**Muhammad Asad A Bridge between Pakistan and Ukraine**

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July 2, 2021 marks the 121st birth anniversary of Muhammad Asad. He was born as Leopold Weiss in Lviv Ukraine and rose to fame as a journalist, traveller, writer, linguist, political theorist, diplomat, an Islamic scholar and most importantly as a worker of the Pakistan Movement.

During his lifetime, Asad was known by many titles; early in Arabia he was called the “Leopold of Arabia’’, in likeness to “Lawrence of Arabia’”. In Pakistan he was titled by the people as Allama (a scholar). He is recognised as a religious bridge builder, a mediator between Islam and the West and the Europe’s Gift of Islam.

Muhammad Asad, a writer and Islamic Scholar wrote his magnum opus, ‘The Message of the Quran’ (1980). An English translation and commentary of the Quran which he published after seventeen years of painstaking scholarly research. It is regarded as one of the most influential translations of the modern era. Earlier his autobiography ‘The Road to Mecca’ (1954) became a bestseller. His other literary work includes, Islam at Cross Roads (1934), Translation of Sahih Al Bukhari; The Early Years of Islam (1981), The Law of ours and others Essays (1987) and Home Coming of the Heart which is regarded as part II of the ‘The Road to Mecca’.

[Israel releases Jordanian citizen accused of 'spying for resistance'](https://nation.com.pk/06-Jul-2021/israel-releases-jordanian-citizen-accused-of-spying-for-resistance)

In the early 1990’s, Liviv was part of the Austro Hungarian Empire and was known as Galicia. Today it is befittingly recognised as the cultural capital of Ukraine. Leopold Weiss was born in Lviv to a Jewish family and after his schooling he travelled to the Middle East. He converted to Islam in Arabia in 1926 and adopted the name Muhammad Asad. Indeed, he had taken the Road to Mecca very early in his life.

In the early 1930’s, Asad travelled to the Subcontinent where met Allama Iqbal, a world renowned Islamic philosopher and thinker who envisioned Pakistan as home for the Muslims of the Subcontinent. Allama Iqbal asked him to elucidate the intellectual premises of the future Islamic state and help achieve it as well. His book ‘The Principles of State and Government in Islam’ (1961) describes a democratic political system which is grounded in Islamic principles.

Allama Iqbal also encouraged Asad to translate Sahih Al Bukhari in English for the first time in history. In order to find a serene place to stimulate his intellectual and spiritual thoughts, Asad travelled to Kashmir during the summer of 1934. There he became friends with Mirwaiz Muhammad Yusuf. While working enthusiastically on his translation, he also set up a printing press in Srinagar. The first two chapters of the translations were printed in Srinagar. In his book, ‘Homecoming of the Heart’ Asad mentions about his special relationship with Kashmir.

[Highly contagious Delta variant raises concerns of 3rd wave of COVID](https://nation.com.pk/05-Jul-2021/highly-contagious-delta-variant-raises-concerns-of-3rd-wave-of-covid)

During WWII, Asad was imprisoned by the British but after his, he continued to work as a dedicated worker of the Pakistan Movement. On the creation of Pakistan on 14 August 1947 he adopted Pakistan as his home and was honoured with the citizenship of Pakistan. He was first appointed the Director of the Department of Islamic Reconstruction and then he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan where he served as deputy secretary to the Middle East and Pakistan’s Envoy to the United Nations. Asad Platz in the UN Square Vienna is dedicated to honour his services. On March 23, 2013, Pakistan Post issued a postage stamp under the ‘the Men of Letters’ series to recognise his literary works and the Islamic Culture Centre has a dedicated centre in Lviv in his home.

To inform people of Pakistan and Ukraine about the numerous contributions of Muhammad Asad, Pakistan Embassy in coordination with Islamic Centre Kyiv will launch a Ukrainian translation of his book, ‘The Unromantic Orient’ during the The International Book Festival, Kyiv. In concert with the Mayor of Lviv, we will initiate work to place a plaque at his birthplace, erect his bust at a suitable location and name a street in Lviv and Kyiv after Muhammad Asad. The Embassy, in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ukraine plans to hold a reference event in Kyiv and has approached the National Book Foundation Pakistan to furnish a complete set of publications of Muhammad Asad to place in the libraries in Ukraine. We have also invited universities in Ukraine and Pakistan to sponsor joint research to document Asad’s numerous accomplishments and most importantly, to explore his ideas as an Islamic Scholar for the benefit of humanity. Muhammad Asad continues to act as single bridge between Islam and Europe and most importantly, between Pakistan and Ukraine. It is because of Muhammad Asad that Ukraine can claim that it effectively contributed towards the making of Pakistan.