

MURDER

Death Of A Prince

BY the time police arrived at the rest house in Jodhpur, the body of young Rao Raja Hukam Singh had gone cold. Hukam Singh alias Tutu Bana, 29, belonging to the former princely family of Jodhpur had met a grisly end, hacked with his own sword. More strange than the murder was the fact that two of the alleged killers were sitting near the body and waiting to be arrested. Their two accomplices who had fled the scene of crime, the Rajput rest house, came back later to surrender to the police.

A murder involving a princely family was bound to trigger a number of questions and theories. In this case it was compounded by Tutu Bana's forays into politics as the Youth Congress(I) observer for the Jodhpur district. It was not the first time that Tutu Bana had figured in the news. He was known for his volatile temper and frequent brushes with the police. Besides, he had a weakness for the bottle and a tendency to mix with low castes, usually frowned upon by the palace.

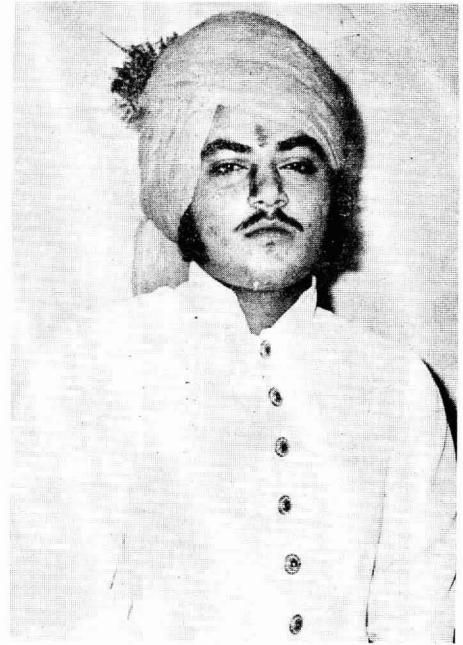
Hukam Singh was the stepbrother of former Maharaja Gaj Singh and a son of former ruler Hanuvant Singh. His mother was the former film actress Zubeda. According to the police version, Hukam Singh had been a frequent visitor to the rest house. He had apparently spent some time between his

visits watching a Dholnis' performance at a nearby Harijan *basti* on the evening of April 17. When he returned unarmed, the sword being taken off him tactfully, as the police put it, he walked to his death. There were over 20 injuries on the six-foot body.

Unanswered Questions: Though it seemed a simple case with the body found, four killers arrested and the murder weapon seized, some doubts were raised about the reasons for the slaying. Not everyone was satisfied with the way the whole incident was handled by the police from the beginning.

Some of the questions that remained unanswered were: Why was only a sub-inspector put in charge of investigation at the scene of crime to gather crucial evidence like fingerprints, footmarks, blood stains while normally a much senior police official would have been handling a case of this sort? How reliable is the statement of Lal Singh, the servant, on whose word the theory of second visit to the rest house is based? Was the claim of the rest house chowkidar Sawai Singh that he had conveyed to the police his fears about violence in the rest house at night, but was sent away with the assurance they would turn up the next morning, checked?

Even as the state Criminal Investigation



Hukam Singh: frequent brushes with the police

Department was entrusted with the inquiry, some local workers of the Congress(I) alleged political pressures and influential persons' efforts to meddle with the investigation. A demand for a Central Bureau of Investigation inquiry to clear up the whole issue has been made. Hukam Singh had reportedly written to the Congress(I) high command some time back alleging that his life was in danger. He had been rather unhappy

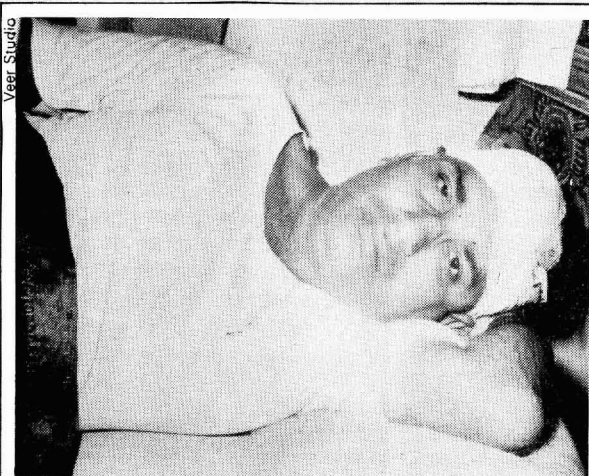
INTIMIDATION Holy Terror

VIOLENT activities are no longer confined to die-hard criminals. It is now the turn of godmen to be involved in bizarre incidents of alleged murders, and beating up of officials and newsmen.

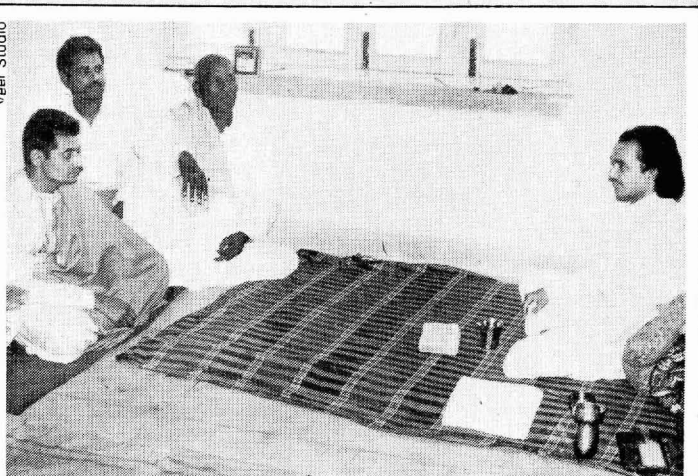
Last fortnight, the Uttar Pradesh police launched a massive manhunt for Swami Sadananda, 28, and his followers who have been charged with the murder of Anand Mohan Shrivastava, Deoria District's statistical officer. Shrivastava was murdered, it is alleged, for lodging a complaint last month against Swami with the Gopal Ganj police station in

Bihar. Swami was accused of kidnapping and illegally confining Shrivastava's wife and three daughters for over three months.

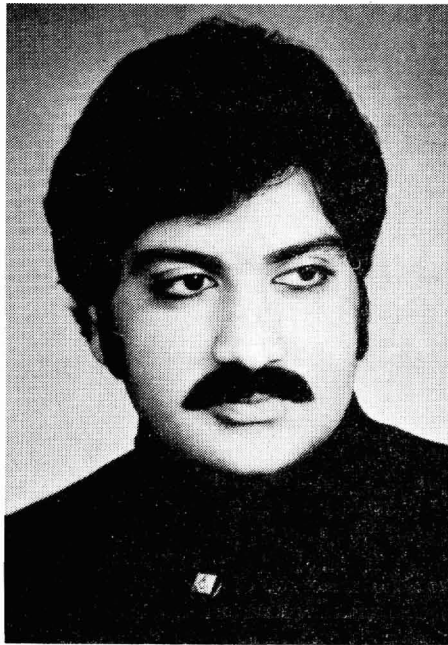
This is not the first time that Swami, a self-proclaimed sadhu with political connections, has been booked. A few months ago, he was involved in a brazen attempt to intimidate an editor of a daily newspaper into submission.



Mishra: threatened with death for an unpalatable story



Sadananda (right) and Tripathi (extreme left): close to the police



Gaj Singh: differences over property

over his status in the family. Property matters too were a bone of contention. In fact, the day previous to his murder, Hukam Singh had met Gaj Singh. But the meeting was to sort out Hukam Singh's estranged relationship with his wife, according to Gaj Singh who was ambassador to Trinidad during the Janata regime and quit after Mrs Gandhi's return to power.

Past Record: Jodhpur Superintendent

According to a complaint filed with the local police, seven followers of the Swami entered the office of the *Janvarta* (circulation: 17,000), a Hindi daily of Varanasi and beat up Ishwar Dev Mishra, 50, the mild-mannered editor of the newspaper, for publishing an unpalatable story about the activities of their guru. Not satisfied with the physical violence, a letter was sent to the editor saying that he would be killed.

The news that sparked off the assault appeared in the *Janvarta* of March 3, 1981. It said the Swami, during his lectures, had criticised top religious leaders like Swami Karpatriji and Avadoot Bhagwan Ram. As a result, the report added, police had to intervene in many places to prevent faction fights. The report alleged that a minor girl who was wrongfully confined at the residence of the Swami had been recovered, according to a report registered with the police station by four railway employees. For their 'brazenness' the employees were assaulted by the supporters of the guru.

Says an office bearer of the Varanasi Patrakar Sangh: "The attack on *Janvarta* is just one example of the Swami's dangerous activities. If a probe is made into his

of Police Shantanu Kumar while briefing newsmen immediately after the murder, said that Hukam Singh had a criminal record and had links with state Deputy Minister for Tourism Narendra Singh Bhati, a powerful leader of the Youth Congress(I). Bhati's fast emerging influence in the state's politics has not been palatable to the men around Chief Minister Jagannath Pahadia. But not only has Pahadia ignored attempts to clip the wings of Bhati, he has strengthened the political bonds at the behest of the party high command. Bhati pointed out that in 1977, Hukam Singh had been convicted in an attempt to murder case. After serving four months of the sentence, he was bailed out by the High Court for treatment on mental grounds. A few days prior to his death after a brawl in the Jaipur Circuit House, Hukam Singh had been allegedly beaten up by the Vidhayakpuri police. This was brought to the notice of All India Congress Committee(I) General Secretary K. Moopanar in a Youth Congress(I) memorandum. Bhati admits Hukam Singh tried to damage his reputation in Delhi with allegations against him to the leadership. "He was being used by other politicians," feels Bhati.

Investigations so far have not revealed the involvement of any political worker, according to Rajasthan Inspector General of Police G.C. Singhvi. More details about the curious case and the possible motive are likely to emerge when the case is taken up for hearing this fortnight.

activities, serious scandals will be exposed."

Police Officer: Sources in Varanasi say the Swami has been emboldened in his activities because of his closeness to senior police officials. A correspondent of *Janvarta* says: "The local police have collected money and dhotis for the Swami and have been making arrangements for his lectures."

The matter set off a storm in the state legislative assembly. Congress (I) members joined the Opposition in accusing the Government of shielding a senior police officer. They demanded the immediate arrest of all those involved in the attack on the daily newspaper. Chief Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh assuaged the anger of legislators by announcing the transfer of Superintendent of Police R.D. Tripathi from Varanasi city. Tripathi is a follower of the Swami. Unruffled by the fuss, the Swami made tracks for Lumbini, a sleepy village on the Indo-Nepal border, where he founded a new camp. Yet, local journalists remain apprehensive that before the wounds of Ishwar Dev are healed, the Swami will hold out a new threat to the press again.

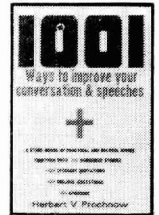
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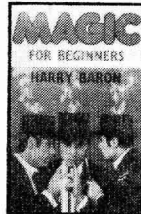
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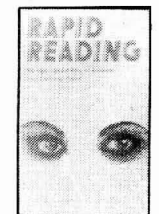
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