does NOT say. But that is not the whole story by any means. For Sobolev takes up the specific case of Britain and agrees with the British Communist Party, which back in 1950 outlined the parliamentary path to socialism for their country.

I interpret Sobolev's article, as I did Khrushchev's report, as saying that whereas Marxists in the past had considered peaceful transition as a possibility but only an exceptional one, in the present period of socialist-capitalist co-existence, it is a general possibility for all countries when certain conditions have been reached.

Now, I still insist that only American Communists can speak for American Communists. But since the editors of the World-Telegram and others insist on taking Soviet writers as their authorities, I must ask them: what do you say now about your Feb. 28 editorial in the light of Sobolev's article?

Comment by Editor Roy Howard is awaited with interest.