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Extract from a translation of an article written by Oleg Bitov in the *Moscow Literary Gazette*

Oleg Bitov apparently defected to the United Kingdom on September 8, 1983 and returned to Moscow on September 3, 1984

There have been a number of articles attacking me in the Soviet press. Most have been the same sort of stuff that has appeared in the British leftist media. But this article is one of the most fanciful and entertaining.

J.G.

Whimsy From Moscow

My MEETING WITH the 'influential person' about which Jerry and Barron had forewarned me did indeed take place a few days later. And it was so noteworthy that I will give the exact time it took place - May 25, 1984 at 1 p.m. And the place - New York, East Side, Manhattan, the private residence of the industrial and trade magnate James Goldsmith.

And there he was himself, looking like a character from Marshak. 'The owner of factories, newspapers, and steamships' or, in real life, the owner of private aircraft and limousines a mile long, of Cavenham Limited (Britain), Generale Occidentale (France) and General Oriental (Hongkong), the founder of the network of Grand Union supermarkets which enmeshes half America, head of the L'Express publishing group, and so on and so forth. He sat with his legs crossed picturesquely, chewing a cigar of a prestige, numbered, made as fat as a factory chimney. He looked down on his visitor from the height of his millions as though they were a throne.

The surroundings of the throne were nothing if not appropriate - real Louis XV furniture, sculptures by Benvenuto Cellini, paintings by old Dutch masters. Only the bookshelves were rather empty, apart from a lonely couple of thrillers and a Stock Exchange handbook. Probably the Old World's secondhand book dealers have not yet collected a sufficient number of antique volumes with gold-embossed spines.

Britain's Queen honoured Goldsmith with a knighthood - meaning that she gave him the formal right to prefix 'Sir' to his name - for some unknown heroic deeds. Do you think that Mr Goldsmith really adores antiques and old paintings? What he does adore is to demonstrate that he can afford the rarest of antiques, and that is all.

But there are no limits to vanity. Goldsmith is not satisfied with the prefix, he aspires to the title of ideologist and leader of 'the crusade against communism'. The Paris weekly L'Express, which he owns, from time to time publishes immoderately long and utterly boring screeds signed by him, teaching mankind how to live and think so as not to anger Mr Goldsmith. It must be noted that the weekly is not doing too well, while a similar venture in Britain, the magazine NOW! collapsed after less than two years. It is obvious that deep-seated hatred for communism - the sole principle on which the publication was founded - proved inadequate. Nevertheless, this lesson failed, alas, to affect the ideologist magnate's conviction that the enemy can be vanquished by the universal weapon of a bottomless purse.

'Would the figure of 50,000 dollars suit you?' he asked without any ceremony. 'No, this is not for Antonov, this is just for the prelude in London. When it comes to Rome, I promise you a six-figure fee ...'

'And what have you to do with Antonov?'

Mr Goldsmith blew a puff of cigar smoke and pronounced philosophically:

'All things in this world are interconnected. Antonov's trial will undermine the communist system's prestige. This is what we hope. : . '

The pronoun 'we' sounded symbolic, coming from him. Who are 'we'? Actually it is not so important to name names. 'We' is His Abominable Majesty Capital, to whose tune publishing houses, governments, courts and special services dance in the 'free world'.

'And what is happening in London?'

'In London there is this petty lawsuit involving the West German magazine Der Spiegel. The case comes up in the autumn. I don't suppose you will refuse to join my team ... '

An explanatory note: The 'petty lawsuit' involving the sum of £2,000,000 was filed by Der Spiegel against Goldsmith on the grounds of libel. The ideologist magnate had publicly expressed his displeasure with the magazine, claiming that it was not zealous enough in upholding the West's interests and that at times it published 'material planted by the East'. Der Spiegel's editorial board demanded proof to back these accusations, Goldsmith failed to produce any and thus 'outside' help had to be sought. The case was eventually 'settled out of court'. If we translate this evasive legal term into plain language, Mr Goldsmith opted to avoid publicity and settle the dispute peacefully, or - to put it even more plainly - to be bought off.

What was my answer to the magnate? He was not worried about my answer, he was totally convinced that money can do anything. He did, nevertheless, threaten me, just to make sure: 'Just don't think that you are indispensable. No-one is indispensable - neither investigators, nor assassins nor witnesses. Italian investigator Matella understood this a long time ago and is now prospering. And witnesses are even easier. In New Odessa (Footnote: This is the name, or rather nickname, of a remote New York district where emigrants from our country, deceived in the past by Zionist propaganda, now shelter), one in two will testify to anything you like for 100 dollars. Whatever the client wishes. But we looked no further than your application. Your statement will sound convincing and you yourself, if everything does well, will be secure for the rest of your life ... '

The magnate then decided to display tangible proof of his influence and offered to arrange for me to have a confidential conversation with President Reagan. He discarded the cigar and picked up the telephone. The gesture was transparently theatrical- I knew from the newspapers that the President had just left for Europe. But Goldsmith did get through to one of his aides, addressing him familiarly as 'Bobby', and invited him to supper somewhere. He then launched into a tirade on relations between the authorities and 'big business' and praised the incumbent administration for its 'tractability'. At long last he exhausted his reserves of eloquence and stood up. The audience was at an end.

And so, back to London. A respectable building in a respectable street - Regent Street. A sign in prominent letters at the entrance: 'Linen Hall'. If only Londoners knew what dirty linen they deal in beneath this sign!

Third floor. A deserted air-conditioned passage, doors without signs on them. This is the location of a major ideological subversion centre run by Brian Crozier, British intelligence officer, extreme right-wing journalist and biographer of Franco and Chiang Kai-shek. Crozier also holds the office of protecting Mr Goldsmith's interests in the British Isles. Maybe not all of his interests, but his political interests for sure. It was he who gave me details of the programme which was only sketched out by the 'boss'.

Mr Crozier and his sidekick Ron Baxter were business-like, brief and to the point. My first task was to study the May 21 issue of Der Spiegel (in fact the issue was published a week before, so at the time of our meeting Goldsmith probably knew about it, but simply did not deign to provide explanations). The issue published an article on the progress of

investigations into the 'Antonov case' and I, as an 'expert', had to prove that it corresponded textually with the 'Literaturnaya Gazeta' items and, consequently, was 'inspired by the same goals and the same organisations'. It was a two-pronged ploy: The magnate would obtain the trump cards he wanted in his lawsuit against Der Spiegel and at the same time the drafting of my 'testimony as a witness' and the testing of my readiness to work for the Goldsmiths in general would start.

What kind of article was it? To say that it was a rehash from 'Literaturnaya Gazeta' would be a sin against the truth. Incidentally, that did not embarrass Crozier and Baxter at all- they had no doubt that the judge's heart would be on the side of their 'boss'. Judges do not know Russian, and they would not want to bother about getting a second expert opinion.

And at the same time it is clear just what infuriated the Goldsmiths. The author of the article strove to be objective. One cannot agree with all his allegations, he overdoes some things and glosses over others. But he dared to mock Sterling and Henze, call the 'Bulgarian trial' imaginary, enumerate once again the glaring contradictions in Agca's testimony, quote the statement by Antonov's defence lawyer Prof Consolo. 'They will have to acquit him, since there is not a shred of hard evidence against him,' and even to be sarcastic about the CIA! How could they fail to suspect a 'communist plot', how could they fail to attack those who dared to think for themselves ...

I won't conceal the fact that I was tempted to concoct such a phony 'analysis' that even the most biased court would reject it. But I found a different solution, no less risky yet more sensible. I 'worked up a storm', demanding from Regent Street a mass of translations, xerox copies and reference works. This was supplied without question. Further meetings, consultations and conferences were scheduled for a long time ahead. With the participation, incidentally, of my immediate 'guardians' from the 'Intelligence Service' who were delighted that I had finally 'come to my senses'.

So pleased were they that they even stopped watching me. And I was able to break through the circle of my captivity and leave without giving Goldsmith and company a single line.