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Emigré Ties Russian to Pope Case

PARIS, Oct. 12 (Reuters) — An associate of a Soviet journalist who returned to Moscow last month asserts that the man, Oleg G. Bitov, was forcibly taken back by K.G.B. men because of fears that he would give evidence to Italian officials investigating the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II.

The friend, Anatoly Gladilin, a Russian émigré writer, wrote in an analysis of the case in *Le Monde* that Mr. Bitov had agreed to give written testimony in the case against a Bulgarian suspect, Sergei Ivanov Antonov, shortly before Mr. Bitov vanished from Britain in August.

Mr. Bitov, a senior journalist for the weekly *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, was thought to have defected at the Venice Film Festival in September 1983 and to have been given asylum in Britain.

He reappeared in Moscow last month and asserted at a news conference that he had not defected but had been kidnapped and tortured by British agents.

Mr. Gladilin wrote: "I spent many hours alone with Bitov; I was the last to see him in London. I spent the evening

of Aug. 15 with him. We spoke by telephone on the 16th and agreed to meet on the 17th. But on the 17th, Bitov had disappeared.

"Believe me, Bitov did not at all look like someone who was planning to return to the Soviet Union. I am sure he was kidnapped in London and held his press conference in Moscow under the dictation of the K.G.B."

Mr. Gladilin said Mr. Bitov had traveled to Italy to collect material for articles implicating the Central Intelligence Agency in the shooting of the Pope by Mehmet Ali Agca, a Turk, on May 13, 1981.

Mr. Gladilin wrote that after Mr. Bitov's defection to Britain the K.G.B. became increasingly worried that he would appear as a witness at the trial of Mr. Antonov, a Bulgarian airline official implicated by Mr. Agca in the plot.

'Invited to Testify'

He added: "I know that the K.G.B.'s fears were well founded. Bitov was invited to testify. It was not the British who asked him, and I do not know exactly who did."

"Bitov refused to go to Italy and give evidence, knowing that the K.G.B. would not forgive him. But he agreed to give a written deposition which could be read at a closed court session."

Mr. Gladilin said that Mr. Bitov was sent a dossier on the Antonov case but that his fate was sealed by the fact that the K.G.B. found out.