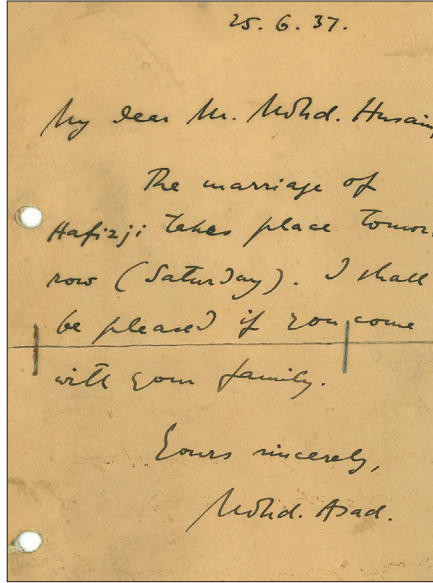




A LIFE IN LETTERS:
MUHAMMAD ASAD AND POLA HAMIDA ASAD
TO
MUHAMMAD HUSAIN BABRI
PART 1: SIXTY-EIGHT LETTERS (1937-1963)

Collected and Annotated by Muhammad Arshad
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INTRODUCTION

Less than two years after his arrival in the Indian Subcontinent in 1932, Muhammad Asad embarked on the ambitious project of producing a bi-lingual Arabic-English edition of *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*. “The idea of rendering the *Ṣaḥīḥ* into English—a task never before attempted—occurred to me during my five years’ sojourn at Madina,” he was to write later, “when I was studying the science of ḥadīth in the Prophet’s Mosque.”¹ He had recently published his first book on the contemporary situation of Muslims, *Islam at the Crossroads*,² and had already secured financial support for the *Ṣaḥīḥ* project. He had ordered several sets of Arabic and Roman type which could be used on a small platen press to typeset the text.

He moved to Sarinagar, Kashmir, to avoid the heat of Lahore and to focus on his work. Shortly after arrival in Sarinagar, he hired a small platen press along with an operator, but he still needed a composer. It is then he that he turned to Muhammad Husain Babri, whom he had met in Lahore and who was “an independent typewriter mechanic.”³ Upon Asad’s request, Muhammad Husain Babri found a composer, one Abdul Haqq, who had recently given up his job at a printing press and who was willing to move to Kashmir; thus started the work on the printing of the first installment of the translation of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.⁴

Asad describes Muhammad Husain Babri as “the best—and certainly the most faithful—of all the friends I have ever had: always ready to share one’s worries and to help to overcome them in whatever way he could. We remained friends for well over fifty years, through the ups and downs of my life and all the changes of my habitat across three continents, until his death in 1985 at the

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1. Muhammad Asad, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: The Early Years of Islam*. Sarinagar: Aarfat Publications, 1938, “Preface to the First Edition (1938)”. Only five installments of the translation were published between 1935-38.
 2. Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1934.
 3. Muhammad Asad and Pola Hamida Asad, *Homecoming of the Heart*, Edited and annotated by M. Ikram Chaghatai, Lahore: The Truth Society, 2012, p. 81.
 4. For these and other details, see Chapter IV of *Homecoming of the Heart*, “The Golden Years (1934-37),” pp. 77-95.

age of well over eighty.”⁵ Asad does not mention how and where he initially met Babri, but according to a private note from the family of Muhammad Husain Babri, they had met at the office of Asad’s Lahore publisher, the renowned Shaykh Muhammad Ashraf. Babri was also present during Asad’s meeting with Muhammad Iqbal.

Muhammad Arshad, who wrote his doctoral thesis on Asad, has collected eighty-one letters written by Muhammad Asad and his third wife, Pola Hamida Asad, to Muhammad Husain Babri between June 25, 1937 and November 11, 1985. The following pages contain the first installment of these letters; the next installment will contain the remaining letters.

Spanning over half a century—from June 25, 1937 to October 7, 1963—this first installment of letters provides valuable material for a future biography of Muhammad Asad as it chronicles many little-known aspects of his life. The letters are mostly personal in nature. Asad is at ease in asking Muhammad Husain Babri to “Please, see on my behalf the Electric Supply Co. and ask them to cut off my meter and to refund my security of Rs. 100—after deducting the outstanding bill,” and to even state frankly that he is in financial difficulties: “At present I am myself in a very difficult financial position. I am paying every month Rs. 265/- for my accommodation, Rs. 350/- or so for Talal, and Rs. 170/- on account of the loan which I took from Government for the purchase of my car.”

When Asad moved to New York, letters to Babri became even more important, as Babri was now a trusted link to Pakistan, a country Asad almost made his home. When Asad resigned and ended his short-lived career with the Pakistan foreign office in October 1952, because he was denied permission to marry Pola Hamida, his life took a new turn. He plunged into writing the autobiography which would make him famous—*Road to Mecca*. Amidst these changes, the letter he wrote to Babri on February 22, 1953 provides insights into his new marriage:

I was very happy to get your letter of the 3rd February. All this time I wanted to write to you, for your friendship is and will always remain an important thing to me: but every time something came in-between, and I had to postpone my letter.

As you have heard from Ahmad, there have been some very far-reaching changes in my life, and for the better, too. Financially I am at the moment naturally not so well off as during my “diplomatic career”, but even this will, insha-Allah, change in course of time. At any rate, I am happy for at least two reasons: my new marriage has given me a companion better than I could have ever dreamt of, and my return to writing has removed that frustration from which I had

5. *Ibid.* pp. 81-82.

been suffering for many years, as you well know. I am now deep in work on my autobiography, which is to be finished before the end of the year (and will be published, I expect, during the early spring in 1954), and am already planning my next book. In all this, my wife is of so great a help to me that I can truthfully say that without her I would never have been able to regain that purpose and meaning of my life which I had been missing for so long a time.

Asad relied on Babri to receive information and material from Pakistan: “These malicious lies damage my reputation,” he wrote to Babri following his resignation from the Pakistan Foreign Service, “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.” Asad remained in constant touch with Babri; always informed him of changes to his postal address and places of residence; even of hotels where he planned to stay for any length of time; he did not want to miss any letters. He entrusted family matters to him; even discusses strains and stresses in his family relations and sought help with practical matters.

The letters become particularly important for a future study on Asad, especially to gain a better understanding of his familial relations. For instance, his strained relationship with his only son Talal and his mother Munira, whom Asad had divorced to marry Pola, is mentioned in a letter of 1959. “You will be glad to know that Talal has visited with us recently and stayed for a fortnight in our house,” he tells Babri and seeks information:

As you know, Munira returned to Pakistan last December. She stayed with Chaudhri Niaz Ali until March or April and then suddenly went to Lahore, Karachi, and God knows where else. At present she seems to be in Karachi with some friends of hers, and I have heard a rumour that she intends to re-marry. Nothing would make me happier, but I would like to know whether this is true. Naturally, I cannot ask her directly because our relations are as bad as ever, thanks to her continuous complaints and dissatisfaction—in spite of the fact that she is receiving regularly from me Rs.500 every month. Could you possibly find out through some of your friends in Karachi whether she really is considering remarriage, or has already remarried? But these inquiries should be made very

discreetly. I know that I can always trust you. Her last address in Karachi was c/o “Dar-ul-Falah”, 45 M. A. Jinnah Road, Karachi. Please do let me have this information as soon as you possibly can; with your connections, I am sure you can manage to find out something about this.

In October 1963, Asad invited Babri to Switzerland, where he had been living since 1958. Asad made all the arrangements for the trip and then wrote to Babri: “Please tell your wife and family from Hamida and myself not to worry because you are going to your “other” family – and that you will be able to see them again before long, insha-Allah. We both send our warmest greetings and affection to you all.” The visit further cemented their friendship and it remained a beautiful memory for Babri until he died.

Asad spells Babri’s name in various way in many letters. At times, he uses “Mohd” for Muhammad, both for himself and for Babri. His style of writing letters also varies considerably; in the early letters, his language has a marked Indian Subcontinental flavor. This was the first time in his life that he was using English both for letters and for his writing. After he moved to New York, his idiom changed, even though there are backward lapses into Subcontinental usage once in a while.

All in all, these letters shed light on a rare friendship between two men of vastly different backgrounds and intellectual makeup. The warmth of a very unique human relationship and the glow of pure friendship and sincerity shines forth in these letters. Stretching across cultures and continents, this friendship is a testimony to one of the most prominent traits of Asad’s character: his extra-ordinary interest and down-to-earth approach to other human beings, whether they be kings and prime ministers or a composer from Lahore. It is the glow of this human warmth that Asad possessed which makes these letters a wonderful read.



(1)

[Lahore]
5-6-37

My dear Mr. Mohd. Husain,⁶

The marriage of Hafizji⁷ takes place tomorrow (Saturday). I shall be pleased if you come with your family.

Yours sincerely,
Mohd. Asad

(2)

Indo-European Machinery Company,
8, GANPAT ROAD
Lahore 5-11-1937

Dear Mohd. Husain Sb.

Would you please come to me as soon as you can. I have to discuss some matters of importance with you.⁸

Yours sincerely,

Asad

6. Asad spells Muhammad Husain Babri's name differently in many letters. His punctuations, style of writing the address, and even his language are very "subcontinental", especially in the early letters. No attempt has been made to "standardize" style and letters are being published as they were written.

7. Hafizji was a mechanic and pressman at Asad's Arafat Press in Lahore during 1937-1938.

8. After assuming the editorship of *Islamic Culture* (Hyderabad Deccan) in September 1936 Asad settled down in Lahore, established a press and edited and published the journal from Lahore from 1936 to 1938. During his early months in Lahore, Asad befriended Muhammad Husain Babari (1895-1986), a typewriter mechanic. To quote Asad, Muhammad Husain was "... the best—and certainly the most faithful—of all the friends I have ever had: always ready to share one's worries and to help to overcome them in whatsoever way he could. We remained friends for well over fifty years, throughout the ups and downs of my life and all the changes of my habitat across three continents, until his death in 1985 at the age of well over eighty" (Muhammad Asad and Pola Hamida Asad, *Home-Coming of the Heart (1933-1992)*, edited by M. Ikram Chaghatai, Lahore: The Truth Society, 2012, pp. 81-82).

(3)

Dalhousie,
April 30, 1947⁹

My Dear Muhammad Hussain,

I am sorry I quite forgot to send you Dr. Zakir Hussain's answer,¹⁰ which I received long ago. You will find it enclosed. I am sorry that it is so disappointing; but he explains his position fully.

I shall come to Lahore within a few days,¹¹ and will contact you at once.

With best regards,
Yours sincerely,
Muhammad Asad

-
9. On the eve of the Second World War Asad was interned by the British authorities. The internment years (1939-1945) caused a long gap of communication between Asad and Babari. After being released from internment in 1945, Asad spent some time in Lahore and Pathankot. Later he, along with his family, moved to Dalhousie from where he launched his monthly *Arafat: A Monthly Critique of Muslim Thought*, the first issue was published in September 1946 and the last on (1:9) in July 1947. After the partition of India in August 1947, Asad went to Lahore, and after a gap of eight years, resumed his correspondence with Babri in April 1947.
10. Asad, on the persuasion of Muhammad Husain, addressed a letter to Dr. Zakir Husain Khan (8 February 1897-3 May 1969), the Vice-Chancellor of the Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi (1928-1948), and recommended the name of Maqbool Husain Babri (d. 2005), the eldest son of Muhammad Husain Babari, for admission to a graduate program. Due to reasons Dr. Zakir Husain regretted to accommodate Asad's recommendation (Zakir Husain Khan's letter to Muhammad Asad, 20th March 1947, unpublished).
11. From 1946 to 1947 Asad stayed with his wife Munira and son Talal in Dalhousie, India. See footnote 3.

(4)

221, Somerset Street,

Karachi, 15.6.50¹²

My dear Mohd. Hussain,

Please forgive me, again, for my not having written to you since I left Lahore. I was very busy, as usual, and this time even more because work has accumulated during my absence.

All three of us are well. And we would have liked to receive better news from you: and you write that you are still without job. Can I do anything for you here? If you have—or think—of any chance in Karachi, I will certainly do anything in my power.

Enclosed you will find the application for partnership-registration signed by Talal.¹³ He has given the old address. This I think, is better. I cannot suggest for the moment any particular line of trade, but your business friends will surely be able to advise you in this respect. If I can be of any help here, please write immediately.

My wife and Talal send their very best regards to your family and yourself. Please, write soon.

Yours as ever,

Asad

(5)

Karachi, 20.9.1950

My dear Mohammad Husain.

Please forgive me for not writing so long a time. I was extremely busy, and on top of that I had a lot of work to do in connection with Talal's departure.¹⁴ He has left for England on the 18th, and has specially asked me to convey his very best regards to you.

Enclosed you will find the Power of Attorney, duly signed and registered.

12. During the first quarter of 1949 the Department of Islamic Reconstruction (Lahore) headed by Asad was dissolved by the Government of the Punjab and Asad was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Karachi where he was appointed as Deputy Secretary in charge of the Middle East Division. Asad served the ME Division until his departure to New York in April 1951. During that time Muhammad Husain was jobless and Asad offered his support to find employment for him in Karachi.

13. Talal Asad was born in 1932 in Saudi Arabia. He is Asad's only son. His mother, Munira Hussein al-Shammari (d. 1978) was Asad's second wife. Talal is currently a Distinguished Professor at the Graduate Centre of City University of New York since 1998.

14. Talal travelled to UK for studies in 1950.

As you will see from it, there is no mention of partnership¹⁵ in it, and the reason is this: When I got your letter informing me of the collector's objection to a change in the proprietorship of the firm without his previous permission, I made inquiries here from the secretary of the Board of Revenue K.B. Abdul Haq, and he advised me not to start this matter now, as this might become a cause for a great delay in our business and perhaps even the cause of Argo Traders, being struck off the list. Therefore I wrote immediately (i.e. on the 14th) to the collector that there is no question now of partnership; a copy of that letter is herewith enclosed. For you it will not make any difference, as you will be the Manager with full powers.

Also, I made an application to the collector regarding the number of our special permit (10 wagons). Copy is enclosed. K. B. Abdul Haq, to whom I have given another copy of this application, has written to the collector, recommending our case.

Enclosed you will find two letters from the collection which I got some time ago. They were again wrongly re-directed to my Karachi address. I have written to the postmaster asking him to make sure that all letters for Argo Traders are re-directed to your address.

Please, consult in all matters Israfeel.¹⁶ He is a very good and sincere boy, and I am sure he will prove very helpful. Let him guide you in all matters pertaining to the salt trade; you should act on his advice. For me here it is very difficult—rather impossible—to advise you on these things, but Israfeel has great experience in the salt trade.

You must have had a very bad time with the floods, but let us hope there will be no repetition. Did your house suffer great damage?

Please, see on my behalf the Electric Supply Co. and ask them to cut off my meter and to refund my security of Rs. 100- after deducting the outstanding bill.

For the next few weeks address your letters to my office address, as we have to leave our quarters during the coming Assembly session (because ours are in reality Assembly quarters). I shall be staying in an hotel, but as I do not know how long, you should send your letters to this address: M. Asad Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Clifton, Karachi.

My wife and I send our very best regards. Please remember me to Israfeel.

Yours sincerely,
Asad

15. While in Karachi, Asad, like many other bureaucrats of the newly born state was engaged in business. He had a partnership with Hussein Imam and brothers and the firm was named as Argo Traders which dealt with salt trade. However this business venture did not progressed well.

16. Israfeel was perhaps associated with Asad and his business partners (Argo Traders) in Karachi.

(6)

C/O Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Karachi, 22.9.1950

My dear Mohammad Husain,

I hope you have received by now the power of Attorney and all the other papers.

Enclosed I am sending you the copy of a telegram which Mr. Hussein Imam¹⁷ and myself have sent from here in the name of Argo Traders. It relates to the indents for the last year (August and September 1949). Please keep it on your file.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Asad

(7)

C/O Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Karachi, 4.10.50

My dear Mohd. Husain,

A few days ago I received your letter of the 26th September, complaining about my silence. But I sent you a registered letter on the 21th, containing a duly executed power of Attorney, as well as copies of several letters which I wrote on behalf of Argo Traders to the collector etc. Please, make enquiries about that letter, in case you have not yet received it. It was posted from the Clifton P. O., Karachi, on the 21th September. The registration No. is 76. (I am not sending postal receipt because if the letter has been lost I will have to make inquiries from here.). As to the salt trade, I asked you to consult frequently Israfeel. I don't know anything about it here, and Mr. Hosein Imam has left long ago. But Israfeel can help you considerably, he has experience in this line of trade, and is very sympathetic. A few days ago I had a letter from him. Please, do see him and give him my very best greetings, and tell him also that my not writing is not due to negligence but simply to over work.

How did you face during the floods? It must have been terrible, and I do hope you did not suffer heavy losses. Let me know all about it.

Talal is now in London, we had a couple of letters from him, he seems to have settled down to work. But, for us it is lonely here without him.

If you see Sohail, please give him very best regards. Also to Dr. Sompek.¹⁸

Do write immediately please and address your letter C/O Ministry of

17. Mr. Hussein Imam was Asad's business partner.

18. Dr. Sompek was a German physician based in Lahore.

Foreign Affairs. We had to leave our flat temporarily because it has been allotted to some constituent assembly members, for the duration of the present session.

With all the best from both of us,

Yours as ever,
Asad

(8)

Karachi, 6.11.50

My dear Mohd. Husain,

First of all—forgive for not writing earlier. You know how it is here. I am working the whole day, and frequently miss very important private engagements. But you should never think that my silence is due to lack of interest or friendship.

Regarding the salt business, I shall talk it over with Mr. Abdul Haq.¹⁹ In the meantime I am sending you a personal letter to Maulana Mohd. Ali.²⁰ Is there at present no salt business? If there is, why are you not getting the monthly quota, and also those extra 10 wagons sanctioned previously? Please, let me know about it.

Talal sends you his very best regards. His address is:

Talal Asad,
1st Year Student,
A. A. School of Architecture,
B. 36, Bedford Square,
London, W. C. A.

How are you going on? How is your family? I know it must be hard times for you. May God give that matters improve soon.

With all the best wishes from both of us, for you as well as your family.

Yours as ever,
M. Asad

19. Mr. Abdul Haq was Secretary of the Board of Revenue, Government of Pakistan, Karachi.

20. Mohammad Ali (1874-1951), the chief of the Aḥmadiyya Anjuman-i Ishā'at-i Islām, Lahore was a prolific author and translator of the Qur'ān (English and Urdu). For the text of the above referred letter see: *Islamic Sciences* Vol 14 (2016) No 2, p. 161.

(9)

C/O Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Karachi, 21.11.50

My dear Mohd. Husain,

Your 2 letters received. I shall see Mohd. Ali within a few days and shall ask him to give us his support regarding the 10 wagons which were taken by Hosain Imam one or two months ago, they relate to the old allotments for August and September, 1949, for which I received my share from Mr. Hosain Imam over a year ago. Now, naturally, I did not get anything. It comes to me, however, that the price he has now received for those 10 wagons must be much more than what they were worth in 1949—and in consequence, he should have paid me the difference. I shall take up the matter with him when he comes again to Karachi (which, I understand, will be soon). If he plays fair, he will give me my due—in which case you will also get something. If not, I shall not cooperate with him in future. I do believe that sooner or later we will have a new temporary trade agreement with India, and then the salt trade will start again.

At present I am myself in a very difficult financial position. I am paying every month Rs. 265/- for my accommodation, Rs. 350/- or so for Talal, and Rs. 170/- on account of the loan which I took from Government for the purchase of my car.

In addition I am repaying some debts—so that I have now only about Rs. 500/- per month for my own expenses (after deduction of income tax). Otherwise I would have most gladly helped you. Is there no possibility whatever of your finding a job—even a temporary one, until the salt business starts going.

Please, let me know whether I could speak here with anybody in your behalf.

My wife sends her best regards.

Yours as ever,
M. Asad

(10)

C/O Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Karachi, 28.2.51.

My dear Mohd. Husain,

Please forgive me for not writing for so long time in spite of your many letters and inquiries. I am simply so overworked that sometime I cannot find time to attend to most urgent personal matters. But you may always rest Assured - whether I write or not—that my friendship for you remains and will remain the same, and that I feel about your difficulties just as if they were my own.

It is probable, I think, that the salt trade will soon be ruined so far we have

not paid any deposit on the 10 extra wagons granted to us in 1949. I shall talk this over with Mr. Mazhar Imam (Mr. Imam Husain's eldest son) who is living here in Karachi and doing business. You please contact Israfeel, and go with him to the Collector's office and obtain all necessary information at once.

Talal is all right, he sends you (in his last letter) his best salams. My wife also wishes to be remembered to you and your family.

Yours as ever,
M. Asad

(11)

3 EAST SOUTH STREET,
NEW YORK, N.Y.
February 22, 1953

My dear Muhammad Husain,

I was very happy to get your letter of the 3rd February. All this time I wanted to write to you, for your friendship is and will always remain an important thing to me: but every time something came in-between, and I had to postpone my letter.

As you have heard from Ahmad,²¹ there have been some very far-reaching changes in my life, and for the better, too. Financially I am at the moment naturally not so well off as during my "diplomatic career", but even this will, insha-Allah, change in course of time. At any rate, I am happy for at least two reasons: my new marriage has given me a companion better than I could have ever dreamt of, and my return to writing has removed that frustration from which I had been suffering for many years, as you well know. I am now deep in work on my autobiography, which is to be finished before the end of the year (and will be published, I expect, during the early spring in 1954), and am already planning my next book. In all this, my wife is of so great a help to me that I can truthfully say that without her I would never have been able to regain that purpose and meaning of my life which I had been missing for so long a time.

21. Ahmad Heinrich Schiemann was Asad's step-son. In 1926 Asad had married his mother Elsa Schiemann, also known as Aziza Asad; Elsa embraced Islam in January 1927. Both performed Hajj in 1927. Soon after the Hajj, Elsa died. Ahmad spent several years in Lahore and Karachi as an employee of a German business firm (Chaghatai, ed., *Muhammad Asad (Leopold Weiss): Europe's Gift to Islam*, vol. I, pp. 17, 103, 221, 308, 316; *Home-Coming of the Heart*, pp. 199 and 205, note 8; Martin Kramer, *The Jewish Discovery of Islam* (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1999), ch. 7 "The Road from Mecca: Muhammad Asad (born Leopold Weiss)", pp. 230-231.

I hope you are doing well—or at least as well as the circumstances permit. I was thinking whether I could not in some way contribute to a more or less permanent improvement in your financial conditions. You tell me that the last edition of “Islam at the Crossroads”²² has been entirely sold out. I do not intend to have it reprinted by Sh. Muhammad Ashraf. But what about you starting the Arafat Publications as your own business? I am gladly prepared to give you the right to reprint the English edition of “Islam at the Crossroads”, and also an Urdu translation.²³ If you could find someone to finance this venture, you could have all the profits for yourself, and I would not claim any share. Possibly also, when my autobiography is completed, we could arrange for an Urdu translation in conjunction with my American publishers (for, in this case they have acquired also the rights of translation into foreign languages). In this way it may perhaps be possible for you to build up gradually a publishing business of your own, with books by other authors thrown in as a good measure. What do you think about this?

Pola, to whom I have often spoken about you, joins me in the best wishes for you and yours. (By the way, how many children have you now...?) Do write, please, as soon as you can.

Yours as ever,
M. Asad

(12)

3 East 80th Street,
New York, N.Y. June 11, 1953

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Many thanks for your letters of March 31st and June 4th. I have to apologize for not answering your first letter earlier, but this was really due only to a great pressure of work. Your fear that there might be another reason for my silence is entirely unfounded. You know how I feel toward you and I do not change easily with regard to my friends.

I am working so hard because my publishers are keen to get the manuscript as quickly as possible sometime in September. About one-half of the book is

22. *Islam at the Crossroads*, Asad's first work published in Delhi in 1934 and within a very short span of time several reprints appeared. The book was highly appreciated by Muslim intellectuals of India including Muhammad Iqbal, Sayyid Abu al-Ala Mawdudi, Sayyid Sulayman Nadwi, Abdul Majid Daryabadi, Abu al-Hasan Ali Nadwi.

23. The plan did not materialize, but several complete and partial Urdu translations of this book have so far appeared. For detail see Muhammad Arshad, *Islāmī Riyāsat kī Tashkīl-i Jadīd: Muhammad Asad kay Afkār kī Tanqīdī Mutālī'a* (Lahore: Al-Faisal, 2011), pp. 195-196.

now ready and the publishers are quite enthusiastic about it.

I would have gladly helped you financially, but at present my situation is somewhat difficult. I am just able to make both ends meet; you know that apart from our living here I have to support Talal and his mother in London. The little money I had with the Schiemanns²⁴ in Karachi has been used up for some necessary purchases and the payment of a few small debts there. I presume that after the publication of the book things will change, insha-Allah, and I will be in a better position to do something for you, as well. Would it not be possible, in the meantime, to find somebody in Lahore who would finance the reprint of “Islam at the Crossroads” and the publication of its Urdu translation? If you think that you can arrange this, I shall send you a power of attorney authorizing you to act for me.

I have not had a letter for some time from the Schiemann and am wondering why. I do hope that everything is in order. As you know, Ahmad has not been well recently. Please let me know whether you have seen him recently in Lahore. If not, you might drop a letter to them at Karachi. The address is as follows: Schiemann, c/o Mr. A. Husian, 29D, Block 6, P.E.C. H.S., Karachi 4(Frere Hall).

Some time ago I received a very nice letter from Qazi Abdul Baqi²⁵ (55, Mozang Road, Lahore). He seems to be under the impression that American publishers are interested in Islamic literature as such and would like me to help him to get his father’s English translation of “Rahmat-ul-lil-Alamin”²⁶ published here. There is, however, not the slightest chance of having this or any similar book published in America. The publishers here are in no way particularly interested in Islam. That they are ready to bring out books of mine dealing with Islamic subjects and Muslim countries is due to the simple fact that they are interested in my writings. Please contact Mr. Abdul Baqi and tell him that I am not able to help him in this matter, although I would very much like to. I thank him for his good wishes for myself and Pola. He seems to be, by the way, under the wrong impression that I intend to settle for good in America. This is, of course, not correct as I intend to go to Pakistan as soon as my book is published and some other matters have been attended to—that is, toward the

24. Asad’s step-son Heinrich Ahmad Schiemann and his wife Ruth Schiemann.
See footnote no. 15.

25. Qazi Abdul Baqi, the grandson of Qazi Sulayman Salman Mansurpuri (1867-1930), the session judge of the former state of Patiala and an eminent religious scholar of India.
26. Famous Urdu biography of the Prophet (3 vols. Lahore: Shaikh Ghulam Ali and Sons) was the magnum opus of Qazi Salayman Mansurpuri. It was translated into English by Qazi Abdul Baqi, entitled as *Mercy Unto the Worlds: Rahmatul-Lil-Alameen* (3 vols.), published by Ferozsons, Lahore (2005).

end of next year, insha-Allah.

Do please write to me as often as you can, even if I sometimes miss answering your letters. You should know me well enough not to attribute any fanciful reasons to my silence. Your bhabi²⁷ and I send our very best regards to you and yours.

Yours as ever,
M. Asad

(13)

3 EAST 80TH STREET NEW YORK, N. Y.

June 17, 1953

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Since I wrote to you last, I have learned from Ruth Schiemann²⁸ 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.²⁹

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 (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 Schiemanns something like Rs. 50 is remaining, and I am requesting them to remit this amount to you. I am

27. Sister-in-law.

28. Ruth Schiemann, the wife of Asad's step-son Heinrich Ahmad Schiemann.

29. For the text of Asad's letters to the editors of *Dawn*, *Nawa-I Waqt*, *Ihsan*, *Islamic Literature* etc. as well as his friends (Mumtaz Hasan, Zahid Hussain, Altaf Husain), see Muhammad Arshad, “Muhammad: Twenty Six Unpublished Letters”, *Islamic Sciences*, 14:1 (2016), pp. 43-59 .

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,

M. Asad

(14)

3 EAST 80TH STREET NEW YORK, N. Y.

July 8, 1953

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Many thanks for your detailed letter of June 25 and the enclosed cuttings.

I intend to file a suit for libel and defamation against "The Star"³⁰ and have sent the necessary authorization to Mumtaz Hasan*(Copy herewith enclosed).³¹

I have left the choice of the advocate to him because in his position he is very influential and will be able to select a suitable man. Nevertheless, I would like you to write to him immediately and to give him your advice in this matter. Please do not lose any time, but write to him at once.

Yours as ever,

M. Asad

* Copy herewith enclosed.

(15)

3 East 80th Street,

New York, N.Y.

July 20, 1953

My dear Mohd. Husain,

I hope that after receiving my letter you have contacted Mumtaz Hasan, Finance Secretary, Karachi. Today I have written to him a reminder about choosing an advocate in collaboration with you.

Below I am giving the points on which my libel suit against "The Star" should be based:

(1) 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

30. Lahore-based English weekly.

31. Mumtaz Hasan (1907-1974), former Secretary of Finance, Government of Pakistan.

I was no longer in the Foreign Ministry but was Alternate Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations;

(2) 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”;

(3) 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;

(4) 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. The Pakistani Foreign Minister, Chaudhri Muhammad Zafarullah Khan,³² has known her for several years and was aware of her inclination towards Islam long before I even met her;

(5) I have never “abandoned” my former wife³³ (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;

(6) 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.

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 from both of us,
Yours sincerely,
M. Asad

32. Sir Muhammad Zafarullah Khan (1893-1985), the first Foreign Minister of Pakistan (27th December 1947 till 24th October 1954), later served as a judge of the International Court of Justice (1954-1961). In 1961 he was appointed by the Government of Pakistan as a Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nation, a position he held until 1964.

33. This refers to Munira Hussein al-Shammari (d. 1978) whom Asad had married in 1930.

(16)

3 East 80th Street,
New York, N.Y.
July 31, 1953

My dear Mohammad. Husain,

Many thanks for your letter of the 25th, which I have just received. I am writing today to Muntaz Hasan. If he has not yet entrusted an advocate (and, of course, informed you as well), I told him to send to you the power of Attorney that I had executed at the Pakistan Consulate in New York and you may take the necessary steps, perhaps in consultation with Chaudhri Niaz Ali.³⁴ His address is: Near Post Office, Khushab, District, Shahpur. In the Power of Attorney the name of the advocate has been left blank. It will have to be filled in after he has been chosen and has accepted the brief.

Do keep me informed, please.

With best regards from both of us,

Yours sincerely,
M. Asad

(17)

**Mohammad Hussain, Esq.,
51 Umar Deen Road,
Wasanpura, Lahore**

3 East 80th Street,
New York, N.Y.
October 14, 1953

My dear Mohammad. Husain,

34. Chaudhry Niaz Ali Khan (1880-1976), a very close and devoted friend of Asad, Niaz Ali Khan was a resident of Jamalpur (Pathankot, East Punjab, India); an engineer by profession and a philanthropist, he established Dar al-Islam Trust in Jamalpur (1937) to disseminate the teachings of the Qurʾān. Asad, was invited to join the project and was nominated a member of the Trust. Niaz Ali Khan migrated to Pakistan and settled in Jauharabad, Khushab, where he re-established Dar al-Islam Trust and a school and press. For biographical information see: Muhammad Arshad, "Muhammad Asad: Twenty-Six Unpublished Letters", *Islamic Sciences*, 14(Summer 2016)1, pp. 26-27; Idem, "Muhammad Asad and Pola Hamida Asad: Twenty-Two Unpublished Letters", *Islamic Sciences*, 14(2016)2, pp. 166-167; Idem, *Islāmī Riyāsat kī tashkīl-i jadīd*, pp. 147-154; K. M. Azam, *Ḥayāt-i Ṣadīd: Bānīye dār al-Islām Chaudhri Niyāz Ali Khān* (Lahore: Nashariyāt, 2010), pp. 64-67.

I have not heard from you for a considerable time and also Muntaz Hasan has been somewhat remiss recently in writing to me. A few days ago, however, I received two letters from him. He had been in consultation with his brother, Nasim Hasan³⁵ about starting a legal action against “The Star”. Nasim Sb. has now suggested that before entering a defamation suit we should give the editor of “The Star” an opportunity to retract those false allegations and to tender public apology. A notice of this effect will be served on him by Nasim Sb.

I have not heard from Ahmad or Ruth for many weeks and I do not even know whether they are still in Pakistan or have returned to Germany. Can you tell me something about them?

My book is practically finished and will be published in March or April, insha-Allah. After that my wife and I will proceed to Pakistan, stopping in the Middle East for a few months.

Please write me about yourself and your doings as soon as possible.

With all the best regards from both of us,

Yours sincerely,
M. Asad

(18)

POWER OF ATTORNEY

I, the undersigned, being the sole proprietor of Arafat Publications, Lahore, hereby grant to Mr. Muhammad Hussain, so of M. Rahim Bakhsh, 51, Umar Deen Road, Wassanpura, Lahore, the Power of Attorney to act in my name and on my behalf as manager of the said Arafat Publications, especially in connection with a new edition of my book entitled “Islam at the Crossroads” in the English original as well as in an Urdu translation.

Sd/-
Muhammad Asad
Signed before me at New York,
New York, USA
this fifth day of January,
Nineteen Hundred Fifty-Four.
Sd/-
Notary Public State of New York.

35. Nasim Hasan (1911-1995), the younger brother of Muntaz Hasan, was a senior advocate of Supreme Court of Pakistan.

(19)

**Muhammad Hussain, Esq,
51 Umar Din Road,
Wassanpura, Lahore, Pakistan**

3 East 80th Street,
New York 21, N.Y.
January 5, 1954.

My dear Muhammad Hussain,

Many thanks for your letter of December 4, which I am answering so late because I was extremely preoccupied with finalizing the manuscript of my book. It is now completely ready and has been handed over to the publisher. The date of publication, which will be some months from now, has not yet been fixed.

Enclosed I am sending you a notarized Power of Attorney as well as letters to the editors of several Lahore newspapers.³⁶ Similar statements have already appeared in some Arabic newspapers in the Middle East and perhaps also, through them, in some Pakistani papers as well, although I have no information about it. I have not yet heard from Nasim Hassan regarding his intervention with “The Star”; perhaps you know something more about it. If not, please contact him and inform me what has been done so far.

I was very much concerned to learn about your family worries. What are these?

I have received a letter from Ruth Schiemann and have answered her.

Our future program is not yet quite settled. At present I am negotiating with a German publisher for the German edition of my book (I will do the translation myself). In any case, we do not intend to stay indefinitely in the U.S.A. Probably in spring we will leave for the Middle East, stopping for some time in Germany in order to supervise the publication of my book there. By autumn, insha-Allah, we hope to be in Pakistan.

Recently a photograph of Pola and myself was taken at a reception in Pakistan House here; as soon as I receive the prints, I shall send one to you.

With best regards and wishes from both of us,

Yours sincerely,
M. Asad

P. S. I am enclosing two more copies of this letter to the Editor, leaving the address blank. You may send it to any other paper you deem fit.

36. For the text of these letters, see: Muhammad Arshad, “Muhammad Asad: Twenty-Six Unpublished Letters”, *Islamic Sciences*, 14 (2016)1, pp. 43-59.

3 East 80th Street,
New York 21, N.Y.
February 22, 1954

My dear Muhammad Hussain,

Many thanks for your long letter of the 29th January. I also received a letter from Sh. Muhammad Ashraf,³⁷ enclosing the draft of a “contract”, which I immediately tossed into the waste-paper basket. I am sure you do not contemplate concluding a contract with him. I leave the whole matter in your hands, and you may proceed as you think right, but on no account give away the copyright to anyone and do not agree to any arrangement on a “royalty” basis. You know yourself that in such a case we would be cheated out of all revenues. The printing should be managed by yourself and the whole edition, if necessary, sold to a publisher against discount.

In spite of all my requests to Sh. Nasim Hassan, the editor of The Star does not seem to have published any apology. It is now nearly one year since that libelous article appeared! I do not know why my friends should find it so difficult to do this small service for me. My friends in the Middle East³⁸

37. Sh. Muhammad Ashraf was a well-known Lahore-based publisher of Islamic literature.

38. Among Asad's loyal and sincere Middle Eastern friends were 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām (1894-1959), the Egyptian ambassador to Pakistan (1952-1954), and Said Ramaḍān (1926-1995), the son-in-law of Hasan al-Banna, the founder of Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn) and the editor of *al-Muslimūn* (see Asad and Pola Hamida, *The Home-Coming of the Heart*, pp. 153, 154, 196, 207, 234-235, 258). For the life and career of 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām, see Zakī Maḥāsīnī, *'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām fī ḥayātihī, wa-āthārūhu al-adabīyah* ([Cairo]: Jāmi'at al-Duwal al-'Arabīyah, Ma'had al-Buḥūth wa-al-Dirāsāt al-'Arabīyah, 1968; al-Siba'ī Muhammad Siba'ī *'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām : rā'idan- wa-mufakkiran, 1894-1959* (al-Qāhirah : al-Dār al-Miṣrīyah al-Lubnānīyah, 2005). For the life and career of Said Ramaḍān see: Hamid Algar, *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay* (Oneonta, NY: Islamic Publications International. 2002), pp. 49–50. Asad developed friendship with 'Azzām while he was serving as Egyptian ambassador in Pakistan (1952-1954). 'Azzām later contributed an introduction to the Arabic translation of Asad's *The Road to Mecca*, translated by 'Afīf al-Ba'albakī (Beirut 1956, new edition Riyadh, 1997). 'Azzām also forcefully refuted the malice campaign against Asad. Ramaḍān (d. 1995) published the Arabic translation of Asad's letter in his journal *al-Muslimūn* along with an editorial note refuting the libel. For the Urdu translation of Asad's letter and editor's note published in *al-Muslimūn*, see *al-'Atiṣām* (Lahore), 5:21 (1st January 1954), pp. 5 and 2. As director of the Saudi funded Islamic Center Geneva Ramaḍān supported the publication of Asad's English translation of the Qur'an.

were far more prompt in this matter and, as you know, it was not they who were responsible for all that calumny. Anyhow, I am slowly getting fed up with and disinterested in what people in Pakistan may think or say about me. If, after living with them and working for them for so many years, I can be so easily slandered, it is not much use to devote my energies and emotions to “defending” myself.

Recently I had a letter from Ch. Niaz Ali, who seems to be in good health. I hope you are able to meet him occasionally. He is a lovely old man—one of the very few people in Pakistan on whom I can rely.

With best regards from my wife and myself,

Yours sincerely,
M. Asad

(21)

3 East 80th Street,
New York, N.Y.
March 14, 1954

My dear Muhammad Hussain,

Enclosed is a photograph of my wife and myself taken at a function in Pakistan House here; the other man in the picture is Lal Shah Bokhari.³⁹

Ashraf is bothering me about “Islam at the Crossroads”. I have just written to him that he should discuss the matter with you and Chaudhri Niaz Ali. You know how to take care of him. Please discuss the matter yourself with Chaudhri Niaz Ali at your earliest opportunity.

My book is in the press. As soon as I am able to get away, we shall be returning to Pakistan. Exactly when this will be is still uncertain—sometime in the late summer or early autumn, I presume.

With very best regards from us both,

Yours,
Asad

(22)

New York,
May 10, 1954

My dear Muhammad Husain,

This in all hurry: we are leaving here by boat on the 15th instant and going straight to Germany. My next address will be: M. Asad, c/o S. Fischer Verlag, Falkensteiner Strasse 24, FRANKFURT a/M. (West Germany).

39. Lal Shah Bukhari, a Pakistani diplomat and Asad's colleague at Pakistani Mission in New York.

We intend, insha-Allah to stay in Germany for the next 3 or 4 month and then to go to Pakistan via the Middle East.

With all the best regards from both of us,

Yours sincerely,
Asad

(23)

C/o Claassen Verlag
Parkallee 42
HAMBURG 13
West Germany
July 31, 1954

My dear Mohammad Husain,

I feel rather guilty for not having written to you for so long. Since we left America our life was not only full of work but also of permanent movements from place to place. In a few days we expect to shift to Hamburg, where, insha-Allah, we will remain for the next two months. Kindly, therefore, note the new address at the head of this letter.

We often see Ahmad Schiemann. He always talks about you and is, it seems, greatly taken with you. His wife Ruth has recently got a new baby, a boy. She is still in Hamburg with her parents and we shall see her soon, insha-Allah.

During the past two months we have travelled over a large part of West Germany and have stayed on two separate occasions of several days each with Dr. O. H. Malik,⁴⁰ our Ambassador here, who, as you know, is an old and loyal

40. Omar Hayat Malik (1892-1982), an educationist, politician, and diplomat who earned his Master's degree in Mathematics and L. L. B. from Aligarh Muslim University and went to Cambridge for another Master's degree and earned his PhD from Gottingen University. He joined Islamia College Lahore, later became the first Muslim principal of Islamic College of Peshawar (1940-1942) and in 1943 he became the Principal of the Islamia College of Lahore (1940-1942); he played an active role in the Pakistan movement. During 1945-1946, he served as Professor and Head of the Department of Mathematics at University of the Punjab, Lahore. He was member of the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan and also served as vice-chancellor of the University of the Punjab (16th September 1947-1950). Later he served as Pakistan's ambassador to Indonesia (1950-1953), Germany, and Japan (1953-1958) and High Commissioner in India (1959-1960). In 1960, he joined Peshawar University as Professor; later he was appointed Professor Emeritus. He served this university until his death on May 28, 1982. As a member of the Constituent Assembly Malik emerged as a staunch supporter of the 'ulamā and supported the efforts for an Islamic constitution. Under his leadership the University of the Punjab organized a Political Science Conference (1950) to develop a blueprint of the Islamic constitution.

friend of mine. He is one of the few Pakistanis who has never given heed to the malicious slanders against me and has always kept his faith. Hamida likes him very much and it appears that he reciprocates this feeling. While staying a few weeks ago in Dr. Malik's house, I met also A. D. Azhar,⁴¹ who came to Bonn on a Government mission; we celebrated a happy reunion.

My book will be published in New York on August 12th. From many indications it appears that it will have a very good press. As soon as I get some copies here, I shall send you yours, duly inscribed. I am already receiving proofs of the British edition, which will be published in London in October. Meanwhile, the translation into German proceeds very well and will be published here about March 1955.

I am trying to persuade Talal's mother to return to Pakistan in the near future, as I think it would be better for her as well as for Talal. For that reason, I find it necessary to have some funds available soon in Pakistan and I am therefore negotiating with Sh. Muhammad Ashraf about an outright sale of all rights to "Islam at the Crossroads" again [sic, against] a lump sum, which I could place at her disposal. Please, therefore, do not make any arrangements for a re-issue of "Islam at the Crossroads" on my behalf. I know you won't like this new arrangement with Ashraf, but it is very necessary for me and I am sure you will understand my situation.

I hope your own situation, both from the financial and from the family point of view, has improved, in any case, you know that my best wishes and my prayers are always with you.

We hope to hear from you soon and send you our affectionate regards.

Yours as ever,
Asad

He was also the founder of the Urdu Encyclopaedia of Islam project as well as the Department of Islamic Studies (1950) at the University of the Punjab. Malik appointed Asad as honorary head of the Department of Islamic Studies. For the life and career of Omar Hayat Malik, see Abdul Shakoor Ahsan, *Zindagī Nāma* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1983), 43-44; Baidar Malik, *Tehrik-i Pakistan aur Islamiyya College Lahore* (Lahore: Pakistan Study Centre, 1986), pp. 243-256; Mian Tufayl Muhammad, *Mushāhidāt* (Lahore: Idara-I Ma'arif-i Islami, 2005), pp. 175-177; Arshad, *Islāmī Riyāsat kī Tashkīl-i Jadīd: Muhammad Asad kay Afkār kī Tanqīdī Mutālī'a*, pp. 180-181; Muhammad Hanif Shahid, *Tehrik-i Pakistan aur Islamiyya College kī Kirdār* (Riyadh: International Islamic Research Institute, 1992), pp. 175, 184-185; Lal Baha, *History of Islamia College Peshawar*, vol. I (1913-1953) (Peshawar: Mashooq Ali, Rahatabad, 2013), pp. 287-307.

41. A. D. Azhar (1900-1974) was a civil servant who served first in British India and later in Pakistan, also as Finance Secretary to the Punjab Government.

(24)

C/o Claassen Verlag,
Parkallee 42
HAMBURG 13
West Germany
September 15, 1954

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Today I received your latter of the 8th September. By this time I hope you have received your copy of "The Road to Mecca" which I sent you some weeks ago. The American reviews⁴² were indeed most lavish in their praise and I can only hope that the financial success will match the literary. In any case, it is very gratifying to get such a response in a country, which, as you know, is not very favourably disposed toward Islam and the Muslim cause.

As regards "Islam at the Crossroads", I am very glad that you exercised your good judgment and went on with printing the book. You have correctly understood our friend Mr. Ashraf⁴³ far sooner than I, in fact. The moment he started talking of installments, I of course realized that his whole scheme was nonsense. The only reason I even considered his "offer" in the first place was that I wanted to keep some money ready for Talal's mother if and when she returned to Pakistan. But she is not willing to follow my advice and wants to remain in London in these circumstances, I am not so pressed for cash in Pakistan (although it would be very useful in view of my debts there). Do go on with the publication, as originally planned, and keep me advised of the developments. In this connection, it occurs to me that the recent publication of "The Road to Mecca" might possibly stimulate interest in "Islam at the Crossroads" as well.

Incidentally, my British publisher hopes to import into Pakistan a considerable number of copies of "The Road to Mecca" (which will appear in London October 18); so whoever may be interested in reading the book will be able to buy it in the bookshops.

42. Reviews in American press: Sterling North, "New Prophet Honors Islam", *New York World Telegram & Sun*, August 17, 1954; S. C. Chew, "A Westerner Finds More in Islam than in Christianity or Judaism", Review of *The Road to Mecca*, *New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, 15th August 1954; Robert Payne, Review of "The Road to Mecca", *New York Times*, 15th August 1954; "Memoirs: The Road to Mecca", *House of Dawson*, October 1954, p. 28.

43. Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore-based publisher, bookseller and editor of *The Islamic Literature*, who reprinted Asad's *Islam at the Crossroads*.

I shall naturally keep you informed of my movements. Until about the middle of October, we shall certainly remain here in Germany.

With the sincerest regards and best wishes from us both,

Yours,

Asad

(25)

c/o S. Fischer Verlag
Falkensteiner Str. 24
Frankfurt a/M, West Germany
September 25, 1954

My dear Mohammad Husain,

I hope you have by now received your copy of “The Road to Mecca”. Enclosed I am sending you a few of the many reviews which have appeared in the American press. Would you kindly see to it that they are as widely publicized as possible in the Pakistani press—that is, in addition to the one from the New York Times, which you say, has already been published. This, by the way, would also help you in promoting sales of the new edition of “Islam at the Crossroads”. How is your work in this respect progressing? Have you made any arrangements for an Urdu translation?

With all the best to you and yours,

As always,

Asad

(26)

Kandernstrasse 12 Badenweiler (Breisgau)
West Germany
December 15, 1954

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Please forgive me once again for being so late in answering your letter. We have been very busy moving about and finally settling down for the time being (until at least February) in this, the loveliest part of Germany where an old lady, herself a famous author has put a cottage at our disposal. We are surrounded by fir forests and mountains and life is very quiet and peaceful. Nevertheless, we long to go away and to return to the Muslim world—probably to the Middle East for quite a long time. I have many friends there who are urging me to come and work among them, and this thought is very dear to both of us. At present I am busy with the second part of my autobiography. In addition to this, I am writing an article for “Life” magazine for which they have requested of me. Some time ago I received long cable from the editors telling me that they

were greatly impressed with “The Road to Mecca” and intend to bring out a special issue about Islam some time next May. They want me to write an article describing the reasons for my conversion to Islam and my views as to what Islam has to offer to the West. As you know, “Life” magazine has an enormous circulation (six and a half million!) and thus the sales of my book may benefit very much.⁴⁴

How is the new edition of “Islam at the Crossroads” coming along? Have you been able to make any arrangements for an Urdu translation? I do not know whether “The Road to Mecca” is available yet in Pakistani bookshops, but my publisher tells me that a large number of copies have been sent to India. If it does not appear in Pakistan, it will be because there are apparently difficulties about an import license. If people are interested enough to want to read it, they can . . . order it from my London publisher, Max Reinhardt Ltd., 66 Chandos Place, London WC2. Frankly, I doubt whether it will appeal very much to the mentality of my Pakistani brethren.

Please write to me at the above address. I am always happy to hear from you. With affectionate regards from both of us,

Yours as ever,
Asad

(27)

Badenweiler, West Germany
February 17, 1955

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Again there has been a long silence from you; but I know that life is often difficult for you and do not take it amiss.

My work here has been completed, and so we are leaving shortly for the Middle East, where we intend to stay for some time. Until further notice, our address will be:

Muhammad Asad
c/o Legation of Pakistan
Abu Rummana
DAMASCUS, Syria.

Needless to say, it will make me very happy to find a letter from you on arrival in Damascus. We shall reach there, insha-Allah, about the 8th March

44. It seems that the plan did not materialize because Asad could not write for the *Life* magazine.

(our ship is sailing from Genoa, Italy, on March 4th).⁴⁵ In any case, I shall certainly write to you from Damascus.

With warm regards from both of us,

Yours,
Asad

(28)

c/o Legation of Pakistan
Abu Rummana
Damascus, Syria
April 3, 1955

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Many thanks for your letter of March 5, which reached me here in Damascus. I was unable to answer it earlier because our life has been very hectic since we left Europe. Very soon, however, I hope to be able to write you a detailed letter about our life here and our future plans and prospects.

In the meantime, I have urgent request to make of you. Would you please obtain for me the following:

1. A complete set of ARAFAT (9 issues) published from Dalhousie.
2. A copy of ARAFAT published in March 1948⁴⁶ under the auspices of the Punjab Government—or if that is not obtainable, a copy of my essay on “Islamic Constitution-Making.”
3. 4 copies of the last issue(sold to Ashraf in 1947) of ISLAM AT THE CROSSROADS. This is for the purpose of registering the book here in order to prevent further thefts. If you cannot obtain new copies, try to get from your friends used ones, but they must be all of the same edition.

I am sorry to burden you with these requests, but you are the only person who can help me in this matter. Kindly send all these books to me c/o Legation of Pakistan, as above.

Perhaps, God willing, things will develop here in such a way as to bring us together again. I shall write about these matters in my next letter. Meanwhile, with all affection from Hamida and myself,

Yours as ever,
Asad

45. Asad travelled to Syria in early 1955 and stayed for a couple of months, then moved to Beirut (*Home-Coming of the Heart*, pp. 207-209).

46. The journal edited by Muhammad Asad, published simultaneously in English and Urdu, under the auspices of the Department of Islamic Reconstruction, Government of the Punjab. It was the first and the last issue of *Arafat*, published by the Department of Islamic Reconstruction.

(29)

c/o Postmaster,
Zebdani, Syria.
June 8, 1955.

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Many, many thanks for your Id greetings, as well as for the copies of “Arafat” and “Islam at the Crossroads”, which have been duly received.

As regards the Urdu translation of “The Road to Mecca”, appearing in series in “Darb-I-Kalim”,⁴⁷ they have never approached me and, consequently, I have never given them permission to do so. I herewith authorize you to take all necessary steps to stop the publication and to threaten them with legal proceedings involving heavy damages. As you know, Pakistan is a member of the Berne Convention on Copyrights, and as the book is fully copyrighted in my name in America and Europe, their action constitutes an act of plagiarism, which will make them liable to very large damages. Please give me further particulars in this matter.

How is the new edition of “Islam at the Crossroads” coming on? I would like to have an account occasionally, as I intend to let Talal’s mother have my share of the revenues from this book. By the way, their address in London is:

10 Belgrave Mansions,
Belgrave Gardens,
London N.W. 8

About myself and Hamida, there is not much to report. I am now working on my new book, as well as completing another book on purely Islamic problems—mainly concerning a new approach to the question of the Shariah.⁴⁸ This will be published first in Arabic and later, perhaps, in Pakistan.

With all the best wishes and regards from both of us,

Yours as ever,
[M. Asad]
Muhammad Asad

47. *Darb-i Kalīm*, an Urdu Lahore weekly which published a portion of translation of *The Road to Mecca* in April 1955 (Muhammad Husain to Asad, dated 26th April, 1955, unpublished).

48. It seems that Asad could not write his planned book on the Question of Shari‘ah; however a few articles on the question of shari‘ah, fiqh, and ijihad appeared in *Arafat* (1946-47); these were later included in his book *This Law of Ours and other Essays* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1987), reprinted by Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2000).

(30)

c/o Green House Hotel
Bhandoun, Lebanon.
[August 28, 1955]

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Enclosed is a copy of my letter to Mr. Zafar Ishaq Ansari,⁴⁹ which is self-explanatory.⁵⁰ You will, of course, remember that some time ago I wrote to you in this connection. From Mr. Zafar Ishaq's letter, it appears that he would like to translate "The Road to Mecca" into Urdu but could not arrange for its publication.⁵¹ Therefore I do not think it will come to anything, but I should like to have your opinion on this point, and also the opinion of some literary persons as to his Urdu qualifications.

I have been informed by my British publisher that "The Road to Mecca" is very much in demand in Pakistan but that he has not been granted an import license so far. Could not anything be done in this respect? Surely there must be some people who are sufficiently interested in my work to prevail upon the Pakistan Government to encourage a Pakistani author!

You will be glad to know that the German edition of the book will appear within a few weeks. The Arabic translation has given me some trouble due to the lack of qualified translators in Lebanon and Syria, but I hope that within the coming months the matter will be settled and the book will finally appear in Arabic as well. I am told there is a great demand for the English language edition here in Beirut.

At the beginning of October we are shifting to Beirut (Lebanon) where we intend to stay for some time, at least until I finish my biography of the Prophet. My address from the beginning of October will be:

M. Asad,

49. Zafar Ishaq Ansari (d. 2016), the former Director General of Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad. For an obituary, see Muzaffar Iqbal, "Zafar Ishaq Ansari (December 27, 1932–April 24, 2016): Glimpses in Memoriam", *Islamic Sciences*, 14 (Summer 2016)1, pp. 95-105.

50. Letter addressed to Zafar Ishaq Ansari (27 December 1932–24 April 2016) in response to his letter seeking Asad's permission to undertake an Urdu translation of *The Road to Mecca*. For the text of Asad's letter see Muhammad Arshad, "Muhammad Asad: Twenty-Six Unpublished Letters", *Islamic Sciences*, 14 (Summer 2016)1, pp. 61-62.

51. Several scholars attempted to translate this work into Urdu, however a complete Urdu version of this work has not appeared in Urdu. A summary of the Arabic edition has been rendered into Urdu by Muhammad al-Hasnî; it has been published in India and Pakistan as *Ṭufān say sāhil tak* (Majlis-i Nashariyāt-i Islām, Karachi, n. d.).

Cortas Building
Rue Maurice Barres
BEIRUT, Lebanon.

Until then I shall remain at the address given at the head of the letter.

I should like to hear from you more often and in more detail. Please let me know how you and your family are faring.

With affectionate regards from myself and my wife,

Yours as ever,
Asad

(31)

Cortas Building
Rue Maurice Barres
Zoukak el Blatt
BEIRUT, Lebanon
September 21, 1955

My dear Mohammad Husain,

I was just about to write to you informing you of our change of address when your letter of September 15th arrived. We are shifting to Beirut on October 1st and our address from now on will be as given at the head of this letter.

I entirely agree with you regarding Mr. Zafar Ishaq Ansari and the Urdu translation of "The Road to Mecca". In any case, it would be useless to pursue negotiations with any prospective translator unless and until an arrangement has been made with a publishing firm of renown. As you know, the foreign rights to this book are held by my American publishers Simon & Schuster, who would have to sign any contract agreed upon with a Pakistani publisher. Nevertheless, I am authorized by them to negotiate any agreement, so if you can interest any well-known publisher (for instance, Feroz Sons) in an Urdu translation, please request them to communicate with me directly.

In this connection, yesterday I received a letter from Mr. Muhammad Sadiq,⁵² Canal Colony, Jahanian, District Multan, who, among other things,

52. Muhammad Sadiq known as Lala-i Şehrai (1920- 2000), an Urdu poet and writer, undertook the translation of *The Road to Mecca* and published two chapters in Urdu journals: *Tasnīm* (Lahore, January 1955) and *Chirāgh-i Rāh* (Karachi, July 1955) (See Zahira Nisar, "Lala-i Şehrai: ayk hama jihat shakhsīyyat", in Rafī'uddin Hashami (ed.), *Yadnama-i Lala-i Şehrai* (Lahore: Dar al-Nawadir, 2013), pp. 333-335). However Asad did not encourage the translator to continue. For the life and work of Lala-i Şehrai see Fauzia Rani, "Lalā-i Şehrāi: Hayat aur adabī khidmāt", M. A. thesis, Department of Urdu, Punjab University Oriental College, Lahore, 2002; Sadhir Ahmad, "Lāla-i Şehrāi kī Na'tiya sha'iri", M. Phil thesis, Hazara University (PKP, Pakistan), 2011.

also seems to be interested in an Urdu translation of “The Road to Mecca”. Please contact him and see what it is all about.

The above letter is one of the many I received in consequence of my reply to the *Pakistan Times*. Most of them were indignant at the libellous remarks made by the reviewer.⁵³

As regards the import license for “The Road to Mecca” this matter has been taken up at high quarters and no further action on your or my part would seem necessary. Yes, you are right, there is no question of any “export license” for the British publisher; but his agent in Karachi is anxious to obtain an import license so as to be able to supply a large number of copies to Pakistani booksellers.

As regard “Islam at the Crossroads”, I wish you all success, but one has to take into consideration the fact that the book is a very old one and has been widely distributed a long time ago. I do hope, however, that you will not suffer any financial loss on this account. By the way, I received a letter from Talal in which he mentions that somebody told him that Ashraf has reprinted some copies of “Islam at the Crossroads”. While I have a feeling that what Talal has in mind is your edition and not any issued by Ashraf, I would nevertheless urge you to look into the matter just to be on the safe side. If it should be established that Ashraf has indeed issued reprints, you are of course authorized under the terms of the full powers granted by me to you to start immediately legal proceedings against Ashraf with a demand for substantial damages. You would have an airtight case.

There is no point in my giving you Talal’s London address as he is leaving these days for Edinburgh, where he is joining the University.⁵⁴ Since he seems to be serious about this, I am resuming my allowances to him in order that he may devote himself entirely to his studies. My financial obligations towards his mother are, of course, unchanged by this arrangement. As soon as I receive Talal’s new address, I shall let you have it.

I also would like to meet you again soon, but unfortunately a trip to Pakistan is out of the question for some time, as I must devote myself to my new book. But, God willing, we will meet sooner or later and you and Hamida can make a personal acquaintance and, I am sure, a friendship. She joined me in sending you best wishes and affectionate greetings.

Yours as always,
Asad

53. See “Road to Mecca—European Discovery of Islam: Adenauer, architect or menace?”, *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 27th August, 1955.

54. Talal received his M. A. from Edinburgh University B. Litt. and D. Phil from Oxford University.

(32)

Cortas Building
Rue Maurice Barres
BEIRUT, Lebanon
October 26, 1955

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Reading of the terrible floods in the Punjab, we cannot help being worried about you. Please let us know immediately how your house has fared in this catastrophe. I do hope that it has escaped serious damage in spite of its position. A line or two from you will reassure us greatly.

With all the best wishes from both of us and prayers for you and your family's welfare,

Yours affectionately,
Asad

(33)

Beit Khalidy
Khan el-Sheikh
ALEY, Lebanon
December 13, 1955

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Your letter of the 26th November finds me in bed with a bad flue plus some gall bladder trouble. In addition, we have to move out of our flat in a few days. The noise of Beirut has forced us to retreat again into the hills, where our address will be as given at the top of this letter.

As regards your idea of going to England, I am very much in favour of it for several reasons. Firstly, I understand that in England there is a labour shortage and it will not be difficult for a competent mechanic like you to find reasonable employment. Secondly, a change of your field of activities will, I believe, prove very advantageous to you if, for no other reason, it will at least make it impossible for you to further increase your dependents and you know what I mean!

I shall be only too happy to meet you at Beirut on your way to England. The place, which we have taken, is only a half-hour's distance from the city and so it will not be difficult to arrange. Perhaps you could stay with us for some days, if this is possible for you. Are you travelling by plane or by ship?

I wish I were able to contribute something to your expenses, but unfortunately I am myself tied down completely, what with Talal at the university in Edinburgh and his mother in London. In any case, I would like to have more details about the practical aspect of your plans. Hamida is looking forward to meeting you here, sooner than any of us had anticipated. As you perhaps know,

Chaudhry Niaz Ali has the intention of coming to stay with us for some time. I hope his health will allow this. We have not heard from him for some time. You might contact him, and perhaps you could travel together. This, I think, would be good for both of you.

With warm regards from both of us to all of you,

Yours as always,
Asad

(34)

Pola Hamida to Mohammad Hussain

Beit Khalidy
Khan el-Sheikh
ALEY, Lebanon
January 29, 1956

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

Just a few lines to set your mind at rest after not hearing from us for so long a time. It really has been impossible to write before this because although my husband was released from the hospital (after spending three weeks there) over a fortnight ago, I have had my hands completely full, what with trying to take good care of him, managing a very difficult household, trying to make my way among a most dishonest people and not knowing the language sufficiently, etc, etc, etc. Really a long, long story which I hope to be able to relate to you personally when we see you here soon, I hope.

You were right to be concerned about my husband's health. Almost immediately after I wrote you, it became obvious that his illness was far more serious than we originally thought. Actually I believe the doctors diagnosed wrongly from the beginning. It is true that his gall bladder was seriously inflamed, but when he developed pleurisy in the hospital several weeks later it became clear to us that that was the primary ailment probably from the outset, and was the more troublesome of the two. At any rate, he has now almost completely recovered from the pleurisy but the after-effects, terrible pain in the right side, are still with him and will probably remain for some time. As you may know, pleurisy is a very serious and painful ailment and, worst of all, a very lengthy one. Although we hope he will be able to be up and around within a few weeks, it will be months before he is back to his normally healthy condition. He has lost a great deal of weight, due to the six or more weeks of continuous temperature. Had it not been for his extraordinarily strong constitution, God knows what would have happened. As it is, we must thank God it was not more

serious and do all we can to help him get well again.

Today (in fact, just now) I have written Chaudhri Niaz Ali in the same vein. You must know that I consider my husband's friends to be my own friends and I assure you that I have written to my own family, who are very anxious about us, at the same time as I have to you. I do hope your affairs go well and that your plans to go to England (via Beirut, we hope) will materialize. By the way, in my next letter I will try to include the information you require about overland travel from Baghdad. Unfortunately I am very ignorant of these facts myself and will have to glean them from my husband, who will be only too happy to supply them, if it means that we will see you at long last! Of course I shall read this letter to him before I mail it, and so you can consider this to be from the two of us.

With the very warmest regards from both of us,

Hamida Asad

P.S. I have just remembered that the best way of travel between Baghdad and Beirut (and also the cheapest) is via the large buses that travel regularly over this route. It will not be difficult to find out the fares, and we will do so at the first possible opportunity.

(35)

Khan el-Sheikh,
ALEY, Lebanon
April 13, 1956

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

My very sincere apologies for not having answered any of your letters sooner. But I assure you that this has not been due to oversight but rather to preoccupation with our many problems. However, I could and should have found at least a few minutes to sit down and write to you. I won't let it happen again. Your letters indicate the real worry you have been undergoing, due to my husband's illness, and the least I can do to reward such a constant friendship as yours is to lessen your worries.

During the past month my husband's health has improved so rapidly that even the doctor is astonished. However, his troubles are not yet over as within a week or so he shall have to have X-rays taken to determine whether or not his gall bladder will have to be removed, I very much hope it can be avoided and would prefer, if it should be necessary, to keep him on a strict diet for the rest of his life than to have him operated upon. Not that it's a very serious operation, but it's never very pleasant to be minus an organ. However, it is in the hands of God.

This afternoon he is in Beirut, completing the revision of the Arabic translation of "The Road to Mecca", which is already being printed. His absence from home is the main reason for my writing, for, I must confess, when

he is with me he occupies all my interest and attention. But this, I believe, is a weakness mine, which you surely must share and of which you cannot help but approve!

Forgive me, not only for the delay but also for the brevity of this letter. You see, now that I have gotten around to it, I would like to write to Chaudhri Niaz Ali, as well.

With all the best regards and wishes to you and your family, I am

Your sister,

Hamida

(36)

C/o Green House Hotel
BHAMDOUN, Lebanon
August 3, 1956

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Very sorry for having kept silent so long. It is not Hamida's fault but mine, because I have been so monopolizing our typewriter with my present work that she has had no opportunity to use it, and I keep telling her that her handwriting will not be easily legible.

I was extremely sorry to learn of the death of your mother. I know it is a very great loss to you. May God console you. I do hope that your wife has fully recovered by now from her attack of typhoid. All this reminds me of a verse from an ancient Greek poem, which I have recently read:

"Poor Mortal, never pray to have no griefs,
Pray to have fortitude".

As for myself, my health has improved very considerably, but I still tire very easily. Nevertheless, I am again able to work and this is the most important thing.

The Arabic edition of my book⁵⁵ has just come out and I am sending you a copy under separate cover.

Please continue writing, even if for some reason or other we are unable to answer immediately. You are one of the very few friends in Pakistan who have remained friends.

By the way, we do not have the Schiemanns' address as we have had little or no contact with them since leaving Germany.

Affectionately yours,

Asad

P.S. I shall remain at the above address for the rest of the summer.

55. Asad's *The Road to Mecca*, translated into Arabic by 'Afif al-Ba'lbaki bearing the title *al-Ṭarīq ilā Makkah* and introduced by Dr. Abd al-Wahhab 'Azzam, was published in Beirut in 1956.

c/o Green House Hotel
Bhandoun, Lebanon
November 26, 1956

My dear Muhammad Husain.

This is only to let you know that we are well and thinking of you. Of course we have been extremely preoccupied these days with the distressing events in the Middle East and particularly with the unhappy relations now prevailing between Egypt and Pakistan.⁵⁶ May God bring about a greater unity among the Muslims!

We may possibly be coming to Pakistan after a few months. I have been invited by the Punjab University to participate in an Islamic Colloquium (orientalists' conference), which is proposed to be held next summer.⁵⁷ They have asked me to come a few months earlier, if possible, so as to assist them in organizing it. I am now corresponding with Mian Afzal Husain⁵⁸ regarding the terms, and if they are acceptable, you may expect us sometime in the spring. We will let you know as soon as things have been settled definitely.

Since it is more than likely that I will be coming to Pakistan in the near future, I prefer to postpone arrangements regarding Urdu translations of "Islam at the Crossroads" and "The Road to Mecca" until my arrival there. This will push things considerably.

56. The Arab nationalism of Egypt's president Gamal Abdul Nasser (1956-1970), his inclination towards Soviet Union and India, and particularly his crusade against the Muslim Brotherhood, deteriorated the relationship between the two countries. For Nasser's pro-Indian stance see Richard Edmund Ward, *India's Pro-Arab Policy: A Study in Continuity*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1992, pp. 19-29). Pakistan's religious-cum-political parties, with *Jamā'at-i Islāmī* at their forefront, were vehemently critical of Nasser's Arab nationalism and especially his military crusade against the Muslim Brotherhood.

57. International Islamic Colloquium was held in at the Punjab University Lahore (29th December 1957-8th January 1958); Muhammad Asad was appointed as Director of the Colloquium, and Pola Hamida acted as honorary secretary. Asad enthusiastically organized the event and made all necessary arrangements, but a few weeks prior to event he tendered his resignation (30th November 1957) due to difference of opinion on administrative matters related to the event. For detail see: Arshad, *Islāmī riyāsat ki tashkīl-i jadīd*, pp. 171-173; Asad and Pola, *Home-Coming of the Heart*, pp. 222-223; Zahid Munir Amir, "Muhammad Asad and International Islamic Colloquium of 1957-58: A Forgotten Chapter from the History of the Punjab University", *Journal of Research (Humanities)*, Vol. LII (January 2016), pp. 1-21.

58. Mian Afzal Husain (1869-1970) was vice-chancellor of the University of the Punjab, Lahore.

Please continue writing; even if I remain silent for some time. My silence is never a sign of forgetfulness.

With all the best from both of us,

Yours as always,
Asad

(38)

c/o Green House Hotel
Bhamdoun, Lebanon
December 28, 1956

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

I did not answer your letter of November 21 because it has obviously crossed with mine of approximately the same date. Moreover, I was awaiting a final settlement of my plans to come to Pakistan.

As I wrote you in my last letter, I have been invited by the University of the Punjab to help them organize the Islamic Colloquium, which will take place late next summer. They want me to come some months in advance, and we shall probably arrive sometime in March. Thus, we shall meet again very, very soon, insha-Allah. Hamida is looking forward to making your acquaintance. In the meantime, I shall give you some trouble, which I am sure, you will gladly assume.

We shall be staying in Lahore for several months and would rather stay in a house than in a hotel. Therefore, would you please start looking immediately for a suitable unfurnished bungalow? We don't need many rooms—about three would do for us but I presume that such a small bungalow will not be easily found. You may therefore consider something larger. The area must be very good and quiet, preferably the Civil Lines or the Canal area, but not too far from the town as we will not have a car. There must be modern, European-style bathrooms with tubs in the house, and of course a garden. Since my expenses in Lahore will be paid by the University, I can afford to pay a good rent and would rather be comfortable at a higher rent than less comfortable at a saving. If you find a suitable half-bungalow, please make sure that the neighbors are of the most quiet kind, not playing radio the day round, etc. You know how difficult it is for me to exist with noises around me. The approximate date at which we would occupy the house would be April 1 or perhaps even a little earlier. So if you can find something, please let me know immediately and inform me about the rents which are generally paid these days for good bungalows. When we arrive we can see what you have lined up and make our choice immediately.

Also, we shall need a first-class servant, preferably one knowing a little English. He need not be an experienced cook but should know something about cooking and should be generally well trained; one who has already served with

Europeans or Americans would be the best. He must be a Punjabi or a Pathan. I am prepared to pay very good wages for a really good man.

By the way, could you find out whether bottled gas for cooking stoves is available in the Punjab, because we have a gas stove, which we would like to take along to Pakistan. In Karachi, I believe, piped gas is already available, but I am not sure about the Punjab.

All this, I know, means a lot of bother for you, but after my five years of absence from Pakistan, I have to bother somebody and that somebody can only be a really good friend like you.

I shall be very grateful if you will keep me continually informed about the progress of your house and servant hunting, etc. My plans depend very much on these items. Perhaps, God willing, after the Colloquium we shall settle in Pakistan for good.

With the warmest regards and thanks in advance from both of us,

Yours,
Asad

(39)

c/o Green House Hotel
Bhamdoun, Lebanon
January 7, 1957

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

Many thanks for your letter of January 28 [sic., December 28], which I was awaiting most anxiously.

Your information about the availability of bungalows has reassured me, but you did not answer any of my other questions, namely servant and whether bottled gas for cooking-stoves is available in Lahore. Perhaps you have overlooked these questions or have not yet been able to ascertain this information. As we intend to leave on March 5, I must receive your reply immediately. Please don't delay.

As I have just mentioned, we plan to leave on the 5th of March, but as our booking on the plane is still provisional, I will let you know the definite date and time of our arrival in Karachi in my next letter. We would be delighted to be met by you at the airport in Karachi.

With warmest regards,

Yours as ever,
Asad

(40)

c/o Green House Hotel
Bhamdoun, Lebanon

January 22, 1957

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

I have not yet received any answer from you to my letter of December 28. Probably you have not yet been able to accomplish all that I have asked of you. In the meantime, however, I have fixed the date of my arrival for the first week of March (the Punjab University are urging me to come as soon as possible). Therefore, I will probably need a house from the beginning of March, rather than April.

Also, in the meantime I have decided to utilize this opportunity to return to Pakistan for good. Thus, we shall be taking all our furniture and household effects along with us and would like to have a house in which we could stay permanently, even after the colloquium is over. So, please keep this in mind while you are looking for a bungalow.

I hope to hear from you very soon as the time is running short. It will greatly ease things for Hamida and myself if we can occupy a permanent house as soon as possible after our arrival. Today I am writing to Chaudhri Niaz Ali and telling him about our impending arrival.

With all the best from both of us,

Yours as ever,
M. Asad

(41)

Bhamdoun,
February 21st, [19]57

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

We shall arrive at Karachi, insha-Allah, on Pan-American Flight No. 2 at 10:55 a.m. on Wednesday, March 6. The following day we will leave for Lahore, most probably by plane. Thus, there is no reason for you to trouble yourself to come to Karachi, but we shall be very happy to see you in Lahore on our arrival. I shall send a telegram from Karachi to Rana Jahandad,⁵⁹ giving him the exact information about our arrival in Lahore, and you should therefore be in contact with him.

As regards bringing in a car, electric stove, etc. this is unfortunately beyond my means at present. I have been doing without a car for several years and see no reason why I cannot continue doing so in the future as well.

With all affection,

Yours,
Asad

59. Rana Jahandad Khan was a senior police officer of President General Ayyub Khan's era, and a relative of Asad's old friend Chaudhry Niaz Ali Khan.

(42)

Bhamdoun,
24.2.57.

My dear Muhammad Husain,

Just now received your letter of the 18th February. Many thanks for finding a home! Please engage it immediately. I have no doubt it will be all right; if it is not, we can always change it later. But do not pay 2 years' rent in advance; payments must be made monthly. Kindly request Rana Jahandad to pay some advance on my behalf, so that I may not lose the home.

I quite agree with your suggestion that we should occupy the bungalow immediately on our arrival and not stay in a hotel. Providing that the arrangement is pucca,⁶⁰ please get for us some furniture etc. on rent, as our own things will have to wait for the opening of the Suez Canal, and will thus reach Pakistan in May or June. In the meantime, we shall need the following articles urgently:

Bedroom: 2 beds; 2 chairs; some kind of dressing table with mirror; if there are no built-in almarahs. We shall also need a chest of drawers and a wardrobe.

Sitting room: a sofa and a few chairs.

Dining room: table and chairs.

Kitchen: Pots and pans, crockery and cutlery.

We shall also need mattresses, blankets, pillows, etc. Perhaps Rana Sb. will help us out for a short time.

These are the most urgent, basic things. When we are there, we can get more.

As I wrote to you in my last letter, we will, insha-Allah, reach Karachi by Pan-American, Flight No. 2, at 10.55 a. m. on Wednesday, March 6. The following day we expect to fly to Lahore. I shall write to Rana Jahandad from Karachi. Please keep in touch with him.

If you are sure that you can make all the arrangements regarding furniture etc. in time, please notify Mian Afzal Husain, so that he should cancel my hotel reservation he may have made for us.

And, yes: Please see to it that the electric connection is made at the bungalow, so that we may have some light on arrival. Also, you will be, I am sure, kind enough to make sure that some eatables are available for us hungry travelers!⁶¹

If it is possible to hire a small refrigerator for the period until we get our

60. A Punjabi word, meaning "confirmed".

61. At first a house in the Chamba House Lane was rented for Asad, but soon he rented a new house at a very moderate rate from his old friend Sardar Shaikat Hayat Khan, in Model Town. (Asad & Pola, *Home-Coming of the Heart*, p. 220).

own, it would help a lot!

Many, many thanks, and best regards.

Yours,
Asad

(43)

Telephone

Office: 4491

Residence: 69185

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC COLLOQUIUM

UNIVERSITY OF THE PANJAB

LAHORE—PAKISTAN

September 23, 1957

I have known Mr. Mohammad Husain of 51, Umar Din Road, Wasanpura, Lahore, for many years(over twenty), and can strongly recommend him as a thoroughly reliable, absolutely honest gentleman, who can be trusted to perform any job entailing responsibility with utmost integrity and efficiency. He has long been in the company of Europeans and is fully acquainted with Western mentality; in addition, he has considerable experience in handling labourers and working staff. His reputation is unimpeachable, and he is very well known in Lahore; he also has wide experience concerning Lahore markets of every kind. I shall be only too glad to answer any queries relating to him.

Muhammad Asad
Director,
International Islamic Colloquium

(44)

Pola Hamida to Babri, dated August 27, 1958. (Handwritten)

Switzerland⁶²

August 27, 1958

Dearest Muhammad Hussain,

It is a very long time since we have written to you, but this was not due to lack of thought but because our life has been unsettled during the past four

62. After tendering his resignation from the position of International Islamic Colloquium, Punjab University Lahore, Asad left Pakistan for Switzerland possibly in February 1958 and settled there until he moved to Morocco in October 1964. For his Geneva years see Arshad, *Islāmī riyāsat kī tashkīl-i jadīd*, pp. 174-176; cf., *Home-Coming of the Heart*, pp. 233-241.

months—looking for a house, going to Italy to pick up our car, etc. And more, in two days' time, we are leaving to Munich to meet our friend Shaikh Saqa... and will then drive together to Vienna for a about a week's stay. Thus, we will be away from Geneva for about two weeks. I did not want to leave without writing at least a few lines to our dear friend Muhammad Hussain, whom we never forget.

Unfortunately, we have still not found a house but we hoping that on our return from Vienna.

(45)

Commugny (Vaud)
Switzerland
December 27, 1958

My very dear Muhammad Hussain,

Forgive us for the long silence. Our only excuse for it—and an inadequate one, at that—is that we have spent the last few months arranging and settling down in our new house in the countryside, just fifteen minutes' drive from Geneva. Asad has already begun to work again, after these many months' interruption, and so life begins to make sense.

We have, at long last, found an excellent house, which we have taken on lease for two years. However, we find it so pleasant, quiet and comfortable that it is easy to contemplate staying in it for years, or at least until we can move permanently into a house of our very own, insha-Allah. But who knows what the future brings? In the meantime, we are grateful to God for giving us this wonderful opportunity to live and work in comfort amidst pleasant surroundings. The house is centrally heated by oil, and we have a permanent hot-water supply on electricity. In fact, everything is on electricity: refrigerator, stove, and etc. We have four big rooms (large sitting-room, dining-room, bedroom and a study-library for Asad to work in), together with a modern kitchen, bathroom, storeroom and an attic. We have no room for a servant, but we do not need one as we have a woman who lives in the village come in two afternoons a week to do the heavy cleaning, washing, ironing, etc. as we have a huge refrigerator (larger than the one we left behind in Lahore), we need only to shop once in two weeks for meat, vegetables and fruit, and we get our milk and butter locally and our bread delivered to the house. Just to give you an idea of how easy it is to exist, even in the country. Insha-Allah, this will greatly increase the time Asad can spend on his work, and I, also, will have plenty of time for reading, sewing and studying Arabic, which has improved considerably after the two months spent in the Persian Gulf.

Our health remains excellent—alhamdulillah—although I am slightly overweight and Asad slightly under; if we could only exchange a few pounds—

so much easier! The climate is extremely pleasant and surprisingly mild. So far we have had no really cold weather and we are almost looking forward to having a little snow. From all the windows of our house, we have a magnificent view of Lake Geneva with the high, snow-covered peaks of the Alps towering above. Some days the mountains are very clear and others, absolutely invisible, so we have a constantly changing view. We have several friends and acquaintances in Geneva whom we see often and, now that we are at last settled, are able to invite out here. In short, we are once again beginning to lead a normal life.

The rumour which you heard about Asad's having been offered the full Directorship of the Islamic Research Institute is correct.⁶³ However, it came several months too late for him to be able to accept it. We had already shifted all our belongings to Switzerland and rented a house for two years. The only possibility would have been to accept it on the condition that we would spend at least four (summer) months in Switzerland and the rest (during the school term) in Karachi, but they, foolishly didn't want to accept that condition (although it would have meant no extra cost to them as we were prepared to pay our own passages whenever we would go to Europe and also Asad was prepared not to accept salary for those extra months). However, thank God they boggled at this facility, so Asad had to say "no, thanks". The salary, which they offered him, as well as the position, was the equivalent of that of a Vice-Chancellor of a university, in addition to a living allowance and, of course, our air passages to Karachi. They have lost a good man and for no good reason, but I, for one, am very happy to see Asad concentrating his full energies on writing and not wasting his time and efforts amidst routine administrative duties, petty intrigues against him, etc. which would have been inevitable.

Speaking of Pakistan, we are very curious to learn more about the situation now prevailing there—that is, since the Army took over the Government. Although there is practically nothing about Pakistan in the foreign press, we have heard here and there that there has been considerable improvement in administration and that morale is high, especially among the middle and lower classes. We pray that this be so, for we remain as much concerned with the present and future of Pakistan as we have always been.

By the way, I have made copies of those snapshots, which you requested, and they are enclosed. You perhaps know that Akram Sheikh has been transferred to Karachi. We received a letter from him some time ago and are ashamed

63. In 1958 Asad was offered the position of Director of the Central Institute of Islamic Research (Karachi), established in 1954 by the Government of Pakistan (later renamed as Islamic Research Institute, currently an organ of the International Islamic University Islamabad). Dr. Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi (1903-1981), the former Minister of Education, was appointed its first permanent and full time director, and was succeeded by Dr. Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988) in 1963.

to say that we didn't write him as we were in the midst of moving. We shall, of course, keep in touch with all our good friends in Pakistan, and expect you to convey our regards to various mutual friends in Lahore.

I really must close now and try to write a few other, also long delayed letters. We hope to hear from you soon that you are healthy and happy and reasonably prosperous. In the meantime, all the best wishes to you and your dear family for the New Year.

With love from both of us,
Yours as always,

Hamida

P. S. Do you know whether Professor Ruhayyim (the Egyptian gentleman who was teaching at the Punjab University)⁶⁴ and his wife are back in Lahore for this term? When we left Pakistan they were not yet certain whether they would return again, and we are wondering. If they are there, and you happen to see them, do please give them our very warm regards. In any case, let us know. (By the way, it will amuse you that we saw Afzal Hussain on the street in Geneva some months ago; there was a mutual non-recognition, as you may well imagine!)

PHA

(46)

Asad to Muhammad Husain Babri

Commugny (Vaud)
Switzerland
April 20, 1959

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

Hamida and I thank you for your letter of March 11, for which we have waited so long. We would have answered it sooner, but for the fact that we have had a guest staying with us for the past month and it was very difficult to find time for letter writing. But you know well that you are never far from our thoughts.

As regards your suggestion that I should take charge of the Institute of Islamic Culture⁶⁵ at Lahore, this will unfortunately not be possible. I think I

64. Professor Ruhayyim was Professor Arabic at Punjab University Oriental College, Lahore.

65. After the death of Khalifa Abdul Hakim (1896-1959), the founding director of the Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore (1950-1959), the senior fellows of the Institute (Maulānā Muhammad Hanif Nadwi, Ja'far Shah Phalwārāwī, and Ra'is Ahmad Jāfari) persuaded the

wrote to you in one of my earlier letters that I had been offered an even more important job by the Government of Pakistan—namely, the Directorship of the Islamic Research Institute in Karachi with the rank and salary of a vice—chancellor. But circumstances did not allow me to accept that office and, similarly, it will not now be possible for me to contemplate the Lahore post mentioned by you.

We have now settled for some years to come in Switzerland and I am working on a new commentary and translation of the Qur'an, which will occupy all my time. Until this work is completed, insha-Allah, I cannot possibly contemplate another change of residence, especially after the recent major shift from Pakistan to Switzerland.

Regarding the lovely gift, which you gave us at the Lahore airport (as well as the two parcels containing my own things), I forgot to mention that I received them in Karachi in good order. We thank you and your wife very much for thinking of us with so much love and we shall certainly treasure that embroidered memento as a gift from our very dearest friends.

You probably know that Talal's mother has returned to Pakistan and is now staying with Chaudhri Niaz Ali. She is receiving her full allowance from me as before and I am also taking care of Talal until he finishes his studies this coming summer, when he will probably return to Pakistan and take up a post at one of the Universities there.

If you see Mr. And Mrs. Ruhayyim, please tell them that they should write to us. We wrote to them several times to their address in Egypt, but have never received any answer from them. Give them our best regards.

And please do continue to write to us from time to time, and to think of us always—as we do of you. With great affection from both of us to you and your family,

Yours,
Asad

(47)

Commugny (Vaud)
Switzerland
September 13, 1959

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

It is your turn now to forgive me for answering your letter of July 20 so late. The summer was a very busy one for us and we were consequently behind in all our correspondence. Today Hamida placed your letter before me and insisted

administrative board to appoint Muhammad Asad as director of the Institute; consequently Asad was offered directorship in March 1959; see Arshad, *Islāmī rīyāsāt kī tashkīl-i jadīd*, p. 182.

that I myself answer it immediately. But you know that we are always thinking of you, even when we don't write.

You ask where my Qur'an translation will be published after completion. It is too soon for me to make any plans in this respect, but I will certainly let you know as soon as my own ideas about this have crystallized. In the meantime, the work is progressing, but it will, of course, take several years to complete.

You will be glad to know that Talal has visited with us recently and stayed for a fortnight in our house. He is now back in London trying to get an appointment with one of the Pakistani universities. He has recently obtained his M.A. (Hons.), which will surely enable him to get lecturer's post and to begin to stand on his own feet.

As you know, Munira returned to Pakistan last December. She stayed with Chaudhri Niaz Ali until March or April and then suddenly went to Lahore, Karachi, and God knows where else. At present she seems to be in Karachi with some friends of hers, and I have heard a rumour that she intends to remarry. Nothing would make me happier, but I would like to know whether this is true. Naturally, I cannot ask her directly because our relations are as bad as ever, thanks to her continuous complaints and dissatisfaction—in spite of the fact that she is receiving regularly from me Rs.500 every month. Could you possibly find out through some of your friends in Karachi whether she really is considering remarriage, or has already remarried?⁶⁶ But these inquiries should be made very discreetly. I know that I can always trust you. Her last address in Karachi was c/o "Dar-ul-Falah", 45 M. A. Jinnah Road, Karachi. Please do let me have this information as soon as you possibly can; with your connections, I am sure you can manage to find out something about this.

As for Hamida and myself, there is nothing much to tell. We are living a quiet life in the country outside Geneva. The weather this summer and autumn is magnificent, and our health is good, thanks to God. Neither Hamida nor I would like to remain forever in Europe; we would very much prefer to settle for good in a Muslim country. This problem is continually in our minds, but we have not yet reached any final solution.

We hope you and your family are well. No need to assure you that we always think of you and talk about you. We wish to God that we would be in a position to help you materially, but so far this has not been possible, as it is, we are just pulling along with what God gives us, but we are grateful to Him.

With the warmest regards from both of us to you and yours, I remain,

Yours affectionately,
Asad

66. Munira never remarried.

(48)

Commugny(Vaud)
Switzerland
December 2, 1959

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

It seems that this time I am at fault for not having written for a long time. The reason was this: I was invited by the Swiss Radio to deliver a very long talk on Islam at the end of November.⁶⁷ Since this talk was a very important one (it was part of a cycle of talks by some of Europe's leading intellectuals on various important questions of the present time), I had to prepare it very carefully and, consequently, to spend some time on it. I have just now returned from Berne after delivering this talk, which I understand, has caused a very great response from the public. And now I hasten to write to you.

Since I wrote you last, I have learned from Chaudhri Niaz Ali that Munira returned to Jauharabad at the beginning of October, and at that time Chaudhri Sahib was under the impression that she had returned for good. But a fortnight later she took all her luggage and departed for Lahore without any explanation. Since that time I have heard nothing about her movements, and Talal does not seem to know anything either. Chaudhri Niaz Ali wrote that she had been strongly urged by Saeeda, the daughter of the late Sheikh Rahmatullah, to stay in her bungalow in Lahore Cantonment (49 Wellington Mall). But she refused this invitation without giving any reason. All this strengthens my impression that she has another source of income—perhaps she has re-married. You have not yet informed me what was the result of your inquiries in this respect. Would you please be so kind as to pursue these inquiries—discreetly, of course—with very great energy? Perhaps you could find out something from Mrs. Saeeda Rahmatullah, or some other of her friends in Lahore. But of course you must give them the impression that you are inquiring for yourself and not for me.

Talal is now studying at Oxford and will probably be remaining there for three years in order to qualify for his Ph.D. degree.

I am working constantly on my translation and commentary of the Holy Quran and I do hope that it will result in something really good. Otherwise, there is no news from our side. We are leading a quiet life in a village near Geneva and meeting friends there from time to time.

Please convey Hamida's and my best regards and wishes to all members of your family—and, for yourself, we send our very affectionate greetings.

Yours as always,
Asad

67. Asad delivered a talk on Radio Beromunster in Switzerland in 1959, with the title: "The Encounter of Islam and the West as Seen by the Muslims". For the text of the talk see Muhammad Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1987), pp. 119-128.

(49)

Commugny (Vaud),
Switzerland
February 25, 1960

My dear Muhammad Hussain,

We have been waiting for a letter from you for a very, very long time and we are now becoming really worried about you. Please do write a few lines to reassure us about your wellbeing.

Recently I have been approached by Mr. Ebrahim Bawany, Managing Trustee of Begum Aisha Wakf, Karachi. They are publishing and distributing a number of books on Islam and have requested me to allow them to re-print “Islam at the Crossroads”, which they want to distribute at a nominal profit. I told Mr. Bawany—whom I met here in Geneva a few days ago—that I have handed over the rights to [sic, of] “Islam at the Crossroads” to you and that, therefore, he should negotiate the matter with you directly. My suggestion to him was that you might print for him a large edition and sell the whole edition to him. As regards the funds for publication, I think that you should demand of him that he should give you an advance upon concluding the contract so that you can cover the necessary outlay. Even if it does not bring you a great amount of money, it will bring something and that will always be useful. At present Mr. Bawany is going to London from there, or after his return to Karachi, he will approach you; I have given him your address. Please keep me informed of the developments, if any. I do not want any profit from this transaction, so whatever you can get out of it you may keep for yourself.

You did not inform me what you have found out about Munira. She is living at present, I believe, in Lahore. When she left Jauharabad some months ago, she was invited by Begum Saeeda (daughter of the late Shaikh Rahmatullah) to live with her in her lovely bungalow in the Cantonment. But she refused, giving no reason. This seems very strange and strengthens my feeling that she may have married, or is contemplating marriage. This is all right with me, but I would like to know. She is getting a monthly allowance from me and I am also supporting Talal until he gets his Ph. D. at Oxford. Could you please find out what she is doing in Lahore and let me know as soon as possible? I have no other source of information since she does not confide in Chaudhri Niaz Ali.

By the way, Chaudhri Niaz Ali is planning to establish a small press at Jauharabad for his Dar-ul-Islam Institute. Some time ago I advised him strongly to engage you as the manager of this press. I do not know how far things have progress in this matter because he is in the midst of several operations for his cataract. But perhaps something will come out of it. You might write to him at Jauharabad.

Please fo [sic, do] let us hear from you soon. We hope that you and your

whole family are well and send you our warmest love.

Yours as always,
Asad

(50)

Pola Hamidan to Muhammad Husain Babri

Commugny (Vaud), Switzerland
May 1, 1960

My dear Muhammad Hussian,

I am really ashamed that I have not written to you long before this and can only plead guilty on account of laziness. But the first part of this month was so warm and lovely that I just couldn't stay indoors and attend to affairs but remained outside working in the garden and helping the flowers to grow. Also, we had several visitors from the Middle East, which kept us coming and going. But that is no excuse for not writing to my "family" in Pakistan, and, believe me, both of us think of you always.

I want to thank you sincerely for two things: for remembering my birthday so kindly and for writing, in one of your letters to Muhammad that he should be thinking on my future. I assure you that he is, but that you should be so concerned about me fills me with great pleasure and almost made me cry. None of his other friends has ever thought in this way, rather they are only concerned about Talal (who is a grown man and quite able to take care of himself) and his mother. Perhaps this is only natural, but they never think that I have no son to look after me when I am older. Anyway, God takes care of his own, but I will always remain truly grateful for the love, which you so obviously bear me for my own sake, and not only for Muhammad's.

I have a piece of news for you. Talal has married! Or have you already received the news by the Pakistani grapevine. It came as a surprise—after it had already occurred—but we were not completely shocked because he did mention something about his intentions last summer. His wife is English (unfortunately) but mature and very well-educated. She has a Ph.D. in anthropology (his own subject) and was teaching for some time in various universities. We are very curious to meet her, but don't know when that will take place. Anyway, the main thing is that Talal is happy and we both wish them a good life together. But I wonder what his mother thinks about it!!!!!!

I hope this letter reaches you in Lahore. What were you doing for so long in Karachi? Do let us know something about your life and doings. And give my warmest love to your dear wife and children. I remember you all always, and the sincere affection, which you showed me while I was in Pakistan. I pray to

God that He will bring us all together again.

With the very best from both of us,

Yours as ever,

Hamida

P.S. I see that you have given a Karachi address on your last few letters. But I do not know whether you are still there and presume that it is better to send this to Lahore and your family will surely see to it that you receive it even if you are in Karachi. But where shall I address my future letters? Do you have a job in Karachi? Please do not be so mysterious!

(51)

Commugny (Vaud), Switzerland

July 19, 1960

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

I am late in writing to you and thanking you for your most thoughtful wishes for my birthday. That you are always thinking of Hamida and me, I never have any doubt, but that you have remembered my birthday is very touching indeed. Let us hope that the future will give us the opportunity to meet again and perhaps to keep you with us. Both Hamida and I would welcome such an opportunity with all our hearts.

You have not written anything about what you are or were—doing in Karachi. We are always anxious and happy to have news from you.

With warmest love to you and your family from both of us,

Yours as always,

Asad

(52)

Pola Hamida to Muhammad Husain

Commugny (Vaud), Switzerland

January 13, 1961

Dearest Muhammad Hussain,

I beg your forgiveness (in the certainty of receiving it) for not having written for so long a time. I have both your last letter and your thoughtful New Year's wishes before me but even without such reminders, you are always close to our thoughts. But somehow, of late, I seem to have caught Asad's disease of non-letter-writing; I hope that it will pass before it becomes chronic like his!

Actually, it has been a very difficult winter—not from the personal point of view, for we are both reasonably well and happy—but the weather has been awful. Winter has been nasty and wet, and this following an equally nasty and

wet summer and autumn. Although we are both healthy, we naturally have our share of the colds, back-aches, flu, etc. which flourish in such conditions.

Nevertheless, every day after breakfast (except if it is raining or snowing hard) we have a long walk in the fields and let our dog Azdar run free. She is a very beautiful and lovable animal and it is difficult to say which of us loves her more—and vice-versa—which is as it should be. In any case, you know my weakness for animals and she is especially charming. Let us hope that you will see her with your own eyes one day!

Do, please, write soon (unless you also have caught Asad's disease from such a great distance) and tell us more about your personal affairs. In the meantime, we both send you our warmest and sincerest love—and please convey my particular regards to your very dear wife and children, whom I never forget.

Yours as always,
Hamida

(53)

Commugny (Vaud), Switzerland
April 26, 1961

My dear Muhammad Hussain,

I want to thank you for remembering my birthday with your usual regularity and for the lovely greeting card, which you had specially made for me. It is beautiful but not as beautiful as the thought of me by my faithful and much beloved friend.

Over a week ago Asad sent to you a copy of a book of his which has recently been published in America: "The Principles of State and Government in Islam".⁶⁸ It was sent by surface but I hope that it will reach you soon and in good condition. I know you will like it.

As for ourselves, there is nothing much to tell. We are both in excellent health and Asad is working constantly on his Quran translation and commentary, which is progressing excellently, thank God. When completed, it will be the best—actually the first—translation of the Quran from the original Arabic into any European language. I know your prayers are joined with mine that God will allow us to see the results of this very difficult, but extremely rewarding, work.

We had several visitors from Pakistan during the past months. One of them I think you know: Mr. A. D. Azhar, a good and loyal friend of Asad's and of mine. We enjoyed seeing him very, very much; he is now Financial Adviser [sic, advisor] to the PIDC in Karachi. Another friend, Mr. M. J. As'ad, an old friend of mine and now also of Asad, came here twice with his wife, on his way

68. University of California Press, 1961, revised edition Dar al-Andalus, 1980.

to and from London. He is an employee of Burmah-Shell in Karachi. As I say, he is a very dear friend and, although he is an Ahmadi(Qadiani), is a loyal and good young man. I mentioned to him a lot about you (as did Asad) and told him that you are our very best friend in Pakistan and perhaps in the whole world, as well. I feel certain that if and when you can come to Karachi, if you should want to have a job with Burmah-Shell and he can find something that would suit you, he would be most helpful. In this connection, we have advised him that anything he might do for you would be exactly the same as doing it for us. He seemed to understand this so, if you would like to contact him, his address is: M. J. As'ad, Burmah-Shell, Karachi. At the moment I have no fuller address, but I think that should reach him. He, and his wife also, is a Punjabi.

That's about all the news there is at the moment. Life remains quiet and pleasant. Our saluki dog, Azdar is growing more and more beautiful and intelligent and affectionate and I know you would love her as we do. We consider her as one of the family and, in fact, she is far more human than most humans!

Asad joins me in sending to you and to all your dear family our warmest love and wishes. Do, please, let me hear from you one of these days, weeks or months! Meanwhile, I remain,

Yours very affectionately,
Hamida

(54)

Commugny (Vaud), Switzerland
June 1, 1961

Dearest Muhammad Hussain,

I must apologize for going so late in answering your letter of May 12th and in thanking you for the greeting. You really should not have gone to the trouble and expense of sending us not only one but two cards, but we really appreciate it from the bottom of our hearts.

Today I have written to Mr. A. D. Azhar in Karachi, once again mentioning our friendship for you. After a few days you should contact him at PIDC House, Kutchery Road. I am certain that if there is any position available, which you can fill, he will certainly be most helpful. In any case, both Asad and I feel that two such very good friends of ours as you and Azhar are really ought to know each other. So please do contact him within a week or so of receiving this letter. And, by the way, have you been in touch with Mr. As'ad of Burmah-Shell? Of course, he is neither so influential nor so close to us as Mr. Azhar, but I think

he might be helpful also. Anyhow, please do inform me of whatever comes out of these two contacts.

Of ourselves there is little news. Asad has been suffering from a very tiring back-ache for over a month and we are coming to the conclusion that this damp European climate does not suit us in the long run.

We have recently learned from Talal that he has accepted a teaching post in the University of Khartoum in the Sudan. He and his wife will be leaving England in July. We have invited them to come here on a visit before their departure and we do hope that he finds the time and the inclination.

You ask us about our future programme—this in connection with our living abroad. We have some prospects in mind and hope to be able to give you some tangible information within the next few months. In the meantime, Asad is working hard as always on his Qur'an translation and commentary.

That's about all for now. Please take good care of yourself and remember us to your dear wife and family. Meantime, warmest, warmest love to you from both of us,

Yours affectionately as always,
Hamida

(55)

Commugny(vaud), Switzerland
July 24, 1961

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

I have to thank you, although belatedly, for your very thoughtful wishes on the occasion of my birthday. You are—apart from Hamida—the only person who remembers it.

I have no word from you as to whether you met Mr. A. D. Azhar of the PIDC or Mr. As'ad of Burmah-Shell in connection with a possible job for you. We are naturally very keen to know whether anything has come out of either of these interventions. Do please write as soon as possible.

With affectionate regards from Hamida and myself to you and all your family, I am,

Yours as always,
Asad

(56)

Commugny (Vaud), Switzerland
February 9, 1962

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

We were very, very happy to hear from you, especially after such a long silence, and to know that you are well. We, also, are both in good health and spirits, with Asad working daily on his Quran translation and leading, in general, a quiet, peaceful life. However, although it is very beautiful here, we are rather tired of living in a wet climate among people who are not like us. We have some friends and acquaintances in Geneva, whom we meet from time to time, but it is not the same thing as living among people who share the same beliefs and general attitude towards life.

We are very happy always to hear that things are going so well in Pakistan and look forward to the day when we shall see this for ourselves—and, more important, when we shall see you with our own eyes again. Letters are a very poor substitute indeed for permanent contact with those whom one loves—as we do you.

Talal and his wife are settled in Khartoum. He is teaching at the University and continuing his studies, and I believe his wife (who has a Ph.D. in Anthropology as well) has also taken a job there. As for his mother, at the end of the year she informed us that she was leaving to join them there, but to the present time we have not been informed whether she has finally arrived. Since Talal has made no offer in this respect and we would not want to place an unbearable financial burden on him, Munira'a allowance from Asad will continue as usual. Together they should be able to manage very well indeed; I hope she finds life attractive there.

That's about all our "news" for the present. Perhaps in my next letter I shall have something more interesting to tell you. But the most important thing is that Muhammad is in good health—as important to you, I know, as it is to me.

Do continue to give us the happiness of hearing from you from time to time. You know, of course, that you are always in our thoughts and prayers.

With the warmest, warmest love to you and all members of your dear family, I am,

Yours as always,
Hamida

(57)

Commugny (Vaud), Switzerland
May 10th, 1962

Dear, dear Mohammad Hussain,

It is about time for me to write to you. As a matter of fact, it is long overdue, but when I explain why I have been so long, you will understand perfectly and, I am certain, forgive me.

In the middle of April Talal and his wife visited us here for a week. Unfortunately, they came at a time when I was just beginning to get over the flu and Asad was just coming down with it. As a matter of fact, during their whole stay Asad was in bed, rather ill, and only began to recover after they had left. They are now in England for the summer, and will return to Khartoum after a few months. He seems to be very happy with his English wife and for this we are also happy. We personally found her rather “cold” (as well as old) for him, but it is his choice and he seems to be very satisfied. Anyhow, she is a very “strong” woman and that is perhaps what he needs. Now that his mother has joined them at last in the Sudan, he will have two “strong” women; I only hope they will not come to blows!

But now for the really important news! As I write this, my beloved brother, I am all alone in Switzerland with only Azdar to keep me company. The reason for this, our first and only real separation in more than nine years of marriage, is that Asad has been invited by the Saudi Government for a visit. I also was invited by them, but the invitation came too late for me to be able to receive the necessary series of injections against smallpox, typhoid and cholera, and I thought it unwise that Asad should postpone this important journey on my account. At the moment, he is visiting in the Persian Gulf, and will then proceed direct to Saudi Arabia. I do not believe he will be able to return before three weeks, at the earliest. But this enforced separation is a necessary sacrifice for both of us and, God-willing, will be well worth it for the sake of our future.

You can imagine how lonely I am without Asad. Now, after many years of marriage, we are even more closely attached than ever. God has been very good to us and I pray that he will keep us together for many, many years. Although I am lonely every moment, I am not alone for not only have I the companionship of Azdar, but I have quite a few friends in the neighborhood who are looking after me very kindly indeed. Pray God that the time will pass quickly!

I haven't even thanked you for the birthday greetings, but I did so in my heart long ago. I never cease to appreciate your love for me, and you must know that I reciprocate it fully—not only because of your long relationship with Asad but because I value you so much for your own dear sake. Let us pray to God that he will bring us together again soon; there is every likelihood of this, but not in the way that you mentioned in your letter. But I will write more of this

after Asad's return, when we will have to take a lot of important decisions. In the meantime, pray to God that He will protect my dearly beloved husband and your dearly beloved friend Asad and re-unite us soon.

With every good wish to you and yours, as always,

Yours very affectionately,

Hamida

(58)

Commugny(Vaud), Switzerland

October 11, 1962

Dearest Mohammad Hussain,

We have just returned home from a two-week holiday in the south of France, and I hasten to reply your anxiously inquiring letter, which we found on our return home.

At the outstart, I must apologize for both of us for not having written to you for so long a time. There was no particular reason for this long silence and you have been in our thoughts all along, but this is no excuse and I know it.

On Asad's return we were very busy discussing the various results of his visit to the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia and then, during the months of July and August, we were positively deluged with visitors from those places, all good friends of ours who came here especially to see us and to whom we owed a great deal of hospitality.

After the departure of all these friends, Asad settled down to hard work on his Qur'an translation and commentary. On my part, I was terribly depressed for about a month and didn't write to anyone, the main reason for this bad mood was the sudden and terrible death (by suicide) of a very good woman-friend of mine. It saddened me terribly and set in motion a whole train of sad and useless thoughts. Anyhow, I am much better now, especially after our holiday in the south of France, where the weather was not warm but hot and people were bathing in the sea only a few days ago. We also liked the people there very much; they are nicer and warmer than the people here in Switzerland. We really hated to return to Switzerland, although it is a relief to live in our own surroundings again, with our own household, belongings, etc. Now Asad has once again settled down to his work and, God willing, there will be no break or respite until he has completed the first part (of three) entirely; we hope it will be ready for the press this spring.

Asad has been very much encouraged in his work by his great success in Saudi Arabia. Although he had to stay there much longer than he had intended, and this was of course a source of discomfort to both of us, the results were excellent. The Saudi Government are assisting him financially in the publication of his work by means of purchasing a large number of copies in

advance and thus paying for the entire printing.⁶⁹ This was what we were hoping for all along but now our hopes have been fulfilled, praise be to God! Thus, not only the success of this truly prodigious work will be assured but also, to a certain measure, a basis of security for our own future as well. Doing God's work truly brings its own fulfillment! Let us pray that Asad's health continues to be good so that he can concentrate all his energies on finishing this task.

I believe I wrote you some time ago that Talal and his wife came to visit us in April—shortly before Asad's journey to Saudi Arabia. They spent the summer in England and have again returned to the Sudan, where Talal has been teaching in the University. He has received a grant for a year's research among a tribe in the Sudan and his wife will accompany him. His mother has joined him in Khartoum and apparently they intend to keep the house there as well as headquarters. We had hoped that now that Talal himself is working and his wife as well, they would help relieve some of the financial burden of his mother, but apparently this is not to be so. In answer to an inquiry from his father, it was quite obvious that he is either unable or unwilling to do much himself and he has demanded that Asad should continue paying her the same amount as in Pakistan. So be it!

At the moment the weather here is surprisingly good—cool but sunny—and we both are in good health. However, we find that the climate of Switzerland does not suit either of us, making us both feel very tired, so after the printing of the first volume we are thinking of moving elsewhere. This constitutes our greatest problem at the moment—where to go? We have been considering both the Persian Gulf and Lebanon, but have as yet come to no decision. The Persian Gulf is very hot and both places are politically unstable, as is the whole Arab world. If we decide to stay on in Europe, it can only be in Italy or the South of France—that is, in a warm climate among pleasant people. We are doing a lot of earnest thinking about this problem of ours because, more than anything else in the world, we want to settle down somewhere. All this—I mean about our future plans—is strictly confidential.

I shall not write more now because I am anxious to get this off to you. In closing, I apologize once more for having caused you so much worry and unnecessarily. If I should ever do it again in the future, you should remember that if there were any trouble, you would be the first to know and that, usually, “no news is good news”.

69. The arrangement of funding for Asad's translation project was made through the good office of the Muslim World League (Rābiṭah al-'Alam al-Islāmī), and its representative office in Europe the Islamic Centre Geneva, headed by Dr. Said Ramadan. The first volume of the Asad's translation of the Holy Qur'an entitled *The Message of the Qur'an* (Surah al-Fātiḥah to Al-Tawbah) was published under the auspices of this Centre in 1964.

Anyhow, there is no bad news, as you can see; I hope the same holds good for you and your dear family. Do, please, write soon. Meanwhile, all love to you and yours from both of us.

Yours very affectionately,
Hamida

(59)

Commugny, Switzerland
Jan. 23, [1963]

Dearest Muhammad Hussain,

It is a long time since we have had news of you. But we have received your wishes for the New Year, for which we thank you and, as God and you know, fully reciprocate!

As for ourselves, we are both in good health, thank God. I was unwell with an accident to my eye some weeks ago, but I have now fully recovered with no permanent damage.

We are undergoing an extremely long and difficult winter; plenty of snow and very cold weather. But it is really healthier than the usual damp winters we have here and Asad has not had a single attack of lumbago. This is a welcome change and worth a little bit (or rather a lot) of snow and ice.

Azdar is very well, too. She loves the cold weather, just as long as there is no rain. In fact, this desert dog loves the snow and no amount of it deters her from running about. I keep forgetting that you have not met her; she is such a member of our family.

We have just today had a brief letter from Talal. He is living in the desert studying a Bedouin tribe and seems to be enjoying it very much indeed; his wife is with him. His mother remains in their house in Khartoum. She continues to be supported, at the same rate, by us. Talal and his wife do not find it possible to lighten Asad's burden in this respect. Well, God is good and has so far made it possible for us to do this.

Asad is working terribly hard preparing his first volume of his Quran translation and commentary for the press. You cannot imagine what a hard work this is. If he would do it as the previous translators have, each volume would take six months at most. But he cannot allow himself the "easy way" and there would really be no point to his undertaking the work at all if it were only to add another "translation" to those already in circulation. This is truly the greatest work of his life –and the most difficult and demanding as well. May God reward him for his diligence and integrity!

There is really very little "news" otherwise. We do nothing and go nowhere and live entirely for his work. After it is finished (insha-Allah), we will be in a better position to "enjoy" ourselves a bit.

We hope you and all your family are well and happy. How we would love to see you again after all this time! We never forget you, time and distance notwithstanding, and know that you, too, always keep us in your heart.

With warmest, warmest love and good wishes from Asad and myself to you and yours,

As always,
Hamida

(60)

Commugny (Vaud), Switz.
March 4, 1963

Dearest Muhammad Hussain,

This is to thank you very much for the lovely, thoughtful 'Id card which you sent to us and which you had especially prepared. Also, in answer to your dear letter of the 25th January. I have been remiss in answering all letters for the last month and more because I had an accident to one of my eyes in the early part of January, which caused me a lot of trouble and discouraged me from writing, as well as many other things. Now, thank God, it is beginning to feel normal. I am very lucky that it neither spoiled my vision nor ruined my appearance (it is a wound on the cornea, very troublesome but not visible). Anyhow, God is good and saved me from something, which could have been much, much worse!

Asad's health is particularly good this winter, strangely, because it was the severest winter we have ever experienced here. However, it is really not so strange, after all, because in spite of the severe temperatures and large amount of snow, it has been unusually dry, which is the most important thing for him (and for myself, as well). In result, he didn't have a single lumbago attack for many months, and this is what usually pulls him down here. As a result, his work has progressed excellently. He works for hours at his desk, day after day, with hardly a break or a change, but what he is producing is well worth the great effort and sacrifice in daily "diversions". It is kind of you to include me in this effort, but I really do not deserve it. If loving and caring for him and sharing his enthusiasm for this work contribute to its success, then that is my "contribution". But the painstaking effort and scholarship are all his.

You are wrong in assuming that the chance of our meeting again is less. As a matter of fact, we are considering a scheme whereby you might join us in another part of the world within the next year or even less. But I do not want to go into the matter until we are certain, lest we all should be disappointed if it doesn't work out. I hope that in a month or so we shall be able to tell you something more definite about this plan. We take it for granted that you would like to come to live with us, if we settle in a pleasant place, which would suit your needs as well as ours (Switzerland suits none of us in the long run). I am

not trying to “tease” you by being so mysterious but I prefer that to your—and our—being disappointed. Pray to God that he may make our wishes in this respect materialize!

We don’t hear from Talal very often. He and his wife are somewhere “studying” some Bedouin tribe in the Sudan. He has a life of his own now and we hope he is happy. His mother remains in their house in Khartoum and we hear nothing from her just so long as she keeps getting her money regularly; this is for the best. Talal is very charming in many ways and extremely intelligent, but I am afraid that he is terribly selfish—“spoiled” is the word usually used and ungrateful.

The last few days have been very sunny and there is a hint of spring in the air, which makes us very cheerful and optimistic. We are tired of winter and gray skies. It must be very pleasant in Lahore just now; but in a few months’ time...

That’s about all our “news” for now. Once again, we thank you for thinking about us at ‘Id—and always—and sent [sic, send] to you and your dear family our fondest wishes and love.

Hamida

(61)

Commugny(Vaud), Switzerland
April 28, 1963

Dearest Muhammad Hussain,

I wanted to write to you immediately when I received your birthday wishes (you never forget!) conveyed in the beautiful card, which you had made especially for me. It is very lovely and I shall always treasure it, but even more I treasure the sincere friendship you feel for me. And you know that it is returned in equal measure. My marriage to Asad brought me a wonderful friend in you. We have only regret that we cannot be always—or at least more often—together and we are constantly thinking of ways to bring this about.

I received your birthday wishes some time ago and, as I said above, wanted to write immediately but I had some trouble with my eye again and had to put off all writing and reading until it was better. For the time being, it is all right again; let us hope!

Asad is well and working hard, as always. He was away for a short trip but we are now back to the old routine. Fortunately the weather is beginning to be warm now and there is sun occasionally, but on the whole this climate suits neither of us - particularly Asad. On a recent check-up with the doctor, he finds that he is in excellent physical condition—with the sole exception of occasional back-aches, which are caused by the damp climate. As soon as there is sun and dry weather for a few days it goes away completely. And it is for this reason that

we are determined not to spend another winter here in Switzerland. These back-aches tire him and cut down his working capacity accordingly. We are still in the process of deciding where we shall go—a difficult decision for various reasons—but it must be someplace warm and sunny.

Azdar is always well (I keep forgetting that you have never met her) and next week we are expecting to get another dog of the same race as companion for her. We shall send you a picture of them both (and of us, as well) soon, I hope.

Meanwhile, Asad (who will read this before I send it, as always) and I send you and your family our warmest love and our wishes for a happy 'Id. What about sending us a picture of yourself and your family; next to being with you, this would give us greater pleasure than anything else.

Yours affectionately as always,
Hamida

(62)

Commugny (Vaud), Switzerland
June 27, 1963

My dearest bother Mohammad Hussain,

I was planning to write to you days ago, but in the meantime Fate intervened in the form of another, very bad, eye attack and I had to await its departure. Now I am back to normal, whatever that may be, and am promptly tackling my overdue correspondence.

Before my recent attack we had consulted a second eye-specialist who put me on another treatment for some time and, only a few days before my last relapse, pronounced the wound “completely cured”. Then, again, misery. Probably the final solution will have to be a small operation to smooth over the scar tissue, which is uneven and is thus irritated by the movement of the eyelid and leads, eventually, to these attacks. But I shall put it off until I am certain that there is no other alternative because I am, in principle, against operations unless they are absolutely unnecessary. On the other hand, I cannot go on like this indefinitely. Both Asad and I need my eyes...

As a matter of fact, we are not contemplating visiting Pakistan in the foreseeable future. Asad's work occupies all his time, and, also, my next long trip will have to be to America to see my mother and sisters. I had planned to go this summer, but Asad's work has reached a point where he cannot possibly spare me, so I have put it off until next year at the latest, insha-Allah. It will then be ten years since I have last seen my family. Much too long, and we have all changed a lot since then, particularly the children who were babies when I saw them last.

In a few weeks I am leaving for a short holiday with some English friends

who have taken a house by the sea in southern France. They invited us both, of course, but Asad cannot leave his work for a day, let alone a week or two. I shall stay for about two weeks, and shall return re-vitalized, insha-Allah, and ready for the hard work of completing the final manuscript of Asad's first volume. As soon as it goes to press, he will take a few weeks off (very badly needed, you may imagine) and is thinking of going to Morocco with a view to possibly settling there sometime this winter. But please do not mention this to anyone, because it is still only an idea. When he returns from his visit there, we will come to a decision. If for some reason it does not suit him there, we may shift to somewhere in the south of France, but we would obviously prefer Muslim Morocco. As you may know, the climate there is marvelous, really moderate and very sunny and cheerful, which is what we both need most. Also, we hope that life will be cheaper than it is here; it has gone up enormously since we first came here from Pakistan—five years ago!

Now, if we decide on Morocco, we are determined to bring you out of Pakistan, especially as you have declared your willingness to be with us wherever we are. What we would do is send you an air ticket to come to us here in Switzerland, and then we would all go by road across France and Spain to Morocco. That is, of course, if we finally decide to go there. But, in any case, we would like you to be prepared for this possibility; perhaps you could start with the business of obtaining a passport. It should be valid for all the countries of Western and Southern Europe, as well as the Middle East, particularly Morocco and Tunisia⁷⁰.

Let us pray to God that this idea of course will become a fact; we would very much like to have you with us, to share our fate, for better or worse—the former, insha-Allah.

England, in any event, is out of the question. The climate is one of the worst in Europe and there is nothing for us there—nor particularly for you, for that matter. Only a short while ago, we received a particularly charming letter from Chaudhri Niaz Ali, trying to persuade us to come to Pakistan, where he would give us land in the hills and help us to build a house. It is very tempting, but unfortunately Pakistan has been a terrible personal disappointment to Asad—not to mention myself—and we are hesitant because of this. We know that politically and economically the situation has improved under the Ayub regime, and we are very glad about this, but I cannot believe that socially things have changed much. Anyhow, God will decide for us...

We have not heard from Talal or his mother for many months and do not know what is wrong, if anything. Perhaps they have gone to England, but they

70. On the invitation of Asad, Muhammad Husain travelled to Geneva and spent several months there (1963-64). Due to cold and wet weather of Geneva he could not stay for long and returned to Pakistan during the first quarter of 1964.

should keep in touch with us, especially if Talal's mother wishes to continue receiving money regularly. She did not even acknowledge receipt of his last cheque, sent months ago. And so we have not send further money because we do know where to send it; they simply do not answer our letters. Perhaps, in this particular case, "no news is good news"!

I shall close now and well read it out to Asad after he has laid down his pen. Perhaps he will wish to add a few words of his own, especially with regard to the practical aspects of your joining us. I pray to God that He will really bring us together, and soon.

Meanwhile, all love to you and your beloved family from

Hamida

P. S. What a comical world it is! There you are, sweltering in the heat of Lahore, and envying us our rainy, cool climate; and here we are, in gray Switzerland, envying you your sunshine! As a matter of fact, the past two days have been entirely sunny (a most unusual occurrence this year) and we are feeling a bit better. But we don't have much hopes of its lasting. However, in the south of France, am practically sure to find very hot, sunny weather, and with the sea at hand, it will be a very healthy change. Only how I shall miss Asad!

PHA

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

First of all: do not mention our Morocco scheme to anybody, even good mutual friends. Although I am almost certain that we shall go there, insha-Allah, there is always a possibility that it will not suit us, and therefore the less talk the better. But since, as Hamida and I have said, it is almost certain that we shall leave Switzerland soon, I would like you to have a ready passport, in case you are really willing to join us. The passport should be valid for: Lebanon, Switzerland, France, Italy, Spain, Morocco, Tunisia and any other country that you may wish to include; but the ones mentioned are essential. Please start the necessary steps at once, in case we need you in a hurry!

Affectionately,
Asad

(63)

Commugny (Vaud)
Switzerland
July 19, 1963

My dear Muhammad Husain,

We had no answer from you to our last letter (that is, Hamida's and my joint letter), and I am wondering what the delay could be due to. Is it possible that you do not like to live with us—or is there another reason for your silence?

Although we do not intend to shift to Morocco immediately (and there is even faint—but very faint possibility that we will settle elsewhere), we would love to have you with us in any case, wherever we are or may be. But since it is very probably that we will indeed go to Morocco, a lot of details will have to be settled before you can leave Pakistan: and therefore we would like to have your answer as soon as possible. Have you already got a passport? And if not, is there any difficulty about it? If so, I shall send you a letter of invitation, stating that your journey will be at my expense, and that no foreign exchange whatever will be needed by you. Also, I would send you a similar letter for the Swiss Embassy in Karachi, so that they should give you a visa for Switzerland without any delay. But first of all I must have your answer.

If you decide to live with us, you will be able, insha-Allah, to visit Pakistan every two years or so.

In September I intend to go on a very short trip to Morocco to study conditions there and, if everything is satisfactory, to rent a house. If Morocco should not be satisfactory for some reason or other (which, however, I doubt very much), we would settle in southern France or in Italy. In any case, we shall leave Switzerland for good, insha-Allah, in the late autumn—and by then we would like to have you with us, provided that you are willing.

Hamida is away just now in southern France, with friends (I believe she wrote to you about this in her last letter). I wanted her to have this “vacation”: she is always alone at home when I go to the Middle East, and I think she needed a change badly. She will return, insha-Allah, on the 29th of this month.

Please, do write at once!

With all affection,
Yours,
Asad

(64)

Commugny (Vaud), Switzerland
August 21, 1963

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

We were very happy to learn from your last letter that you are willing to come to us and to live with us. Will it suit you to come here about the first half of October? If so, I will book your passage by plane and send you the ticket well in advance.

In the meantime, I have recently remitted to you Rs. 500/- which you may utilize for equipping yourself for the journey. In our opinion, you should have a warm suit made, as well as good shoes and a good Jinnah cap. If you can also arrange for a warm overcoat, it would be very good. Otherwise, we would buy one for you here immediately on arrival. Also, you will need a good, light

suitcase.

Please let me know as soon as you have received the remittance. As regards the Swiss visa, I shall send you within a few days a “letter of invitation” which you may show to the Swiss Embassy in Karachi and obtain a tourist visa.

This is all for the moment. Since the time is so short, I would request you to start all the preparations now and to answer each of my letters immediately by return of mail.

With all the best wishes to you and your family from both of us,

Yours as always,
Asad

(65)

Commugny (Vaud), Switzerland
September 20, 1963

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Since you prefer to come in the second half of October, I have made a provisional reservation for you with the PIA. The plane is due to depart from Karachi on Sunday, October 20, at 7:30 a.m. The flight number is PK 707. You will arrive at Geneva, insha-Allah, the same day; we shall, of course, receive you at the airport.

Please let me know immediately whether this programme suits you. If so, the PIA office at Lahore will be instructed to issue a ticket to you accordingly. I presume that you will go from Lahore to Karachi by train. You should be there a few days before your departure in order to obtain your Swiss visa. Enclosed you will find a letter to the Swiss Embassy in Karachi which should facilitate the matter. If anything should go wrong, you will, of course, send me a telegram. Please do not leave Lahore without letting me know in advance because I may have to write to you several times.

I am awaiting your immediate reply, whereupon the necessary will be done from here. Please do not bring us anything from Pakistan except yourself in good health and in good spirits.

Affectionately yours,
Asad

P. S. My telegraphic address is:
ASAD COMMUGNY (Switzerland)

(66)

Commugny (Vaud), Switzerland
October 1, 1963

My dear Mohammad Husain,

I have received your letter of September 27. Your journey from Karachi to Geneva has been definitely fixed for Wednesday, October 23 (Flight No. PK 703)—and not on Sunday the 20th.

According to your desire, I have booked for you also an airplane journey from Lahore to Karachi. You will receive the entire ticket Lahore-Karachi-Geneva from the PIA office in Lahore; they will contact you. The date for your journey from Lahore to Karachi has been left open, as I do not know how many days you wish to spend in Karachi. As soon as the PIA office contacts you, please let them know the date on which you wish to leave Lahore for Karachi and they will make the necessary entry in your ticket.

We shall, then, be expecting to see you here in Geneva on Wednesday, October 23, insha-Allah! We will be at the airport. Please note that your baggage allowance is 44 lbs., so try to keep within this limit.

Very important: during the first few months here it may be difficult for you to get sufficient reading material. Therefore, I would suggest that you subscribe to some Urdu magazines, which you may like, and also to arrange for some Urdu books. These books should be sent to my address by surface mail; it would also be advisable to have the magazines subscribed in my name in view of the possibility that the address will change soon.

Please tell your wife and family from Hamida and myself not to worry because you are going to your “other” family—and that you will be able to see them again before long, insha-Allah. We both send our warmest greetings and affection to you all.

Yours,
Asad

P. S. Please write immediately whether everything is in order.

(67)

Commugny (Vaud), Switzerland
October 7, 1963

My dear Mohammad Husain,

In reply to your letter of October 2, I am sending you enclosed the requested letter to the Assistant Controller of Exchange. In the meantime, I trust, you will have received your ticket from the PIA office, Lahore.

Please note that your journey from Karachi to Geneva has been fixed

for Wednesday, October 23. You will arrive in Geneva, insha-Allah, at 2 p.m. (Geneva time). We shall be there to receive you. But in case some unexpected circumstances delay us, do not leave the airport but phone us at the number: 8 60 70. But we shall, insha-Allah, be there and on time.

With love and hoping to see you soon,

Yours,
Asad

(68)

Cummugny (Vaud), Switzerland
October 7, 1963

Assistant Controller
Foreign Exchange Dept.,
State Bank of Pakistan,
LAHORE

Dear Sir,

This is to certify that I have invited Mr. Mohammad Husain Babri of 51 Omar Din Road, Wasanpura, Lahore, to visit me here in Switzerland, where I have been residing since 1958. All of his travelling expenses, including the airplane ticket from Lahore to Geneva, are being borne by me; the ticket has been paid for by me in Swiss francs. Thus, no foreign exchange whatever is involved in Mr. Babri's trip abroad. His ticket is being issued to him by the Lahore office of the PIA on instructions from their Geneva office.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,
Muhammad Asad