

# General Zia moves against Pakistan's 'anti-Islamic' Qadiani cult

by Susan Maitra

Pakistan President and Chief Martial Law Administrator Zia ul-Haq recently issued an ordinance effectively banning the "anti-Islamic" activities of the Qadiani group, also known as Ahmadiyya, a sect which originated as an instrument of British colonial rule under cover of an "Islamic reform movement" in Pakistan—then undivided India—during the late 19th century. Favorites of the British colonial rulers, the Qadianis are distinguished for being well-educated, and have exerted great influence in the Pakistani Army and bureaucracy. At least once, President Zia himself had been accused of being a "closet Qadiani."

What prompted Zia's action against the Qadianis is unknown. So far, nothing has been made public in the way of official clarification. But it comes at a time of seething turmoil throughout the subcontinent threatening India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. "Communist violence" between radical Muslims and Hindus in Bombay has taken hundreds of lives in a week. Sikh separatist-terrorists have rendered the Punjab virtually ungovernable. Both British and Soviet hands are certainly involved in the destabilization—and the Qadianis have historically served as a premier instrument of destabilization.

Zia took his action against a background of arrests of army men charged with plotting a coup, heightened anti-Zia ferment by both the nominal left and Islamic fundamentalists on the political spectrum, and general deterioration of the internal political situation.

The Qadiani issue in Pakistan is an old one. It has taken a violent turn on at least two previous occasions. In spite of this, with 4 million followers, the Qadianis have continued to enjoy wealth and power in an impoverished and highly turbulent country. They have maintained their headquarters in Pakistan, but their network has meanwhile spread in Europe and Africa.

The recent ordinance banned the Qadianis from using the word "mosque" on their places of worship; it prohibits them from giving "Azan," the call to evening prayer, from their places of worship. It bars them from observing fasts during the month of Ramadan, and it prevents them from using the

name of Islam in their preaching. In short, the Qadianis have been banned from acting as Muslims.

Reports say the ordinance has given way to violent attacks against Qadianis. Following the order, a district leader of the Qadianis was reportedly stabbed to death in Sind province outside of a mosque. Reports of similar incidents have circulated. Unconfirmed reports indicate that Qadiani leaders from all over the world assembled in Pakistan following the announcement of the ordinance and took a decision to move their headquarters from Rabwah, Pakistan to Lagos, Nigeria.

The founder of the Ahmadiyya sect was one Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, a town which now belongs to the Indian part of the divided Punjab. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad proclaimed himself to be a "Divinely Inspired Renewer" in 1889, and was immediately dubbed by many as a "false prophet."

Both the Baha'is and Ahmadiyyas are involved in reinterpreting the Koran and proselytizing on the basis of their reinterpretation. The Baha'is, who acknowledge that the Koran is an infallible revelation and that the Koranic phrase "Khatam al-Nabbiyyin" indicates the finality of the prophecy, argue that Islam stands abrogated because it is out of date. The Ahmadiyyas, on the other hand, do not accept the finality of the prophecy; they claim that the word "Khatam" means "a seal." All prophets before Muhammad, and the subordinate prophets coming after him, would derive their authenticity by his "seal."

What infuriates the Muslims, Shia and Sunni alike, is the Baha'is' rejection of Islam as out of date. Khomeini hangs them outright. The Saudi king, who advocates "Itjihad," the interpretation of Islamic edicts in matters of daily conduct, religion, and law today, is no more their friend. Both regard the Baha'is as heretics.

As infuriating to the Shias and Sunnis, from a different standpoint, are the sayings of the Ahmadiyyas. During his lifetime Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed himself to be both Al-Mahdi and the awaited Krishna—a synthesis of Hindu and Shia incarnation; he also claims to be the second advent of Christ. He thus claims to be the forebear of both the Judeo-

Christian and Hindu traditions, using the “seal” of his master, the Prophet Muhammad. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad propagated the theory that Jesus Christ escaped the crucifixion and came to Kashmir, where he lived to the age of 120. This is typical of the belief-structures promulgated out of such colonial policy-making bodies as the Quattuor Coronati Scottish Rite lodge of London.

Although Pakistan National Party (PNP) General Secretary Syed Muhammad Kaswar Gardezi denounced the ordinance, saying that the state should have nothing to do with religion, and the pro-regime Muslim League (Pir Pagaro) spokesman, Rehman Ali Alvi, warned that government involvement in controversies between different sects might be harmful to the country’s integrity and solidarity, the ordinance has been generally welcomed by the majority of Pakistanis. The list of grievances of Pakistani Muslims against the rich and influential Qadianis historically is long enough to tilt the scale in favor of the ordinance.

Most important is the fact that the Qadianis openly collaborated with the British to delay the partition of the Indian subcontinent with the express purpose of prolonging Britain’s rule. The religious community perceives the Qadianis to be heretics, defilers of Islam. On top of this the Qadianis have recently been accused of joining Israeli forces fighting against Muslims in the Middle East.

### **Britain’s cult-creation**

The Qadianis amount to an elite Islamic-named version of the British Scottish Rite Freemasonic cult, and were undoubtedly originally a spin-off project of the Freemasonic elite of London. The Ahmadiyya movement emerged in 1889, less than two decades after the Baha’i movement was launched in Iran, and about five years after the founding of the Indian National Congress in India. Like the Baha’i, the Ahmadiyya movement from its inception has enjoyed the sponsorship of the British, and both have been used to split the Islamic community.

The British had received a major setback in the Indian subcontinent in 1857 when the Indian army, composed of both Hindus and Muslims, picked up arms to throw the imperial occupiers out. This armed independence struggle—since belittled by British historians and their protégés as the “Sepoy Mutiny”—was subdued within a year, but the point had been made. The British knew that the Hindus and Muslims could join together again to drive out the “foreign devil.” The fact that many Muslims were joining the Indian National Congress also did not escape their attention. They promptly launched a series of operations designed to create factionalization and fragmentation within and among the religious communities of India. The Ahmadiyya movement was the one directed at the Muslims of the subcontinent.

The Ahmadiyya movement’s resemblance to the Baha’i movement is probably not accidental. No mere heretics intent on spreading their interpretation of the Holy Koran, both

were repeatedly at the center of struggles for earthly power.

The Baha’is were born in 1844 when one Sayyid Ali Muhammad Shirazi (1819-50) took the title “Bab” and claimed that he was the Al-Mahdi returned. According to the Shia Muslim creed, Al-Mahdi is the 12th Imam who went into occultation in 940 A.D. and is to reappear on Earth to bring equality and justice. In 1848, the same Shirazi organized a revolt in Khurasan to capture political and religious power in Iran. This led to his execution in 1850 at Tabriz, but two years later a group of “Babis” attempted to assassinate the king of Iran, Nasiruddin Shah. The same “Babis” emerged from underground two decades later under one Mirza Husayn Ali Nuri who took the title Bahauallah (Splendor of God) and declared himself to be “He whom God shall manifest.” Bahauallah spent most of his time in exile in the Ottoman Empire and died near Acre, now in Israel.

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Like the Baha’is, the Qadianis were deeply involved in geo-political matters. Mirza issued two edicts toward the end of his life. First, “jihad” (holy war) was forbidden—an apparent effort to prevent the Muslims from picking up arms against the British in the name of religion. That this was the purpose was underscored by the second edict: Mirza ordered strict conformity to the rules and regulations layed down by the British Raj. He took his stand on the Koranic injunction to “obey your rulers”—neatly omitting to mention the related imperative that your ruler “should be amongst you.” It is not surprising that in the wake of the 1857 rebellion the British made it a priority to counter the Muslim belief that they cannot and should not be subjugated under a non-Muslim regime.

After promoting the new “prophet” who was already making a name for himself as a champion of Islam, the British showered favors on the new body of “Muslim.” It was in token of their services that Mohammad Zafrullah Khan, a Qadiani who was later appointed foreign minister in the first Pakistani cabinet, was knighted and appointed a member of the Viceroy’s Executive Council as the representative of 100 million Muslims. As the second successor to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Mirza Mahmud Ahmad, was prompted to proclaim at the time, the British preferred Ahmadiyyas to Muslims in

recruitment to the services of the British people.

The Qadianis strongly opposed termination of British rule on the subcontinent. Following it, they retired to Rabwah, refusing to mix with the other Muslims. But given their British patronage for so many years from the inception of independent Pakistan, the Qadianis were overly represented in the country's administrative service. Besides Sir Mohammad Zafrullah Khan, there were many other Qadianis involved in running the government.

Their hegemonic presence and activity was a point of constant conflict in the early years of Pakistan's history. The Qadianis were repeatedly accused of trying to create "a state within a state" as it became evident that the elite members of this community—the bureaucrats, big landlords, and merchants of Western Pakistan—did not endorse the promise of social improvement for the broader population. During this same period, the Qadiani Caliph of Rabwah, Mullah Bashiruddin, announced the "Tabligh"—an aggressive campaign for mass conversions of Muslims, including the orthodox Sunnis, to the Ahmadiyya faith. The Qadianis chose Baluchistan as the first state where a full-scale campaign to recruit would start, and their publication *Al Fazl* editorialized that Pakistan's state machines should be used in the interests of the sect's program.

In the midst of all this, on Oct. 16, 1951, Pakistan's Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated at Rawal Pindi, allegedly by a follower of the Jamaat-e-Islami (the Muslim Brotherhood). The elimination of Liaquat, like the 1948 assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, was probably a key factor in preventing India and Pakistan from jointly overcoming the horrors of the partition bequeathed at independence by the Raj. The Liaquat murder case was never investigated but instead quickly covered up.

Liaquat's death had become a certainty when he planned a visit to the United States. Liaquat had been steadily moving Pakistan out of the British orbit and probing for closer ties with the Americans. Liaquat's defiance of ancient Muslim custom by taking his wife with him to Washington is typical of the "heresies" cited to provoke the mullahs of Pakistan, and they soon merged with those in the army, bureaucracy, and elsewhere who were discontented with Liaquat's foreign policy.

## Public backlash

The backlash against the Qadianis had already begun. By 1952-53 combat against this powerful religious heresy became the call of the day. The Qadiani community, wrote a leading orthodox Moulavi, stood opposed to the Muslims as an independent group in the government service, trade, industry, and agriculture. Many Pakistanis who had opposed the government policy of maintaining close ties with Britain and were actively promoting closer ties with the United States gravitated toward the anti-Qadiani movement.

Khwaja Nazimuddin, then prime minister of Pakistan and

a well-known British puppet, declared at the time that "the anti-Ahmadiyya agitation is a political movement actuated by power politics." Nazimuddin's charges, together with his refusal to carry out a land reform in Punjab as promised by the earlier Liaquat cabinet, only added fuel to the fire. Meanwhile economic difficulties mounted, creating fertile ground for unrest.

Things came to a head in early 1953. During the discussion of the draft constitution, the orthodox Muslims demanded the government officially proclaim the Qadianis a sect and a religious minority so that they would not get more than one seat in the future legislative assemblies. They also demanded that Zafrullah Khan be removed from office as foreign minister and that all other Qadianis be dismissed from government office. Khwaja Nazimuddin was also accused of belonging to the Ahmadiyya community.

By February of 1953 an all-Pakistan conference of Muslim religious parties had formed an action committee to combat the Qadianis and announced a mass civil-disobedience drive in West Pakistan. The leaders of the action committee won over the artisans, a section of workers employed at small-scale industrial establishments, the small businessmen, and the student groups to their cause. Strikes were called in Karachi, Lahore, Rawal Pindi, Multan, Sialkot, and other major cities. Demonstrators raided government institutions, obstructed the postal and telegraph services, damaged railway tracks, stopped trains and buses, set up pickets, and destroyed shops and warehouses owned by the Qadianis en masse. Bloody clashes occurred between orthodox Muslims and the Qadianis.

Though large-scale arrests were made, the Nazimuddin government was already tottering. The government quickly announced that it would carry out the Punjab land reforms and at the same time removed the Punjab governor for condoning the riots. Finally, on April 17, 1953, the Nazimuddin cabinet was asked to submit its resignation.

## The second wave

The next time the Qadiani issue took center stage in Pakistani politics was during 1974, when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was in charge of Pakistan. At the time, the Caliph of Jamaat-i-Ahmadiyya of Rabwah, Mirza Nafir Ahmad, told the Associated Press that the riots were engineered by Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party in order to shore up his crumbling image. From London where he was appropriately based, Zafrullah Khan accused Bhutto of allowing Qadiani properties to be burned to ashes while the Federal Security Forces stood by as silent spectators. Bhutto more accurately accused the opposition parties and "foreign powers" of having fanned the agitation.

In 1974, the Bhutto government had come under increasing pressure from the opposition to declare the Qadianis a non-Muslim minority. In a June 13 broadcast to the nation, Bhutto fought to blunt the growing agitation. Not only he,

but the people could also see the hands of foreign powers behind the anti-Ahmadiyya trouble, Bhutto said. One could link it with the Indian nuclear blast, the visit of Afghan President Daud to Moscow, and the presence of a political leader (Wali Khan) in Kabul as a state guest, Bhutto told the nation.

But the efforts to tar the agitation with the brush of foreign conspiracy left the opposition undaunted. Their press did not hesitate to point out that Bhutto had showered many favors on the Qadianis in the past, particularly in their large scale appointment to sensitive military posts. The opposition press also noted that Bhutto had sought and obtained support of the Qadianis in the 1971 elections. The Majlis Tahaffuz Khatame-Nabuwat (Association for the Protection of the Finality of Prophethood of Muhammad) accused Bhutto of protecting the Qadianis and demanded his resignation if he could not resolve the problem. The Majlis' demands included the declaration of Rabwah as an open city, the removal of Qadianis from key posts, a ban on their paramilitary organizations, the arrests of persons involved in the Rabwah railway incident, including the Caliph himself, and the convening of an open trial of Sir Mohammad Zaffrullah Khan for anti-Pakistan propaganda.

Bhutto had little choice but to yield under the pressure, and he set up a tribunal to investigate the Rabwah railway station incident. Soon the assemblies of Azad Kashmir (the Pakistan-held part of Kashmir) and the North West Frontier Province passed resolutions declaring the Qadianis a non-Muslim group. Finally, a resolution to the same effect was moved in the National Assembly, and, on Sept. 7, 1974, the Second Amendment to the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan declared the Ahmadiyyas a non-Muslim minority.

### Broader horizons

Their periodic travails in Pakistan notwithstanding, the Qadianis have spread out to develop an extensive network in Europe as well as in North Africa, where they have launched the *Tabligh* movement to proselytize among African Muslims. Playing the role of teachers and Koranic interpreters, the Qadianis have also made inroads into the ranks of the Black Muslims in the United States. In Northern Europe the Qadianis are most active as subversive agents, supplying veiled misinformation to factionalize political parties and Pakistani exiles living in Europe in particular, through an array of institutions.

One such institution is the so-called Temple of Understanding, set up in 1963 with the help of Zafrullah Khan and the Patriarch of Constantinople. Many Qadianis are also involved in the Islamic Bank International in Copenhagen. The Deutsche Orient-Institut in Hamburg, West Germany, is also reportedly controlled by an Ahmadiyya named Dr. Munir Ahmad. Among the ranks of scientists, Dr. Abdus Salam, stationed at the Trieste International Center for Theoretical Physics, is a prominent Qadiani.

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