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USSR-ITALY-BULGARIA: Coming to Bulgaria's Defense

Moscow's recent public statement denying involvement in the assassination attempt on the Pope and the strong protest over US press coverage delivered by the Soviet Charge in Washington on Monday indicate the Soviets have decided to play a more active role



Comment: Moscow until recently has avoided direct involvement in the controversy, and its activism suggests new concern that the case is damaging the USSR's interests. The Soviets may be particularly sensitive to the issue because of the Western press implications that General Secretary Andropov, during his tenure as head of the KGB, might have played a role in the attempt. The Soviet Ambassador presumably hoped to persuade the Italian Government to play down the issue. The Soviets are likely to continue to defend Bulgaria against its accusers.

