

## From New Delhi by Susan Maitra

### Zia reshuffles the deck

*Army unrest and the fundamentalist establishment challenge the plan for "Islamic democracy."*

**T**he removal of two top army generals, the sacking of three cabinet ministers, and the subsequent acknowledgment of an extensive army coup plot against Zia ul-Haq have raised new questions about the general's hold on power and the prospects for his "Islamic democracy" scheme, promised to go into effect no later than March 1985. These dramatic developments, pointing to fissures within the institution that is the pillar of Zia's present and projected rule, coincide with a revolt by the student wing of the Jamaat-i-Islami, the Muslim fundamentalist establishment that has been Zia's main base of civilian political support.

The student revolt erupted in Peshawar in February at General Zia's first "election" rally. A large section of the crowd began stamping and shouting "Down with Zia!" An earlier ban on student unions was the pretext, but the complaint of Jamaat-i-Islami leader Mian Tufail Mohammad bespeaks a broader disaffection. Tufail points out that his party—the principal target of the ban, since "political" activity by the other major parties had long before been prohibited—has played a key role in keeping communist and leftist groups out of Pakistan's universities and labor unions.

"And now General Zia wants to crush us," said Tufail, a distant relative of Zia. "He is a foolish man, and the ban was an act of foolishness." For the past two months, student riots have rocked Lahore and Karachi, and hundreds of arrests have ensued. In one recent incident, students took five

army men hostage, demanding the release of detained colleagues.

Reports of the arrest of a large number of officers from the Lahore Cantonment, one of Pakistan's military facilities, and vague references from Zia to attempted foreign destabilization of his regime, came in February. But it was not until March 3 and 4—when Zia summarily dismissed Gen. Sawar Khan, his number-two man and Vice-Army chief, and Gen. Mohammad Iqbal Khan, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee—that it became clear something larger was at issue.

According to senior Pakistani officials quoted in the British press, a group of army officers had plotted to kill Zia while he was reviewing the Republic Day parade on March 23. The plot was reportedly foiled when Pakistani intelligence discovered an arms cache in the home of an army captain in Lahore in January. About 50 military officials were arrested at that time.

Pakistani officials, these sources say, have accused Indian intelligence of masterminding the plot and providing the sophisticated arms and ammunition—a charge New Delhi has categorically denied. U.S. officials have stated that they have no evidence of Indian involvement.

Ghulam Mustafa Khar, a wealthy Pakistani landlord, former governor of Punjab under former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and a prominent opposition figure currently a factional leader with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), insists that the al-

legations about India are a "smoke-screen" to try to hide widespread unrest within the armed forces.

Khar, who acknowledges his close and continuing contact with Punjabi officers, was apparently involved in coordinating the coup attempt from his exile in London. Khar told the Press Trust of India on March 25 that nearly 45 officers of the armed forces and a dozen civilians have been detained in connection with the plot, and more than 400 army officers have been interrogated.

Khar revealed that this was the third coup attempt in the seven years since Zia took power, and is not likely to be the last. Many army officers believe Zia is using the army for selfish purposes, Khar reports, and fear that the Pakistani armed services are in danger of being destroyed as an institution.

Alleged brutality in the suppression of the recent rebellion in Sind province is said to be one major point of factional polarization within the army. Several months ago, at the height of the Sind stir, PPP chairman Begum Nusrat Bhutto had called on Zia to step down and hand power over to Sawar Khan, who would safeguard constitutional elections.

Sawar Khan is otherwise regarded as a soldier of great professionalism, known for his strong views about the undesirability of involving the army in day-to-day administration. He has been replaced by Lt. Gen. K. M. Arif, who aided Zia in a number of crucial negotiations, including the \$3.2 billion U.S. military and economic aid deal. Gen. Mohammad Iqbal Khan has been replaced by Lt. Gen. Rahimuddin Khan, former governor of Baluchistan and father-in-law to Zia's son. The two summarily retired generals were the last of the army commanders who supported Zia in the 1977 coup against the Bhutto government.