

## Zafar Bangash

### **In pursuit of the power of Islam: the life and work of Kalim Siddiqui**

*[This paper was written by Zafar Bangash, now Director of the Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought (ICIT), in 1996, as the introduction to In Pursuit of the Power of Islam: Major Writings of Kalim Siddiqui (London and Toronto: The Open Press, 1996). In it, Zafar Bangash, who had worked closely with Dr Kalim Siddiqui since before the formation of the Muslim Institute, and was with him in South Africa when he died, provides the best available account of his life and thought.]*

One of the surprising facts about the life of Dr Kalim Siddiqui is how little his writings are known and read. Few of the hundreds of obituaries written after his death earlier this year made more than a passing reference to his intellectual work. Most people highlighted his political activism, his support for the embryonic Islamic Revolution in Iran, his work in the service of the ‘global Islamic movement’, and the major institutions he established—the Muslim Institute for Research and Planning (1973) and the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain (1992). This activism was certainly a major part of his life. Yet at the core of his work lay a unique analysis, understanding and exposition of Muslim history and the contemporary situation facing Muslims which he developed and presented in a series of major writings and speeches over the last 25 years of his life. This intellectual understanding underpinned all the work he did.

Kalim Siddiqui was born in the village of Dondi Lohara, CP, British India, on September 15, 1931.<sup>1</sup> He died in Pretoria, South

---

1. Dr Siddiqui's date of birth is often given as July 2, 1933. This is how it was recorded when he started school and therefore how it appears in his passport and other official documents. However, his correct date of birth is September 15, 1931. His official place of birth is given as Sultanpur, UP. This was his family home. However, he was actually born in the village of Dondi Lohara, District Durg, CP. His father, a sub-inspector in the

Africa, on April 18, 1996. To say that no understanding of this period is possible without reference to him would be an exaggeration. No individual is indispensable to history. But a study of his life and work provides a unique insight into the period. He was a product as well as a scholar of the period. He lived it, studied it, analysed it, understood it, explained it, and at the same time contributed to its shaping as few others have done. This combination of intellectualism and activism is rare indeed.

Hindsight, it is often said, is the basic tool of history. Historians are people who study, understand and critique the past. The future tends to be shaped by politicians and others whose understanding of history is usually limited, especially in its impact on their own period. Kalim Siddiqui historically understood and critiqued the present without benefit of hindsight and used his understanding to contribute to the shaping of the future. It follows, therefore, that his work and achievement can only be understood and appreciated in the context of that historic situation.

When Kalim Siddiqui was born, the granting of independence to India and Pakistan, that great symbolic event of the ending of European empires, was still some 16 years away. The Second World War, that final struggle for supremacy between the west's imperial powers, had yet to be fought, let alone won. The United Nations, that symbol of the post-war international order, the highest stage of western civilizational development, had yet to be conceived, let alone born. The rising power of the west was still some considerable way short of its post-war zenith. And, contrary to popular belief, the fortunes of the civilization of Islam had not yet reached the nadir that was to come with the establishment of the Zionist State in the heart of the holy lands and division of the Muslim world into Muslim-ruled nation-states explicitly recognizing—by their membership of the United Nations—the overlordship of the west and its ruling order.

By the time of his death, he had witnessed, indeed recognized and proclaimed, the beginning of the end of western civilizational hegemony. The Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1978-79, and its effects on the rest of the Muslim world, have shaken the west to its core and pieces can clearly be seen falling off. An embryonic Islamic State had been established in Iran. Similar efforts are underway in their parts of

---

police, was posted in this area at the time.

the Muslim world, where Islamic movements determined to emulate this example dominate the political scene. The west's inability to deal with these challenges to its hegemony is plain for all to see. The west's own intellectuals are talking of its terminal decline and acknowledge that Islam is the only alternative source of global civilizational power in the world. Kalim Siddiqui's life is intimately tied to the historic processes by which the course of history was turned in this short period. He was brought up during the last years of colonialism in India and took part in the Muslims' struggle to establish an Islamic State in parts of British India. Similar processes were also underway in other parts of the *Ummah* as the colonial powers were forced to surrender power to local rulers. Once the State of Pakistan was achieved, he quickly realized that it was little different from the British-ruled State that had preceded it. He briefly joined a 'Khilafat movement' in Karachi which was working to turn Pakistan into a truly Islamic State, becoming editor of its newspaper, *The Independent Leader*. Along with other members of the movement, he moved to London in the early 1950s to study further in order to better serve the movement. Here the group broke up and, disillusioned, Kalim Siddiqui threw himself into developing his journalistic career and educating himself through night school.

Distracted by political activism, his schooling in India and Pakistan had been erratic at best. In London, he started from scratch, with O-Levels and A-Levels. While climbing the journalistic career ladder from the *Kensington News* via various local and provincial papers to the *Guardian*—one of Britain's top national dailies—in the mid-sixties, he also put himself through college and university, taking a degree in Economics and then, in 1972, a Ph.D in International Relations from University College, London. His doctoral thesis, later published as *Functions of International Conflict—A Socio-economic Study of Pakistan*<sup>2</sup>, examined Pakistan's post-independence development in the context of the old colonial legacy, the Pakistani elites' history and role in Pakistan's creation, and their priorities in Pakistan's post-independence politics.

His mind was clearly still preoccupied with the question of what went wrong in Pakistan. The debacle of East Pakistan in 1971-72

---

2. Kalim Siddiqui, *Functions of International Conflict - a Socio-economic Study of Pakistan*, Karachi: The Royal Book Company, 1975.

brought all his feelings about Pakistan—his tremendous love for the country and the people, coupled with his great disillusion with its leaders—to a head. His first book, *Conflict, Crisis and War in Pakistan* was published in 1972, a powerful indictment of the Pakistani ruling elites and their total subservience to the west.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, however, he was also beginning to think in broader terms; to realize that the same problems existed in all parts of the Muslim world, and that the causes were similar. This period can be seen as a major turning point. Having reached close to the top of his profession, and armed himself with a powerful understanding of the west through living, working and studying it, he was ready now to relaunch his life in the direction it was always destined to take: the pursuit of the power of Islam.

In hindsight, the early years of political activism in India and Pakistan, and the years of disillusionment and immersion in studies in London, can be seen as preludes to this third and major phase of Kalim Siddiqui's life—that of political intellectualism and activism in the cause of the Islamic movement. All the writings included in this compilation, *In Pursuit of the Power of Islam*, date from this third phase.

This was a period of tremendous change in the Muslim world. Dr Siddiqui understood the nature and dynamics of this change as no-one else did. One of the remarkable features of his work during this period is how little he had to adjust his ideas and analysis as events unfolded. The Islamic Revolution in Iran which transformed the course of Muslim history was totally unforeseen. Yet it, and the developments throughout the Muslim world which followed, fitted exactly in the pattern hypothesized by Dr Siddiqui in his writings during the 1970s. These early writings were largely intellectual. Often, they were presented in the jargon of political science at the time. This was because they were aimed at Muslim intellectuals rather than the Muslim masses. Dr Siddiqui did not expect them to become relevant to the masses in his lifetime. As soon as the Revolution took place, he committed himself to studying it and to explaining it to Muslims outside Iran. He understood that this was a time when ideas and

---

3. Kalim Siddiqui, *Conflict, Crisis and War in Pakistan*, London: Macmillan and New York: Preager, 1972. This book was written after Dr Siddiqui's thesis had been completed. Much of the material used in it was based on his doctoral research. But it was published in London and New York in 1972, while his thesis was not published until 1975.

intellectual work on their own were not enough; they had to be made relevant to the needs of the embryonic Islamic State and the struggle of the Islamic movement. This is clearly reflected in his work during the early and mid-eighties, which are aimed much more at the masses. But at the same time, he was reflecting on the events of the period and understanding their historic significance. This is also reflected in these writings and in particular in his final major paper, *Processes of error, deviation, correction and convergence in Muslim political thought*.<sup>4</sup> This is an entirely intellectual piece analysing the development of Muslim political thought from the earliest days of Islam and explaining the contemporary situation in this light.

The development of his ideas and work during this period merits closer examination. I am fortunate to have worked with him throughout this crucial third phase of his life. It was during the period leading up to the publication of *Conflict, Crisis and War in Pakistan*, that I happened to meet him, for the first time, at a public gathering in London. The date was January 21, 1972. The meeting, at the Finsbury Park Hotel in London, was organized by the Pakistan Solidarity Front. It was called to consider the situation arising out of the defeat of the Pakistan army and the dismemberment of Pakistan. There were a number of speakers. While others talked about the treachery of the enemy, India, Dr Siddiqui called upon the audience to look inward. He reminded the Muslims that they should not expect anything different from their enemy. Instead, he said, those in Pakistan who created the circumstances that led to the debacle of the East Pakistan/Bangladesh tragedy must be called to account.

This was refreshing stuff. Attracted by these ideas, I went over to meet Dr Siddiqui during a break in the programme. Introducing myself I told him that I was a student at University College London and headed the student society there. He said that he too had studied at UCL. We struck an instant friendship. I invited him to address our society at the university. He gladly accepted. The meeting materialized within a few weeks of our first encounter at the Finsbury Park Hotel. This proved to be the beginning of a life-long relationship in which he always treated me like his son or a younger brother. I looked upon him as my teacher.

---

4. Kalim Siddiqui, *Processes of error, deviation, correction and convergence in Muslim political thought*, London: The Muslim Institute, 1989.

The meeting at the UCL Union building was very well attended. There were students not only from UCL but also from the London School of Economics, Imperial College, King's College as well as the numerous Inns of Court, the traditional haunts of itinerant students from Pakistan. The meeting was extremely lively and would have continued but for the limitation of time. It was clear that there was great interest in what Dr Siddiqui had to say. The discussion revolved primarily around the situation in Pakistan and what could be done to retrieve it. It was agreed to meet again. In the meantime, Dr Siddiqui's book on Pakistan came out. I immediately obtained a copy from the bookstore opposite the engineering building at UCL and found it so exciting that I did not put it down until I had finished reading it from cover to cover. The style was captivating; the content electrifying. After reading it once, I read the book again, and again. During my school days, I had developed the habit of reading a great deal about world issues. I read the biographies of numerous well-known people and many books on Pakistan. Dr Siddiqui's book, however, was very different and refreshing. Since it was already agreed at the UCL meeting to get together at some future date, the publication of his book provided an appropriate opportunity to meet again. Discussions about the contents of the book gradually expanded into broader themes and the informal meetings became more regular. We usually met in one of the rooms at the University of London Union building (ULU) where students and other interested Muslims would join in the discussion. A number of other Muslims— students, academics and professionals—also started coming to these meetings. Discussions revolved around Pakistan and the situation there. A consensus gradually emerged that some kind of research institute to study the history and experience of Pakistan should be established.

Dr Siddiqui was at the time not only on the editorial staff of the *Guardian* but had also started teaching International Relations at the University of Southern California's overseas teaching programme in Germany. But it was already clear that he was primarily committed to studying the contemporary situation facing Muslims. He would be working in Germany for a week or 10 days at a stretch. Whenever he returned, we would meet at the ULU building for discussions. But his work did not have the general aimlessness of many academics. He was a meticulous man who kept copious notes of all meetings. He would prepare an agenda for each meeting, however small or informal. Similarly, the minutes of the previous meeting would be presented for

approval. The thoroughness and structured thinking that are so essential for effective community work, and which are so often lacking in intellectuals, were already apparent.

In July 1973, Dr Siddiqui was invited to attend the International Muslim Youth Conference, organized by the Islamic Call Society in Tripoli, Libya. There he met a number of brothers from the Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa, among them Ismail Kalla and Advocate Abu Bakr Mahomed. While the conference itself, in the words of Dr Siddiqui, did not offer any new ideas, the meeting with brothers from around the world opened new opportunities. These acquaintances, especially with Ismail Kalla, developed into a life-long friendship and became an important pillar of support for the work of the Muslim Institute in its early years.

The discussions Dr Siddiqui had with brothers from different parts of the world in Tripoli confirmed his growing realization that the situation in Pakistan was not unique. The entire Muslim world suffered from the same malaise. Upon his return, he also produced his second book, *Towards a New Destiny*. This book took the form of a report of the conference from one delegate, rejecting the half-baked ideas advanced by Colonel Mu‘ammar Qaddafi, the Arab Socialist Union, and their ‘Third International Theory’. In reality, it went much further than that. Dr Siddiqui used the context of the conference to critique a large part of contemporary Muslim political thought and lay out the understanding of the contemporary situation that he had developed over the previous years of contemplation and study. Many of the trends of thought which were to dominate his later writings and activism can be seen in this small book. These include his rejection of all western forms of knowledge and political ideas as irrelevant for Muslims; his total rejection of nationalism; his condemnation of the post-colonial Muslim nation-States and their governments; his understanding of the different situations, roles and problems of western educated and traditional Muslim scholars; and his concern for Muslim minorities in western countries.

Returning to London, Dr Siddiqui wrote *Towards a New Destiny* within a few weeks. In hindsight, his attendance at the Tripoli conference and the discussions he had there with other delegates, which are discussed at length in *Towards a New Destiny*, can be seen as a turning point in his life. Back in London, he proposed to the informal discussion group that the Pakistan Institute project be turned



into a project for studying not only Pakistan but the whole world of Islam, that the proposed Pakistan Research Institute should become the Muslim Institute for Research and Planning. The actual name was proposed by another member of the group, Amir Ahmad. No one disagreed.

Thereafter, Dr Siddiqui turned his attention to preparing the *Draft Prospectus of the Muslim Institute*. No other document, at least in my life experience, has perhaps been so thoroughly debated and discussed as the *Draft Prospectus* before its final version was approved by what came to be called the Preparatory Committee. Dr Siddiqui was generous in calling the *Draft Prospectus* the product of the collective effort of the Preparatory Committee; in fact, it was almost entirely his own work. The input from members of the Preparatory Committee was in the form of comments, criticisms and suggestions during the discussion sessions. During those early days, when the meetings moved to Dr Siddiqui's home at 32 Warrington Avenue in Slough (my student days at UCL had come to an end with graduation in June 1973), the discussions were often intense. This process lasted from July 1973 to February 1974 when the final version of the *Draft Prospectus* was approved.

*The Draft Prospectus of the Muslim Institute* is chronologically the second paper in this compilation. It is included as an appendix as Dr Siddiqui was not formally its author. In *Towards a New Destiny*, Dr Siddiqui's understanding of the contemporary situation can be seen as a reflection of the ideas put forward by Qaddafi. The *Draft Prospectus* is a cool, careful and direct presentation of the same ideas in terms which are clearly understandable even to the most sceptical reader. It described the condition of Muslim societies as beyond repair and reform. In language that was Dr Siddiqui's hallmark throughout his life, he called for the dismantling of existing socio-economic and political systems in Muslim societies, describing them as a legacy of colonialism. He invited Muslim businessmen, academics, professionals and students to join the great task of creating the epistemology (framework of knowledge) of Islam for the re-creation of the glorious civilization of Islam. He also invited them to pay for these activities, rejecting the petrodollar largesse from the Muslim regimes that corrupted so many Muslim activists in the sixties and seventies. The *Draft Prospectus*, in short, called for Islamic Revolutions in Muslim societies but only after producing a



‘philosophical framework which is at least as articulate as all the other traditions of knowledge that are current today.’

Today, these ideas seem very simple and obvious, the basic currency of contemporary Muslim political thought. But in 1973-74 they were radical indeed. The *Draft Prospectus* then goes on to outline ‘a strategy for change’. The introduction of this is worth quoting in full:

The Muslim Institute is and must be part of a strategy of social action which should ultimately lead to the restructuring of the entire socio-economic and political systems in Muslim societies throughout the world. The Muslim Institute, therefore, cannot be more than a necessary first step towards that goal. Indeed, progress towards the goal is certain to be uneven in time and space. It may well be that a model society will have to be created and developed in one geographical area before the pace of change can be accelerated in other areas. Besides, the objective conditions to be overcome will differ greatly from place to place and any strategy would have to take these into account. It is, therefore, impossible to produce a grand strategy at this early stage. Indeed, part of the work of the Muslim Institute shall be to produce such a strategy, and perhaps also a number of area strategies, and keep them under constant review.

The fact that all of Dr Siddiqui’s subsequent work can be seen as a continuation in new circumstances of this initial approach determined in the early 1970s is reflected in the title of his final paper in this compilation, *The Islamic movement: outline of a grand strategy*. This was written in 1992, as the introduction to a book which was never completed, and is thus chronologically the latest of the papers included in this volume. However, as it serves to some extent as a personal introduction to the rest of his work, I have put it as the first paper in this compilation.

As the *Draft Prospectus* went to press, Dr Siddiqui suffered a massive heart attack one evening in February 1974 after running to catch a train from Paddington Station to Slough. Fortunately there was a doctor on board the train who administered first aid before Dr Siddiqui was rushed to hospital at the first stop. Upon release from hospital, his medical consultant advised him that the damage to his

heart was so great that he must retire and take it easy for the rest of his life. Dr Siddiqui was not the kind of person to take things easy. In fact, he was fond of quoting the *hadith* of the Prophet, upon whom be peace, which states that even if the world were coming to an end and someone were planting a date tree, he should proceed with what he was doing. Dr Siddiqui lived according to this teaching until the very end of his life.

When the *Draft Prospectus* was published, Dr Siddiqui started travelling around the world inviting Muslims to support the Muslim Institute project. The *Draft Prospectus* stated clearly that financial contributions for the Muslim Institute would be sought only from individual Muslims. Any support from the Muslim nation-States would prove detrimental and undermine its credibility. This was a most-challenging task but Dr Siddiqui undertook it despite his heart condition. Others in the Preparatory Committee either watched from the sidelines or pursued their own careers. There were times when Dr Siddiqui saw in this a repeat of the break-up of his original 'Khilafat movement' in London in the fifties. I moved to Toronto, Canada, in May 1974, much to the displeasure of Dr Siddiqui. When I went to bid him farewell in Slough, he said to me with tears in his eyes, 'you too are abandoning us.' I assured him that my move to Toronto would in no way diminish my attachment to the work of the Muslim Institute or its worldview and that I would do everything in my power to promote its ideals and goals.

Those who questioned Dr Siddiqui's total support for the Islamic Revolution should reflect on the contents of the *Draft Prospectus*. It spelled out, several years before the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, very clearly that an Islamic Revolution—indeed a series of Islamic Revolutions—is what the Muslim world needed to break loose from the stifling legacy of colonialism. That Iran had been a blind spot in the thinking of most Sunni Muslims is something that Dr Siddiqui himself readily admitted. But once the initial focus had been adjusted, the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran was taken up as the realization of Dr Siddiqui's own ideas as enunciated in the *Draft Prospectus*.

Between the publication of the *Draft Prospectus* (1974) and the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1978-79), Dr Siddiqui wrote a number of papers and books. In 1976 he wrote *The Islamic Movement: A Systems Approach*. While couched in the language of the systems analysis, it

hypothesized the existence, role and structure of an Islamic movement dedicated to the re-establishment of an Islamic civilization. He rejected the political parties approach as divisive and inimical to the teachings of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, upon whom be peace. The following year, he wrote *Beyond the Muslim Nation-States*, critiquing modernist Muslims' approach to political thought, rejecting the nation-State structure as alien to the ethos of Islam and the unifying concept of the *Ummah*, and calling for Muslim social scientists to produce a new political theory rooted in the traditions of Islam rather than the west.

It is interesting to note that he presented this paper at a conference in Makkah in 1977. Dr Siddiqui never couched his words in diplomatic language. Here was a conference organized by the Saudis at which he told them, quite bluntly, that their State was illegitimate. In fact, he called all the Muslim nation-States illegitimate and asked the Muslim social scientists to plan for their demolition and replacement by Islamic States. While Dr Siddiqui showed them the way out of the prison of the nation-State structure, he invited the Muslim social scientists to take credit for it. This is indicative of the atmosphere of the time and of the confidence of the Saudis, and more importantly, their masters in Washington and London, that Islam no longer presented any challenge to the civilizational hegemony of the west or to the subservient structures the west had established in Muslim countries. Having subjugated the Muslim world for nearly two centuries and producing a class of people who were brown in colour but western in outlook, the west assumed that Islam too had been reduced to the level of Christianity—banished from political life and confined only to the individual's personal salvation. All outward indicators also pointed to the validity of this assumption. In such an environment, the west could afford to allow papers like those of Dr Siddiqui to be presented from their platform. But, to be fair to the west, this confidence seemed justified even to those who opposed the west; even Dr Siddiqui did not expect to see the Islamic movement he hypothesized actually emerging in his own lifetime; he saw the work of the Institute as building 'a solid platform from which a future generation can launch its escape.'

It was in this atmosphere that the Islamic Revolution came as a bolt from the blue. As late as September 1978, barely four months before the Shah was driven out of Iran, Jimmy Carter, then president

of the United States, described Iran under the Shah as an ‘island of stability in a sea of turbulence.’ Kalim Siddiqui had visited Iran a few months earlier. He was not totally ignorant of the Islamic movement there. He had also met and had discussions with Iranian students in London during the late seventies. Several regularly attended the Muslim Institute courses and seminars. But he too saw little sign there of an Islamic movement with the potential to start the process of revolutionary change that he expected. This was partly because of the Iranian students’ natural reticence in discussing the political affairs of their country in detail when the Shah’s secret police were known to be everywhere.<sup>5</sup>

Dr Siddiqui would later say that he first recognized the import of the Islamic Revolution in Iran when he saw pictures of Imam Khomeini on television. He knew immediately that this was not just another Muslim revolutionary educated at London, Harvard or the Sorbonne. This was a leader from the political traditions of Islam itself. The Muslim Institute, now located in Endsleigh Street in the heart of London’s academic centre in Bloomsbury, busied itself with studying the Islamic Revolution and explaining it to the rest of the world. Two papers which reflect Dr Siddiqui’s early understanding of the Revolution are included in this book. These are *The State of the Muslim World Today* (1979) and *The Islamic Revolution: achievements, obstacles and goals* (1980). In the first of these, he presents the Islamic Revolution in the light of his previous rejection of the west. The book reflects his earlier tentative postulates that the west is implacably opposed to Islam and would do everything in its power to prevent its emergence in a dominant role on the world stage. *The Islamic Revolution: achievements, obstacles and goals* sets out to define Islamic Revolution and the Islamic State; examines the events in Iran in view of these definitions, and concludes that Iran after the Islamic Revolution has indeed, for all its failings, become an Islamic State.

In fact, even prior to the Islamic Revolution, the Muslim Institute organized courses in Muslim political thought to which both Shi‘is and Sunnis were invited. It was one of the enlightening aspects of these courses that both major schools of thought in Islam held the

---

5. Many of these students were to return to Iran after the Revolution and be among Dr Siddiqui’s best friends there.

same view of the contemporary Muslim situation. The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran was viewed by Dr Siddiqui as a vindication of his own ideas. Now that these had come to fruition, there was a living laboratory in which the great experiments of Muslim statecraft could be conducted. The Muslim Institute no longer operated on the basis of bringing about change in the distant future. The change had occurred in Iran. It was time to study and understand it and to project it to the non-Shi'i world in a language that it would understand. More importantly, he had to impress upon the practitioners of statecraft in Iran that the Islamic Revolution had to become applicable in all situations if it was to survive and gain wider acceptance in the non-Shi'i Muslim world. At the same time, he was also concerned with serving the nascent Revolution and State and ensuring its survival in the hostile world environment. In the early part of the 1980s, it may be that this took precedence over his intellectual interpretation of the Revolution.

While the Muslim Institute continued along this path, the *Crescent International* in Toronto, which had existed as a small community paper since 1971-72, took up the challenge of the defence of the Islamic Revolution against the vicious propaganda of the west, with equal vigour. I had started writing for the *Crescent* soon after my arrival in Toronto. In fact, the first article that I wrote for it was about the Muslim Institute which attracted a number of queries from curious readers in Canada. It was in early 1980 that Dr Siddiqui phoned from London to offer congratulations on one particular piece about the Revolution. Events were moving in a way that our paths would soon link up again; and on a permanent basis. He invited me to visit him in London.

The opportunity presented itself within a few months. In April 1980, I went to Pakistan to meet leaders of the Afghan mujahideen in Peshawar. On my return, I stopped over in London and held detailed discussions with Dr Kalim Siddiqui as well as Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui (then Assistant Director of the Muslim Institute; now Dr Kalim's successor as both Director of the Muslim Institute and Leader of the Muslim Parliament). We talked about the future role of the *Crescent* and agreed that it could be improved through input from the Muslim Institute. During the next few months, Dr Kalim Siddiqui visited Toronto several times and formal arrangements were made to

transfer ownership of the *Crescent International* to the Muslim Institute's publishing wing, the Open Press.

Dr Siddiqui took keen personal interest in its development and for the next several years, he personally wrote the bulk of its editorial content. He was always gracious and generous in his praise, even though my input as editor in those early days was minimal. In fact, we often joked about my position as a glorified salesman of the *Crescent International* as I travelled around North America promoting the paper and developing my skills as a speaker. The launching of the *Crescent International* as the newsmagazine of the Islamic Movement in August 1980 increased the workload immensely. Dr Siddiqui asked me to quit my job as an engineer and to work full-time for the movement. At the end of March 1981, I formally bid farewell to engineering and devoted all my efforts to the *Crescent International*. One of the great qualities of Dr Siddiqui was that he not only sacrificed his own career for the sake of Islam but he also inspired those around him to do likewise.

The *Crescent International* gained international fame because of its forthright stand on major issues. Dr Siddiqui and a number of other leading Muslim writers invested it with their thoughts and ideas. While others excelled in producing glossy magazines, the *Crescent International* concentrated on producing hard-hitting commentaries and analyses which soon captured the imagination of Muslim activists and youths worldwide. A number of Islamic movements around the world have been inspired by the thought of Dr Kalim Siddiqui as presented in the columns of the *Crescent International*. Small journals and magazines also started to lift material from the *Crescent International*, reflecting the worldwide acceptance of its ideas. Branches of the Muslim Institute and publication arrangements for the *Crescent International* were made in a number of other countries as well. Today, the Muslim Institute/*Crescent International*/ Open Press have facilities in Toronto, London, Karachi, Islamabad, Pretoria, Kuala Lumpur and Port Louis (Mauritius). Others are being planned and will become operational soon, *insha'Allah*.

Dr Siddiqui's total commitment and support of the Islamic Revolution in Iran frightened the Muslim Institute's Arab supporters. These individuals wanted to support low-level, harmless Islamic activity. As long as the Muslim Institute was perceived as a harmless academic body, they had no problem supporting it. Once it came out

openly in support of the Islamic Revolution, even though the Muslim Institute had called for just such a revolution, these Islamic luminaries took fright. The Muslim Institute's contributions from individuals in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia almost instantly dried up.

Dr Siddiqui, however, was a man of enormous self-confidence and resourcefulness. Instead of compromising on the fundamental principles, he plunged headlong into organizing International Seminars in London to which Muslim scholars, *ulama* of all schools of thought, academics, student activists and others were invited. From 1982 to 1988, the Muslim Institute organized a number of seminars. During these years, his relations with the Islamic State of Iran remained uneven. While his broad understanding of the Revolution found many supporters, particularly among intellectuals and others at the highest levels of the Revolution's leadership, many others, the bureaucracy and some more traditional Shi'i *ulama* in particular, resented his articulation of the Islamic Revolution in global, non-sectarian terms. They wanted to keep it Shi'i and Iranian. Dr Kalim Siddiqui often said that he understood their position; they had been on the periphery of Muslim history for so long, and now, having found themselves at centre stage, wanted to keep it to themselves. But he persisted in his work. The body of ideas generated by the world seminars and carried by the *Crescent International*, the *Muslimedia*, a news and feature syndicated service launched in 1981 (it was closed down in 1991), and later *Al-Hilal al-Dawli*, the Arabic version of the *Crescent International*, had a tremendous impact on Muslims throughout the world. Events in Algeria, Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt were greatly influenced by *Al-Hilal al-Dawli* even though it ceased publication after merely four years (1987-1991) because of lack of resources.

In 1982, Dr Siddiqui also launched the popular annual anthology series, *Issues in the Islamic Movement*. Seven volumes of this series have been published. These books have served as ready reference material for journalists and academics alike. The Issues books, as they came to be called, carried material from the *Crescent International*, *Muslimedia* and later a few select articles from other journals as well. For a few years, the Muslim Institute also organized Journalism Courses in conjunction with the City University of London. A number of young Muslim journalists were trained who have now established their own magazines in various parts of Africa, Asia and Southeast



Asia. The publications of the Muslim Institute and the training of Muslim journalists were all designed to present the ideas of the global Islamic movement to the worldwide *Ummah*.

During this period, Dr Siddiqui's main writings were for *Crescent International*, the Issues books and the Muslim Institute's seminars. Several of his major writings during this time are included in this volume. It is instructive to consider their themes briefly, for these contribute to our understanding of the trends in his work. The introductions to the first two Issues books, *The Islamic movement—setting out to change the world again* (1981) and *The struggle for the supremacy of Islam—some critical dimensions* (1982), were both primarily concerned with the nature and characteristics of the new Islamic movement which he had theorized in the 1970s and which had taken concrete shape in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution. He also developed his understanding of the differences between the western and Islamic civilizations in *Integration and disintegration in the politics of Islam and kufr* (1983). He re-formulates his understanding of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in *Primary goals and objectives of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (1984). The Revolution is now five years old and is faced with a total onslaught by the west through the instrument of the Ba'athist regime in Iraq. Its ability to withstand this onslaught, he concludes, is a sign of its depth and resilience.

He looks again at the problem of nationalism in *Nation-States as obstacles to the total transformation of the Ummah* (1985); and the impact of western imperialism on Muslim political thought in *Political thought and behaviour of Muslims under colonialism* (1987). Written in the light of the Islamic Revolution, these papers present a damning critique of the path Muslim history took in the aftermath of colonialism and the failure of 'partial Islamic movements' to address these problems. In particular, Dr Siddiqui takes to task those who failed to grasp the divisive nature of the nation-State and the political parties approach. He describes both as rooted in *kufr* and, therefore, irrelevant to the needs of Muslims. The experience of such 'Islamic' political parties as the Jama'at-e Islami in Pakistan and the Ikhwan al-Muslimoon in Egypt are analyzed to explain and illustrate his position. The continuity of his thought from before Revolution is clear in all these themes; but the impact of the Islamic Revolution is equally clear in the development of the ideas he presents.

For the newly-vibrant Islamic movement, these writings provided a crucial expression of the ideas the new movement instinctively recognized. But Dr Siddiqui was never content simply to study and to write. His worldwide travels also continued. He was a man constantly on the move. He not only generated great ideas but also communicated them—verbally as well as in writing—throughout the world. The contacts he established throughout the world, and the contacts different parts of the Islamic movement made with one another at the conferences and seminars he organized in London, Toronto, Pretoria and other parts of the world, contributed immensely to the development and cohesion of the new movement and its understanding of itself and the historic situation it faces.

As time went on, however, the emphasis of Dr Siddiqui's writings shifted again. From the highly applied writings of the early years of the Revolution, he returned to examining the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Movement in longshot, so to speak; to see them in the wider perspective of history. This was a constant backdrop of all his writings; now he turned to it in particular. His study of the place of the contemporary Islamic movement and the Islamic Revolution in the wider trend of Muslim history led in 1989 to the publication of his paper *Processes of error, deviation, correction and convergence in Muslim political thought*. This paper presents his very personal vision of how the civilization of Islam came to its present plight; what needs to be done to restore it to its proper place in the forefront of human history; and why that process has begun in Iran rather than anywhere else. He says that the emergence of the *usuli ulama* among the Shi'as paved the way for Imam Khomeini's *ijtihad* about the Islamic Government. With this, the Shi'i school of thought returned to the track from which Muslims had deviated after the period of the *khulafa al-rashidoon*. The Sunnis, too, had drifted into *malukiyyah*. They, however, have not made the correction nor rejected the deviant theology developed to support *malukiyyah*. Dr Siddiqui's commitment is to the crucible of history. He says that history is relentless and impartial in dealing with error and deviation. Those who claim to have found the 'truth' must not fail to check their position against actual results that flow from their actions. Partial truths cannot be the whole truth. Unless there is a correction and the two major schools of thought return to the path laid down by the Prophet, upon whom be peace, Muslim achievements will remain

partial. He points out, however, that the Islamic Revolution in Iran has taken Muslim political thought a long way towards convergence.

Dr Siddiqui completed this paper shortly before the death of Imam Khomeini in 1989. He sent a translation to Ayatullah Khamenei later the same year. Ayatullah Khamenei endorsed its argument entirely. Unfortunately, many other Shi‘i *ulama* failed to do likewise, seeing it as a belittlement of their particular understanding of history. Dr Siddiqui always believed, however, that time would make his analysis acceptable to greater and greater numbers of people, both Shi‘a and Sunni.

Along with this analysis, Dr Siddiqui’s greatest gifts to the *Ummah* will remain his ideas on the nation-State structure, the political parties approach and the concept of the global Islamic movement. He has often been compared with Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (Assadabadi), Dr Muhammad Iqbal and Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi. He held all three in great esteem. He had even greater regard for Sayyid Qutb and Imam Khomeini. Of the first three, he felt closest to Iqbal primarily because like Iqbal, Dr Siddiqui, too was educated in the west and came to see its weaknesses from within. In his early writings—for instance, the *Draft Prospectus*—he was prepared to concede a major role to the western educated Muslims whom he referred to as the ‘modern sector’. By the time of the Islamic Revolution, he had revised his thinking about them. In February 1980, Dr Siddiqui had gone to Tehran to attend the first anniversary celebrations of the victory of the Islamic Revolution. When he saw the performance of Bani-Sadr, then president of the Islamic Republic, he said ‘The Imam will have to dismiss this man!’<sup>6</sup> In less than 18 months, the Majlis in Iran called for Bani-Sadr’s impeachment and he fled the country seeking refuge in France. Men like Bani-Sadr and Sadeq Qutbzadeh (former foreign minister of Iran and later executed for treason) confirmed Dr Siddiqui’s belief that western-educated Muslims were not capable of performing leadership roles in the Islamic State even when given the opportunity.

In the last years of his life, Dr Siddiqui became better known as the Leader of the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain than for his work as Director of the Muslim Institute. This work began with his

---

6. This comment was made to Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, who was accompanying him on this trip.

emergence as an uncompromising spokesman for the disparaged Muslim community in Britain during the Rushdie affair. In October 1988, I had called Dr Siddiqui to seek his advice about the brewing Rushdie *fitnah*. His words proved prophetic. He said that no matter how much Muslims protested and made noise about Rushdie's blasphemous filth, nobody would pay the slightest attention. It needed somebody like Imam Khomeini to take a stance and then the world would take notice! When the Imam's famous *fatwa* was pronounced on February 14, 1989, Dr Siddiqui happened to be in Tehran. His flight out of Mehrabad airport was cancelled because of a heavy snow storm. When he arrived in Britain it was into another kind of storm that would transform the political landscape of British society for good.

Dr Siddiqui articulated the feelings and aspirations of the Muslims as no one could. But he realized that Muslims had to be organized in a formal way to become effective. During 1989-90, the Muslim Institute undertook detailed research into the situation and needs of the Muslim community in Britain, leading to the publication of *The Muslim Manifesto*. This became the foundation document of the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain, inaugurated (after some 18 months of intensive preparation) in January 1992. The Bait al-Mal al-Islami was established a year later. These two institutions have given the Muslim community in Britain not only a high profile but also great self-confidence. A number of other institutions have also emerged in the wake of the establishment of the Muslim Parliament. The thinking behind the establishment of the Muslim parliament can be thought of as Dr Siddiqui's *ijtihad* about Muslims living in a minority situation. Its establishment was a remarkable piece of social engineering. None of this work would have been possible without the pioneering intellectual work undertaken by the Muslim Institute for more than two decades. It has often been said that this work was a radical departure from his earlier trends of thought. That this is untrue can be seen by reading the section on minorities in Dr Siddiqui's 1973 book *Towards a New Destiny*. The themes that Muslims are one *Ummah* and that the Muslim community in Britain is part of the global Islamic Movement run throughout his writings.

The papers included in this book are only a selection of his major writings. In recent years, he had started to write about the *Seerah* of the noble Messenger of Allah, upon whom be peace, saying that it

must be viewed in a new light. Describing the present state of the world as ‘total darkness’ since it is encompassed and dominated by the west, including the Muslim parts of it, he calls for a return to the Prophet’s *Seerah* and *Sunnah* to break out of what he calls the modern-day *jahiliyyah*. He rejects much of the apologetic literature that has so far been produced on the *Seerah*. Just as the world emerged from the *jahiliyyah* at the time of the Prophet, so too would the present-day Muslim world by applying the lessons of the *Seerah* and the *Sunnah*. The major difference today is that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, is no longer present. This, according to Dr Siddiqui, is part of the Divine scheme. Allah has completed the *deen* of Islam and today, *muttaqi* leadership has to fill the vacuum created by the Prophet’s absence from the worldly plane. One of the major arguments that Dr Siddiqui repeatedly advanced in his writings was that Islam is incomplete without the Islamic State. Since the Prophet, upon whom be peace, himself established the Islamic State before Allah completed His message for mankind, the establishment of the Islamic State is, therefore, compulsory for Muslims. The Islamic State, by definition, cannot be a subservient State or it is not an Islamic State. It also must be borne in mind that everything that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, did or ordered to be done and which was not corrected by Allah through revelation, becomes obligatory on Muslims. The Islamic State is one of the most fundamental institutions in Islam.

Dr Siddiqui was unable to complete the *Seerah* project that his mind was so pre-occupied with in the last days of his life. This is the unfinished task left to his colleagues and successors. Undertaking such a project would be a fitting tribute to his memory as well as a great contribution to Muslim political thought in the contemporary age, *insha’Allah*.

### **Zafar Bangash**

Assistant Director, The Muslim Institute,  
Editor, *Crescent International*,  
Markham, Ontario, Canada,  
Jamadi al-Awwal 9, 1417/September 23, 1996.