

TODAY ABROAD

by Joseph Clark

The Clause Which Pravda Deleted

IN REPUBLISHING the article by Eugene Dennis on Khrushchev's special report the Soviet Communist leaders indicated that they were continuing their gradual recitification of the errors and crimes of the Stalin regime. They used this means of informing the Soviet people that questions were being asked not only regarding Stalin's misdeeds but also about Khrushchev's explanation of why they were tolerated.

However, when reprinting Dennis' article, the official Soviet Communist newspaper, Pravda, deleted one phrase from the original. Among the crimes of the Stalin era which Dennis condemned was: "snuffing out the lives of more than a score of Jewish cultural figures." This phrase was cut out by Pravda.

If the charge was untrue, all Pravda had to do was to deny it. Moreover, an explanation is long overdue from the Soviet leaders about the physical annihilation of the top Soviet Jewish writers and poets in the late 40s. The recent statement of the National Committee of the Communist Party here criticized the continued silence of the Soviet leaders on this matter.

DELETING the phrase from Dennis' article solves no problems for Pravda or for anyone else. It only compounds the wrong that was done in the first place. Candor, not suppression, is called for. And Pravda's action is reminiscent of the suppression for so many years of important writings of Lenin because the founder of the Soviet state did not hesitate to state the truth even when it was embarrassing

and unpalatable.

Pravda's deletion is of a piece with a most unusual interview granted by a top Soviet Communist Party leader, Ekaterina Furtseva, to National Guardian correspondent Tabitha Petran. Mrs. Furtseva is an alternate member of the top Soviet C.P. body, its presidium.

Mrs. Furtseva denied the closing down of Soviet Jewish cultural institutions and the executions of Jewish leaders. She said she had not read the Polish Folkshimme article which gave details both on the suppression and the executions.

TO PUT it mildly, Mrs. Furtseva displayed a disquieting insensitivity to world public opinion. If charges of such gravity are made by such responsible sources, a top Soviet leader should at least be aware of them. Secondly if Yiddish culture was not suppressed and Jewish cultural figures were not snuffed out it should be easy for Mrs. Furtseva to refute such charges. That is why the actual "evidence" she cited was so fantastic. She mentioned the many Jewish people prominent in science and the arts. And she added that 80 percent of the musicians who played at Tito's reception were Jewish.

What has that got to do with books, or papers, or theatres in Yiddish? What has that got to do with the snuffing out of the lives of David Bergelson, Itzik Feffer, Peretz Markish and many others?

It is true that anti-Semitism is barred by law in the USSR: It is true that the Soviet Union alone, of all the nations of Europe, was able to save the lives

of a sizeable part of its Jewish community from Hitlerite barbarism. It is true that wherever you travel in the Soviet Union, you see Jews as workers, Jews as scientists, Jews as artists, Jews in almost all spheres and levels of Soviet life. In fact, Jews have attained leading and honored positions in Soviet life generally to a far greater degree than their percentage of the population.

All this, and more, is true—such as the fact that during the war Soviet authorities often evacuated Polish and Soviet Jews from the path of Hitlerites despite the sacrifices and difficulties often involved. It is true that Soviet soldiers fought to save lives of Jews threatened by the Hitlerites and to punish Hitlerites and their supporters in territory occupied by the Germans.

BUT THE fact remains that at the end of the 40s all Soviet Jewish cultural institutions, operating in the Yiddish language were closed down. The Soviet Jewish anti-Fascist committee was dissolved. The finest Soviet Jewish cultural figures disappeared without trace or explanation. It is a tragic fact, as Dennis put it, that "the lives of more than a score of Jewish figures" were snuffed out.

They can't be brought back to life by snuffing out a clause in an article. . . . We say this in full knowledge of the fact that the Soviet Communists are taking heroic measures to wipe out the bleak aspects of the Stalin regime. We say this although we are confident that the deletion of the sentence from Dennis will not be the final answer of the Soviet leaders to this crime of the past. But full truth and candor will aid the process of self-correction.