

KEY PERSONALITIES AND ORGANISATIONS

Chapter Two, you will recall, depicts the general Muslim attitude towards the Nigerian nation and culture. Chapter Three summarizes the various interpretations and explanations that Muslims offer for the riots described in Volume One. That chapter is organized around the various explanations. The current chapter continues the same theme, but it is organized around key personalities and organisations. Though the explanations are similar, the emphasis on personalities and organisations provides a more wholistic and personable picture than the piecemeal box-by-box approach of the previous chapter. Covering the same territory, these two chapters complement each other.

▲ JAMA'ATUL NASRIL ISLAM

The Jama'atul Nasril Islam (JNI) is an umbrella organisation for the Nigerian Muslim community, a Muslim equivalent to the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). In its submission to the Kaduna State committee on the Kafanchan riot series, it concentrated on three areas of tension that helped set the stage for these riots.

First, there is the entire history of colonialism with its strong Christian stamp. Colonialism and Christian missions are seen as two prongs of the European attack on Islam throughout the world. The post-colonial Nigerian federal and state governments are largely regarded as stooges of their former colonial master, the United Kingdom. The post-colonial Nigerian church is a thinly-veiled weapon of Western missions. Both of these agencies, governments and churches, serve the will of their European masters by trying to impose a secular order on the country. Secularism is seen as a weapon to destroy Islam by privatizing and personalizing religion, by reducing its scope in society and, in general, by trivializing it. Islam objects to all of its facets, and reacts to it much like a bull does to a red flag. Advocating secularism is hardly a way to defuse tensions in Nigeria. This issue is covered more completely in Chapter Two.

Second, JNI complained that Christians generally object to anything Muslim. If an idea comes from the Muslim community, it is by definition suspect as far as Christians are concerned. It will hardly be looked upon in terms of its own merits. If it is Muslim, it must be part of their secret plan to subdue Christians. It is very much a cold war type of mentality where every move, however legitimate in itself, creates suspicion.

I have seen this mentality operate among adherents of both religions in surprising and unhealthy ways. Christians have their Christian organisations for medical doctors, but when Muslims wanted to establish theirs, a nationally-prominent and highly-educated Christian instinctively rejected this attempt as illegitimate and interpreted it immediately as a veiled attack on Christians. So, this Muslim charge is correct—except in its one-sidedness. It ignores the fact that Muslims tend to do the same with respect to Christians.

Thirdly, JNI is offended by the alleged widespread Christian practice of discounting serious Muslims as archaic, while non-serious Muslims are regarded as progressive.¹ Thus the opinions of

activist leaders are hardly worthy of serious Christian attention, except in so far as they are understood in terms of the cold war. This accusation, too, is true. One seldom hears a Christian express admiration or appreciation for a Muslim leader, while Christians tend to admire maverick Rushdie for his courage. But here, too, the charge is one-sided. Every decade or so the Anglican communion either in the United Kingdom or in the United States produces a bishop who denies some central aspect of the Christian faith, such as the resurrection. These outrageous “theologians” are then jubilantly upheld by Muslims as supportive of the latter’s views and for revealing the “bankruptcy” of Christianity.

It should be noted that these points are very general and have little to do with the immediate causes of the Kafanchan riots. As we have seen earlier, they are important components of the general Nigerian Muslim attitude towards Christianity, and are the major reasons for their strong resentment. These are the background factors that, when combined with specific provocation, however flimsy, spark the riots. The fact that the JNI report restricted itself to these generalities leads me to the suspicion that they realized the Muslim instigators had no valid specific grounds for these riots, but did not want to admit it. They had to resort to more “remote causes,” the popular term in the myriad of government commissions investigating these riots.

With the JNI fully supporting the Muslim side of the Kafanchan debacle, the Muslim public expected the Kaduna Government to fall in line. They assumed that the government, in Muslim hands, would naturally support the Muslim side in these riots. The “governor should have protected Muslims against the attack of non-Muslims” by using the army. Many felt that “the art of governance ought to take second place to religion.” It is significant that the Kaduna Muslim governor declared himself “ashamed to associate with Muslims who perpetrated this havoc.”² This was not only an important and rare admission of Muslim

guilt on the part of a Muslim politician, but it was also a clear break from JNI's stand.

Curiously, in spite of the previous sentence, the Kaduna Government's reaction to Christian explanations for the riots³ was basically dismissive. It rejected these explanations because they had little immediate connection with these events.

*They were mainly issues relating to national politics and the perceived deprivation suffered by Christians in the face of what many see as the threat of Islamisation and political domination by Muslims. These issues ranged from the OIC, Sharia, Friday as a work-free day, etc.*⁴

Interestingly, these are the same remote issues that feature in the JNI documents, either implicitly or explicitly, and that both the Kaduna Government and the Donli commission supported in defence of the Muslim case.

While Christian background issues or remote causes were rejected, the recommendations of the Donli commission were strongly supportive of JNI explanations, even though they were also mostly remote causes. It recommended a work-free Friday, membership in the OIC, the application to Muslims of the total sharia, and discouraged the use of the term "secularism." None of this had anything directly to do with the Kafanchan spark either!

How could these pro-JNI recommendations have emerged when the chairperson of the commission was a Christian? For one thing, she probably did not have the clout that most chairpersons would have. Being a woman, Donli's position was challenged by Yahaya Jinadu, the commission member representing JNI. Islam does not accept leadership of men by a woman, argued Jinadu. Secondly, Donli admitted that "they could not risk the wrath of government." Supporting Muslim remote causes would apparently avoid such risk.⁵

▲ MUSLIM STUDENTS SOCIETY (MSS) —————

The MSS may not be the most authoritative among Muslim organisations in Nigeria, but it is a very prominent one that has often been associated with protests, demonstrations and, not infrequently, riots.⁶

In an anonymous document in *Radiance*, “The Maitatsine Phenomenon: A Special Report,” the writer strongly disassociates the Maitatsine sect from Islam and insists that it is a non-Muslim movement.⁷ Its revolution is classified as *fitnah*, a term denoting an attack on and affront to Islam. It is basically the result of difficult social and economic circumstances that have created an atmosphere ripe for violence. These circumstances are the presence of two contradictory groups in the city: a large contingent of begging *almajirai*, children attending Qur’anic schools, side by side with a small number of the wealthy who live in scandalous opulence. This circumstance has created “the right chemistry for brewing up any *fitnah* to embarrass and humiliate the Muslim communities and to vilify and suppress Islam.”

The writer of the report is therefore very upset with those that blame Islam for the ruckus this movement has caused. It is not a case of an innocent mistaken-identity problem; it is a deliberate attempt by “virulent anti-Islamic forces, including the Government, to weaken the resolve of Muslims.” The federal Government explained the Maiduguri Maitatsine riot as the result of a clash “between the police and Muslim religious fanatics who were preaching without a permit.” Either the Government does not understand the problems in society or it “has purposefully decided to exploit it to achieve its vested interests.”

The other “beneficiaries of the anti-Muslim [Maitatsine] disturbances” are the alleged alliance between—and hold on to your chair for this unlikely combination—the “Zaria Marxist clique and the Jos Christian missionary establishment.”

“Their organ—the crusading *Nigeria Standard*,” a daily owned by the government of the more Christian-oriented Plateau State, declared that

*these Islamic fundamentalist groups are sponsored and nurtured by the dominant class of reactionary Northern politicians, [and] businessmen. Their feudal cohorts use them as reserve armies against any threat to their entrenched privileged positions.*⁸

The author of the report in *Radiance* fumes at the “scandalous and infuriating” ways in which the enemies of Islam exploit the Maitatsine phenomenon. What is there in this sect that would make it Islamic? He declares that “the sponsors of the *Nigeria Standard* have failed and will, *insha Allah*, continue to fail in their efforts to blackmail Muslims.” The sponsors “behind the newspaper are part of the ‘curses’ which have permitted the social, economic and political structures of this country and occasioned the emergence of such phenomena as the Maitatsine.”

As if the above were not enough irritation, there is the way in which the name of the MSS has “been viciously dragged into the whole episode.”⁹ Apparently the *NS* blamed the MSS of supporting such violence. It is alleged to have written that

the “religious”¹⁰ disturbances in Kano, more than anything else, give the clearest clue as to where the responsibility for the recent chain of violence lies. The roving bands of rioters were reported to have been led by the MSS. The MSS has a long record of violent militancy and fanatical fundamentalism which is very well known to both the security agents and the powers that be.

The report goes on to assert that the alliance of the Marxist clique and the Christian “mafia” are trying to “obfuscate the realities” of these disturbances. Their concern is not with the disturbances so

much as “about Islam itself, which they see as a threat to their nefarious designs.” And now comes the clincher: “From the manner in which the Kano disturbances have been readily and eagerly attributed to the MSS by the Anti-Islamic Front, it is not unlikely that some of its constituent elements have a hand in planning and executing these uprisings” for purposes of their own. By these comments, the MSS report clearly places these riots in the broader context of the campaign of the unholy triad of colonialism, secularism, and Christianity to destroy Islam. Christians are behind the Maitatsine riots! How the “Marxist clique” relates to all this is not clear from the discussion, but that is of secondary importance for our purpose.

The MSS presented a submission to the Kano state government committee that was to investigate the causes of the riots of October, 1982.¹¹ The document almost immediately launches into the usual tirade against the colonial forces and their impact on culture. It then proceeds to deny that any Muslim organisation could have burnt the churches, for doing so “has no foundation in Islam and no place in Muslim tradition. Therefore such occurrences *cannot be the acitivity of any true Islamic organisation.*” The denial is based on the interesting but hardly verified assumption that Muslims and their organisations always act like proper Muslims. What of the long periods of Muslim dormancy and its oppressive regimes that are freely admitted by Muslim writers?

The MSS statement goes on to assert that the question of the riots and the “who done it” are “marginal issues which are only indicative of the more fundamental maladies which have eaten deep into the fabric of society.” There is the long-time humiliation of Muslims ever since the destruction of the Sokoto caliphate by the colonialists. There is the collusion between the Christian missionaries and colonialism that has led to the average Muslim seeing “missionaries and their establishments [read: ‘Nigerian churches’] as agents of colonialism, and the embodiment of the humiliation

of the Muslims, the destruction of their caliphate and the obliteration of their Muslim institutions.”

Though Muslims have no hatred for any other religion, they do

have a mass psychology which identifies some of these religious groups with their present predicament and the frustration of their hopes and aspirations. It is this mass psychology which has to be understood by anybody wishing to comprehend the Kano disturbances.

Without justifying the arson cases in Kano, the submission insists that

the real culprits are not the individuals who participated in it, but those who provoked the people into taking such action. The real culprits are those who have turned a residence into a church, knowing full well the sensibilities of the people. The real culprits, undoubtedly, are those who invited a bishop from England—a symbol of the Muslims’ humiliation—to lay the foundation stone of the said church.

That humiliating colonial system led to the separation of the rulers from the people to such an extent that they developed conflicting interests. The interests of the people were no longer significant and were usually ignored. Grievances went increasingly unheard and frustration mounted. It is in such a context, the document intones, that

the only means open to these unfortunate Muslim fellows to maintain their mental stability is through such emotional outbursts, against any visible targets of their oppression. It should be kept in mind that we are not justifying any action which these frustrated fellows have done and will do.

This “cumulative frustration can breed anything, be it logical or otherwise.”

Another aspect of the same problem is the effect of secularism that has “removed all restraints on human behaviour” and created a climate “of a terrifying culture of lawlessness and indiscipline.” A “proper understanding” of this reality is “essential to understanding the nature of these outbursts.” Muslims can tolerate offenses to their persons but not, “for one moment, to their values and ideals.”¹²

There are several red flags here that are familiar by now. There is the smouldering issue of resentment for the humiliation colonialism inflicted on Muslims. There is the red flag of secularism. There is the visible challenge of the churches that represent all these negative forces. That combination has given shape to “mass psychology of hatred towards Christianity” and ended up in violence. Though such behaviour has no place in Islam, the frustration with and hatred for Christianity makes re-occurrence possible. Here we have in summary fashion the entire bag of background issues that provide not only the rationale but also the justification, even if arson in principle is not approved by Islam.

Akbar Ahmed, the narrator in the film “The Last Crusade,” describes himself as a moderate Muslim who prefers peace between Christians and Muslims. However, he appears to support the MSS opinion and to regard it as perfectly plausible and acceptable that Muslims rioted and destroyed the Kano Anglican church. The fact that it predated the neighbouring mosque and even the entire community by some decades was conveniently omitted, so that the new church building was portrayed as a new Christian intrusion into an established Muslim community, mosque and all. When the police came to protect the rights of the Anglicans and shot several Muslims, Muslim anger against Christians reached the point of explosion. There was not even a hint of criticism of such Muslim behaviour, nor of any recognition of the Anglicans’ long-standing rights to that property. Given the general situation, it is perfectly understandable and, therefore,

apparently, legitimate. The concept of responsibility for your own actions does not seem to play a role.

The MSS at Kaduna Polytechnic were up in arms against their administration, all of whom were sporting Muslim names. Five members of the MSS leadership were suspended for endangering peace on the campus. The students were disrupting various campus events that featured immorality. MSS objected that authorities gave “unlimited permission to students to indulge in any immoral and obscene activities, thereby betraying the trust reposed in them by the parents of the students to teach their children moral education along with their various courses.” The administration alleged that armed MSS members disrupted a traditional dance programme. Most students seemed to oppose the administration, because it was “hostile to the Muslims” and considered them “trouble makers.” Even though the administrators were mostly Muslims, the students dubbed this confrontation as “a battle between Islam and *kufri*.” They threatened to continue their confrontation as long as the immorality continued. They would not tolerate women who “obscenely exhibit their naked bodies for token fees.”

The above was not the only complaint of the students. There is always that rabbit of discrimination that can be pulled out of the magician’s hat any time it is convenient. During the fracas, security staff had allowed some Muslims through the gates without checking their identification. They were promptly suspended. The administration, basically in Muslim hands, was immediately accused of anti-Muslim discrimination, for they did allow Christians not connected to the university at all, to attend worship services.¹³ Well, of course, what else do you expect from students?

ALHAJI SHEIKH ABUBUKAR GUMI

Though there have been a number of major Muslim actors on the scene, during the 1980s many journalists liked to zero in on the now late Sheikh Abubakar Gumi. Gumi is the only Nigerian recip-

ient of the King Faisal Laureate Award, the Muslim equivalent to the Nobel Prize. Journalists associated with *TSM* magazine trace much of the heightening of tensions between Christians and Muslims to him. Gumi reportedly said that there will be no peace in Nigeria unless everyone becomes a Muslim. That is clear language, and in keeping with other public statements he has made over time. These include the threat that the country will divide into two, if the presidency is not in Muslim hands. Another is that a woman would never be president in his lifetime. "These, and other controversial statements led to perceptible tightening of position in the...Christian camp," and "an upsurge of unaccustomed militancy among Christians," reports Nnanna.

Hananiya Zakariya reported a lengthy interview with Gumi conducted by one Yakubu Muhammed in 1987. Gumi complained that Christians "stridently" criticized him for his statements about them. "They are ignorant," Gumi declared. "They have all the chance to come to me to find out why I said Christianity is nothing." Zakariya interpreted Gumi as saying that "Islam is everything...and there is nothing you do or say that has not been regulated by Islam. Politics, economics, corruption, social relations, law, just to mention any subject under the sun: Gumi has the answer and the answer is Islam." Christianity, he asserted, has "no rules, no regulations, no anything." Christians go to church on Sundays to listen to songs. That's all there is to the religion.

Gumi preferred a political system "that is rooted in...Islam." Christians and Muslims should both have their own parties. In any mixed party, Muslims would not allow a Christian to serve as leader. If Christians do not want to accept Muslim leadership, then the country should simply be split up with one section for Christians and one for Muslims. Gumi would have no truck with compromise, for then Islam would no longer be true to itself. Nigerian unity can be achieved only when non-Muslims turn to

Islam or when the other religions “become minority and they will not affect our society.”

He did agree that Yakubu Gowon, a Christian, was a good leader of the country, but he would have been better if he were a Muslim. The reason for this concession may well have been Gowon’s confiscation of Christian schools and hospitals, an action that greatly supported the Muslim *jihad*.

In common with Muslims in general, Gumi denied that Nigeria is a secular country. It is a “multi-religious state.” It is better to involve religion in the development of the country, for without it people will not listen. He is said to have done all he could to undermine the secular status. Though he did not specifically dub the Kafanchan riot series as religious in nature, according to the report of an interview with Gumi by the Executive Editor of *This Week*, Gumi’s responses definitely put it in that category. Christians are not enlightened, he lectured. When Christians were challenged about their behaviour, they should have taken their challengers to court. But, being unenlightened, they resorted to fighting instead. Christians are fighting, he explained, because “they have seen that they are losing, because Christianity is not based on anything.” It is an empty religion. They have nothing serious to do. On Sundays they go to church, sing “and look at good ladies.”

“Islam changes you to be a new man. But if you become a Christian, what are you going to do? Nothing. You only say if I slap you on this cheek, bring the other cheek, I slap you. Is that a teaching?” The implication here is that such an empty religion has little resistance to fighting and violence. What Christians did in Kafanchan was “very bad indeed. If my opinion is different from yours, do you start killing me. Is it good?” In such situations you talk it over, “but if you start killing, that means you are not a man but a beast.”¹⁴

However, Gumi also recognized a political dimension. In response to the question of what the government should do to avoid such riots, his immediate response was “I want the govern-

ment to be impartial. To give Muslims their rights and Christians their own rights.” That is not in fact the case. Muslims in the security forces constitute only some ten to twenty per cent. The result is an anti-Muslim bias in their security work.

These Christian soldiers or policemen think that since some Muslims burnt a church, they must punish all Muslims. Some Muslims were sleeping on their beds and taken away... Not just taken, but killed. Innocent people [read: Muslims] were arrested and killed...in their own rooms and houses. I know two cases—one of them... an Imam who was coming out of a mosque, and was shot and killed.¹⁵

You, the reader, in order to gain some perspective on Gumi’s views, will do well to refresh your memory of the Kafanchan riots by re-reading its account in Volume One.

There is more to be said about Gumi, but, in keeping with the structure of these studies, some of it is reserved for Volume Three, where you will learn what non-Muslims say about him. Of course, as will also be discussed in that volume, Gumi had a hand in marrying the daughter of the Christian leader Christopher Abashiya to a Muslim. This was apparently not the only time he was involved in such arrangements, but that story is reserved for the next volume as well.

Gumi was indeed a powerful player who constantly irked Christians. Nothing demonstrated his power and influence more than his funeral that was attended by all the leading Muslims in the nation. As a result, the government was hesitant to rein him in, a fact that led CAN to protest when the government report on the Kafanchan riots was silent about his involvement.

THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT

I now turn to the Islamic Movement and two of its main leaders, Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, the founder, and his faithful and equally

radical follower, Yakubu Yahaya. We have already met these man and their movement in Volume One. They are alleged to be leaders of Nigeria's Shi'ite Movement, though both deny it.¹⁶

1. El-Zakzaky

El-Zakzaky is the founding leader of the Islamic Movement. He was born from radical revivalist stock that includes ancestors involved in the Dan Fodio *jihad*.¹⁷ Akbar Ahmed, the narrator in the video "The Last Crusade," describes him as a devout Muslim activist, whose major concern is to oppose the increasing spread of secularism and Christianity. Christians have imposed the secular system on the government, through whom they run the country. It is a system marked by corruption, oppression, and by total disobedience to Allah. Since such a state is not based on the shari'a, it has neither legitimacy nor the right to control Muslims. Muslims should have nothing to do with such a system or such a government. In fact, they should do all they can to oppose and undermine it, even if Muslims run it who do not share the Movement's vision. El-Zakzaky served two four-year prison terms for his group's defiance of the government, only to be followed by another two-year sentence.

During his days as a student of political science at ABU, he was at one time an active member of the MSS. He became dissatisfied with the narrowly religious focus of this body and its lack of both a political program and revolutionary fervor. He felt it should be "geared towards practical and revolutionary transformation of the country along the lines of Islam," and should prepare "for the inevitable clash with *Kuffr*," that is, non-Muslims. In 1979, he led a split from the MSS and established a "dedicated radical group," known as the "Islamic Movement."

The first practical demonstration of the group's zeal was a violent demonstration, led by El-Zakzaky himself, against immorality and alcohol at ABU. He traveled around the country's universities, encouraging an Iran-type of revolution. The result was that

student groups in various northern cities went around shouting the slogan “Islam Only!” and painted public buildings with their colours and slogans.¹⁸

Frequently confronted by police and other security forces, after the 1991 Kano riots, El-Zakzaky decided to establish his own paramilitary force. Though that sounds violent, his henchmen insist that the force does not have weapons.¹⁹ The video *The Last Crusade* portrays large groups of devout young men, for hours dancing themselves into a frenzy, until some of them swoon, not unlike some Christian charismatic groups. People around them stand ready to catch them during their fall. All of this is designed to prepare them spiritually and psychologically for *jihad*, a Muslim sacrificial war or crusade against a corrupt and oppressive secular government. That is the radical and fanatic mentality that lies behind Muslim attitudes and behaviour in the anti-Christian riots, according to narrator Akbar Ahmed. They are brought to such a dangerous, fragile, and almost hypnotic level of emotional hatred and frenzy that it takes only a minor incidental spark to provoke a wholesale riot.

The video also shows how the Islamic Movement immerses children in the *jihad* culture so that it becomes their natural way of life. It portrays children being taught to shout Muslim militant revolutionary slogans, interspersed with the well-known cry, “*Allahu akbar*” [“God is great”], all the while waving angry fists in the air with their faces betraying great intensity of hatred and purpose. Being raised in such an environment with no alternative models guarantees their growing up as hatred machines for everything non-Muslim, and ready at any time to kill, maim and destroy without any second thoughts of compassion, tolerance or pluralism.

Imprisonment became part of the movement’s culture. But prison or not, the struggle continues uninterrupted right into the new millennium. El-Zakzaky, his deputy, Muhammad Mahmud Turi, and some other followers were in various jails, while a game of postponements of court hearings prolonged their incarceration.

Shortly after the sudden death of Head of State Abacha, members of the Movement staged a demonstration in Kaduna in support of their demand for the “immediate and unconditional release” of El-Zakzaky and his fellow detainees. In a press release they stated that a change of head of state does not mean the end of their cause, since they are not against any individual head of state but “against a system.” The end of 1998 saw El-Zakzaky strutting out of jail victoriously. Attempts to crush his movement had failed, he boasted.²¹

Actually, El-Zakzaky had more overt Muslim enemies than Christian, and these enemies ranged far and wide. They included Muslim governors, Muslim heads of state, emirs—the whole gamut. Never one to mince words, he declared emirs useless because “they will support whoever is in power. Yesterday they dealt with Abacha, today with Abubakar, and tomorrow they will deal with Obasanjo,” he declared.²¹ That “tomorrow” arrived more than three years ago. Though the first two were Muslim presidents and the third a Christian, to the El-Zakzakis of Nigeria there is no real difference between them. They all need to be opposed, for all of them have accepted the secular model of operation.

Even Governor Sani Yerima, the one who started the restoration of sharia, the hero of so many Muslims, is considered an enemy. Yerima said that his worst opponents are not the Christians but “Islamic radicals.” Though they all share the strong desire for sharia, they are enemies because of disagreement on strategy. El-Zakzaki insists there must be a Muslim revolution before the sharia can be reinstated,²² an opinion he repeats time and again. With such narrow scope of acceptable ideology and narrow range of satisfactory fundamentalist comrades, there are not too many left to carry the ball forward in a manner that would satisfy him.

2. Yakubu Yahaya

Then there is Yakubu Yahaya, the “Khomeini-like *mullah*,” of whom we already heard, in connection with rioting in Katsina in

Volume One. If there is a question about Yahaya's connection with Shi'ites, there is no doubting his leadership under El-Zakzaky in the Islamic Movement, especially of the Katsina branch, the most active and radical of all.

Yahaya's appointment at the Arabic Teachers College in Katsina was terminated by the Katsina State Government, because of the rebellious spirit he inculcated among students. He taught them to disregard the national anthem and the flag, for they were said to dilute faith in Islam. He also encouraged them to ignore the school's program whenever it coincided with the times for Muslim prayers. In short, he taught disdain for all authority except that of Allah.

He left little to the imagination:

I am a Muslim. I have the injunctions of Prophet Muhammad. I have the Holy Qur'an and I am schooled in Islamic science. I am under these rules. I am following it and I am not working for anybody. I do not recognize any authority over me but the Holy Qur'an. I do not recognize the federal government. I do not recognize the state government and their laws. Whatever my religion permits me to do, I will do it without waiting for any permission or without considering whether somebody likes it or not. I will never seek anybody's permission at all.²³ Do not be surprised we are using our own model of justice. The federal government does not recognize the injunction of my Holy Prophet, neither the state government. So this is clean justice. They do their own and I will do my own. Everybody should stand on his own. They are Kaffirs.

Nigeria, according to Yahaya, needs an Islamic revolution in order to "flush out this corrupt system and establish an Islamic state.... The solution is no compromise. The solution is not talking on the table but to shed out all the idol worshippers and their leaders, and all these evils. So our aim and target is to do so here...."

Yahaya repeated these notions frequently and, in keeping with this spirit, he and his people demonized the former national administration of Babangida, a Muslim, as “a government of Satan,” even though Christians think of that administration as an Islamising force. He expected that any subsequent government headed by any of those aspiring to the presidency of the country would be running the same kind of satanic system. Hence he said, “We do not recognise the laws of this country because they do not conform to the laws of Allah as stated in the Holy Qur’an. This is why we want to operate outside it.” No wonder that he, too, spent time in prison.

Occasionally the Islamic Movement will organize public processions called *muzahara* that are supposed to be peaceful, but often become violent. People are killed and properties destroyed. Yahaya has been involved in several riots, but he claims that he never started rioting; it was always the police. Yahaya’s people, according to him, do not use weapons. The riots start

when the police use batons to beat defenseless protesters, with helmet, tear gas and guns, they beat innocent people, put tear gas into their eyes, seizing and damaging their properties. Ask the people of the town [Katsina]. They will tell you who is a trouble maker.

The Katsina riot of 1991, described in Volume One, is a case in point.

M. D. Suleiman concludes that members of the Islamic Movement cannot be deterred by threats from government or police, not even by death threats. They have a strong sense of martyrdom and fear no death. During an interview with various members, all agreed that “it does not matter to us at all whether we die or survive in (the) struggle for the establishment of sharia. God will raise other believers who will continue with the struggle from where we stop.” After the Christian Military Governor of Katsina State, John Madaki, pronounced the death sentence on Yahaya, members from all over the country came to congratulate the latter.

Though the sentence was not carried out, the hysterical celebration of the threat underscores the determination of the members to carry on with their struggle against all odds.

Yahaya and his aides also have their own explanation for the phenomenon of religious riots in general to share with a *TSM* reporter. Yahaya says:

I think other non-Muslims cause disturbances to annoy Muslims. Muslims are peaceful people. They are not after any disturbance. If you look at Kafanchan, Bauchi, Kano and others, it was because Muslims were oppressed, or were abused, or their way of worship was abused, so they have to show their anger. So when they are holding peaceful processions or call people to see what is happening, the government will come and arrest and beat them up.

It should be noted here that the explanation for the riots as given by Yakubu Yahaya is quite contradictory to that presented in the film. Yahaya talks as if the followers of the movement are trained to act calmly and non-violently. Riots are caused by the stupid interference of the authorities who provoke the people. The film shows that in fact these followers are consciously prepared and trained for violence.

I continue with the *TSM* report. Yahaya's Aide no. 1 explains:

Most of the time the causes of these riots are not properly reported. Almost all the national media were unable to get the correct version of the Bauchi massacre, which was caused when a pig was slaughtered in a Muslim abattoir. They were abusing Muslims. When Muslims wanted to show they were aggrieved, government sent the police, army to beat them. In Kano, Reverend Bonnke wanted to come and abuse Islam. You know what happened in Zangon-Kataf. It is the government that is causing the crises, not the Muslims nor the Christians. The Katsina riot had nothing to do with what happened in

Bauchi. The problem is not between Muslims and Christians. We are not anti-Christian. We are against the system.

According to Aide No. 2: "The problem is that Nigerian Christians are too apprehensive. As far as we are concerned, they have nothing to fear. If government will leave us alone, we will live peacefully with all religious groups."

When the *TSM* journalist suggested that the government serves as a moderator between the various interest groups in the country, Yahaya became vehement: "Who appointed government to do that? Man or Allah? IBB (Ibrahim Babangida, former Head of State) appointed himself by coup."

When asked about his political ambitions, Yahaya responded:

Our aim is to establish and pursue the system of government as dictated by Allah in the Holy Qur'an and the Hadiths;²⁴ a complete system of the Sharia. There is no difference between the Islamic revolutionary act and the political act. They work hand-in-hand, so that by the time the system of Allah is established there will be no difference.

The next question was about the role of non-Muslims in the Muslim theocracy Yahaya envisions:

There are many roles they will play. They have the right to vote; they have the right to select one²⁵ of them to represent them in parliament; they have the right to get a minister or commissioner. See Egypt. Even Iran. There are many Christians there. They are holding positions and belong to one parliament like the Muslims. What we want is to follow the system of Allah. Christians and people of other religions will have the right to practice their religions, but everybody will be involved in the system of Allah. In all countries where Muslims are in the majority, Christians still hold good positions.

Could a non-Muslim be President? Yahaya responded, “Of course, the leadership goes to the majority people. Even in the democratic system, the majority carries the vote.... I think this is justice, isn't it?”²⁶

What is Yahaya's “recipe for peace in Nigeria?”

“My only recommendation for peace is to establish the way of Allah.” In this context, he begins to elaborate on the role of Christianity, but it is the Islamic version of Christianity, not the self-image of Christianity, that dominates his response. It has a heavy emphasis on the role of the Ten Commandments. The present legal system has done away with all religious law and replaced it with paganism and man-made laws—like the Constitution, the Penal Code and other such things. This keeps Christians from abiding with the teachings of Christ. The same thing with Muslims; they were kept away from these commandments.

Now follows a rather crucial statement about government and Christian–Muslim relations:

The government comes to gather people, make a constitution which is different from what is in their original religions. This will continue to cause problems, because always, Muslims will continue to pursue their religion, but some people will see it as Muslims dominating them. So, the clash will continue, out of misunderstanding from both sides—the Christians and Muslims. Because had Christians realized that they were being cheated from God's side, they would come together with Muslims and fight this system and establish the one which would take them directly to Allah through their various religions. So, if we want peace, we have to pursue Allah's will. Christians have to pursue their Ten Commandments and other laws, and Muslims their own. Christianity and Islam have the same origin. There is no clash. But if government will come and be a judge between these two.... Government

did not create anyone, so how will they set up laws for Muslims and Christians? In the Islamic world, Christians and Muslims live together peacefully as one. I will cite one example. When Prophet Mohammad (SAW) had Christian visitors from Abyssinia who had come to discuss with him, he divided his mosque into two and gave them one part to pray in.²⁷ And when he came to Medina, he called the Jews there to sign a treaty to defend the land and to help each other, while everybody would be free to practice his religion according to his way. It is the same thing we want in Nigeria. Allah is the same; all human beings are the same and the scriptures have remained pure, except that some people tend to edit their own as some other Christians edit their books.

Asked what he was doing to have dialogue with Christians and reduce the tension, Yahaya responded, "I try my best to see that Muslim brothers anywhere try to exist peacefully with Christians, to explain to them what Islam is and even discuss the Bible..."²⁸

Yahaya is disdainful of human authority not only in government, but also in religious organisations. Because of the troubles caused by random Muslim preachers, the government has given the power to license Muslim preachers to JNl and the Council of Ulamas. However, Yahaya does not have a licence: "I derive my authority to preach from the Qur'an which enjoins all Muslims to call [people] to the way of Allah. I do not need any other permission from anybody," he told Suleiman.

Suleiman has found that eighty per cent of the membership of the Islamic Movement have not gone beyond primary school. In fact, most of them are products of the traditional Qur'anic schools found all over northern Nigeria. Though he does not make a big point of it, he suggests that this low level of education during a time of "socio-economic distress" could at least partially account for the appeal of the Movement. And, I personally add, it provides an otherwise powerless, despised and frustrated people with a sense

of power, worth, direction, and purpose—and all of that in the context of a virile vision of Allah and His purposes for this world and the next.

▲ NOTES

¹ Kukah, 1993, p. 196.

² Kukah, 1993, p. 196.

³ Christian explanations are treated in Volume Three.

⁴ Kukah, 1993, pp. 191-192.

⁵ Kukah, 1993, pp. 190-193.

⁶ NIPSS, 1986, p. 29. The report alleges that Muslim Students Society has received funds from various Muslim countries and that it has been involved in a long list of “fanatical religious actions” too numerous to mention here.

⁷ This disclaimer is shared by the Muslim community as a whole. U. Salihu asserted that: “Even though the Mai-tatsines have rejected the prophethood of Muhammad, and they always attacked mosques and killed Muslims, they have always been branded Muslim fanatics, extremists and fundamentalists. We reject the Mai-tatsine connection, even more than they reject our Prophet.” (“*Why Do We....*” p. 111.)

⁸ Unfortunately, the magazine provides no information as to its sources.

⁹ The author of the report creates confusion by suddenly switching to the disturbances in Kano. Lack of documentation leads to uncertainty here and confusion.

¹⁰ It is difficult to determine whether these apostrophes belong to the original *NS* article or are inserted by the *Radiance* writer. It makes a real difference in how the disturbances are evaluated.

¹¹ Muslim Students Society, “*Submission....*” pp. 41-44.

¹² For another summary of this Muslim Students Society submission, see Byang, p. 61.

¹³ “Kaduna Polytechnic Suspends Muslim Students Officials.” *The Pen*, 21 Apr/89, p. 1.

¹⁴ Zakariya.

¹⁵ L. Omokhodion, “We Must Enlighten....”

¹⁶ Not only do both deny membership in the Shi’ite movement, but some, including Gumi, will deny that there are any Shi’ites in Nigeria, only some admirers. Still, Zakzaky does admit to being influenced by

them and he has “an immense portrait of Khomeini” on the wall of his reception room. Some of his followers forsook him for his connection to Shi’ites (Maier, 2000, pp. 168, 174, 175).

¹⁷ K. Maier, p. 173.

¹⁸ M. D. Suleiman, pp. 5-6. See also *Citizen*, 19 July-Aug/91 and K. Maier, p. 173.

¹⁹ K. Maier, pp. 167-168.

²⁰ I. Usman, an e-mail news item from August, 1998. This Ibrahim Usman is not to be confused with the Christian with the same name from Wukari, Taraba State, whom we may meet in later volumes. K. Maier, pp. 173-176.

²¹ K. Maier, p. 175.

²² K. Maier, p. 188.

²³ In the Ojudu version of Yahaya’s declaration, the latter openly admitted that he was obeying his “master, Mallam Ibrahim Zakzaki.” “Nothing is done here without his consent.” See also Falola, p. 199.

²⁴ Hadiths are an official written collection of Muslim traditions.

²⁵ Note the number of Christians Yahaya foresees in the parliament of a Muslim-dominated Nigeria: One!

²⁶ Obviously, Yahaya assumes that Muslims are in the majority in Nigeria. That is a crucial assumption for him and most Muslims, but what is the basis of this assumption? Christians dispute it with their own statistics.

²⁷ This is an incident Muslims repeat time and again to prove their tolerance.

²⁸ *TSM*, 27 Sep/92.

