

THE MUSLIM INSTITUTE



for Research and Planning

Preparatory Committee

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14 Rajab 1396

12 July 1976

A REVIEW PAPER FOR
MEMBERS OF THE
PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

The idea of writing this paper is to try and recollect the beginnings of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE idea - or the ideas that crystalized in the form of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE project. Then to review the ground so far covered, the 'progress' if any, and to see what might be predictable in the near future.

To make it informal and without a plan, I have not written it out in advance. It is being written straight on the typewriter. What you see in front of you is the first and the final draft!

Perhaps the earliest meetings during 1972 in the apartment of Viqar Malik and later in ULU can be quickly mentioned. These were elementary meetings to explore whether there was in fact anything in common that might be usefully developed.

It was not until the middle of 1973 - after I had spent a year in Germany - that we finally began to converge on the idea of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE. For me personally, the International Youth Conference in Tripoli that summer, the FOSIS summer conference in Manchester, and the MSA convention in East Lansing, Michigan, were important. They confirmed my belief that the fragmentation of Muslim intellect had reached its peak; that a common strain of thought was beginning to emerge. But it left me in no doubt that what I had seen was only the beginning and that the road ahead to some kind of convergence of Muslim thought would be long, difficult, and demanding. Yet I felt that the time had come to make the attempt.

By this time the Preparatory Committee was beginning to take shape and my report on the Tripoli conference was ready under the title of TOWARDS A NEW DESTINY. The Open Press Limited was formed in the autumn of 1973 and with an arrangement with our brothers in South Africa, it was possible to send the book to the printers.

At the same time between June 1973 to January 1974 a series of day-long meetings at Slough and at ULU had considered a Draft Prospectus. Several revised drafts were prepared until the 'final' draft was passed for printers at the end of January 1974. In the meantime the artwork and layout had also been prepared and approved. The whole thing went off to the printers in the first week of February 1974.

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It was at this point that Allah the Merciful and Compassionate gave me a respite or rest from sustained hard work and application that I had perhaps unwisely maintained for many number of years, if not all my life. The rest and respite came in the shape of a massive heart attack which included a cardiac arrest, uraemia, and phlebitis of the left leg.

I enjoyed the rest and what is more it gave me the opportunity few men have - the opportunity to lie back for months and think things out. This was also the period of the three-day week in Britain, the general elections, and general upheaval in which little could have been done anyway.

By the autumn of 1974 the Draft Prospectus had been printed and I had had a long summer of recovery. Work now began in earnest. Though, let me add, that I was still officially too ill to work!

THE MAGNITUDE OF THE UNDERTAKING

As so often happens men undertake work without quite realising what it actually entails. Often also well meaning people use a lot of words the meaning of which they do not comprehend in all their depth and manifestations.

In all sincerity I feel that the members of the Preparatory Committee were, and perhaps still are, in this situation. We have produced a document, the Draft Prospectus, which in clarity of thought and expression is perhaps unique; it also hits the right note. It finds the mood of the contemporary Muslim intellectual and catches his imagination. It does not mince words or ideas. Let us recall exactly what we set out to do.

We in fact set out to take those elementary steps in the MUSLIM INSTITUTE which are necessary to change the course of history in the long run!

We felt that mankind was heading towards a civilizational upturn; knowing the western civilization as well as we do living here, we felt that the west had already committed suicide and what we are now witnessing is the long process of the death of a civilization. (Civilizations don't have cardiac arrests, they die slow deaths). We should know it, our own experience of history tells us just that.

We also felt that the so-called Muslim world today could not be expected to take advantage of the opening that history is offering us right now; we found that the existing Muslim States are part and parcel of the west and their political forms and intellectual frameworks organised around nationalism, socialism, capitalism, etc., is also bound to die. What, apart from chaos, would take its place we did not know.

We decided, however, that though there is little we can do to influence the course of events in Muslim countries immediately, we could, and we felt it our duty that we should, begin to prepare the intellectual/spiritual framework and action hypotheses for a future generation which would - in 30, 40, 50 or even 100 years from now - take the bull of human history by the horn and lead it to a destiny where it should have been in any case had it not run off into the western wilderness.

In short, we set out to define the civilizational goals of the Ummah and to create the manpower capable of attaining those goals perhaps long

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after we ourselves are dead.

We, in other words, entered ourselves in a relay race of history itself in which we would do the running in the first lap and at the sametime preparing our seccessors and defining their short and long-term goals!

Yes, indeed, no less!

THE DEMANDS OF THE UNDERTAKING

We got off to a fine start; and I mean it. The great strength of our position in this race is that we cannot be faulted for not having done our homework.

It has already been stated and perhaps can be repeated that the analysis we made of the situation and the projections we have made have withstood the test it has so far faced. It has been my privilege and good fortune to have presented our analysis and position to a multitude of audiences in all parts of the world. These audiences have ranged from packed public meetings to small groups and face to face individual talks. The thinking and approach of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE project has brought forth almost universal acclaim. The feedback has been so positive and unanimous that one wishes that more voices of dissent had been heard.

But, let it be said immediately, there has been widespread expression of doubt as to whether we would succeed going about it the way we are.

The main area of doubt has been expressed in our almost exclusive reliance on individual FOUNDER members for material, namely financial, resources. It has been widely observed that we would have to seek or accept financial or other material support from sources other than individual FOUNDER members. Otherwise, the argument goes, it seems extremely improbable that enough individuals can be found to support the MUSLIM INSTITUTE for long enough to allow it to do the basic fundamental research and hand it over to a new generation.

These comments, incidentally, have almost always come from brothers who have agreed with us and have become FOUNDER members. So they must be taken seriously; they are not people who are trying to find reasons for withholding support.

I am not aware of anyone who actively opposes the establishment of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE or would like to be known as being opposed to it! But our relationship with other brothers and organisations working in the field is one that needs to be defined. We will return to this later.

But returning to the question of our reliance on FOUNDER members and the doubts expressed, let us examine this carefully. Let us admit straightaway that for the kind of success we are looking for a handful of FOUNDER members at £5 a month (average is far less) is just not enough. And also that financial contribution and viability are not the only ingredients of success - the total level of commitment has to be much, much higher than we have had so far! We have not yet risen to the heights of sacrifice that a cause of this magnitude demands. The reasons for this are not always to be found in the individual; more often the reason is found in the structure of the society in which the individual lives and of which he is a product. The pressure on

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the individual to produce high visible levels of earnings and prestigious consumption in housing, hardware, and transport is great. We are socialized into thinking that without these trappings one would not be 'respected.' One can hardly fail to recognize these as the cultural and psychological domination of alien, materialistic values.

The individual is not to blame; it is the environment! Yet those who are setting out, in however modest a fashion, to help reshape the course of history, must be able to exercise a greater awareness of the hold of the environment on them and they should be able to do something about it!

Thinking over it, I am still quite sure that we were right to depend on FOUNDER members from all parts of the world. But in my view we erred on the side of caution in asking our FOUNDER members to contribute too little. I believe that a greater degree of participation and a more intensive process of communication would produce a greater number of FOUNDER members with greater levels of commitment. If we ask for little we should not be surprised if we get even less.

A MISUNDERSTANDING

The doubt expressed by some in our viability is based on a misunderstanding. The Preparatory Committee's position has never been that it would accept no funds from anywhere other than the contributions from individual FOUNDER members.

Similarly, our rejection of the present or what exists does not mean that we shall bypass the present and deal with it. To take up such positions would not only be unrealistic and unpractical but also naive. We have to have a relationship with the reality that surrounds us. We cannot get away from it. But it is for us to decide what kind of relationship we would try and forge and what kinds of relationships we would avoid and positively reject.

For instance, when in the Objectives we stated that 'The MUSLIM INSTITUTE may accept commissions to undertake specific research for Muslim societies, governments and minority groups, to help them solve their local or immediate problems' we were obviously not saying that we would do this type of work free! Indeed, we were deliberately keeping open our options of co-operation in areas of our choice.

At the end of Draft Prospectus we stated a principle which said: 'As a matter of principle and policy, position or influence in the MUSLIM INSTITUTE will not be related to the wealth or lack of it among brother Muslims who support it. All Muslims, rich and poor, are equal in the eyes of Allah and so they must be in the MUSLIM INSTITUTE. Position and influence in the MUSLIM INSTITUTE shall depend entirely on ability, service and dedication and will ultimately go to those who do not seek them.'

In this statement of policy we are once again unique. I know of no comparable document in which a similar policy has been so clearly stated. What we were in fact saying is that we shall accept assistance, financial or otherwise, from any quarter provided no visible or invisible strings are attached and the donor gives because he supports the cause and not because he or his agency wishes to secure short-term goals or acquire influence or control of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE.

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We have already acted on this principle. I recall that when Abu Bakr Mohammed of South Africa and I called on Hasan al-Tohamy, the then secretary-general of the Islamic Secretariat, in April 1975, Tohamy was quick to offer the MUSLIM INSTITUTE a substantial grant from the \$18,000,000 'Islamic Solidarity Fund.' He added, however, that a committee of Muslim ambassadors in London would be appointed to supervise the work of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE. The speed and finality of my reaction to that kind of proposition surprised Tohamy.

However, later, when propositions have been made to us to project aid, such as the purchase of an office building in London, or the financing of THE ROAD TO MEDINA project, these have been and are being explored; needless to say on a 'no strings' basis.

I hope this has cleared up the misunderstanding about our reliance on FOUNDERS only as the source of finance.

THE ROLE OF FOUNDER MEMBERS

Yet individual FOUNDER members remain the cornerstone of our organizational and Ummah-wide strategy. The fact that Muslims living in such distant parts of the world as Malaysia, South Africa, Libya, North America, the Persian Gulf, and the Middle East and Pakistan and India have come forward to become FOUNDER members is indicative of two facts, both enormously encouraging: (a) that the MUSLIM INSTITUTE's framework has an appeal across all national, ethnic, linguistic and other barriers that now divide the Ummah, and (b) that an area of agreement has emerged among the aware sections of the Muslims throughout the world and it is the task of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE to define that area of agreement and to expand it to a point where Muslims can once again become an operational force in the making of human history.

The number of FOUNDER members is now nearing 300. Many of them are students and pay very nominal sums, e.g., £1.00 or £00.50 per month. FOUNDER members in countries with very strict foreign exchange control are unable to get any money to us in London.

But the fact that we are perhaps the only Muslim body with FOUNDER members throughout the world makes us a unique organisation. No other body to our knowledge has even tried let alone come anywhere near having such a worldwide body of FOUNDER members. This diversity of our FOUNDER members is also an effective 'insurance' against any attempt that might be made to put pressure on us.

For these reasons a disproportionately large amount of our attention has so far gone to reaching Muslims in distant parts of the world. We did not want the MUSLIM INSTITUTE to be identified by any 'national' group. We could not even risk being known as a 'British' Muslim Institute. Once we decided on the world as our oyster we had to spread our net wide.

Therefore, the enlarging of our multi-national worldwide net of FOUNDER members must continue to get top priority. Only then can we ensure that the work of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE will be of relevance to Muslims everywhere.

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RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS

In the present state of fragmentation of the Ummah, the inevitable confusion prevails. Muslims - good, sincere, dedicated brother Muslims - view the present situation with their own experience and vantage point. Each comes to a different conclusion as to what needs to be done. Each is equally sincere in wanting to serve Islam. And no one is entirely wrong. Some are trying to tackle immediate problems that are pressing, others are trying to change the form of governments under which they live, some are trying to reform the educational system at various levels, some are trying to activate the mosque or correct the kalimah of Muslims, ad infinitum. We in the MUSLIM INSTITUTE are just one other among so many trying to serve Islam according to our lights. Let no one take up a 'holier than thou' attitude.

Let us state categorically that we regard ourselves as complementary to all the work being done by Muslims in all the fields of human endeavour and that we are not in conflict with any organisation or individual whatsoever. We wish for active co-operation wherever possible.

In our view conflicts among Muslims are dysfunctional and counter-productive. To take up any other position would be untenable. This is not to say that we shall not express opinions different from those held by other brothers. As an academic Institute it will be our duty to do so and we shall discharge this duty with dignity and a sense of duty and fairness always fearing Allah and His judgement. Never, insha'Allah, shall we be vindictive, or indulge in personality clashes.

We must all hold fast to the rope of Allah!

RELEVANCE TO MUSLIMS IN BRITAIN

A view that has often been expressed to us is that the MUSLIM INSTITUTE should concern itself more directly with the more immediate problems of Muslims living in Britain. We have already said that we have set out to tackle the long-term underlying fundamental problems rather than the short-term day to day ones. There are others doing this and we shall ^{do} all we can to help them. Secondly, we have taken good care not ^{to} identify ourselves with any group of Muslims concentrated in any geographical area. We cannot afford to be a 'British' Muslim Institute.

Indeed, in the earliest days in 1972 the drift of our discussion was towards a 'Pakistan' Institute perhaps because most of us then in discussion came from Pakistan and had recently been helpless spectators as our country was dismembered from within and without. But very soon we realised that our scope could not be limited to any geographical boundary or political unit; that we must look beyond the immediate.

Subsequently, in the campaign to find FOUNDER members, every effort has been made to have FOUNDER members in all parts of the world.

But there is a very special relationship we have and shall always have with the Muslim community of Britain. We shall exist among them and our contact with them will be more intensive, ^{be} and more extensive than with any other group of Muslims. Also, we shall ^{be} drawing on the pool of talent the British Muslims represent and in due course, insha'Allah, enriching the British scene by our very presence here in London.

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To conclude this point, let me state that we are aware and encouraged by the fact that there now is and, insha'Allah, shall always be a very strong Muslim community in Britain. For the foreseeable future this Muslim community will be a small minority in the larger British society. But the status of a minority in a community is greatly influence by a number of factors - one of which is the part the community plays in the intellectual life of the whole society.

The establishment of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE as a seat of higher learning, research and planning in London will create a much needed centre of Muslims' intellectual presence in Britain. Our work, our research, our seminars, our courses, our lectures, our students, our academics, our publications, will all be enhancing the status of British Muslims in Britain. Muslim academics and Muslim children and young men will be able to look to the MUSLIM INSTITUTE for guidance in their problems in a totally alien and culturally, ideologically, morally, and behaviourally repugnant society. The presence of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE in London will, insha'Allah, give status to Muslims now settled in Europe and North America.

Besides, ultimately the MUSLIM INSTITUTE must challenge the so-called intellectual dominance of the west and show their arrogant scholars the truth as it really is and the hollow backwardness which the west has been getting away with. We have to make our point, point by point, in west and to the west as well as to the Muslim Ummah throughout the world.

All this, it might be argued, might be true and relevant to the British Muslims in the long run, but does not help them in the short-term. Our answer is that the entire strategy of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE is concerned with the long-term. Nonetheless, let us be prepared to undertake work of short-term nature for the British (or any other) Muslim community.

In this connection it might be worth mentioning that we are now considering a research programme to prepare a madrassah education programme for children from Muslim homes living in societies where their first language is English. This is an immediate need of British Muslim parents, or Muslim parents living in Britain, as well as of Muslims living as minorities in all English speaking areas of the world. There is no reason why the MUSLIM INSTITUTE cannot or should not undertake other projects of a similar nature.

I shall be asking the Preparatory Committee to consider this point and to explore the possibility of seeking funds specially for this type of research projects.

MUSLIM MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Much of what has been said in the previous section dealing with Britain, also applies to our relevance to Muslim minorities everywhere. It is probably true to say that the pressures of having to live in non-Muslim environments makes Muslims more conscious of their identity whereas Muslims living in Muslim countries suffer from a false sense of security. Some people go so far as to say that it is the minorities who will have to act to save the majority 'Muslim States' from their present disastrous course. They may well be right! What is clear for the MUSLIM INSTITUTE, however, is that we must lay our roots deep in both majority and minority areas. We have set out to serve the Ummah as a whole and no particular area.

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In this connection it is perhaps worth noting that so far the distribution of our FOUNDER members is nearly half and half between 'majority' and 'minority' areas.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MUSLIM INSTITUTE

This issue has caused us (and certainly me!) more mental anguish than any other. This has been because all the existing 'models' are western; the same age-old problem. No living model of a Muslim seat of higher learning survives to guide us. The only guidance comes from British law! It shows that no matter how futuristic you might want to be, existing reality cannot be bypassed. A position in relation to the existing reality has to be defined and taken.

The difficulties we had having a charitable TRUST registered are well known to you. I need hardly cover that ground again. But those who might get a little impatient on this score, please remember that that alone took up over a year of negotiations.

The next step is obviously the registration of a company - again on the 'learned society' model of the west. Does anyone know or remembers whether Muslim societies of the past had learned societies; if so, what they were like and what were their organizational form(s). Such essentials our historians have not recorded!

The problem, then, is this: we must come to terms with existing reality (British Law) and have both TRUST and COMPANY structures. But we should create these structures so carefully and with such fine balance that ultimately we are able to mould into our own image. How to leave so much room for manoeuvre and 'evolution' of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE has been at the heart of the problem.

After the last Preparatory Committee in May, I was asked to take professional advice and produce Memorandum and Articles of Association at the next meeting. I saw the solicitor and I have remained in intensive consultation with Sarwar Rija, Ghayas Uddin Siddiqui, Ajmal Ahmad and Ziauddin Sardar. I have talked for hours with these people which will be reflected in the telephone bill!

The issue that caused me the greatest anguish was whether the company should be floated by the TRUST or whether it should be independent of the TRUST. I argued both ways in separate conversations. And after meeting with the solicitor I am now going to suggest that the company should be INDEPENDENT of the TRUST. I shall be giving my reasons orally to the Preparatory Committee. The Preparatory Committee, if it accepts my recommendation, will then have to decide how it wishes to distribute the existing assets between the TRUST and the company and who the sponsors and directors of the company should be. Assuming that you will follow the same procedure as you did in the case of the appointment of Trustees, I shall come ready with my recommendations. I am hopeful that by October we shall have the company registered as well.

These formal structures apart, perhaps a committee structure for the day to day functioning and the performance of specified tasks needs to be worked out and implemented as soon as possible. The committees appointed at the FOUNDERS'

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meeting in January 1975 has, for various reasons, not worked smoothly, if at all. This needs to be reviewed.

FINANCE

Looking through the files I was surprised to find that it was not until January 1974 that a Bank account in the name of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE itself was opened at Lloyds, Park Lane, W1. Before that an account in the name of Amir M. Ahmed was used. That account was at Barclays, West Smithfield Branch, EC1. The first bankers orders were signed by seven members of the Preparatory Committee in June 1973.

We did not in fact begin to make FOUNDER members on any scale until the autumn of 1974 (after the Draft Prospectus had been published and I had had my enforced rest). I ought to mention that the Draft Prospectus was printed with the help of a loan of £300 from Maqsood Siddiqui. This amount remains outstanding. Now that we have the money we ought to repay it. We ought to thank him but Allah, in the meantime, has been more than generous to him.

Our exact financial situation will, I hope, be available in the statement to the end of June which Ehsan Malik has prepared. I hope a copy will be available to go with this report. Broadly speaking, the balance at the bank net of all liabilities should be around £2,000.

Our regular monthly income from Standing Orders is about £300, plus the dribs and drabs - some rather large dribs - that come in at irregular intervals. This consists of such people who pay annual amounts, FOUNDER members in Libya and South Africa who send in groups every three or four months. It is perhaps worth noting that our income from FOUNDER members in Britain is under £100 a month. All the rest of our income comes from overseas.

In themselves these figures look very small. But in fact they represent an enormous potential. Last year, for instance, I went to South Africa twice which took up almost the whole of the second half of 1975. So far the income from South Africa has been very small due to exchange and other difficulties not then foreseen. Some of these have now been ironed out and I am hoping that in the next 12 months South Africa will yield perhaps £5,000 or more.

In January-February 1975 a two-week visit to Bahrain had yielded 12 FOUNDER members and an income of about £60 a month. This, as a result of the visit there in March this year has nearly doubled with an income of about £140 a month. The rest of the Persian/Arabian Gulf States remain unexplored. An early visit there should be made. In Saudi Arabia, until recently, we had only one FOUNDER member despite several visits. But recently the vital breakthrough in Saudi Arabia has been made and in the next 12 months Saudi Arabia should yield £1,000 and perhaps a good deal more. (This estimate has nothing to do with Ziauddin's impending hijra to King Abdul Aziz. His presence there might in fact increase the situation to a higher level). In Libya we have a small number of FOUNDER members as a result of my visit there in July 1973 which was before the Draft Prospectus was published. Another visit there should enlarge the group there considerably together with our income from Libya which at present is about £30 a month. In India and Pakistan we have large numbers of FOUNDER members but no income. Income levels there are low and exchange difficulties insurmountable. We have

one FOUNDER member in Malaysia who pays through his bank regularly and one in West Germany. There are three FOUNDER members in North America (two in the States and one in Canada).

From the review above it can be seen that within a year a good deal of geographical diversity has been achieved. But in the first 18 months one could hardly hope for more. Indeed, if we view it as a "start" we have good reasons for much better results in the future. We must remember that all the work so far has been done with a background of little to stand on. As our area of activity expands and the MUSLIM INSTITUTE becomes better known it would get progressively easier to persuade people to become FOUNDER members.

It can also be seen that large areas of the world remain to be explored. Europe, for instance. There are large Muslim communities in Germany, France, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries. Similarly, apart from a visit to Canada and the United States in the summer of 1973 - long before the Draft Prospectus had been written - we have had little contact there. I have remained in personal contact with the MSA and some of its leading figures. But the whole of the North American continent remains to be explored.

Similarly, the potential in the Gulf States is enormous. The characteristic feature of these areas is that income levels there are high, taxes nil, prices low, and saving margins comfortable. In these circumstances people are more willing to participate.

In Europe by contrast not only the margins of savings are relatively small but pressures for ostentatious consumption are also high. And for some inexplicable reason the Muslim settled in Europe, particularly professional people who are also in high income brackets, are very difficult to motivate and to sustain their motivation. Perhaps we need to do a research project in the psychology of professional Muslims living in Europe! By contrast, the unskilled and skilled factory workers in Europe are far more motivated, but they can and only give to mosques and local madrassahs. Perhaps we ought to try and reach them.

But one group in Europe - and I am sure also in North America - which is very responsive is that of Muslim students here. This is the area where we need to make a major effort in the next phase of our development. We need to create a special role and place for the Muslim student in the MUSLIM INSTITUTE and to work hard to bring them in. This is the area where a new full-time appointment could be most usefully employed. Students can also be a source of income.

What priorities we ought to assign to the unexplored areas and further developing the already explored areas where a toe-hold has been established is a matter for consideration and decision.

Two points can be made. One is that we now have the experience and the base from which to launch the next phase of development and enlargement of the area already secured. Second is that a good deal of new input of time by members of the Preparatory Committee is necessary.

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Perhaps enough has been said on the subject of finance. The Finance Committee, however, should be reconstituted as a smaller and more functional body and its role, including that of its individual members and chairman, more active and involved.

PARTICIPATION

Part of the problem in more intense participation of FOUNDER member and of members of the Preparatory Committee has been that the 'office' of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE has been located in Slough. Thus the physical barriers to more intensive participation have been a real obstacle. Just how soon this can be corrected remains a matter for speculation. Perhaps another year or so.

While this physical distance has been an obstacle, it need not have been as big an obstacle as it appears to have been! Perhaps some degree of participation higher than the present level can still be achieved even from outlandish Slough. I can think of a number of members of the Preparatory Committee who are within reach of Slough or who could reach Slough, if.... After all, Ziauddin Sardar has done just this. There is no reason why others cannot.

Indeed, in the next phase of our development this might prove the vital variable. If in the next 12 months or so the input of some more voluntary labour will be crucial and all important.

Each member of the Preparatory Committee might like to look at his own situation and come forward with offers of time at weekends, evenings and so forth. There is no such thing as having no time. Indeed, it is possible to have time and not know it! And the achievement of extra-ordinary goals requires extra-ordinary effort on the part of a large number of people.

ACADEMIC WORK, PRIORITIES AND PLANS

The first full academic year available to us since the publication of the Draft Prospectus, i.e. 1975-76, has been used to hold a series of seminars at the Royal College of Arts in London. The four held so far are:

Social Change in Islam - The Progressive Dimension
by Dawud Rosser-Owen

A Research Approach for Muslim Social Scientists
by Ziauddin Sardar

Historical Approaches to the Reconstructions of Muslim Civilizations - A Crisis of Scholarship*
by Ghayas Uddin Siddiqui

The Role of Authority in Islam
by Zaki Badawi

(*The second part of this paper dealing exclusively with the experience of Jamaat-e-Islami will be presented during September).

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During the year Dawud Rosser-Owen and Ziauddin Sardar became 'Research Fellows' of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE. In that capacity Ziauddin participated in the colloque of the Conservatoire National des Arts et Metiers in Paris. There he presented a useful paper entitled THE QUEST FOR A NEW SCIENCE. This paper, together with Dawud Rosser-Owen's seminar paper on Social Change have been published by the Open Press Limited for the MUSLIM INSTITUTE in the first collection of 'The Muslim Institute Papers.' This publication is extremely attractively produced and much of the credit for its design and layout goes to Ziauddin Sardar who worked extremely hard.

Dawud Rosser-Owen and Ziauddin have also co-authored a chapter "Science Policy and Developing Countries" in a book SCIENCE POLICY STUDIES IN PERSPECTIVE edited by I. Spiegel-Rosing and D. de Solla Price for the International Commission for Science Policy Studies. Ziauddin Sardar has also written a new paper, "Between Scientism and Mysticism: A New Ethics". Another paper by him "Where Will We Be in the Year 2000" will be published in Quest in October.

Dr Ghayas Uddin Siddiqui has, despite his formal academic speciality in chemistry and fuel technology, undertaken research for the MUSLIM INSTITUTE in 'history.' But this is not history as we know it; it is an analytical approach to the understanding of the underlying forces that have made Muslim history. His special concern are the movements for the revival of Islam since Imam al-Ghazali right up to our own times. This is of course a very useful field. Because much of the work of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE will be geared towards the needs of the Ummah in the future, we have to know why the movements of the past achieved as much as they did and did not achieve more. Only when we have developed a view on the past can we begin to project a credible future.

Ghayas Uddin Siddiqui is of course also chairman of the Academic Committee. Though he personally has worked extremely hard, perhaps the Academic Committee needs to be reorganized. The same comments apply to it as those for the Finance Committee.

We recently held a day-long informal meeting at Slough attended by Dr Zaki Badawi, Ghayas Uddin Siddiqui, Zia Sardar and myself. We discussed in great length the major outlines for a research strategy. I took copious notes in the hope of producing a paper for discussion by the full Academic Committee. I have yet to get down to writing that paper.

THE ROAD TO MADINA project is yet to get off the ground, though I have started organizing some ideas, discussing it, and looking out for bibliographies. In the meantime I have asked Dr Zaki Badawi to help me in this project. His participation will be invaluable for a number of reasons; he is a graduate of Al-Azhar and, unlike me, can reach the Arabic sources, he is also a Ph.D in psychology from London and has excellent knowledge of English as well as of French and a little German. THE ROAD TO MADINA is of course a very major project and we shall be looking out for specific project aid for it. We shall probably need to employ two or more research scholars to assist with it. Together with logistic support, this will amount to a substantial sum.

Our proposal for the Hijra centenary has been widely welcomed and our MEMORANDUM on the subject has been widely reproduced throughout the world. The Muslim Foreign Ministers recently meeting in Istanbul set up a Preparatory Committee of 10 member States to formulate proposals. We are

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in contact with Dr Ezzeddin Ibrahim of the United Arab Emirates. At his request I have written a detailed DRAFT WORKING PAPER for the consideration of the 10-nation Preparatory Committee when it meets in Jeddah.

In the meantime we have proposed to the King Abdul Aziz University, through Sheikh Ahmed Salah Jamjoom, a member of the university's senate, that a Seerah Conference should be held in Mecca during the Hijra Centenary Year. The Conference should begin in Mecca on a Friday and should symbolically move to Medina on the following Thursday for the final plenary session there on Friday, preferably in the Masjid-e-Nabwi itself. There we have suggested the assembled scholars should sign a document to be known as THE DECLARATION OF MEDINA. The document should lay down the civilizational goals the Ummah as a whole and its component parts should pursue during the 15th century of the Hijra.

This is a major initiative on our part and its effects, insha'Allah, will be felt by many generations yet unborn!

You already know the details of the two Memorial Lectures in Bahrain and South Africa. Some organizational details remain to be finalised. Otherwise these two should go ahead as planned.

I have recently participated in the International Islamic Economic Conference at Mecca. Once again, the main value of the conference was in the personal contacts that were made. Some of these will, insha'Allah, bear fruit in the future. The MUSLIM INSTITUTE is also represented on the steering committee of the World Conference on Muslim Education in the Modern World to be held in Mecca next April. We shall be making major contributions in many of the fields to be covered by the conference, though our influence will be largely through individuals than the formal presentation of papers. Sarwar Rija is preparing a paper on "A model of a Primary School in a Muslim Society" which he will present at a MUSLIM INSTITUTE seminar in London in November and thereafter, insha'Allah, at the conference in Mecca. He is also preparing a research project to prepare detailed syllabuses for madrassah education of English-speaking Muslim children. This too is a major project for which separate funding will have to be provided.

A Research Advisory Service is also one of our major priorities. This should be the 'consultancy' wing of the MUSLIM INSTITUTE. The work of the Research Advisory Service can vary from consultancy arrangements with major institutions, such as the newly formed Islamic Development Bank, to advising Muslim students in universities in Britain and perhaps also in other countries. This service could utilize the expertise in all fields - medical doctors could go out to advise on hospital and health services; engineers in their fields of specializations; and so forth. To start with it needs at least one major breakthrough to give it the impetus it needs. I am working on several ideas and one of them might just come off. Nonetheless, it would help if other people will also keep their eyes open for such opportunities.

On the academic side of our work one point needs to be made with some emphasis and thoroughly understood by us. We should also make this point to all those with whom we might talk about the MUSLIM INSTITUTE. The point is this: that the MUSLIM INSTITUTE does not at this moment have any definitive views of its own. For a long time to come there will not be any such thing as the MUSLIM INSTITUTE view. All our views, except those of aqeeda,

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are tentative views or views held by individuals. Therefore, in the first few years we shall be having a wide range of views held by Muslims, brought out at our seminars, lectures, discussions, or in papers published by the MUSLIM INSTITUTE. It will be some years before a MUSLIM INSTITUTE view begins to crystalize. But, as an academic body, it is our duty to give considered views on major issues of the day in all fields of human endeavour. This duty we must discharge to the best of our knowledge, ability and resource so long as we do it in the full knowledge that our actions are being watched by Allah ta'ala. We must never be vindictive, polemical or personal. From the beginning the MUSLIM INSTITUTE has to establish the highest standards of Muslim scholarship. But, of course, we have to allow for the fact that the highest standards are reached over a period of time and through a long period of sustained effort.

CONCLUSION

When I set out to write this 'review' paper I thought it would be about four pages long - I am now struggling to finish it off on page 14. Nonetheless, I think it has been a useful exercise.

Perhaps we can claim that the fact that so many FOUNDER members from so many parts of the world have been attracted to support the MUSLIM INSTITUTE indicates that our framework represents an 'area of agreement' within the Ummah. Perhaps our task is to begin with this area of agreement and then to expand it to a point where national, ethnic, linguistic and other barriers are bypassed and the Ummah once again becomes an operational force in the making of the destiny of mankind as we once were.

Such a project will only succeed by the WILL of Allah.

But that WILL, the Divine WILL, has to be won over by a level of total commitment and ability to undergo sustained hard work, if not actual physical hardship! And why not physical hardship? It is part of the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him!) whose methods will have to be applied in all its rigour before we can or we will deserve to succeed.

K.S.