

## MUHAMMAD ASAD: TWENTY-SIX UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

### *Muhammad Arshad*

Muhammad Asad had a large circle of friends—from Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) to Muhammad Hussain Baburi (d. 1984), a type-writer mechanic he hired when he set up his printing press. Among his eminent friends were Chaudhri Niyaz Ali Khan (1880–1976), Mir Wa'iz Muhammad Yusuf (1892–1968), a Kashmiri religious and political leader and the founder of Anjuman-i Nusrat al-Islam, Mawlana Abdul Qadir Qasuri (1863–1942) and his younger brother Maulavi Abdullah Qasuri (1875–1949); Sayyid Sulayman Nadwi (1884–1953), the director of Dar al-Muṣannfin (Azamgarh, India), Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi (1903–1979), Mawlana Sayyid Dawud Ghaznvi (1895–1963), Muhammad Ismail Ghazanvi (1895–1964), Mawlana Ahmad Ali Lahori (d. 1962), Dr. Zakir Hussain (1897–1969), the vice-chancellor of the Jamia Millia Delhi (1928–1948), Dr. Omer Hayat Malik (1892–1982), the Principal of Islamia College Peshawar and Lahore and later the vice-chancellor of the University of Punjab (1947–1950), Muntaz Hassan (1907–1974), the Finance Secretary of the Government of Pakistan (1952–1958), and his younger brother Nasim Hasan (1911–1995), Zahid Hussain (1893–1957), the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan and the founder chairman of the Planning Commission of Pakistan, Chaudhri Nazir Ahmad Khan (d. 1980), the attorney general of Pakistan (1959–1961), Muhammad Sadiq Qureshi (a Lahore based journalist), A. D. Azhar a government servant in British India and later in Pakistan and several others.

I have collected more than 170 letters by Asad from various persons. I am indebted to the descendants of the Mawlana Ghulam Mehr, Chaudhri Nazir Ahmad Khan, Malik Muhammad Ashraf, and Muhammad Sadiq Qureshi for making these letters available to me. The author is greatly indebted to late Maqbool Hussain Baburi (d. 2005), the son of Muhammad Hussain Baburi, for the provision of a folder containing more than 130 original letters of Asad. Most of these letters are addressed to Muhammad Hussain

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(by Asad and Pola Hamida), but there were also dozens of copies of letters addressed to others. These letters are significant source to understand the life, career, and intellectual and political interests of Asad. They also shed light on the intellectual, cultural, social and political history of the period.

**Keywords:** Muhammad Asad; Islamic intellectual history; Pakistan; Formative currents in Islamic thought; politics and culture of the colonial era; British Raj; Islam, Muslims and the challenge of modernity.

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### About these letters and their recipients

No attempt has been made to alter the text of the letters. Asad sent both typed and handwritten letters. The language and phrases used by Asad over the extended period of fifty years (1935-1986) during which these letters were written, provide important clues to his intellectual and personal developments. Until his arrival in the Indian Subcontinent in 1932, Asad had not written much in English. His articles for the German and Swiss newspapers were in German. He had learned conversational Arabic during his second trip to the Muslim lands (1924-1926), and seemed to have quickly learned to read scholarly texts while he was in Arabia. He provides no details of his teachers, but vaguely says he studied *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* in Madinah.<sup>1</sup>

These letters reveal that once in India, Asad quickly picked up English usage spoken and written in the Indian Subcontinent at that time. His shorthand notations, the use of words peculiar to the Subcontinent (Begum sahība), even the format of letters (the way self-address is inserted in the handwritten letters and how the addressees are addressed) are all indicative of a rapid acquisition of local culture. Some of the official letters included in this selection are written and formatted in the style of the colonial administrative structure set up by the British.

**Letter 1.** Addressed to Chaudhri Niaz Ali Khan (1880-1976) to whom Asad remained greatly indebted throughout his life.<sup>2</sup> Niaz Ali Khan, an engineer by profession, was an affluent and wealthy resident of Jamalpur (Pathankot,

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1. *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* (Lahore: Arafat Publications, 1938), Volume 1, Part I, p. 8.

2. For details see: *Arshad, Islami Riyasat ki tashkil-i jadid: Muhammad Asad kay afkar ka tanqidi mutali'a* (Lahore: Al-Faisal, 2011), pp.147-154; Idem, "Dar al-Islam (Pathankot) ka ta'limi Mansuba", *Jihad al-Islam*, 5:2 (January-June 2012), pp. 105-140; Sayyid Asad Gilani, *Iqbal, Dar al-Islam aur Mawdudi* (Lahore: Islami Ikadmi, 1978), chaps. 6 and 7; Safir Akhtar, *Bayaad-i Sayyid Mawdudi* (Lohsar Sharfo, Wah Cantt: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1998), pp. 79-82; Raihana Qureshi, *Dar al-Islam: ayk tehqiqi mutali'a* (Lahore: 'Ala Publications, 2000).

East Punjab, India). In 1935, he planned to establish an institution of Islamic learning with the aim to impart Qurʾān instructions to the graduates of the modern institutions. He contacted eminent ‘Ulamā’ and intellectuals, including Sayyid Sulayman Nadwi, Abu al-Kalam Azad, Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, Mawlana Ahmad Ali Lahori, the eminent disciple of Obaidullah Sindhi, and Mawlana Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhalavi, offering them various positions in the proposed institution. Niaz Ali Khan also corresponded with Sayyid Abu’l-A’la Mawdudi<sup>3</sup> and Muhammad Asad. In response Mawdudi and Asad corresponded with Niaz Ali Khan. Two of Asad’s letters to Niaz Ali Khan have survived.<sup>4</sup> In these letters, Asad enthusiastically welcomes the notion of a new Islamic Dār al-‘ulūm. His letters reveal that he also tried to get Muhammad Iqbal<sup>5</sup> interested in the scheme.<sup>6</sup>

Chaudhri Niaz Ali and Muhammad Asad travelled to Lahore and met with Muhammad Iqbal to elucidate the scheme of the proposed Dār al-‘ulūm. To realize the scheme Dar al-Islam trust was constituted in December 1937 and Muhammad Asad was appointed as one of its six trustees.<sup>7</sup> Though Asad visited Jamalpur several times, he could not settle there. On the eve of the Second World War, Asad was interned in Ahmadnagar by the Indian British Government. During most of his internment years (1939-1945), his wife Munira and son Talal stayed at Jamalpur as guests of Niaz Ali Khan.<sup>8</sup>

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3. See Akhtar Hijazi (ed.), *Dar al-Islam* (Lahore: Idara-i Tarjuman al-Qurʾan, 1995; Rafiuddin Hashmi and Saleem Mansur Khalid (eds.), *Khutoot-i Mawdudi*, vol. 2 (Lahore: Manshoorat, 1995).
  4. For the text of another letter dated 18th November 1936 see. M. Ikram Chaghatai, *Muhammad Asad: Europe’s Gift to Islam* 2 vols. (Lahore: The Truth Society 2006), vol. 2, pp. 690, 736, 762, 860, 884, 932.
  5. Two of the Asad’s letters have been recorded in the proceedings of Anjuman-i Himayat-i Islam, and later produced in M. Sherif, *Searching for Solace: A Biography of Abdullah Yusuf Ali* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1994), pp. 114-115, n. 34. These letters reflect Asad’s vision of a Faculty of Islamic Studies. On the recommendation of Muhammad Iqbal (then the President of Anjuman-i Himayat-i Islam), the Executive Committee of the Islamia College Lahore appointed Asad as Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies. Asad, in his letters to Iqbal, elucidated a scheme of Islamic learning.
  6. Muhammad Asad to Niaz Ali Khan, 18th November 1936, in Chaghatai, *Muhammad Asad*, vol. 2, p. 884. For Urdu translation of the letter see: K. M. Azam, *Hayat-i Sadid: Baniye dar al-Islam Chaudhri Niaz Ali Khan* (Lahore: Nashariyat, 2010), pp. 64-67.
  7. Arshad, “Dar al-Islam (Pathankot) ka ta’limi Mansuba”, p.122.
  8. See Asad to Ghulam Rasul Mehr. See also Azam, *Hayat-I Sadid*, pp.46-67; Idem, “The Unforgettable Pakistani”, *The Daily News* (Lahore), July 1, 2000, p.6.

**Letter 2:** Addressed to Chaudhri Muhammad Aslam Khan, the son of Chaudhry Niaz Ali Khan, to offer condolence on the demise of his father in 1976. Asad also wrote a few lines as obituary, this is placed the end of this letter.

**Letters 3-9:** Addressed to the well-known journalist and historian Mawlana Ghulam Rasul Mehr (1895-1971). Asad had developed a close friendship with Mawlana Ghulam Rasul Mehr, who was highly appreciative of Asad's work. Mehr, through his newspaper *Inqilab* (Lahore), very generously introduced Asad's intellectual endeavors to Muslim intelligentsia. During the early months of his internment, Asad wrote several letters to Mawlana Mehr, asking for his support. Asad did continue to correspond with Mehr in the post-internment years as well. Seven letters of Asad have survived in Mehr's collection. Among these, the first five were written from the Ahmadnagar internment Camp. These letters highlight the agony and suffering Asad underwent during the period. He looked for support of influential figures of the Muslims of India. Letter 7 was written from Dalhousie, East Punjab, where Asad had established his Arafat Press after his release from the British internment in second half of the 1945.<sup>9</sup> He launched his journal, *Arafat* (1946) from Dalhousie. This letter reveals that one of the vital influences that had a significant impact on Asad's intellectual development that was of Ibn Hazm (994-1064). Letter 8 was written by Asad as Director of the Department of Islamic Reconstruction (Established in 1947 by the Government of the West Punjab, Lahore, by the Premier Nawab Iftikhar Hussain Mamdote, 1906-1969). Asad endeavored to devise a plan for the establishment of a model Islamic Dār al-ʿulūm for training jurists and theologians. He also evolved a scheme for the Islamization of the institutions of the newly created Muslim state of Pakistan. Asad wanted to form advisory committees to review the scheme. Mawlana Ghulam Rasul Mehr was often invited to the meetings of the committee.<sup>10</sup>

**Letters 10-11:** Addressed to Malik Muhammad Ashraf (1915-1981) (Gujrat, Pakistan). Ashraf was a devoted friend of Dr. Iqbal; he authored two monographs as commentaries on some of his poems. One of his monograph is devoted to the poem "Iblis ki Majlis-i Shura" (which he published as *The Devil's Conference*). During 1933-1938, Asad frequently visited Iqbal; they often discussed intellectual and political concerns of the time.<sup>11</sup> Ashraf, while

9. See. Arshad, *Islami riyasat ki tashkil-i jadid*, pp. 155-158.

10. For details on the Department of Islamic Reconstruction see Arshad, *Islami Riyasat ki tashkil-i jaded*, pp. 161-163.

11. These visits were also related to Asad's editorship of *Islamic Culture* (Hyderabad Deccan). He was appointed its Editor after Pickthall's death (May 19, 1936). He moved from Srinagar to Lahore (September/October 1936), and until the first quarter of 1939, he edited and published the journal from Lahore. It was during this period, that he frequently visited

interpreting Iqbal had asked Asad to comment on Iqbal's life and thought. Ashraf received several letters from Asad in this connection; while commenting on Iqbal's poetry, Asad also took into account Iqbal's writings on Islam. Ashraf was much impressed by Asad's contributions to the emerging debates on Islamic polity, he took special interest in Asad's *Islam at the Crossroads* and the English translation and commentary of *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. In his commentary on the poem, Ashraf quotes Asad while elucidating Iqbal's philosophy and thought.<sup>12</sup>

**Letters 12-21:** During his New York years (1951-1953), especially after his resignation from the position of Pakistan's representative to the United Nations (October 1952) and his marriage to Pola Hamida (1st November 1952), there were rumors in a circle of Pakistani press about his apostasy and reversion to Judaism.<sup>13</sup> He was also labeled as an agent of the Western powers. Asad was greatly disturbed by the mischief and wrote numerous letters to his friends in Pakistan, including Altaf Hussain (1900-1968), the editor of the *Daily Dawn* (1945-1965), Mumtaz Hasan (1907-1974), Secretary Finance, Government of Pakistan, 1952-1958), Sir Muhammad Zafarullah Khan, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan (1947-1954), Zahid Hussain (1893-1957), the first Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan (1948-1953), Hamid Nizami (1915-1962), the editor of the *Daily Nawa-i Waqt*, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, the famous publisher of Lahore (who was the main publisher of books on Islam at that time), and the editor of *The Islamic Literature* (Lahore). He also wrote to editors of some of the leading newspapers and periodicals. In these letters, Asad clarifies his position and forcefully reiterated his unshakable commitment to Islam and the Muslim Ummah.<sup>14</sup>

With regard to his family life, the situation seems more complex than how Asad describes it in these letters. The news of his marriage to Pola Hamida was like a

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Iqbal and had discussion with him on Islamic issues. See Muhammad Asad, *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhari* (1935), vol. 1, "Preface"; Idem, "Sir Muhammad Iqbal is Dead", *Islamic Culture*, xii:2 (1938), p. 1; Idem, "Iqbal's Role in Muslim Thought", *The Voice of Islam* (March 1957), pp. 633-636; Idem, *Home-Coming of the Heart, 1933-1992*, edited by Chaghatai, (Lahore: The Truth Society, 2012), pp. 68-76, 86, and passim; Sayyid Nazir Niyazi, *Iqbal kay Hazur* (Karachi: Iqbal Academy, 1971), pp. 383-387.

12. Ashraf acknowledged his indebtedness to Asad in the preface of his work, see Muhammad Ashraf, *The Devil's Conference (Iblis Ki Majlis-i Shura)* (Gujrat, Pakistan: Urdu House Booksellers, 1371 A. H.), "Preface", p. 3.

13. The English Weekly *Star* (Lahore) launched a campaign against Asad on April 4, 1953. Asad recognized Ahmad Shah Bukhari (1898-1958), known as Patras Bukhari, who was Asad's immediate boss at United Nations, as the mastermind of the campaign (See my *Islami Riyasat*, pp. 166-168).

14. For details, see my *Islami Riyasat*, pp. 166-169.

bombshell for his wife Munira and son Talal, both of whom were in London at that time. Asad recounts this in *Home-coming of the Heart* (pp. 182-189).

He had met Pola Hamida in New York at a reception given by Pakistan's press attaché and was immediately drawn to her. In the reception, he introduced himself to her and "we talked and talked, and I found that she had a lively, perceptive mind, and I knew that I had fallen in love with her... I asked her to have dinner with me, and she agreed...It was May 7, 1952. Pola, half his age, was then married and so was Asad. But they courted each other for two months and in June, when Asad proposed, she said, "But, darling, you are already married – and so am I.' 'Yes,' I replied, 'I am married, but I am no longer living with my wife and have no intention of living with her in the future. We have become estranged from one another, and there is nothing in common between us except our son. Moreover, I am a Muslim and my religion allows me to have more than one wife. Although I would not like to divorce her – because of our son – we are already separated to all intents and purposes, and if you agree to marry me, her remaining outwardly my wife would not really play any role in your and my life....'" (pp. 187-88).

Pola agreed. Asad arranged for her to "fly to Mexico to obtain a quick divorce"; he also wrote to Munira and Talal. "Munira's reaction was swift and violent. She not only refused point-blank to accept my proposal, but she went straight to the Pakistan High Commissioner in London and told him that I intended to abandon her. She raised such a scandal that the High Commissioner not only saw fit to address to me a highly offensive letter of 'admonition', but also – quite unwarrantably – wrote to the Governor-General of Pakistan, Khwaja Nazimuddin, asking him to intervene directly in the matter."

The situation was, however, more complex than a Pakistani official asking permission to marry a foreigner. Pola was then "working at the Voice of America as editorial 's assistant to a well-known radio commentator, Raymond Gram Swing...before her present job, she had been employed at the State Department in Washington as secretary to the head of the European desk, and was for some time in charge of the secretarial pool at the U.S. Delegation to the United Nations, and it was in that capacity that she had become acquainted with some Middle Eastern and Pakistani representatives since she was responsible for introducing American VIPs who visited sessions at Lake Success to the heads and members of the various delegations."

Even though Asad wrote to Zafarullah Khan, he later insinuatingly and bitterly wrote about "the fine Italian hand" of Zafarullah Khan, "who had known Pola for well over a year before I made my appearance on the scene and had often lunched with her during his many visits to New York."

Both Munira and Talal were devastated by the letter received in London.

Munira had stood with Asad, in thick and thin, through the twenty-two years of their life, first in Arabia, then in the Subcontinent, where Asad was interned during the War years and she took care of their young son. When Asad went to New York, Munira went to London to be with Talal, but there were plans for her to go New York. After receiving the letter, Talal wrote “a brief letter” to Asad, “declaring, ‘My father is dead.’ Although I realized that this was an emotional response, it did, of course, hurt me deeply. A few weeks later he turned up, unannounced, in New York, having borrowed the airplane fare from my step-brother Martin in London. His purpose: to persuade me not to marry Pola. Both Pola and I tried, of course, to make Talal understand that this was not, nor ever could be, a break with him nor the end of the world, but he returned to London almost immediately, obviously unconvinced” (*Home-coming*, p. 189). Munira died in 1978, bitterness between Pola and Talal was to remain until the end, as personal conversations with Pola and Talal indicate.

**Letter 22:** This letter to Zafar Ishaq Ansari (27 December 1932–24 April 2016),<sup>15</sup> is in response to seeking Asad’s permission to undertake an Urdu translation of *The Road to Mecca*.

**Letter 23:** Addressed to Colonel Anwar Ahmad, giving some details on Asad’s publications.

**Letter 24:** Addressed to Chaudhri Nazir Ahmad Khan, a renowned pan-Islamist, the former attorney general of Pakistan, and the editor of *Al-Ahībba*.<sup>16</sup> Chaudhri Nazir Ahmad Khan was an admirer of Asad.

**Letter 25:** Addressed to Mrs. Nazir Ahmad Khan, offering condolence on the demise of Nazir Ahmad Khan.

**Letter 26:** To Abdul Qadir Najafi, the grandson of Dr. Abdul Ghani (1864-1943) of Jalapur Jattan (Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan). Dr. Abdul Ghani was the founder director of Public Instruction of Afghanistan as well as the founder principal of Maktab-e-Habibia Kabul (1905-1915; 1919-1927). Dr. Abdul Ghani later served as Principal of Islamia College Lahore. He was the author of *History of Afghanistan*. He translated one of the famous treatise of Sayyid Mawdudi, *Risala-e-Diniyat*, into English.<sup>17</sup> He also undertook a English translation of the

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15. See his obituary in this issue of *Islamic Sciences*.

16. Asad authored a preface to Nazir Ahmad Khan’s *Commonwealth of the Muslim States: A Plea for Pan-Islamism* (Lahore: Ferozsons Ltd., 1972), pp. i-ii. Nazir Ahmad quoted Asad intensively in his writings. See Chaudhri Nazir Ahmad Khan, *Afkar-i Milli* (Lahore: Al-Ahībba, 1978), pp. 74, 271 and passim.

17. Originally written in 1932 in Urdu. The English translation entitled “*Towards Understanding Islam*” was published in 1940 by Tarjuman al-Qur’an. Later the translation was thoroughly revised and its several editions were published by Idara-I Tarjuman al-Qur’an, Lahore.

Qurʾān, which remains unpublished.<sup>18</sup>

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(1)

**To Chaudhri Niyaz Ali Khan**

THE ARAFAT PUBLICATIONS

SRINAGAR, KASHMIR.

22 November 1935.

Dear Khan Sahib,  
As-salamu alaikum,

I must apologise for not having earlier answered your very kind letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> inst. The proposal it contained is so full of consequences that I had to spend some time considering it.

As it happens, I had since years the idea of starting a religious school of the kind mentioned by you. The disappearance of belief among the young educated generation of Muslims is so obvious that something must be done as soon as possible to counteract, the evil influences of the “modern”, irreligious education. The ulama of the old type are not very helpful in this respect. They merely stick to the formalities of Islam without giving any thought to its moral and spiritual demands. My idea is, to establish a school where young Muslims could not only acquire the knowledge of the Holy Qurʾān and the Traditions of our Prophet (upon whom be peace), but also learn to think in the spirit of Islam, and to find out ways and methods for regenerating the Muslim World. In short, it should be a school for training the future spiritual leaders of Islam. I very much appreciate your desire to make this school like one of the “madrasas” of the old type, because the atmosphere of such a madrasa will have a great traditional value and will in itself act as an antidote against the poison of the so-called “modern” educational system.

Such a project necessitates, of course, considerable expenses, and this was the reason why I never could approach its realization. Sometime ago Dr. Sir Mohd. [Muhammad] Iqbal requested me to take over the post of Dean of religious instruction at the Islamia College, Lahore, and I was, in fact, subsequently appointed by the college Committee; but apart from the fact that this kind of teaching, in the surroundings of an otherwise not very encouraging

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18. The manuscript is in the possession of his descendants. For the life, career, and works of Dr. Abdul Ghani see: Abdul Qadir Najafi, *Dr. Abdul Ghani Jalalpuri, 1864-1943* (Lahore: Maktaba-e Maʿarif-e Najaf, n. d.). For Asad’s encounter with Abdul Ghani, see: Asad, *Home-Coming of the Heart*, pp. 28 and 38-39, fn. 4.

school-system, would not have the effect on youth which I desire, my present pre-occupation with the English Translation of, and a new Commentary on, *Bukhari Sharif* would not allow me efficiently to work at the College, and therefore I declined this post at the last moment. Your project, however, is entirely different. The spirit of a school as suggested by you would be entirely in keeping with the work I have on hand and would, therefore, not collide with it. On the contrary, I think that both these works would further each other. It seems, therefore, that your project is something like God-sent; it might be that old dream of mine is going to be realized.

But there are, so far as I personally am concerned, at present some difficulties in the way, but they are by no means such as could not be surmounted. I have chosen Kashmir as my headquarters, because the heat of the plains does not allow me to work efficiently during the hot months. On the other hand, the printing of "*Sahih al-Bukhari*" is of such a kind as to make my personal supervision absolutely necessary. As there was no suitable press arrangement here at Srinagar, I was obliged to establish a press of my own. I purchased types and other requisites from Europe, and took a printing machine on hire from one of the presses here. I have my own press staff here (compositors, machine-men and proof-readers).

Now you say that the place you live is not as hot as the rest of the Punjab, and what I know of the Kangra-valley, which is in your vicinity, this may well be the case. So it might be possible for me to live and to work permanently there. It is my desire, if I find a suitable place, to make India my home and to work here in the service of Islam. But at present my financial position is extremely straightened, and I could not bear the expenses of shifting my press and my household. Then there is the question of accommodation in Jamalpur; for this sake I would require two houses -one for myself and my family, and one for the press and offices.

As I have said, these difficulties could perhaps be overcome, and I have no doubt that on a large estate such as you fortunately own there will be enough room for my requirements. But in order to settle all these questions it would be necessary for us to meet and discuss all matters personally. At present I am still busy with the printing of the first part of *Bukhari Sharif* which, insha-Allah, will be ready by the middle of December. After that I could come down to the plains and visit you at your place.

I don't need to tell you, dear Khan Sahib, that I very highly appreciate your generosity with regard to this most important scheme. If such a school is once started and if it proves to be a useful institution (and about this I have no doubts), it will be easy to interest the broad Muslim public in it and to enlarge it by and by, until it becomes something of an Islamic Academy and a pride of Muslim India.

I hope to hear from you soon,

and remain,  
yours very sincerely,

*Asad. Asad.*

(2)

**To Chaudhri Muhammad Aslam**

Villa Asadiyya  
La Montagne  
Tangier, Morocco.  
March 19, 1976

My dear Aslam,

It was with infinite sadness that I received your news of the death of your father and my beloved friend. Although this news was expected for some time, it did not make it less painful. May God grant him all that he so richly deserved through his efforts and his exemplary life, and may He console you and your family for your own irreparable loss. As a matter of fact, I did not write to you for a long time because I was precisely afraid to receive such news as this.

*انا لله وانا اليه راجعون*

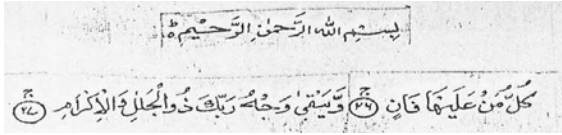
This enclosed few lines do not really express—and cannot express—what I feel for him in the course of the forty years of our friendship. I have no doubt, however, that his efforts will be long remembered and appreciated by all Muslims who came in to contact with him or heard of him.

Hamida joins me, of course, in my feelings. Although she did not know him as well as I did, she was always deeply impressed by his shining goodness and sincerity. The world is really a poorer place without him.

May God bless you all. Please keep in contact with us.

Yours as always,  
Asad

**Obituary of Chaudhri Niaz Ali Khan by Asad included in the above letter:**



The death of Chaudhri Niaz Ali Khan has brought to a close an important chapter of Islamic endeavours in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. His burning love for the idea of Pakistan, his long-standing friendship with the protagonist of that idea, the unforgettable Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, and the establishment of the Darul-Islam Institute on his estate at Jamalpur (in what is now East Punjab) became a focal point of encouragement for many Muslims who were longing for a revival of Islamic thought.

But even more than these concrete results of an exceptionally long and fruitful life entirely devoted to the service of Islam, his outstanding personality – his glowing goodness, deep faith and ever-present readiness to give help wherever help was needed – will forever remain alive in the hearts of those who knew him. During the forty years of our friendship I have never encountered any person of equal selflessness and readiness to sacrifice all his own concerns to the idea of Islam and its propagation in a world that is so badly in need of spiritual guidance: and it is this personal example that constitutes his most enduring contribution to the hopes of all who, like him, love Islam and work for its realization at this crucial point in the history of man.

Muhammad Asad  
(Leopold Weiss)  
FORMER TRUSTEE  
DARUL ISLAM TRUST



(3-9)

**Asad to Ghulam Rasul Mehr**

22th September, 1939.

From  
Muhammad Asad-Weiss,  
No. 622,  
Central Aliens' International Camp,  
Ahmadnagar (Bombay Presidency).  
To  
Mawlana Ghulam Rasul Mehr,  
Editor, "*Inqilab*",  
Lahore.

My dear Mehr Sahib,

We have reached Ahmadnagar two day ago. I am quite all right.

I hope you have had opportunity by now to speak to Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan about me. I feel confident that he will do his best for me, but his intervention will be successful only if he stands personally surety for me. Please do tell him in my name that I build on him the future not only of myself but also of my work, which is always uppermost in my mind.

The many German Jews who are interned with me have their Jewish Relief Association which intervenes on their behalf with the Central Government. But I, being a Muslim, have no claim to that Association. I believe and hope, however, that my Muslim friends will not forget me in my present situation. In the Last years I have lived only for my work, as you know – and now this work is threatened with destruction. I have given up my journalist career – which, as you are well aware, had future in it – for the sake of my ideal. I cannot imagine that my friends will so soon forget it. But I believe that it is necessary to make Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan to realize how urgent and how grave the matter is; otherwise he is apt to forget it under the pressure of his official business.

It is no good to wait until government moves down from the Hills. Kindly see Sir Sikandar yourself in these days again - perhaps, you will have to go to Simla for this purpose, but then you know that I shall always remember this genuine act of friendship. This time it is not a question of business worries, but of the very sweetness and sense of life.

Do write me as often as you can. Every letter brings a little happiness. You must sign your letters with full name and address, otherwise it is not certain whether and when the letters will be delivered. My address you will find at the top of this letter. You must always write my number on the envelope, and the back-flap of the envelope must again bear your full address. The letters must be written in English. Please write soon and in detail. Give my best salams to Hafiz Sahib. He should also write me (in English).

Yours sincerely,  
Muhammad Asad-Weiss



(4)

28<sup>th</sup> September, 1939.

From:

Muhammad Asad-Weiss,

Internee No. 622,

Central Aliens' Internment Camp,

Ahmadnagar (Bombay Presidency

To:

Mawlana Ghulam Rasul Mehr,

Editor, "*Inqilab*",

Lahore.

My dear Mawlana Mehr,

I have not yet heard from you. I hope you have received my letter, written about a week ago.

A few days ago I wrote to Sir Sikandar Hayat and requested him to take decisive steps in the matter which you brought before him. I am sure that he will do something but he is normally so busy that he must be constantly reminded and pushed on. Every day which passes makes the resumption of my work more problematical. You know how difficult it was to overcome the financial obstacles. A hope exists only in a regular and speedy publication. Now everything is becoming more and more precarious, owing to my internment. Unless Sir Sikandar does something quickly, it is difficult to prophesy when I will come out. Tomorrow a Government Commission will reach here which will investigate the cases of all internees and will decide whether this or that individual is to be released. I am rumoured that the Commission will sit for three months, but God knows how long or short the sitting will be.

My wife wrote me from Abbotabad that she was allowed to shift to Lahore. I don't know whether she has already arrived there or not. She is entirely without money, I believe, and so I would request you to see Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf and to tell him that he should kindly advance some money to her. I will certainly not allow that he should suffer on my account. The employees of my press wrote to me that they are penniless, but that Mr. Muhammad Ashraf is prepared to advance money to them if he gets a letter of authority from me. I cannot write him in these days, for we are allowed only a limited number of letters per week, but I am sure that he will act if you show him this letter. Please give him my best Salams. Hafizji will be able to tell Ashraf sahib the amounts which are to be paid to every man. He should himself pay to everyone (including Hafizji himself) one month salary.

I am praying every day that God may end this unjustified internment. Tell my wife that she should write at least every second day, and tell me in detail how

and where she lives. If you see Talal, give him my love. Do write yourself also. I am waiting and waiting for letters from you about Sir Sikandar's action. Loss of freedom, combined with a destruction of one's work, is a bitter thing.

Yours sincerely,  
Muhammad Asad-Weiss



(5)

7. 10. 39 [7<sup>th</sup> of October, 1939].

From:  
Muhammad Asad-Weiss,  
Internee No. 622,  
Central Aliens' Internment Camp,  
Ahmadnagar (Bombay Presidency)  
To:  
Mawlana Ghulam Rasul Mehr,  
Editor, "*Inqilab*",  
Lahore.

My dear Mawlana,

I received yesterday your letter dated the 26th September, and was very happy to learn that I am not forgotten. The waiting here goes on. Several of the internees whose cases have already been heard will be released in these days, and I hope that I will be called soon. I presume that you have seen our friends in Simla. They are now in Lahore, I believe, and you will be able to speak to them more often. Please give me the address of Hafiz. We are not permitted to write to anybody C/O the address of another person. I should like to know how and where he lives. My wife wrote me from Jamalpur, and am glad that she is there. I don't know still what has happened to my press. Did you receive my previous two letters?

I hope to hear from you soon.

With best regards.  
Yours sincerely,  
Muhammad Asad-Weiss.

P. S. Please, write always my full name (Muhammad Asad-Weiss ) and my number on the envelope, as well as your own address.



(6)

12. 10. 39 [12th October, 1939].

From:

Muhammad Asad-Weiss, No. 622,  
Central Aliens' Internment Camp,  
Ahmadnagar (Bombay Presidency)

To:

Mawlana Ghulam Rasul Mehr,  
Muslim Town,  
Lahore.

My dear Mawlana,

Did you receive the three or four letters which I sent you during the last 3 weeks? I got your letter of the 26<sup>th</sup> September, which has greatly cheered me up. But I am afraid that after the initial "spurt" the matter will be left sleeping. My hopes are with you. I have read in the newspapers that Sir Abdul Qadir has been nominated as Sir Muhammad Zafrullah's substitute in H. E. Viceroy's Council, when Sir Muhammad Zafrullah goes as India's delegate to the Dominions Conference in London. Please, give Sir Abdul Qadir my best salams. I shall be very glad if you would inform me about the address of Hafiz Sahib. Is he in Lahore or Jamalpur? I don't know so far what has happened to my press.

Hoping to hear from you soon.

Yours as ever.

Muhammad Asad-Weiss,  
No. 622,  
Central Internment Camp,  
Ahmadnagar



(7)

**Ahmadnagar**

18<sup>th</sup> November, 1939.

From:

Muhammad Asad-Weiss,  
Internee No. 622,  
Central Aliens' Internment Camp,  
Ahmadnagar (Bombay Presidency).

To:

Mawlana Ghulam Rasul Mehr,  
Editor, "Inqilab",  
Lahore.

My dear Mawlana Mehr,

A few days ago I received a lot of letters which had been somehow delayed in the transit – and among those letters was one from you. I was happy to learn that you had been able to see my wife in Lahore and to comfort her. She must be very upset indeed. Since we were married I was never away from her for so long a time, and never under such circumstances.

I really don't know when the present situation will be over. I should think that my case, in spite of appearances, could find an easy solution – but unfortunately the decision does not rest with me. I am waiting and waiting and hoping. Physically I am quite fit, and my expectation that truth will ultimately prevail keeps utter depression away from me.

As I can write only three letters a week, I am not able to write you very often. I must utilize every opportunity to cheer up my wife and child in their present tribulation. But I think very often of you, and hope for the day when I will be able to meet you again.

Please, give my salams to Hafiz Sahib. I have heard from Sh. Muhammad Ashraf that he is living in Model Town. Ashraf wrote me that the last instalment of "Sahih al-Bukhari" printed before my internment has not yet been sent to Hyderabad. Tell Hafiz Sahib that he should see to this matter.

I wonder what the subscribers are thinking of the sudden interruption of the publication. The work was just beautifully progressing, and we all had the hope that it would become financially self-supporting in this autumn. I don't know how the matter will be when I am ultimately released. We will have to work very hard to restore the confidence of the public. Well, I am sure you will help me therein.

My best regards for Salik Sahib.

Yours sincerely,

Muhammad Asad-Weiss

No. 622.

P. S. I had some time ago a letter from the Private Secretary to the Premier telling me that he had received my letter of the 25th September and had forwarded it to the authorities.



(8)

“Fairview”,  
Dalhousie,  
May 28, 1946.

My dear Mawlana Mehr Sahib,

The bearer of this letter, Maulvi Shafiq-ur-Raqhman, is now working for me. I had to send him to Lahore in connection with some business.

You will perhaps remember that some time ago we discussed Ibn Hazm’s *Muhallah*, and you very kindly promised to lend it to me. As I am now working on some aspects of the conventional *fiqh*, I could profit a lot from Ibn Hazm who (as you know) is my Imam A’zam. Please, therefore, give the book to Maulvi Shafiq Sahib, and I can promise you that it will be excellently kept and returned to you in good order. Thanks in anticipation.

Kindly give my best regards to Salik Sahib.

Yours as ever,  
Muhammad Asad



(9)

MORALE BUILDING SUB-COMMITTEE,  
(Provincial Civil Defense Committee, West Punjab)  
Office of the Director of Islamic Reconstruction.

“PIPALS”

Near Civil Secretariat,  
Lahore,  
20<sup>th</sup> September, 1948.

Dear brother,

In view of the present emergency it is most desirable that contact should be established between this Sub-Committee and the press in this Province, so that all our energies should be concentrated on the object of building up the

civic morale of the Millat. In order to discuss the ways and means of such a cooperation, it will be greatly appreciated if you will kindly attend an informal conference at this office at 5.30. It is hoped that you will kindly excuse this short notice.

Yours truly,  
(Muhammad Asad)  
Chairman

Mawlana Ghulam Rasul Sb. Mehr,  
Editor, "INQILAB",  
Lahore.



(10-11)

**To Malik Muhammad Ashraf**

THE ARAFAT PUBLICATIONS

SRINAGAR, KASHMIR

26<sup>TH</sup> August, 1935.

Dear Muhammad Ashraf Khan Sb.,

I am extremely sorry you were disappointed at my silence, but I was absent from Kashmir for nearly two months, and did not receive your letters (all three of them) until after my return about 4 days ago. I hope you will accept this apology.

Your somewhat violent accusations which I have not the slightest doubt, were only dictated by sympathy, are therefore out of place.

I fully appreciate your desire to come into touch with me, and I can assure you that this feeling is mutual. I am very happy that my small effort, embodied in *Islam on the Crossroads* evoke such an echo in the hearts of sincere Muslims.

At present I am busy with the translation of *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the first part of which will be published in October next. I shall not fail to send you one copy.

A prospectus with several specimen copies is being just now printed and I shall send it to you as soon as it is out of press.

I hope that this new translation along with its extensive Commentary, will help many modern Muslims to understand and appreciate the true spirit of Islam - and I pray to God that He may allow me to accomplish this work. Hoping to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely,  
Muhammad Asad



(11)

**ARAFAT**

***A Monthly Critique of Muslim Thought***

Dalhousie, 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1946.

My dear Ashraf Sb.,

I thank you for your letter of the 8<sup>th</sup> instant. I think you are exaggerating the closeness of my association with the late Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, as I know him well only during the last two years of his life. Anyhow, if you send me the M. S. I shall see what I can do by way of an appreciation.

As regards publication, I may tell you that at present I am not in a position to undertake and finance the publication of any books, and so I think you should contact in this matter Sh. Muhammad Ashraf of Lahore.

As desired by you, *Arafat* has been issued in your name, and the first 2 numbers have been sent today per V. P. P. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> numbers will follow. As a rule, we do not accept subscriptions for less than a year, but, in your case I have made an exception. The V. P. P. is for Rs. 4/- (i. e. Rs. 3/12 for six months' subscription plus An. 4 reg. charges). I shall thank you if the balance of Rs. 3/12 is sent before the expiry of the six months (i.e. before the end of February). Or you may perhaps authorize us to recover it per V. P. P., but in this case it would be again Rs. 4/-.

With best regards.

Yours sincerely,

Muhammad Asad / M. Asad



(12)

**Altaf Hussain (Editor Dawn, Karachi)**

3 East 80<sup>th</sup> Street,

New York, N.Y.

June 16, 1953.

My dear Altaf Hussain,

A few days ago I was informed by friends that certain rumours about me are being deliberately circulated in Pakistan. Both by word of mouth and in the press, with the obvious intent to damage my reputation. I do not know in detail what is being said about me, but the main line of the attacks seems to be that (1) have changed my attitude in matters Islamic from what it has been during the last quarter of a century; (2) I am supposed to be sympathetic to political movements to which the whole Muslim world, and especially the middle East,

is fundamentally opposed; and (3) I am supposed to have decided to become permanently domiciled in America and abandon the homeland of my choice, Pakistan.

These allegations are so atrocious and so far from truth that I would not have bothered to contradict them were it not for the fact that what I have heard about them from several sources seems to point to a deliberate campaign against me. To let such attacks pass without contradiction is more than can be expected of me. I shall be, therefore, most grateful if you will see your way to publishing this letter in its entirety in the columns of the "Dawn" and thus afford me an opportunity to defend myself against slander and libel.

The attacks against me seem to be connected with my resignation from the Pakistan Foreign Service in autumn 1952, and so it has become necessary from me to make public the reason for that resignation. In the early summer of 1952, I applied to the Government of Pakistan for permission to be allowed to marry a foreigner (under the rules of the Pakistan Foreign Service no PFS officer is allowed to marry the national of another country without the express consent of the Government). The lady whom I intended to marry was an American citizen of Polish descent, Roman Catholic by birth and Muslim by conversion. I should like to point out that her conversion to Islam took place before I met her; it was indeed this community of experience and belief, which brought us together in the first instance. This fact was known to the Government; nevertheless, the permission to marry was refused and the resignation which, according to the rules, I had to submit together with my application to marry was accepted. I married the lady in question on November 1, 1952.

At about the same time an American publishing firm approached me with the suggestion that I write my autobiography: for to many Americans and Europeans the life-story of a European who embraced Islam in his youth and has ever since identified himself with the outlook and the interests of the Muslim world appeared to be very unusual. I accepted the suggestion not only as a literary proposition but also because it seemed to me that, by describing my own story the understanding of Western readers and thus contribute to a better appreciation, in the West, of our glorious religion which ever since my conversion in 1926 has been the central factor of my life and my work. The writing of this book has made it necessary for me to remain in America until the manuscript is completed and published. Not for a single moment have I intended to take up my domicile here permanently. Pakistan has always been and will always remain the country to which all my loyalties are due; not only because I have been a firm and outspoken believer in the idea of Pakistan since 1934 (as many of my friends will be able to testify), but also because I have always been convinced that the establishment of a state based on the ideology of Islam is of paramount importance to the revival of a truly Islamic spirit all

over the Muslim world.

Ever since I embraced Islam in 1926, I have devoted all my energies to the propagation of its ideology. The views expressed in my book *Islam at the Crossroads*, which was published in 1934 and reprinted several times in Pakistan (and also published in Arabic, at Beirut, in several editions since 1945), as well as the views [...]<sup>19</sup>

The Official Secrets Act unfortunately does not allow me to describe in detail my activities and endeavors in the cause of Islam and Muslim unity during the time that I was Head of Middle East Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I may only mention that if the Government were ever to see fit to disclose the pertinent records, the many memoranda which I wrote on major problems of Pakistan's policy in the Middle East, the reports on my official tour of the Middle East in 1951 and another tour in 1952 (undertaken in the company of Pakistan's Foreign Minister), as well as the recommendations I submitted in the context of these tours to our Government, would bear out my contention that whatever influence I may have possessed was always directed at the strengthening of the bonds of unity between the various components of the Muslim world and at the combating of all trends that might be inimical to the interests of the entire Muslim world and especially of the Muslim middle East.

I understand that some malicious persons have spread the false rumours that because of my origin I am in favour of a rapprochement between the Arabs and the so-called State of Israel and have surreptitiously "visited the State of Israel". Nothing is farther from truth and in this respect, also, the Government of Pakistan could, if necessary, bear out my contention. Not only have I never visited or intended to visit Jewish-held territory in Palestine but have, also always regarded the Arab struggle against Jewish encroachment as a cause with which Pakistan must unreservedly identify herself if she is to fulfill her historical role as a champion not only of Islam but also of right and justice. As a matter of fact, my opposition to Zionism and the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine was made clear even before I became a Muslim: for in my first German book, *Unromantisches Morgenland*, published in 1924 – of which copies are still extant – I strongly advocated the Arab cause and combated Zionist aims on moral grounds. Indeed, it was this realization of the injustice that was being done to the Arabs, which drew me to them in those early years and thus became, indirectly, the initial cause of my interest in Islam and my final conversion in 1926.

Those who have known me throughout all these many years before and after the establishment of Pakistan are fully aware that my conversion to Islam did not bring, nor was it expected to bring, any material benefits to me. That I, on the basis of my public record in the Muslim world extending over more

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19. The original letter is torn and difficult to make out at this point.

than twenty-five years, should now be forced to defend myself publicly against unjustified and groundless accusations in a poor testimony of the value which some Muslims attach to a lifetime spent in the service of Islam. It goes without saying, however, that such a malicious attitude on the part of individuals will not in the least affect my loyalty to the cause of Islam which I have adopted of my own free will simply because I regarded and do regard it as a cause of truth. My life is an open book and everyone who has had personal contact with me over the past twenty-five years will be able to bear witness to what I have aimed at. And God is the best of all witnesses.

Yours sincerely,  
Muhammad Asad.

Ataf Hussain, Esq.  
Editor, "Dawn"  
Karachi, Pakistan.



**No. 13-16**

**To Muntaz Hassan Secretary Finance, Government of Pakistan**

3 East 80<sup>th</sup> Street,  
New York, N.Y.  
June 17, 1953.

My dear Muntaz Hasan,

It is again a long time since I last heard from you and I really do not know whether it was my or your fault. Anyhow, I hear about you from time to time from people coming from Pakistan and am glad to know that things are all right with you.

My own work here is progressing very well. The manuscript of the book will be ready, insha-Allah, in September or so. The publishers are enthusiastic about what they have seen so far of it and expect the book to become a real "hit". Shortly after the American publication, a Separate London edition will appear and also a German translation. Negotiations between my publishers and a French publisher about a French translation are also going on.

Between the completion of the manuscript and its publication in America about six months will elapse. My publishers are desirous that I should utilize this time in preparing a new book on the current situation in the Middle East,

which will probably entail a journey to that part of the world to collect material. A lecture tour in America is scheduled a short time after the publication of the first book. After that we intend to go to Pakistan.

I am told that a lot of silly rumours are circulating in Pakistan about my alleged intention to settle in America for good. All this is, of course, complete nonsense for I have never - not even for a single moment - thought of disconnecting myself from Pakistan. I also hear that some mischievous persons are saying that I have "changed my view about Islam". Nothing could be more idiotic than this. Nevertheless, it hurts that after so many years of work in some of these malicious rum ours (which, I strongly suspect, are largely due to the efforts of Mr. A.S. Bokhari, who seems to pursue me with an incomprehensible hatred) have appeared in the press as well (I have not seen them myself but have been told by reliable persons that this is the case), I have written a letter to Altaf Hussain, a copy of which is enclosed for your perusal. As you will see from it, I have requested him to publish it in full in the "Dawn": this is the only means to defend myself as long as I am forced to stay abroad. I do hope that Altaf Hussain will publish the letter, but, on the other hand, it may well be that he will consider my concern exaggerated in view of what he himself knows about me. Therefore, I shall be most grateful if you will talk to him about it and see to it that my letter is actually published. To those of my friends who have never had any doubts about me, the scurrilous attacks to which I am now exposed may seem of little consequence; but they always seem of much consequence to the person who is exposed to such attacks. Please, therefore, do your utmost to ensure the publication of the letter and also speak about this matter whenever an opportunity arises. Some of the people whom I thought to be my staunch friends - as, for instance, Zahid Hussain Sh. - have unfortunately cut me; at any rate, a long letter, which I wrote to him many months ago, remained unanswered. I do not wish my reputation to be further damaged by remaining silent.

Remembering the many talks we had on the subject of my writing, I am sure you will be glad to know that it is many years since I have been in so productive a mood. Indeed, I doubt whether I have ever felt so strong an urge to express myself in writing as I do now. My marriage has a lot to do with it. Apart from the autobiography I am now writing (and which will cover only the part of my life until the time I came to India), I am planning a sequel volume dealing with my life in India and Pakistan. In both these books Islam, of course, is the central theme. Apart from these, one or two other books are already in my mind, so that, God willing, I will publish during the coming years at least one book per year.

I have written so much about myself that it is now your turn to tell me something about your life and thoughts. Please do write as soon as you can. I

know you must be frightfully busy, but I also know that you are an industrious gentleman and can find time to scribble a few lines to me.

With all my best regards to you and your family,

Yours as ever,  
Muhammad Asad.



3 East 80<sup>th</sup> Street,

New York, N.Y.

July 8, 1953.

My dear Mumtaz Hasan,

Many thanks for your letter of the 25<sup>th</sup> June. I am glad to find that to you also – as you have pointed out in that letter – “it is a happy augury that we thought of each other at the same time”.

I do not quite see why Altaf Hussain should think it necessary to consult the Foreign Office before he publishes my letter to him since it contained nothing that could be construed as objectionable from the Government’s point of view. Nevertheless, I quite appreciate his position. I shall be grateful to you if you will continue pressing him for immediate publication. I have also written to Rahim (F.S.) requesting him to tell Altaf Hussain that he might publish the letter. You might also contact Rahim on this point.

You think that the publication of this letter might do more harm than good. I do not agree with you. Possibly you do not see what harm has already been done to me by the rumours that have gained currency so far. I understand that some of the Middle Eastern representatives in Karachi have also begun to believe them, and if I remain silent any longer, my name will be ruined beyond redemption. “The Star” of Lahore published the following about me on the 4<sup>th</sup> April in the context of an article about alleged “blunders” of Pakistan’s foreign policy:

“An important mistake which was committed by the Government vis a vis Egypt and other Muslim countries was the calling of the Muslim Premier’s conference. This was done under direct advice from Allama Muhammad Asad, now Leopold Weiss, who was then in the Pakistan foreign office. The gentleman who has again become a Jew and married a Jewess in United States of America after abandoning his Syrian wife and children in London is stated to be responsible for this. One now understands the motives of the advisor”.

I am bound to file a suit for libel and defamation against the editor of “The Star”, and in this I need your help. Enclosed you will find an authorization for a lawyer to represent me in that libel suit. I have left the name of the lawyer free, for I want you to decide upon the advocate in Lahore whom you think

most competent to pursue the matter. I shall be grateful if you will immediately decide upon the lawyer in question and entrust him with the suit after filling in his name in the enclosed authorization. It will have to be a Lahore advocate as the offense was committed there. Pleased do not try to “persuade” me, because I am determined to go on with this suit and I am sure that after mature consideration you yourself will admit that this is the only possible course for me.

The action should be built up on the following points arising from the quotation from “The Star” given above:

I had nothing to do with the Government’s decision leading to the calling or calling off of the Muslim Premiers’ Conference as at time of the decision I was no longer in the Foreign Ministry but was Alternate Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations;

- (1) My original name was Leopold Weiss, but it has been Muhammad Asad ever since I embraced Islam in 1926 and has been officially recognized as such by the then Austrian Government in 1934; I have never changed my name back to that of “Leopold Weiss”.
- (2) It is an unqualified lie that I have “again become a Jew”. I am a Muslim and would never dream of giving up my allegiance to Islam;
- (3) The lady I have married in the United States has never been a Jewess. She was Roman Catholic (descending from a Polish family that had always been Roman Catholic) and became a Muslim long before our marriage.<sup>20</sup> The Pakistani Foreign Minister, Chaudhri Muhammad Zafarullah Khan, has known her for several years and was aware of her inclination towards Islam long before I even met her;
- (4) I have never “abandoned” my former wife (who by the way, is not a Syrian but a Saudi Arabian) and “children” (I have only one son); I have never ceased to hold myself financially responsible for them and have continued to maintain them in the same status as before my recent marriage;
- (5) Whatever advice I may have tendered to the Pakistan Government during my service was never motivated by any sympathy for the Jews (which is non-existent with me, as both the Government and my friends can testify), but solely by what I regard to be the interests of Pakistan and the Muslim world.

After you have selected the lawyer, please cable to me and I will send him a detailed letter of instructions.

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20. Contrary to the impression given by “long before our marriage”, recounting their first meeting on May 7, 1952, Asad says in *Home-coming*: “I learned that Pola had embraced Islam a few months earlier.” (p. 182)

I am making a similar communication to my good friend Muhammad Hussain at Lahore asking him to contact you at once, but, remember please: it is for you to decide upon the advocate and to urge him to act vigorously. As regards the fees, you may tell him that I shall be responsible for them either from the damages which I confidently expect will be awarded to me or, alternatively, in cash. You may also instruct him not to agree on any account to a settlement “out of court” and the publication of an “apology”, for this would not help me in the least. What I want and need is a very vigorous lawsuit with a very high demand for indemnities. The figure may be left to the advocate, but it should be placed as high as possible – not that I care for money, but because I care for a strong condemnation of the culprit.

Kindly do what I request you to do. To you, as to many others of my friends who have never had any doubt about my integrity, such scurrilous attacks as that in “The Star” may appear of little consequence; but don’t forget that innumerable people who do not know me as well as you do will not have an equally staunch faith in my integrity.

Enclosed you will find, also, a copy of a letter I have written to Chaudhri Zafrullah. You will see from it that I am somewhat bitter about the role the Government has played in this matter. (Someday I will tell you the whole story in detail). I do not know what, if anything, Zafrullah will do about it, although in my opinion he is morally bound to assist me. Please keep it entirely to yourself that I have sent you a copy of my letter to him.

Forgive me for bothering you so much in spite of my knowing how busy you are. But you are one of the very few friends I have in Pakistan and so I have to impose this burden on you. You may, of course, talk freely about this matter to Azhar.

As things look at present, I may come earlier to Pakistan than expected – namely, sometime in May or June of next year.

With all the best regards to your family, Azar, and other friends (if any),

Yours as ever,  
Muhammad Asad.

I have just received another letter from Pakistan, informing me of further details of the campaign of calumny and slander. I was shocked to hear that Zahid Hussain also believes those rumours. Enclosed a copy of my letter to him. You will now fully realize how important it is to give widest publicity to my contradiction and the lawsuit against “The Star” the only opportunity for it.



3 East 80<sup>th</sup> Street,  
New York, N.Y.  
July 17, 1953.

My dear Mumtaz Hasan,

Since I wrote to you last, I have learned from Ruth Schiemann that a lot of false rumours are being circulated about me in Pakistan both in the press and in talks. It is being said, for instance, that I have given up my connections with Pakistan and intend to settle permanently in America; that because of my origin I am favorably disposed toward the State of Israel and that I have even paid visits to that territory; and that my previous views about Islam have “changed” – in other words, that I am no longer the same convinced Muslim that I was.

These malicious lies damage my reputation, and I would like to answer them in the press, if possible, but in order to do so, I must see what has actually been written about me and who are the people responsible for this libel. I shall therefore be most grateful to you if you will immediately collect all the material you can find in this connection in the Pakistani press and send it to me at once; the Urdu cuttings should be accompanied by a translation. If necessary, I will appoint a lawyer in Lahore or Karachi to file in my name libel suits against the newspapers responsible. I am counting on you to supply me the material as soon as possible and also to let me know what you have heard about me and from whom.

Of the money which I had with the Schiemanns something like Rs.50 is remaining, and I am requesting them to remit this amount to you. I am extremely sorry that for the moment I cannot do better, but as I have explained to you in my last letter, my financial condition is somewhat tight at present. Later on, I am sure, I will be able to do much more for you.

With best regards, as always, from both of us,

Yours sincerely,  
Muhammad Asad



3 East 80<sup>th</sup> Street,  
New York, N.Y.  
July 20, 1953.

My dear Mumtaz Hasan,

In continuation of my last letter, I should like to stress once more how necessary it is for me to take immediate action against “The Star”. I understand that the slander campaign against me is already being given currency in Egyptian papers as well.

I also got an answer from Chaudhri Zafrullah to my letter, copy of which was enclosed in my letter to you. He is very sympathetic and apparently distressed by the rumours. Although he cannot quite see how the Government could appropriately “chase those rumours”, he also feels that I myself must take vigorous action. Apart from this, he requested me to give him a suggestion as to what the Government could do in this matter. I have made a suggestion and am now awaiting his answer.

Altaf Hussain has written to me that he is unable to publish my letter because it would start a controversy; and it is not the policy of his newspaper to give space to such controversies about personal matters.

As soon as you have selected the advocate to represent me in Lahore, do please contact Muhammad Hussain cooperation with the advocate.

Apart from Zahid Hussain, I wrote also to Dr. Abdul Wahhab Azzam, the Egyptian Ambassador, as well as to several other Middle Eastern representatives in Karachi. I have not yet received an answer from any of them. If you happen to see any of them do please speak about the matter. I should like you to find out from them the source of these rumours—for it seems to me that the person or persons who originated them must have invented some sort of “evidence” to make them credible.

Since I wrote you last, my plans for the immediate future have undergone some change. As you will recall, I intended to leave next autumn (after the completion of my manuscript) on a Middle East tour to collect material for another book. My publishers, however, are very keen in my staying in the United States until my present book is published, that is, until spring of 1954. In view of this, I have decided not to go to the Middle East now. Instead I shall utilize the autumn and winter to write the sequel volume of my autobiography, that is the part dealing with my life in India and Pakistan. About May 1954 Pola and I will go to Pakistan. In this way, we shall meet earlier than I had anticipated.

With best regards,  
Yours sincerely,  
Muhammad Asad.



(17)

**To Chaudhri Muhammad Zafarullah Khan  
(Foreign Minister of Pakistan).**

3 East 80<sup>th</sup> Street,  
New York, N.Y.  
July 6, 1953.

Dear Chaudhri Sahib,

I am sorry that every time I write to you it is about something unpleasant, but I really see no way out of a difficult situation without placing before you the facts of the libel and slander to which I am now exposed.

Since my resignation from the Foreign Service, a spate of malicious rumours, both oral and in the press, has been put into circulation to the effect that:

- 1) I have forsaken my allegiance to Islam and have reverted to Judaism;
- 2) I have exerted my influence in the Pakistan Foreign Ministry in favor of the Jews and have been advocating Arab rapprochement to Israel;
- 3) In the course of my recent tours of the Middle East I have surreptitiously visited Israel;
- 4) I have married in the United States a Jewess;
- 5) My advice has been responsible for the miscarriage of the Muslim Premiers' Conference and its unfortunate reactions throughout the Middle East;
- 6) My "removal" from the Foreign Service was due to the Pakistan Government's feeling that my being a member of the Foreign Service was injurious to the interests of Pakistan.

These are the main points on which I am being attacked. I shall not even bother you with a repetition of the allegations that I have "abandoned" my former wife and my son and left them without support. But the few points which I have quoted above do undermine the reputation which I have built up for myself in the course of my twenty-five years' work for Islam and the idea of Pakistan. You can well imagine how it hurts to be accused of disloyalty by the community to which one's whole life has been devoted. Apart from this, it is an indication of the emotional liability in which Muslim society finds itself at present that a man can so easily be believed to have betrayed all the ideals he had been professing for so many years - and this in spite of all lack of evidence.

I am sure you personally sympathize with my predicament, but I am also sure that something more than personal sympathy is morally due to a man

who throughout his life has done nothing to advance his personal interests but has always stood up for an ideal. I have no doubt that the ease with which the Government of Pakistan dropped me from service, in spite of the fact that a more generous interpretation of the existing regulations was possible, has greatly contributed to the impression that I was in some way a persona non grata with my own Government. (Perhaps I am, but, if so, I should like to know why.)

As all these rumours have originated in connection with my resignation from Government service, it might perhaps not be inappropriate if the Government would do something at this late hour to counteract the terrible smear campaign left loose against me. This campaign has spread not only in Pakistani but also in Middle Eastern circles. I might stress that an informal “contradiction” in occasional talks with the Middle East representatives in Karachi would not suffice to remove the undeserved blot from me. Something much stronger and more tangible than this should, I believe, be done by the Government to clear my name. All this is, of course, on a moral plane only, and I have no “legal claim” in this respect. In the last resort, the decision as to what should be done lies with you. I assure you that I would not have approached you with this matter unless I felt it to be extremely urgent that something should be done in an effective manner. After all, you personally have never had any doubts about my loyalty to the cause of Islam.

Yours sincerely,  
Muhammad Asad

Sir Muhammad Zafarullah Khan  
Foreign Minister  
Government of Pakistan  
Karachi.



(18)

**To Zahid Hussain (Former Governor State Bank of Pakistan)**

3 East 80<sup>th</sup> Street,  
New York, N.Y.  
July 8, 1953.

My dear Zahid Sahib,

I wrote to you a long time ago but have never received an answer. At that time I presumed that your silence was a result of your disapproval of my separating myself from my former wife and remarrying here in New York. Although one should have thought that nobody could really have a correct appreciation of the

marital relations between two people without knowing entirely the emotional set-up between them, I conceded to you the right to give your and your family's friendship with Munira preference over your friendship with me. It is only now that I have come to know in greater detail the rumours which are being spread about me in Pakistan; and thus I have begun to understand that your silence was not merely an outcome of a disapproval of my marital actions but of a wholesale and entirely unjustified condemnation of myself.

When some friends in Pakistan recently reported to me what is being said about me, I was hurt beyond expression; but I had never thought it possible that a man like you, who has known me intimately for years, would give credence to slander of this nature.

First of all, I should like to state most emphatically (and it is a tragic testimony to what a lifetime of service in the cause of Islam may lead to within the Muslim community that a man like me is obliged to make such a statement):

- (1) It is a most atrocious lie that I have reverted or ever thought of reverting to Judaism. Over many years I have struggled to the utmost of my capacity for the fulfillment of the ideals of Islam and my work was once considered to have been a very valuable contribution to the cause of Muslim revival. Nothing I have done or written since could be construed as an evidence of a change of attitude.
- (2) I have never favoured the so-called State of Israel or the Jews. On the contrary, before and during my service with the Pakistan Government I have always championed the cause of the Arabs and have denounced the establishment of Israel, publicly and privately, as a moral crime of the first magnitude.
- (3) The lady I married last year in New York is not and never has been Jewish. She belongs to a Polish family that has always been Roman Catholic; nor is there any Jewish blood in that family. Years before I knew her she had been strongly attracted to Islam, and her decision to become a Muslim was taken long before we met. Several Pakistanis (including the Foreign Minister and other diplomatic representatives of Pakistan to the UN) have known my wife years before we met and can testify to the above. Indeed, it was her love for Islam which brought us together in the first instance and convinced me that in her I had found a companion filled with the same ideals as have motivated my own life for over twenty-five years.
- (4) It is entirely untrue that I have ever visited the State of Israel either before or during or after my tenure of service under the Government of Pakistan. I have been told that some people allege that I

have handed over secret Government documents to Israel. The Government of Pakistan is fully aware that this is an atrocious lie. My resignation from service was entirely due to the unwillingness on the part of the then Prime Minister, Khawaja Nazim-ud-din, to allow me to marry a foreigner and thus to establish a precedent which possibly might have been followed up by other members of the Pakistan Foreign Service. As my marriage was of the utmost personal importance to me, I preferred to resign than to give it up for the sake of a career or personal gain.

- (5) I have never “abandoned” my former wife and son but on the contrary, have always continued and shall always continue to hold myself financially responsible for them. My son, with whom my relations have never been broken and who is as dear and near to me as he ever was, can testify to this.<sup>21</sup>

It is really a bitter irony that all these rumours are being spread while I am working on a book describing my life and the reasons which led me to embrace Islam. I have undertaken to write this book at the request of a New York publishing firm not merely as a literary venture but also – and mainly – because it offers me an opportunity to present the ideas of Islam to the Western world and to prove that the conversion of a European to Islam is not so “unreasonable” as most Westerners think. Islam is, as it had always been, the most important factor in my life, and my loyalty to it will not be affected by the fact that some people of my own community – the Muslim community – have given credence to a campaign of calumny against me. But what hurts most is the easy credulity of friends like you who have lent their ears to ghiba, which our Holy Prophet has condemned in the sharpest terms. I would never have thought that a man like you would join the ranks of my detractors on the basis of mere hearsay. Is not this one of the causes of our community’s decay, that a man’s reputation can be so easily torn to shreds? If anyone had told me that you had abandoned Islam, I would have slapped the face of the slanderer. Was it too much for me to expect the same loyalty from my friends? Does the fact that before my conversion to Islam in 1926 I was a Jew by birth make me a prior suspect in spite of a lifetime of work in the service of Islam?

Yours sincerely,  
Muhammad Asad.

Zahid Hussain, Sh.  
235 E.L.Lines,  
Karachi.

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21. Contrary to what Asad says here, his marriage to Pola Hamida caused deep scars in his relationship with Talal. See note to this letter.



(19)

3 East 80<sup>th</sup> Street,  
New York, N.Y., USA  
January 5, 1954.

The Editor,  
“Ihsan”,  
Lahore, Pakistan.

Dear Sir,

It has been brought to my attention that a vicious campaign of calumny and slander is being waged against me. Although I am convinced that those who know me well would never give credence to such malicious lies, I find it necessary to state most emphatically that:

- (1) The sole reason of my resignation from the Pakistan Foreign Service was a purely personal one, as is well known to the Government of Pakistan.
- (2) It is a most atrocious lie that I have reverted, or ever thought of reverting, to Judaism. I am a Muslim and would never dream of giving up my allegiance to Islam. Over many years I have struggled to the utmost of my capacity for the fulfillment of the ideals of Islam, and my work was considered to have been a valuable contribution to the cause of Muslim revival. Nothing I have done or written since could be construed as an evidence of a change of attitude on my part.
- (3) I have never favoured the so-called state of Israel or the Jews as a community. On the contrary, before, during and after my service with the Pakistan Government I have always championed the cause of the Arabs and have denounced the establishment of Israel, Publicly and privately, as a moral crime of the first magnitude. All my writings and statements from my earliest days in the Middle East (even before my conversion to Islam) are a testimony to my attitude in this respect.
- (4) It is absolutely untrue that I have recently married a Jewess. The wife I married in the United States in 1952 neither is nor has ever been a Jewess. She was originally a Roman Catholic (descending from a Polish family that had always been Roman Catholic) and became a Muslim even before our marriage.

It is really a bitter irony that all these rumours are being spread at a time

when I am working on a book describing my life and the reasons which led me to embrace Islam. I have undertaken to write this book at the request of one of the largest American publishers not merely as a literary enterprise but also-and mainly-because it offers me an opportunity to present the ideas of Islam to the Western world and to prove that the conversion of a European to Islam is not so “unreason-able” as most Westerners think.

Islam is, as it has always been, the most important factor in my life and my loyalty to it will certainly not be affected by the fact that some people of own my community- the Muslim community-have given credence to a campaign of calumny against me, forgetting that our Holy Prophet has condemned all *ghiba* in the sharpest terms. It is a tragic testimony to the moral decadence of our community that a man who has spent his entire mature life in the service of Islam can be so easily doubted and slandered by the very people for whom he has been working.

Yours faithfully,  
Muhammad Asad.



(20)

3 East 80<sup>th</sup> Street,  
New York, N.Y., USA  
January 5, 1954.

The Editor,  
“Nawa-I-Waqt”,  
Lahore, Pakistan.

Dear Sir,

It has been brought to my attention that a vicious campaign of calumny and slander is being waged against me. Although I am convinced that those who know me well would never give credence to such malicious lies, I find it necessary to state most emphatically that:

- (1) The sole reason of my resignation from the Pakistan Foreign Service was a purely personal one, as is well known to the Government of Pakistan.
- (2) It is a most atrocious lie that I have reverted, or ever thought of reverting, to Judaism. I am a Muslim and would never dream of giving up my allegiance to Islam. Over many years I have struggled to the utmost of my capacity for the fulfillment of the ideals of Islam, and my work was considered to have been a valuable

contribution to the cause of Muslim revival. Nothing I have done or written since could be construed as an evidence of a change of attitude on my part.

- (3) I have never favoured the so-called state of Israel or the Jews as a community. On the contrary, before, during and after my service with the Pakistan Government I have always championed the cause of the Arabs and have denounced the establishment of Israel, Publicly and privately, as a moral crime of the first magnitude. All my writings and statements from my earliest days in the Middle East (even before my conversion to Islam) are a testimony to my attitude in this respect.
- (4) It is absolutely untrue that I have recently married a Jewess. The wife I married in the United States in 1952 neither is nor has ever been a Jewess. She was originally a Roman Catholic (descending from a Polish family that had always been Roman Catholic) and became a Muslim even before our marriage.

It is really a bitter irony that all these rumours are being spread at a time when I am working on a book describing my life and the reasons which led me to embrace Islam. I have undertaken to write this book at the request of one of the largest American publishers not merely as a literary enterprise but also-and mainly-because it offers me an opportunity to present the ideas of Islam to the Western world and to prove that the conversion of a European to Islam is not so “unreasonable” as most Westerners think.

Islam is, as it has always been, the most important factor in my life and my loyalty to it will certainly not be affected by the fact that some people of my own community-the Muslim community-have given credence to a campaign of calumny against me, forgetting that our Holy Prophet has condemned all *ghiba* in the sharpest terms. It is a tragic testimony to the moral decadence of our community that a man who has spent his entire mature life in the service of Islam can be so easily doubted and slandered by the very people for whom he has been working.

Yours faithfully,  
Muhammad Asad.

(21)

**To Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Publisher and Bookseller and the Editor *The Islamic Literature*, Lahore.**

**The letter was published in *The Islamic literature*, Vol 6, No. 2, February 1954.**

3 East 80<sup>th</sup> Street,  
New York, N.Y., USA  
January 5, 1954.

Dear Sir,

It has been brought to my attention that a vicious campaign of calumny and slander is being waged against me. Although I am convinced that those who know me well would never give credence to such malicious lies, I find it necessary to state most emphatically that:

- (1) The sole reason of my resignation from the Pakistan Foreign Service was a purely personal one, as is well known to the Government of Pakistan.
- (2) It is a most atrocious lie that I have reverted, or ever thought of reverting, to Judaism. I am a Muslim and would never dream of giving up my allegiance to Islam. Over many years I have struggled to the utmost of my capacity for the fulfillment of the ideals of Islam, and my work was considered to have been a valuable contribution to the cause of Muslim revival. Nothing I have done or written since could be construed as an evidence of a change of attitude on my part.
- (3) I have never favoured the so-called state of Israel or the Jews as a community. On the contrary, before, during and after my service with the Pakistan Government I have always championed the cause of the Arabs and have denounced the establishment of Israel, Publicly and privately, as a moral crime of the first magnitude. All my writings and statements from my earliest days in the Middle East (even before my conversion to Islam) are a testimony to my attitude in this respect.
- (4) It is absolutely untrue that I have recently married a Jewess. The wife I married in the United States in 1952 neither is nor has ever been a Jewess. She was originally a Roman Catholic (descending from a Polish family that had always been Roman Catholic) and became a Muslim even before our marriage.

It is really a bitter irony that all these rumours are being spread at a time when I am working on a book describing my life and the reasons which led me to embrace Islam. I have undertaken to write this book at the request of one of the largest American publishers not merely as a literary enterprise but also-and mainly-because it offers me an opportunity to present the ideas of Islam to the Western world and to prove that the conversion of a European to Islam is not so “unreasonable” as most Westerners think.

Islam is, as it has always been, the most important factor in my life and my loyalty to it will certainly not be affected by the fact that some people of my own community the Muslim community-have given credence to a campaign of calumny against me, forgetting that our Holy Prophet has condemned all *ghiba* in the sharpest terms. It is a tragic testimony to the moral decadence of our community that a man who has spent his entire mature life in the service of Islam can be so easily doubted and slandered by the very people for whom he has been working.

Yours faithfully,  
Muhammad Asad.



(22)

Zafar Ishaq Ansari, Esq.  
12/18 Bunder Road  
Karachi

C/O Green House Hotel  
Bhamdoun, Lebanon  
August 28, 1955

My dear Mr. Zafar Ishaq,

Many thanks for your letter of July 13 and my apologies for not answering it sooner. I was away from here for some time and have only recently returned.

I am afraid that Mr. Muhammad Aman Hobohm was mistaken in understanding that I had agreed to your translating "The Road to Mecca". All that I told him was that might be prepared to discuss this possibility with you. I have no objection in principle to your undertaking this task, but it should be borne in mind that the final permission must be given by my American publisher, who holds all foreign rights to this book. Unless and until there is a reputable publisher in Pakistan who is prepared to publish the Urdu translation and to make the necessary contract with my publishers, there is no point in your, or anybody else, undertaking this work.

I would suggest, therefore, that before taking upon yourself a trouble which might prove to be absolutely fruitless, you should contact Messrs. Feroz Sons of Lahore and Karachi, and particularly Dr. A. Waheed, with whom I discussed this possibility some time ago in New York. I do not know how he will react to this suggestion but I should like to know his opinion and, if he should be interested, to hear from him. I would certainly not like the Urdu translation to be published by a second-rate publishing house and would not give my consent to it. Under the terms of the copyright law, the publication of any unauthorized translation would certainly result in a law-suit by my publishers. Personally, I

can assure you that I appreciated your interest and that I am looking forward to hearing further from you in this matter.

With regard to the publication of excerpts from “The Road to Mecca”, I must caution you that the same copyright law applies to such portions as well.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Muhammad Asad

P.S. As of the 1st October, my address will be as follows:

M. Asad

Cortas Building

Rue Maurice Barres

BEIRUT, Lebanon



(23)

### To Anwar Ahmad

Villa Asadiyya

La Montagne

Tangier

May 7, 1981

Col. Anwar Ahmad

842 Consort Crescent,

Mississauga,

Ontario, Canada

Dear Colonel Anwar Ahmad,

Thank you for your kind letter of April 22 inquiring about the “Message of the Qur’an”. This work has indeed been published and will be available from the Islamic Book Service, 10900 W. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Indiana, U. S. A., who are distributing it and other books of mine in the United States and Canada. Two other books of mine, “*The Road to Mecca*” and *The Principles of State and Government in Islam* will also be available through them. In addition, the historical chapters of *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Translated and annotated by me) are now in the press and will soon be available. Thanking you for your interest in my work and with warm regards, I am,

Yours sincerely,

Muhammad Asad



(24)

**Chaudhri Nazir Ahmad Khan**  
**(Former Attorney General of Pakistan)**

Villa Asadiyya  
La Montaque  
Tangier (Morocco).  
June 1, 1980.

Dear Chaudhri Sahib,

Many thanks for your letter of May 4, which reached us only a few days ago. Both Hamida and I are distressed on learning that you are ill – and we pray to God that you may be restored to health soon and be your old self for many, many years.

Yes, we are growing older – I myself will be 80 in less than a month's time insha Allah – and when one grows old there is no regret greater than being far away from our friends. We often speak of you and your dear sister Hamida – but speaking of one's friends is not the same as speaking to them. May God in His great mercy grant us an opportunity of meeting you again.

I am glad that the copy of the "The Message of the Qur'an" has given you pleasure. When (and not "if") you get better you will be able to tell me what impression my work has made on you. I have put my whole heart and brain into it, but I do not know how well – or how badly – I have succeeded. So far there has not come to me the slightest echo, but perhaps it is too early yet.

With our heartfelt wishes for your full recovery, and with deep love from both of us to you and Begum Sahiba,

Yours as ever,  
M. Asad



(25)

Begum Ch. Nazir Ahmad Khan  
Villa Asadiyya  
La Montaque  
Tangier (Morocco).  
July 15, 1980.

Dear Begum Sahiba,

We have just learned with a great shock from a Pakistani newspaper that your dear husband has died.

To me he was one of my oldest and certainly the closest of my Pakistani friends, and so I can fully understand and share your grief and loss. Words are

never sufficient on such an occasion. I can only say that my heart is with you, and that you are not alone in your great sorrow. My wife, Hamida, fully shares my feelings, and we both pray to God that He May lighten your pain, and reunite us all in a better world. A man like Chaudhri Nazir Ahmad is never really dead – he lives on in the hearts of those who knew and loved him.

God be with you, my dear sister.

Yours

Muhammad Asad & Hamida



(26)

**To A. Q. Najafi**

Casa Caravela  
Carregueira (Belas),  
2745 QUELUZ  
Portugal  
August 24, 1986.

Mr. A. Q. Najafi  
Mustafa Quarters  
Jander Street  
Nauthia Jadeed  
PESHAWAR CANTONMENT  
Pakistan.

My dear Abdul Qadeer Najafi,

It gives me a surprise and great pleasure to hear from the grandson of Mawlana Nafafi Ali Khan. I will try to answer all your questions one by one:

- (1) I was into a Jewish family in Austria and accepted Islam in 1926 at the age of 26 – that is, exactly 60 years ago.
- (2) I have never been “ousted” from any country, including my native country Austria.
- (3) I first met Dr. Abdul Ghani in Mecca in 1927. Of course I was already a Muslim at that time, otherwise I would not have been in Mecca. From the very first meeting we became close friends.
- (4) By sheer coincidence, I believe, Dr. Abdul Ghani travelled to India on the same ship with me in 1932. During the years which spent in India, I stayed off and on with Dr. Abdul Ghani at Jalalpur Jattan [District Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan], but never resided there

permanently. Of course, he had left Afghanistan years before that and years before our meeting in Arabia.

- (5) The Then British Government in India did not like me very much because I was a European convert to Islam and all my friends were fellow-Muslims, and I was under more or less constant observation. But they did not persecute me in any way, except when the Second World War broke out and I was interned as an “enemy alien” because of my Austrian passport for over 6 years.
- (6) I have never been “separated” from Dr. Abdul Ghani. Even after I settled down in Lahore we were very often meeting each other there, together with your grandfather. At that time I was Director of the Department of Islamic Reconstruction which was meant to elucidate the ideological principles underlying the new State of Pakistan.
- (7) Of course I benefited from Dr. Abdul Ghani’s wisdom and experiences, but my Islamic knowledge was not derived from him. I had already studied Islamiyat at Medina, where I lived several years. This explains why I was so well-versed in Islamic problems before I came to India and it explains, also, how I was able to translate “*Sahih al-Bukhari*” and, subsequently, many years later, the Holy Qur’an, which appeared in 1980 under the title “*The Message of the Qur’an*”. As for my command of Arabic, it was derived from close association, over the years, with the Royal Family of Saudi Arabia, as well as with the Bedouins of that country who spoke – and speak to this day – the best Arabic in the world. I have been very fortunate.
- (8) I have never been offered any post by the British Government and would not have accepted any had it been offered to me. The Department of Islamic Reconstruction, which I have mentioned above, was, of course, a Pakistani Government Institution established by me.
- (9) I have never “left” Pakistan because to this day I am a Pakistani citizen and carry a Pakistani passport. But I have been many years abroad, mostly in Morocco, and have visited Pakistan several times, the latest three years ago at the invitation of President Zia ul-Haq who, by the way, made an excellent impression on me.
- (10) I left Pakistan for the first time in 1950 when I was in the Foreign Service, in charge of the Middle East Division at the Pakistani Foreign Ministry. Shortly afterwards I was appointed as Minister to the Pakistan Delegation to the United Nations in 1951 and remained in New York until 1954, during which time, after my resignation from the Foreign Service, I wrote my book “*The Road to Mecca*”. Ever since then I have been writing on Islamic subjects and have

produced several books, including “The Message of the Qur’an”.

- (11) As I have mentioned above, I visited Pakistan about three years ago. Aside from meeting with the President of Pakistan and other personalities, I met many old friends in Islamabad and Lahore and delivered several radio and television talks. At present I am not a representative of Pakistan in any capacity except as a worker for the spread of Islam and for the welfare not only of Pakistan but of the world Muslim *ummah*. I have visited Saudi Arabia many times over the past years and have maintained my contacts not only with the Royal Family but also with many old and new friends. I consider Saudi Arabia my spiritual home side-by-side with Pakistan.
- (12) Yes, I have a son named Talal, the son of my Arabian wife Munira, now deceased. He is at present Senior Lecturer of Social Anthropology at the University of Hull, England, and is married to an English lady who is also an anthropologist. They have no children.
- (13) In conclusion, I would like to tell you that my friendship with the late Dr. Abdul Ghani was a very deep one and that I loved him very much. He was an outstanding person, had suffered greatly during his life and never lost his deep faith. I am sure that if anybody is in Paradise, he is one of them. May God bless his memory.

This is about all I can think of now. Very shortly (probably in October or November), my wife and I will be moving to Marbella, Spain, where our address will be as follows:

Muhammad Asad  
“Al-Asadiyya”  
Calle Sierra Nevada, 56  
Lomas del Marbella Club  
MARBELLA (Malaga), Spain.

When you finally do write your proposed pamphlet about Dr. Abdul Ghani, please send me a copy of it to the above address in Spain. In the meantime, I send my warmest regards to the descendants of Mawlana Najaf Ali Khan.

Affectionately yours,  
M. Asad