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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 20, 1987

On Wednesday, March 18, 1987, Rudy Beserra, Associate Director, Office of Public Liaison, met with three members of the Hare Krishna sect. The meeting was arranged by Achamma Chandler, president of the Indian American Forum. The meeting took place in room 193 OEOB. The three members of the Hare Krishna were:

Dick Dezio 6-28-48
Arthur Billa 2-8-49
Bhajirth Zyas 8-1-44

There were some questions yesterday if someone named Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada attended the meeting. This gentleman supposedly had an arrest record. Mr. Beserra did not meet with anyone by that name.

This morning, however, there was an article in the New York Times with a photo of Mr. Bhaktipada. This is the same person who was cleared in as Bhajirth Zyas.

Rudy Beserra can be reached at x2657.

Guru, Focus of Investigations, Meets Reagan Aide

By LINDSEY GRUSON

Special to The New York Times

PHILADELPHIA, March 19 — A West Virginia Hare Krishna leader who is the focus of investigations into murder, child abuse and drug smuggling was expelled from the Krishna movement Wednesday, hours after meeting with a White House official to complain that he was being persecuted by the authorities.

The guru, Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada, met for 30 to 45 minutes in the Old Executive Office Building with Rudy Beserra, assistant director of the Office of Public Liaison, according to the religious leader's aides. The aides said they had tried to persuade the White House that the investigations into the sect's activities were based on prejudice against Hindus and that the Reagan Administration should intervene.

In a telephone interview, Mr. Beserra at first denied meeting with the guru and his aides, then said he had met with the group "briefly" and had been given evidence of religious persecution. He said he had not looked into the swami's background or read any of the numerous articles describing the investigations into his New Vrindaban commune, 70 miles southwest of Pittsburgh.

Referred By Indian Lobby

"Apparently they've been harassed," Mr. Beserra said. He said he met with the guru because the religious leader had been referred by Achamma Chandler, president of the Indian American Forum, a nonprofit lobby concerned with Indian-American relations. Ms. Chandler, in a letter to the Hare Krishnas released today, charged that the sect had "abused" her organization to serve its "ulterior motives."

Asked how Mr. Bhaktipada had received security clearance, a White House spokeswoman, Leslye Arsht, said Mr. Bhaktipada was not one of three members of the sect given clearances for the meeting with Mr. Beserra. But she said she did not know exactly who the three Krishnas were and that Mr. Bhaktipada could have attended the meeting by using another name.

Mr. Bhaktipada said he had used his own name.

A spokesman for the Office of Public Liaison said it was a division of the White House communications department and frequently arranged briefings for President Reagan on a variety of topics.

'A Very Friendly Exchange'

A spokesman for Mr. Bhaktipada, Tulsi Das, said Mr. Beserra promised to set up a meeting next week with the United States Civil Rights Commission and several other Federal agencies. He also advised the guru to get in touch with West Virginia's Governor, Arch A. Moore Jr.

"It was a very friendly exchange," said Mr. Das, who accompanied Mr. Bhaktipada to the meeting. Mr. Das



Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada

"He doesn't have anything to apologize for because he hasn't done anything wrong," Mr. Umapati said. He charged that the sect's leaders, who are in Mayapur, India, at their annual meeting, acted without authority under the group's religious laws in expelling the swami for "political" reasons.

The decision to excommunicate Mr. Bhaktipada is the latest sign of a growing schism in the sect, which traces its Hindu roots back 5,000 years. In the 1970's it attracted thousands of middle-class Americans by preaching that non-violence, chanting and vegetarianism are a way to transcend the body and reunite with God.

In recent years, however, internal warfare has bedeviled the sect, which is governed by a loose confederation of about a dozen gurus known as the Governing Body Commission. But Mr. Bhaktipada has long dismissed the commission's authority, claiming he is the only true guru.

The schism has been exacerbated by a series of overlapping inquiries by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the West Virginia state police and the sheriff's office in Marshall County, the site of Mr. Bhaktipada's ornate commune.

The investigations began after a disenchanting devotee, Steven Bryant, was found murdered in Los Angeles in May, 1986. The victim had blamed Mr. Bhaktipada for his divorce and had charged sect leaders with a wide range of criminal misconduct, ranging from child abuse to drug trafficking.

The investigations, focusing in part on Mr. Bhaktipada's possible role in drug trafficking and the Bryant murder, have so far led to the conviction in West Virginia of Daniel Reid and Thomas Dresher, members of Mr. Bhaktipada's commune, in the 1982 murder of Charles St. Denis, a convicted drug dealer associated with the Krishnas.

Mr. Dresher has also been charged with murdering Mr. Bryant and is awaiting extradition to California. The probes have also resulted in the filing of child abuse charges against two teachers at the Krishna school in West Virginia.

said the session showed that "people are beginning to take notice" of the sect's contention that it is a victim of religious persecution and asserted that would force investigators to "back off."

Mr. Bhaktipada was expelled by the governing body of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness at its annual meeting in Mayapur, India. In a statement released here Wednesday, the group said the swami had been expelled because of "repeated instances of dishonesty" and "his apparent approval of illegal activity in the community."

A spokesman for the commune, Umapati Das, said Mr. Bhaktipada would not resign or give up control of the sprawling estate, home of Prabhupada's Palace of Gold, a temple decorated with gold leaf that is one of the state's leading tourist attractions.

April Trial for School Sex Case

LOS ANGELES, March 19 (AP) — A mother and son accused of molesting children at a nearby preschool institution will go on trial next month, Judge William R. Pounders said Wednesday. He said jury selection would begin April 20.

The defendants, Raymond Buckley, 28 years old, and Peggy McMartin Buckley, 60, who ran the McMartin Preschool institution, were arraigned on that same date three years ago.

They were among seven people originally arrested in the case. Charges

against five were eventually dismissed and several of the counts against the Buckyes were eliminated.

Mr. Buckley is charged with 79 counts of child molestation and one count of conspiracy, while Mrs. Buckley is charged with 30 counts of child molestation and one count of conspiracy.

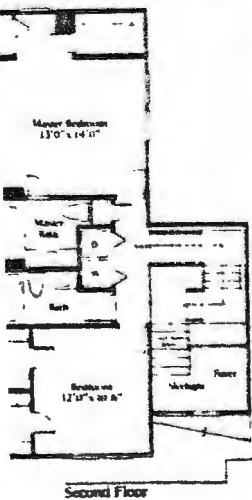
Their trial was scheduled to begin Wednesday, but the Buckyes agreed to postpone it.

Jury selection is expected to take several weeks or even months.

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