

Ambiguous Russian Salesman

Victor Yevgenyevich Louis

INTELLIGENCE services of several countries are interested in Victor Yevgenyevich Louis, a fast-talking 39-year-old Russian who is currently offering Western publishers photos of the Stalin family and a version of Svetlana Alliluyeva's memoirs. Mr. Louis, whose original name is said to be Vitaly Yevgenyevich Lui, is a man who paces up and down the room while talking business and sometimes pulls out pictures of his handsome three-story house in Moscow, his backyard swimming tank and his wife and two children.

Man
in the
News

Currently touring Western Europe selling the Stalin pictures and Alliluyeva text, Mr. Louis describes himself as a journalist—the Moscow correspondent of The London Evening News.

He speaks proudly of his "scoops," saying: "I was the first to report the news of Khrushchev's fall in 1964, eight hours ahead of the rest."

Educated at Moscow University's foreign-language center, Mr. Louis speaks five languages, including fluent English. He is a good mixer, a pleasant host and a patron of the arts and seems to live very much like a well-to-do Western businessman. His contacts reach from the Kremlin to New York's garment district.

Western intelligence services have long suspected Mr. Louis as an agent of the K.G.B., the Soviet intelligence agency.

United States intelligence men surmise that Mr. Louis's efforts to sell the unauthorized version of Mrs. Alliluyeva's book are intended to spoil sales of the authorized version and to discredit the author.

Mr. Louis denies that he has anything to do with Soviet intelligence.

Antecedents Are Vague

"Why don't people believe me?" he asked an American correspondent in Hamburg several days ago. "Why should I be the scapegoat? Everyone expects that I should be a Soviet agent. Why can't they believe I am a professional journalist?"

His antecedents are cloaked in uncertainty. Mr. Louis has sometimes said that his great-grandfather was French—accounting for his French name—and that he has many relatives in France, but he has given other versions of his background.

Western diplomats remember meeting Mr. Louis just after World War II when he was serving as a messenger for the New Zealand Embassy in Moscow and later for the Brazilian Embassy. Two or three years after the war Mr. Louis disappeared from Moscow. He has since told friends that he was arrested because of his many contacts with Westerners, and was charged with black-market dealings and treason. He is believed to have



His trade, he says, is journalism.

spent nearly a decade in various Soviet labor camps, including the notorious one at Karaganda.

Mr. Louis stands about 5-foot-11 and has light brown hair and blue eyes. He generally wears gold-rimmed glasses, a wristwatch with a gold band and well-tailored suits. He smokes fairly heavily, preferring Camels to Soviet brands.

He travels freely outside the Soviet Union, and has been seen in the Far East and the United States as well as in Western Europe.

He even arranged, on Oct. 17, 1966, to spend a half hour with Vice President Humphrey, at the latter's office. The meeting was set up by Parade, a magazine section for Sunday newspapers, for which Mr. Louis had provided photographs of former Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev in retirement.

He also made arrangements that led to a National Broadcasting Company documentary broadcast July 11 on Mr. Khrushchev's life since his fall. Mr. Louis has denied that he personally filmed and interviewed Mr. Khrushchev.

Attracted Notice in 1956

His deals began to attract attention here as early as 1956.

Foreign correspondents who were in Moscow in 1959 remember Mr. Louis as a purveyor of art works by young Soviet avant garde painters of whom the Soviet regime disapproved.

Western visitors recall that he used to take them to his home, turn up the radio to foil electronic eavesdroppers, and produce a portfolio of paintings. Sometimes he arranged meetings between Westerners and the painters themselves. These meetings sometimes led to arrests and

charges of illegal dealings with foreigners.

In 1958, Mr. Louis married Jennifer Stratham, a young Englishwoman who had been the governess for the children of the British Naval attaché in Moscow. Mr. and Mrs. Louis now have two children of their own, and Mrs. Louis frequently travels with her husband.

In May, 1959, Mr. Louis aroused Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe when he attempted to pirate their hit musical "My Fair Lady."

Mr. Louis wrote to them asking for a complete orchestral score, saying he had translated the libretto into Russian and intended to produce the musical in Kiev and Sverdlovsk. He mentioned that Mr. Lerner and Mr. Loewe would receive no royalties because the Soviet Union was not a member of the Universal Copyright Convention.

The Lerner-Loewe team refused, and requested assistance from Soviet officials here in preventing the piracy. As a matter of fact, the State Department in Washington soon thereafter arranged for an American production of "My Fair Lady" to tour the Soviet Union.

Accompanied Tarsis

When the noted Soviet writer Valery Yakovlevich Tarsis was granted permission to leave Russia in February, 1966, Mr. Louis was initially at his side as a public-relations man and interpreter. Later he was heard to say that Mr. Tarsis was psychotic and a third-rate writer.

Mr. Tarsis, a critic of the Moscow regime, delivered a series of lectures at Leicester University in England and was stripped of his Soviet citizenship Feb. 20, 1966. He later became a Greek citizen.

Among Mr. Louis's business associates in the United States is Harold Weiner of the Crown Textile Manufacturing Company, at 205 West 39th Street. Several years ago Mr. Weiner became interested in doing business in the Soviet Union and found that Mr. Louis could smooth the way.

Mr. Weiner said the arrangement worked so well that he himself is now a paid consultant on Soviet trade.

Mr. Louis first visited the United States last October, and came here again with his wife in May. During their visit, Mr. and Mrs. Louis stayed at Mr. Weiner's home. Besides his visit to Vice President Humphrey, Mr. Louis went to Disneyland and stopped in a half-dozen American cities. He entered the United States on both trips on a tourist visa and with no official status.