

APPENDIX III: SELECTED DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE EAST LONDON MOSQUE, THE JAMIAT-UL-MUSLIMIN, AND RELATED DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LATE 1930s AND EARLY 1940s

Evidence relating to the events surrounding the establishment of the East London Mosque, the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, and other related developments in the late 1930s and early 1940s is deposited in the British Library. This appendix contains transcripts of a selection of the most relevant of these records (BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468). While these transcripts are not annotated, they provide useful additional information on various developments mentioned in the Minutes.

Report on schemes to build a Muslim centre in London (dated 29.5.1941)

BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fols 186–189

There are three schemes in existence for Moslem centres in London. Each of them includes proposals for a Mosque and a cultural centre. These schemes are:—

(1) The London Mosque Fund. This fund was founded in 1926. Sir Ernest Hotson is the Honorary Secretary and Sir Hassan Suhrawardy is one of the Trustees. The present assets of the fund stand, according to Sir Hassan Suhrawardy's note of November 1940, at £10,664 of which £1,050 has been invested in property in Commercial Road, possession of which has been obtained. Sir Hassan Suhrawardy stated in his note that this fund could be amalgamated with the Egyptian Ambassador's London Mosque scheme by resolution of the Trustees and that a meeting was to be held at an early date to discuss this question. Sir Hassan had suggested that the Egyptian Ambassador should become Chairman of the Executive Committee.

I understand from Mr. Blake of the British Council that the premises in Commercial Road have now been opened as a Moslem meeting place for the purpose of worship and that what the Council have been asked to do is to supply a sum of about £100 to provide furniture

for a cultural centre and also to provide an annual sum of about the same figure to finance the purchase of literature for the centre. The Council are disposed to consider this favourably especially as they understand that some oral undertaking that it would be done was given by the late Lord Lloyd, although they have no record of this. It would seem that as this centre is now a going concern, its funds can hardly be amalgamated with those of the Egyptian Ambassador's scheme except in the sense that the Commercial Road centre and organisation might become a branch of the centre contemplated by the Egyptian Ambassador and his Committee. The money, however, would not be available for the Egyptian project. Mr. Blake told me that he was satisfied after consulting Sir Ernest Hotson that the London Mosque funds could not provide money from its own sources for the purpose for which the British Council has been asked to contribute.

(2) The London Nizamiah Mosque Trust. This Trust was set up in April 1928. Its present assets are somewhere between £67,000 and £77,000; the first figure being given by Sir Hassan Suhrawardy in his note of November last and the second in the Hyderabad memorandum enclosed with Sir A. Hydari's letter of the 23rd February. Possibly the difference is due to the fact that Sir Hassan Suhrawardy took the cost price of the site, while the Hyderabad figure is the present value based on an offer known to have been made by the War Office. The original Board of Trustees consisted of Lord Headley, the Aga Khan and three other Moslem gentlemen, but has been entirely reconstituted and now consists of Sir H. Suhrawardy, H.E. Hafiz Wahaba, Nawab Sir Aqeel Jung, Mr. Mohammed Ali Zainal Aliraza and Dr. Saeed Mohamedi.

A site has been purchased in Mornington Avenue, West Kensington, and in 1937 H.H. the Prince of Berar laid the foundation stone. The project is at present held up by legal difficulties with an architect (Brumwell Thomas) with whom there have been legal proceedings which were settled by a compromise payment, one of the terms of which was that if the work of building the Mosque started within 10 years of the date of the decree (July, 1933) and if any of the Trustees against whom the decree was passed, were in office at that time, the work should be entrusted to Sir Brumwell. The complete change in the personnel of the Trustees has removed this obligation but it is thought desirable to postpone work until July 1943 to be on the safe side.

It is stated in the Hyderabad note that as the foundation stone has been laid, the site cannot now be used for any other purpose. This presumably refers to some religious requirement.

(3) The Egyptian Ambassador's Scheme. This is the scheme strongly supported by the late Lord Lloyd. It is a plan for a Mosque and cultural centre in the centre of London which will be a central place of worship for Moslems in the Empire equivalent to the Moslem centres in Paris, Rome and Berlin. The scheme appears first to have been mooted by a Mr. Mougy in 1938 and was taken up by the Egyptian Government after the Palestine Conference. The Cabinet has authorised expenditure of up to £100,000 to provide a site and made the Secretary of State for the Colonies responsible for carrying the matter through. The promoters of the scheme were informed that H.M.G. were prepared "to provide a site on which the construction of a Mosque could begin as soon as the necessary funds have been contributed and conditions in the building trade allow". Lord Halifax and Lord Lloyd were satisfied that about £250,000 would be forthcoming from Moslem sources.

I understand from Mr. Luke of the Colonial Office who deals with this matter, that enquiries are being pursued with the Ministry of Works and Buildings for a site. The original proposal was for a site opposite the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Kensington, but the latest idea is a site on the south side of the river as a part of the L.C.C. reconstruction scheme for that area. Not very much progress has been made but I understood that the Colonial Office were expecting to hear from us the result of the approach to the Nizam.

It seems quite clear that the Nizam is not prepared to merge his scheme in one which is primarily under Egyptian auspices. This bears out the opinion originally held by Sir Miles Lampson that the Egyptian Government would desire to collect all the credit for this proposal and I understand that the Egyptian idea is that an Egyptian Government architect shall design and erect the Mosque. India is represented on the Committee by the High Commissioner and Sir Hassan Suhrawardy. The other representatives are the Iraqi Ambassador and the Saudi Minister. The Viceroy is not prepared to apply any pressure to the Nizam and the Nizam appears to expect to be protected from Egyptian competition. It seems very doubtful whether without the Nizam's support, funds will be forthcoming to erect the centre which from our point of view may perhaps be fortunate.

As regards the Foreign Office letter of the 9th May my own view is that the objections raised to the British Council contributing to the Commercial Road centre are not very strong. Mr. Blake told me that the basis of their belief that the India Office supported the proposal was that Sir Hassan Suhrawardy was one of the Secretary of State's Advisers. There does not seem to me to be any great force in the

argument that the Council may be asked to support other religious movements. If they are they can refuse unless they think there is a good case for doing so. The Hindus are the only comparable religious body within the Empire and a request from them is perhaps unlikely. It seems that the London Mosque Fund are in possession of sufficient assets to keep the centre going for some time and I would suggest that we tell the Foreign Office that while we do not feel very strongly in the matter we should be inclined to support the proposal that the British Council should contribute something provided that they are satisfied that the centre is a fairly flourishing affair and requires assistance. I have asked I.P.I. if he can contribute anything on this point but he says that he has no definite information on this point, but that there are very few Moslems in the East End now, as shipping is largely diverted to West Coast ports and lascars are not coming to London. Dock workers generally have tended to move with the work. He feels a good deal of doubt whether there is a case for a contribution at the moment.

I think that on this, we might well tell the Foreign Office that while we favour the idea in principle and do not think there is much force in their objections, we are doubtful if at the moment there is a case for financing a centre in the East End, when it is very liable to be bombed and where there are believed to be few Moslems at the moment, and feel that any assistance given should be on a much lower scale than is proposed in their letter. I suggest a draft.

**Assessment of the position of Sir H. Suhrawardy
(dated 31.5.1941)**

BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fols 190-191

The position of Sir H. Suhrawardy in this matter is a delicate one. In his capacity as Muslim Adviser he has perforce had to shoulder the mantle of his predecessors in the shape of Trusteeship of both the London Mosque and the Nizamiah Mosque Trusts, which has since been induced to become closely associated also with the Egyptian scheme. His assertion that Fund (1) could be amalgamated with Fund (3) and his efforts to persuade the Hyderabad authorities to pool Fund (2) may be unduly optimistic. I understand that he and his colleagues on Fund (2) will probably take legal advice about the interpretation of the Nizamiah Trust, in the matter of diverting its capital to another project.

It seems best to consider the Foreign Office reference in regard to assistance to Fund (1) independently of what may be done in the matter of Fund (3) and on its own merits. There is clearly something

to be said for making the gesture of giving some small assistance to a Moslem religious enterprise already working in a poor quarter of London where poor Moslems are most likely to be found. But as at the moment they are said to be fewer than usual I would advise very limited assistance, [deleted], particularly if the late Lord Lloyd contemplated some such assistance. This corresponds with Mr. Turnbull's suggestions at A & B of his note, except that I would make the recurring grant £50 p.a.

As regards the relation between Funds (2) and (3), I do not think that any obligation has been contracted to tell the C.O. what the Nizam's Government have said to the Trustees of Fund (2). This would raise the question how far that Government is free to override the views of the Trustees who, according to Sir H. Suhrawardy, have here a majority in favour of merger with the Egyptian scheme (Fund (3)). It might be sufficient for Mr. Turnbull to tell Mr. Luke that according to our information the Hyderabad Government's attitude has been defined in a letter to the Trustees of the Nizamiah Mosque Fund here and that they will no doubt explain the position to the promoters of the Egyptian Mosque in due course. (Sir H. Suhrawardy has told me that in fact he will be holding a meeting with his co-trustees to determine precisely what is to be said to the Egyptian Ambassador, probably after taking legal advice).

Report on the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin in Great Britain (dated 30.10.1943)

BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fols 71-74

The Jamiat-ul-Muslimin was founded in England in 1934, with an office at 59, Canton St, E.14. It was registered under the Charitable Societies Act and was stated to comply with all the requirements of a Charitable Society. Its declared objectives were: to serve the cause of Islam truly and practically by creating facilities for the observance of its Principles: to produce a weekly paper (the, the [*sic*] 'Muslim Standard'); to collect funds for a Mosque in the East End of London; to provide for the training and education of Muslims generally: to succour poor and needy Muslims: to promote social intercourse between resident Muslims and visitors to this country and generally to adopt all practical and legitimate means to work for the moral, intellectual and economic advancement of Muslims throughout the world.

1. The original President was Dr Mohammed BUKSH, Co. Secretaries, AHMAD DIN QUERESHI (Silk merchant, trading as Quereshi & Co., of 36, Church Lane, Aldgate)

and GHULAM MOHAMMED, who lived at the address of the Jamiat: Treasurer, ALLAH DAD KHAN, salesman of 530, Commercial Rd, E.1. The Committee consisted of four officials and twenty members.

2. In its early years the JAMIAT did not come to notice, in fact it was first heard of in 1938 when it organised a protest against the chapter on the Prophet in Mr H.G. Wells' "Short History of the World". (A deputation was interviewed by the High Commissioner and dispersed quietly). In September 1938 it appealed for funds to the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind in Delhi. In April 1939 it protested against the invasion of Albania by the Italians and, in sending a copy of its protest to the Italian Embassy, demanded that Mussolini should renounce the title of "Protector of Islam" which he had assumed after the conquest of Abyssinia. At this time of its existence the Jamiat was described by SURAT ALI as a purely religious body, but of progressive outlook; he said it should not be taken that it had any connection with the organisation of the same name which had been formed by the Grand Mufti of Palestine.
3. In November, 1910, a fund was started in London by influential Muslims for the purpose of building a Mosque worthy of Islam and of the capital of the British Empire. In November 1926 a Deed of Trust was executed and the Fund, known thereafter as the London Mosque Fund, was vested in Trustees: a clause of the Deed provided that the majority of the Trustees and the Chairman of the Executive Committee must at all times be Muslim. The Trustees arranged for prayers to be held at various addresses in the West End of London, but when it became obvious that the majority of Muslims frequented or lived in the East End, the King's Hall, Commercial Rd, E.1, was rented for weekly prayers and other religious functions and the local Muslim association, i.e. the Jamiat, was entrusted with the arrangements. (1935). On 31.12.39, the Fund stood at £10,687 odd and in 1940 the Trustees purchased freehold property at 446/450 Commercial Rd, E.1, for the erection of the East London Mosque, which was formally opened on 1.8.41 by H.E. The Egyptian Ambassador. The Jamiat were appointed agents for the Trustees for managing the religious and other duties connected with the Mosque.
4. At this time, the Treasurer of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin was, and still is, SAID AMIR SHAH, a silk merchant and film agent, who had already come to notice in political connections as a

supporter of the INDIA LEAGUE and generally as an agitator amongst East End Indians. SHAH has recently claimed that it was only through agitation by the Jamiat that the East London Mosque was built and that it was only after repeated representations to individual Trustees that the latter made any move to implement the objectives for which the London Mosque Fund was created. It may be said that up to the opening of the Mosque there were no indications that the Jamiat was politically inclined; from August 1941, however, SHAH has made every possible effort to turn it into a political weapon.

5. This became increasingly apparent after the arrests of the Congress leaders in 1942. By this time, SAID AMIR SHAH had more or less broken with V.K. KRISHNA MENON and the latter's India League and had transferred his allegiance to AMIYA NATH BOSE and the latter's Committee of Indian Congressmen. That organisation was founded to give unqualified support to the Indian National Congress which, it maintained, had in its celebrated resolution of August 1942, declared a state of Civil Disobedience, and to demand that all power should be handed over to the Congress, making no mention of the claims of the Minorities. SHAH next created Provincial branches of the JAMIAT and followed this up by creating under the auspices of the Committee of Indian Congressmen and with the full cooperation of Bose a "NATIONAL INDIAN MUSLIM COMMITTEE", which gave full support to Congress and disputed the claims of the Muslim League to represent the majority of the Muslims of India.

Provincial Branches of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin

6. SHAH and his colleagues now began to move about the Provinces, notably the Midlands and Glasgow areas holding meetings, with the result that his activities on behalf of the Jamiat and those for his Indian National Muslim Committee became inextricably tangled. It was reliably reported that by the end of 1942 he was using his position as an official of the Jamiat to obtain recruits for his own Muslim Committee and it later became clear that he was using both to obtain a control of the East London Mosque and the Mosque Fund and to create for himself the position of uncrowned king of the Muslim Community in Britain. He does not appear at any time to have been actuated by religious motives. As his Muslim Committee was from the start violently opposed to the Muslim League and

the Pakistan Plan, for both of which some supporters must exist in the Jamiat, the disruptive quality of his activities needs no stressing.

7. It was claimed that a branch of the Jamiat had been established in Glasgow and that premises had been taken there; the precise date of the inauguration of this Branch is not clear, but SHAH was in the habit of talking of "our people" in Glasgow long before he formed his Muslim Committee at the end of August 1942. It was further claimed that a Branch of the Jamiat had been established at Newcastle on Tyne in August 1942, a Manchester Branch in October and a Birmingham Branch in November of the same year. Many of SHAH's relatives and business associates were installed as officials of the provincial branches, particularly in the Birmingham one. (The Birmingham Committee includes Jan MOHAMED, friend of S.A. Shah; ABBAS SHAH (relative), ZAMAN ALI (agent of Shah Bros and suspected of being involved in the Black Market) and SHABIR HUSSAIN SHAH (connected with Black Market Trade and an associate of Shah, Abbas Shah and of Zaman Ali; he is probably a relative of Shah)[]).

The position in Glasgow is confused. The Jamiat there is under the guidance of Ghulam Mohamed SHARIF, a Punjabi Mohammedan, who was also a leading light in the Hindustani Majlis. In May 1943 the Jamiat closed its premises – it was said on account of disunity amongst the members. In July it was stated that since the majority of the Mohammedans in Glasgow were seamen and hence, to some extent already catered for by the Indian Seamen's Welfare Centre run by the Majlis, there was not much point in the Jamiat indulging in welfare activities which would probably only add to the existing confusion. (The latter was doubtless due to the visits of S.A. Shah to Glasgow, coupled with the activities of SURAT ALI, who was endeavouring to attract the Majlis into his own orbit). It is certain that the Jamiat still owns premises in Glasgow and that plans are entertained for developing a branch there. (See para 8).

8. It has become regular routine for the Supreme Council of the Jamiat to meet periodically in one or other of the Provincial Towns and not regularly in London – following the pattern of Ali's Federation of Indian Associations in Great Britain, and doubtless to offset the activities of the latter, as well as to enable Shah to proselytise amongst Muslims outside London.

On 16.5.43, the Council met in Birmingham. On this occasion a resolution was passed that at all centres where the Jamiat had branches freehold property should be bought which during the war would serve as headquarters of the Muslim community and that after the war, if the Muslim community seemed inclined to settle there permanently, a Mosque should be built; otherwise the property would be sold and the proceeds put to a fund for building a Mosque primarily in Glasgow and thereafter in any other centre which needed one.

On 19.6.43, a report was given on the Jamiat to the Manchester Branch by SAHIBDAD KHAN. He stated that at that date the Jamiat had £1,000 in hand: of this amount £400 had been collected in Birmingham, £260 represented a credit balance from the previous year and the remainder had been collected in London for the "Mosque Fund" (vide above). At this meeting a further £312 was collected. Said Amir Shah and Sahibdad Khan claimed to have contributed £200 apiece to the total funds. It was stated that it was proposed to run the Jamiat on lines similar to the Indian Workers Union (an organisation affiliated to Ali's Federation), i.e. the Committee administering the affairs of the Jamiat would, in future, be composed of representatives from the London Centre and from each of the Provincial Branches. (It is interesting to note that Manchester Jamiat members have, however, expressed doubts as to whether the money collected would be used for the purposes indicated and as to how Shah had disposed of monies collected in the past; similar doubts appear to have been voiced in Glasgow.[])

On August 1st 1943 the Supreme Court of the Jamiat met at Newcastle on Tyne – this venue having been selected because other Indian meetings were taking place there round about the same date. Shah later boasted to Amiya Nath Bose that over £500 had been collected.

9. The East London Mosque and Trust Fund Dispute

The trouble which has arisen over the East London Mosque with the Board of Trustees appears to be almost entirely due to the ambitions and activities of SHAH and the results of his mobilisation of supporters from the Provinces was seen on October 10th, at a public meeting of the Jamiat, friends and supporters, convened by Shah on October 10th with the assistance of Bose. (It was decided between them that this

meeting must be convened under the auspices of the Jamiat and not under those of Shah's National Indian Muslim Committee). The object was to protest against the action of the Trustees, who had cancelled the authority of the Jamiat to act as their agents and had required the Jamiat to vacate the premises of the East London Mosque. Shah, and Sahibdad Khan to a lesser degree, appear to have brought the trouble to a head because it was not felt that they were in a position to acquire a Mosque of their own in London and as a result of their collection of funds, possibly elsewhere, and that they were therefore strong enough to throw off the supervision of the Board of Trustees and to use the Jamiat openly as a political organisation and not as a Charitable one. It is unfortunate that shortly after the opening of the East London Mosque in August 1941, these two should have been co-opted as additional members of the Executive Committee of the London Mosque Fund (they were the first members of the Jamiat to be so appointed); but it cannot be denied that their selection was practically inevitable owing to the large following they undeniably commanded in the East End. It was also unfortunate that the Board of Trustees was weakened by the absence from England of distinguished members such as Sir Aziz ul Haque and Sir Hassan Suhrawardhy, and by the inaccessibility of the Aga Khan. For a time after their co-option, things went smoothly, then under the increasing influence of Shah, the Jamiat started to press for changes in the Board of Trustees designed to give it the control of the East London Mosque. The Trustees resisted this pressure, the two Jamiat members resigned and finally on October 1st, as no reply had been received to their notice to vacate the premises, the Trustees instituted legal proceedings, or threatened them.

10. The protest meeting on October 10th was attended by about 400 persons, less than 20 of them Europeans and most of them Punjabi and Bengali Mahommedans. It was very significant that amongst the audience were sundry non-Mahommedans such as Amiya Nath BOSE (who frankly confessed that he was very much interested in "certain political aspects of the dispute"), and I.G.P. SINGH, K.S. SHELVANKAR and others, who presumably went to spy out the land for the benefit of the Communist Party, Swaraj House and the India League, all of which take a very meddlesome interest in the affairs of East End Indians. Sunder KABADI considered the meeting so important that he cut the relatively more spectacular Delegate Conference of the India League which took place on the same

day and went instead to the Jamiat meeting. The atmosphere seems to have been electric and apparently only the diplomatic handling of matters by the chairman (Sahibdad Khan) and some counsels of moderation from the Manchester delegate prevented an uproar. As it was, Sahibdad Khan succeeded in preventing any discussion after the speeches. SAID AMIR SHAH, however, has no intention of letting matters rest there; he proposes to bring out a pamphlet keeping off legal points and stressing emotional and religious aspects of the dispute best calculated to foster agitation. So far there is no indication that Shah has secured via Bose any "Parliamentary support" for his side, but as there is no doubt that he had the full collaboration of Bose in the running of the Jamiat meeting, this may be due to the fact that Bose has recently been too much occupied with his Famine campaign to tackle the Jamiat question at the highest levels accessible to him.

Miscellaneous

11. In May 1943, a paper called "MUSLIM NEWS" made its first appearance, issued from 36, Whitechurch Lane, the address of AHMAD DIN QUERESHI, one of the secretaries of the Jamiat; it was distributed in the Provinces. This issue was innocuous, but as in June 1943, S.A. SHAH was generally interesting himself in securing articles for forthcoming issues and also in securing from I.K. KAZI, (Karachi) an "Indian Letter", it is probable that subsequent issues were not so reputable. (None have so far been seen).
12. Reports of the activities of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin in England have been sent by S.A. SHAH to I.I. Kazi, who has promised to despatch books for the use of the organisation which he has purchased on their account.

Statement issued by Sir Hassan Suhrawardhy (n.d.)

BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fols 58-60

As a Trustee, and also as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the London Mosque Fund, I am making the following statement to remove the misleading impression caused by the matter published in the leaflet circulated by the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin.

1. The London Mosque Fund dates from 1910 when a meeting was held, under the Chairmanship of His Highness the Aga

Khan, of persons interested in the project for the erection and maintenance of a Mosque in London. As a result of that meeting a Committee was formed for the purpose of collecting funds and for the purpose of appointing Trustees of the Fund. In 1926 a Deed of Trust was drawn up. The Trustees at that time were H.H. the Aga Khan, the Rt. Hon. Syed Ameer Ali, Sir Muhammad Rafique, Lord Lamington and Lord Ampthill and these five persons, three Muslims and two Christians, were appointed Trustees under the Deed of Trust.

2. The Deed of Trust also provides for an Executive Committee. The first Chairman of this Committee was the Rt. Hon. Syed Ameer Ali, the Secretary was Sir Thomas Arnold and the Treasurer Mr A.S. Mahomed Ali Anik.
3. Although between 1910 and 1928 over £6,000 were subscribed by representative Muslims all over the world, including H.I.M. the Shah of Persia, H.I.M. the Sultan of Turkey, H.E.H. the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Sultan of Perak, the building of the Mosque was not proceeded with because the funds were considered inadequate. Arrangements were, however, made by the Trustees for the hiring of premises where Juma and Id prayers could be held. At first these premises were in the West End of London but as the number of persons attending was small it was decided in 1935 to make similar arrangements in the East End, where there is a considerable Muslim population. The Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, the local Muslim Association, was entrusted with the arrangements and King's Hall in Commercial Road E.1. was rented out of funds provided by the Trustees. In 1938, in view of the considerable number of persons attending prayers, the Trustees decided to purchase a site for a small Mosque and a Muslim hostel in the East End and a Sub-Committee consisting of two Trustees, Sir Abdul Qader (Chairman) and Mr Waris Ameer Ali, and the then Honorary Secretary, Sir Ernest Hotson, was constituted for the purpose. In 1939 Sir Hassan Suhrawardy succeeded Sir Abdul Qader as a Trustee and as Chairman of the Sub-Committee and in 1940 the premises at 446-450 Commercial Road were purchased. These premises, purchased, repaired and remodelled at a total cost of over £4,000, provide accommodation for (a) the Mosque, (b) the Islamic Culture Centre and (c) the caretaker's quarters. The Mosque and the Culture Centre were opened by His Excellency the Egyptian Ambassador in August 1941. This ceremony was attended by a large gathering. Sir Ernest Hotson, the then Honorary Secretary to the Trustees, read the

report and speeches were made by Mr. Amir Shah and Mr Ahmeddin Qureshi in which they, on behalf of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, thanked the Trustees of the London Mosque Fund for providing a Mosque and a Culture Centre. They made particular reference to the work done by Sir Hassan Suhrawardy and Sir Ernest Hotson.

4. At this time although two of the Trustees and the Honorary Secretary were Christians, the relations between the Trustees and the Executive Committee on the one hand and the Jamiat on the other were cordial. The Jamiat out of their own funds had provided furniture and other fittings for some of the rooms. In 1941 the Trustees decided to appoint the Jamiat as their agents for the management of the Mosque and the Culture Centre. This arrangement was made in agreement with the Jamiat by means of a letter from the Trustees which inter alia provided for the termination of the arrangements by seven days' notice by either party. Two members of the Jamiat were also appointed as members of the Executive Committee.
5. The income of the Trustees from invested funds is about £250 a year and it is from this income that the greater part of the expenditure on the maintenance of the Mosque and the Culture Centre has been met.
6. Unfortunately the relations between the Trustees and the Jamiat have deteriorated and about two months ago the Jamiat demanded that a majority of the Trustees and of the members of the Executive Committee should be composed of members of the Jamiat. This was a demand to which the Trustees could not agree and it was decided that the agency arrangements with the Jamiat should be terminated in accordance with the terms of the agreement by which that agency was established. Seven days notice of the termination of the agency arrangement was accordingly given. The termination of the agency agreement involves, of course, no change in the position of the Mosque as a place of Muslim worship. It is open to all Muslims for the purpose of prayer. Further in the notice which was sent to the Jamiat the Trustees explained that if the Jamiat or any other body of Muslims desired to arrange a function after Id prayers or on the occasion of the Prophet's Birthday, they would be only too glad to allow such functions to be held.
7. The Jamiat alleges that the notice given by the Trustees is illegal because a non-Muslim cannot be a Trustee of a Mosque Fund. As has been pointed out, the Deed of Trust of 1926 was drawn

up by H.H. the Aga Khan, the Rt. Hon. Syed Ameer Ali, (an eminent jurist and recognised authority on Muslim Law) and Sir Muhammad Rafique (a former Judge of the Allahabad High Court). They certainly were well acquainted with Muslim Law and would not have included two Christians (Lord Lamington and Lord Amphill) as Trustees if such a course was in any way opposed to Islam. Again it is impossible to believe that His late Imperial Majesty the Sultan of Turkey, H.I.M. the Shah of Persia, H.R.H. the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Sultan of Perak and other representative Muslims would have subscribed to a Mosque Fund, the Trustees of which included Christians, if the inclusion of persons of the Christian faith on the Board of Trustees was in any way repugnant to Islam tenets. It should also be remembered that the Jamiat took no objection to the presence of Christians among the Trustees (i) during the years during which it (the Jamiat) received assistance from the Trustees towards the renting of King's Hall, (ii) at the time of the purchase of the property in Commercial Road in which the Mosque is situated, (iii) at the time of the opening ceremony of the Mosque and the Islam Culture Centre and (iv) at the time the arrangement was made by which the Jamiat was appointed the agent of the Trustees for the Mosque and the Culture Centre. It was only when the Trustees terminated this arrangement that the Jamiat discovered that according to the Holy Quran no non-Muslim can be a Trustee of a Mosque Fund or be in any way connected with it.

8. The Jamiat-ul-Muslimin also seeks to maintain that the "Board of Trustees" is non-Islamic because it runs counter to the words and spirit of the Holy Quran and the Surat-al-Baqra and the Surat-at-Tauba relating to Islamic tenets which govern the laws of the Wakf and the Mutwalli. The Jamiat is again wrong. The true facts are that the passages on which they rely apply to idolators, their confederates and the hypocrite Muslim who, under the pretext of promoting the cause of Islam opened a Mosque in the neighbourhood of Prophet's Mosque at Quba near Medina, and were circulating misleading lies. These allegations certainly do not apply to the Trustees as they have not started a new Mosque in opposition to an existing one in the East End of London. The Trustees are not idolators. The Trustees have made it quite clear in the notice cancelling the appointment of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin as their agents that the East London Mosque remains open to all Muslims without restriction, and permission will be given to the

Jamiat-ul-Musulimin or any Muslim Association, or any other body or person who would like to arrange any function for Id, Prophet's birthday, or any other such occasion, when in the interests of the Muslim such a function could be properly held in the Muslim premises. (This para. has not been printed by the Jamiat in their leaflet).

9. At present all the Trustees are Muslim, except one, Earl Winterton, well-known for his sympathy and friendship for the Muslim cause. All the members of the Executive Committee of the London Mosque Fund are Muslims with the exception of the Hon. Treasurer, who is a Christian.

A Managing Committee for the Mosque, composed entirely of Muslims, was appointed in 1941. However, so long as the Jamiat was the agent of the Trustees such a managing committee was not functioning. Now that the Jamiat has ceased to be the agents of the Trustees, the Managing Committee for the Mosque will resume its duties and members of the congregation will be invited to serve on it.

Information on two leading members of the Jamiat-ul-Musulimin (dated 1.11.1943)

BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fols 75-79

SAID AMIR SHAH

b/o Fazal Shah and ? nephew of Akbar Shah.
Born: Ajwala, dist. Amritsar, Punjab.

Treasurer Jamiat-ul-Musulimin.

m/o firm of Shah Bros., Silk merchants and warehouseman, 8 Whitechurch Lane. Has in his time run Indian boarding houses in the East End and also had a shop at 36 Old Montague Street. Before the war he acted as a contractor to Film Companies in respect of Indian "crowds".

AMIR SHAH first came to notice as representing East End Indians on the Executive Committee of the London branch of the Indian National Congress. (This branch was later disaffiliated by the I.N.C.). His name cropped up now and again between 1930 and 1932 as the owner of somewhat doubtful Indian boarding houses, but he did not otherwise attract attention until 1939, when, with his brother Fazal Shah, he ran an employment agency for Indian film extras whom they recruited from lascars and hawkers in return for substantial commissions. In

November of that year Fazal Shah returned to India and there was good reason for thinking that he had done so because he was alarmed lest the authorities had become aware that he and Amir Shah had been falsifying their Income Tax returns.

In 1940 Amir SHAH was taking a good deal of interest in cases in which Indian seamen figured and actually acted as official Court interpreter. His contact with V.K. Krishna MENON began at this time, as the latter was similarly interested in cases of lascars. In this year he was said to be very anti-British and showed symptoms of defeatism: he certainly did not wish to invest his money in this country.

During 1941 and during the earlier part of 1942, Menon, who had himself no means of approach to East End Indians, cultivated SHAH and endeavoured to secure his influence in propagating the India League "line". Neither of the pair has any great opinion of the other, but there was, nevertheless, a certain amount of collaboration between them in regard to meetings and collection of funds for the India League and for various objectives sponsored by the latter. Shah, for instance, was responsible for calling an East End Indian Conference on 9.8.41, and attended the India League conference on 10.8.41.

In September 1941, with Professor G.S. DARA who acted as accountant to the firm of Shah Bros., he formed the Hindustani Majlis. This organisation, it was stated, had been originally formed to promote studies in Indian languages, but was extended in its scope to include "social and cultural" activities; it finally embarked on politics with the ambitious intention of co-ordinating the activities of East End and "West End" Indians. There is no evidence that anything concrete was achieved along these lines by the Hindustani Majlis.

In 1942 it was reported that Amir SHAH was encouraging anti-Soviet ideas in the East End and was maintaining that neither Britain nor Russia had the right to occupy any Moslim country. On Indian Independence Day he attended a meeting organised by the India League as representative from the East End and read the pledge of Independence in Urdu.

With John Kartar Singh, Sahibdad Khan and Ahmed Din Qureshi, he evinced a certain amount of interest in the affairs of the Hindustani Social Club; they did not wish to associate themselves unduly with it, since it was run by the Communist, Surat Ali, but thought that there was something to be said for joining it in order to oust Ali from the secretaryship. They were unable to agree on concerted action in this matter.

In July 1942 Amir SHAH founded the Shah Film Corporation, with himself as Managing Director, and Kartar Singh and Herbert Bundy as co-Directors. On 4.7.42 Kartar Singh had been fined £2,500 for exceeding a quota of razor blades and penalised to the further amount of £250. There were reports that both Amir Shah and Kartar Singh were engaged in Black Market activities. This allegation has been quite recently repeated in regard to Shah.

In August 1942 Amir SHAH's political activities greatly increased. He became, so to speak, the "Moslem member" of the Committee of Indian Congressmen in Great Britain, and has taken a very active part in this connection, both in the direction of addressing meetings and collecting funds. The C.I.C. was originally the creation of Amiya Nath Bose, nephew of Subhas Bose, and P.B. Seal, and the presence of these two amongst its Office Bearers led to the organisation being regarded as pro-Fascist and pro-Subhas Bose, and also to a number of splits amongst the membership. Nevertheless, Shah remains one of the leading figures in the organisation and clearly intends, by means of it, to increase his influence upon East End Indians who are useful to him for his various commercial enterprises (e.g. the recruitment of film crowds). The fact that he has contacts with the Indian working class, is, of course, a decided asset to the C.I.C. These activities on Shah's part have naturally led to a rift with Menon, who is now denouncing him in no uncertain terms as a pro-Fascist and a Black Marketeer.

Amir SHAH has for some time (possibly at the original instance of Menon) been bitterly anti-Moslem League and has characterised the League as a traitorous organisation in the pay of Great Britain "led by Jinnah who received a princely sum as the price of his services to the British". He went to the expense of having copies printed of a speech expounding these views made by him at a meeting of the C.I.C. held in the East End on 28.10.42.

It is now clear that from 1941 onwards, SHAH has been trying to work himself up to a position of leadership in Moslem circles in this country. It is highly improbable that he has any religious motives in the matter, but desires to strengthen his hand as uncrowned king amongst Indian merchants, peddlers and seamen in the East End and in Provincial towns. In October 1941, when the East London Mosque was opened, he commented to the effect that it was not the Mosque he wanted, but it would have its uses. Shortly afterwards he was one of two members of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin co-opted onto the Board of Trustees of the Mosque and the Mosque Fund, and thereafter campaigned strenuously to obtain control, through the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, of the Mosque and the Fund. He was particularly bitter

against Sir Hassan Suhrawardhy, whom he regarded as pro-Moslem League.

In pursuance of these tactics, he formed Provincial branches of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, and staffed them to a great extent with persons who were either relations, friends or business associates, with the result that the non-political character of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin altered in the course of a few months. Still with the same end in view, at the close of 1942, he founded an "Indian National Moslem Committee" with the aid of Amiya Nath Bose, and under the wing of the latter's Committee of Indian Congressmen. He used his position as an official of the Jamiat to recruit members for his new organisation and used the latter to foment the dispute between the Jamiat and the Board of Trustees of the East London Mosque, which came to a head in October 1943. (In this affair, which is still unsettled and has reached the hands of solicitors on both sides, he is undoubtedly the prime agitator). The aim of the Indian National Moslem Committee purports to be the union of all Indian Moslems in Great Britain in one organisation for the protection of their religious and political rights; its political aim is stated in its constitution to be the realisation of the complete and immediate independence of India. In the same publication it is announced that the Committee stands for joint electorates with reserved seats for Minorities, and condemns the Pakistan plan as a suicidal policy for Indian Moslems fostered by the enemies of Islam and India. The Constitution further stated that "the Committee stood for democracy, since that was the basic creed of Islam, and was therefore opposed to all forms of nomination and hereditary devolution of power, either in religious or political fields, which are against democratic procedure."¹

Throughout the first half of 1943 SHAH collaborated very closely with Amiya Nath Bose and followed the fortunes of the latter's organisation, the Committee of Indian Congressmen. During these months, and also up to date, he has acted as a spy for Bose on the activities of other Indian organisations. Nevertheless, he cannot be said to have been loyal to Bose, for in June and July of this year he was attempting pourparlers with both the India League and Swaraj House, ostensibly to create unity amongst Indians – but the piece de resistance in all suggestions was that Bose and Seal should be eliminated from the C.I.C. It seems that these moves were really an attempt to ascertain whether there was any chance of creating an organisation to defeat

¹There is no closing quotation mark in the original document.

Surat Ali, of whose influence in the East End and the Provinces he has become exceedingly nervous.

SHAH is at the moment supporting Bose's Famine Campaign, partly to enhance his own importance in the East End and the Province generally, and partly because he apparently wants Bose's assistance, or that of Bose's Press contacts, in regard to the East London Mosque dispute. Bose sent a telegram to the Mayor of Calcutta in Shah's name, and other telegrams in his own name, Seal's, and that of his Committee of Indian Congressmen. Replies have been received out of which much capital is being made, the one sent to Shah being specially useful to the latter for display to his following. This rather astute move on the part of Bose will make it difficult for Shah to wriggle away from the Committee of Indian Congressmen for the time being. Bose, like other Indian leaders in the UK, evidently mistrusts Shah but is forced to use him as a contact with the Indian working classes.

SHAH has spoken at numerous meetings under various auspices during the past year, including meetings of Surat Ali's Hindustani Social Club, which he desires to penetrate. For example, on 10.5.43, he spoke at a meeting to celebrate "Indian Martyrs' Days", lauded the Mutiny as a great event in Indian history, and blamed the "Lords of Whitehall" for initiating and encouraging the Pakistan movement, which, he said, permitted the Moslem landlords to suck the blood of the Moslem peasantry. It was, he said, the latest example of the "Divide and Rule Principle". He urged Indians to do something concrete for their country – to act.

It is interesting to note that he held one meeting under the auspices of the Indian National Moslem Committee to pray for Gandhi's health during the latter's fast, and to demand his release. In his speech on that occasion, he said that the Moslem community had undying faith in Gandhi as their leader and that, in spite of what was published in the British Press, every Moslem in India was behind Gandhi, who had been elected leader of Congress by all castes and creeds. These utterances, coming from the Treasurer of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, which presumably includes supporters of Jinnah, are not likely to make for peace within that organisation.

SAHIBDAD KHAN

Punjabi Mohammedan, s/o Abdulah Khan.

Born: Kal Kligri, dist. Jhelum, on 8.8.96

Passport no. 4080, issued Lahore 1920, renewed London 17.3.26, to enable him to visit France, Germany and the U.S.A.

Married to an Englishwoman; two children.

Address: 135 Benhurst Avenue, Elm Park, Romford, Essex

According to Police records, KHAN first came to the United Kingdom in 1923, lived in the Mornington Crescent district and was known by his clan name "CHUMA". In 1926 he went to the U.S.A. and returned the following year, since when he has been engaged in the perfumery business. In 1935 he commenced to trade at 9 Assam Street, E.1, under the name of the Egyptian Perfumery Company, but since 1938 has traded under his own name. He has one employee, Ghulam Mohammed Buta, a Punjabi aged 40, who has been with him since May 1942 and is paid £5 per week. He is reported to be a "conscientious Moslem and less interested in politics than Khan".

At one time Sahibdad Khan and Syed Akbar Shah (relative of Said Amir Shah) were associated in business; in October 1937 they were granted a license in respect of the Oriental Artistes Agency (Films), but this business has now ceased to function.

Sahibdad KHAN first came to notice as interested in politics in 1935, when he was one of those who signed an address of welcome to Nehru. In the same year he was reported to be associating with Surat Ali and to be treasurer of the Colonial Seamen's Association but information is limited on this point to one not very conclusive report.

In 1939 he was described as by no means extreme in his sentiments but as coming under the thumb of Said Amir SHAH and as acting as Secretary of the latter's organisation "Indian Residents in Great Britain" (now apparently defunct). Shah's idea in forming this organisation seems to have been to counter the effects in the East End of Surat Ali's Hindustani Social Club. (Said Amir Shah loathes Surat Ali).

In August 1941 he attended the India League meeting held in the East End (9.8.41) which was run with the aid of Sair [*sic*] Amir Shah; with the latter he was on the platform representing Moslem interests and was described as Joint Hon. Sec. of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin. He announced that the purpose of the meeting was to appoint delegates to the India League Conference the following day and was himself elected as also was Said Amir Shah. Speaking in Hindustani, he made a moderate speech, advising unity and punctuality amongst Indians as likely to be conducive to a co-ordination of activities in the direction of securing freedom.

On 24.1.42 he attended an Indian Independence Day meeting staged by the India League and on the following day presided over one organised by the Hindustani Social Club. He appealed to Indians to sink their petty differences and unite.

In March 1942 he was showing some interest in the Hindustani Club. He considered it would be better to “penetrate” it, with a view to removing Surat Ali from the secretaryship, rather than to increase friction by starting a rival show to the Club.

In October 1942 he appeared to be taking a very mild and friendly interest in the affairs of the Indian Workers Association, and on 25th October is reported to have attended the first public meeting organised by the Committee of Indian Congressmen in Great Britain (Amiya Nath Bose’s organisation).

On 31st January 1943 he attended and spoke at an Indian Independence Day meeting run by the Hindustani Social Club in the East End. He contended that there was no disunity between the Hindu and Moslem Committees, and that it was a myth created by the British Government and exploited by them for propaganda purposes and to justify denial of freedom to India.

He referred to the then impending battles in North Africa and said that the Allies should not attack Tunisia, a Moslem country, thereby endangering the lives of Tunisian Moslems. He added that Moslems in the Middle East and in India were anxiously awaiting developments.

In August 1943 it was reported that KHAN, who had a license to purchase spirits for use in perfumery manufacture, disposed of his purchase at a profit of over 200%. The informant added that there was rivalry between him and Said Amir Shah, who also dealt in the Black Market, but that they were careful not to tread on each other’s toes.

On 14th October, after the meeting held by the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin to protest against the action of the Trustees of the London Mosque Fund, Said Amir SHAH, discussing the proceedings, described Khan as “mentally defective”. This was because Khan had wanted to stick to points which were absolutely legal – whereas Shah and his supporters wanted to avoid them, because “in agitation, controversial points must be avoided”. Bose is understood to have commented that it must indeed be difficult to conduct a meeting of the Executive Committee of Shah’s Indian National Moslem organisation, if that was Khan’s method of procedure. Apparently Shah was incensed because Khan had jibbed at the publication of a pamphlet on the East London Mosque question, written from the “agitation” point of view, and wanted him to confine himself to facts.

Scotland Yard officers who have known Khan for nearly four years consider him a moderate man and a conscientious Moslem who

devotes much of his time to the affairs of the East London Mosque. He is reported to have balanced ideas on the subject of Indian Independence in spite of being a keen nationalist. He has, according to them, never been deeply involved in extremist politics although serious attempts have been made to persuade him to take a more active part in both the India League and the Committee of Indian Congressmen, and they considered that he went to political meetings only to avoid trouble with his friends and spoke mildly at them, if at all.