

Leopold Weiss, Statesman and Journalist, Austria (part 1 of 2)

Description: A correspondent for the Franfurter Zeitung, one of the most prestigious newspapers for Germany and Europe, becomes a Muslim and later translates the meanings of the Quran. Part 1.

By Ebrahim A. Bawany

Published on 16 Jan 2006 - Last modified on 08 May 2006

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Muhammad Asad was born Leopold Weiss in July 1900 in the city of Lvov (German Lemberg), now in Poland, then part of the Austrian Empire. He was the descendant of a long line of rabbis, a line broken by his father, who became a barrister. Asad himself received a thorough education that would qualify him to keep alive the family's rabbinical tradition.



In 1922 Weiss left Europe for the Middle East for what was supposed to be a short visit to an uncle in Jerusalem. At that stage, Weiss, like many of his generation, counted himself an agnostic, having drifted away from his Jewish moorings despite his religious studies. There, in the Middle East he came to know and like the Arabs and was struck by how Islam infused their everyday lives with existential meaning, spiritual strength and inner peace.

At the young age of 22, Weiss became a correspondent for the Franfurter Zeitung, one of the most prestigious newspapers for Germany and Europe. As a journalist, he traveled extensively, mingled with ordinary people, held discussions with Muslim intellectuals, and met heads of state in Palestine, Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.

During his travels and through his readings, Weiss' interest in Islam increased as his understanding of its scripture, history and peoples grew. In part, curiosity propelled.

Muhammad Asad, Leopold Weiss, was born in Livow, Austria (later Poland) in 1900, and at the age of 22 made his visit to the Middle East. He later became an outstanding foreign correspondent for the Franfurtur Zeitung, and after his conversion to Islam travelled and worked throughout the Muslim world, from North Africa to as far East as Afghanistan. After years of devoted study he became one of the leading Muslim scholars of our age. After the establishment of Pakistan, he was appointed the Director of the Department of Islamic Reconstruction, West Punjab and later on became Pakistan's Alternate Representative at the United Nations. Muhammad Asad's two important books are: *Islam at the Crossroads* and *Road to Mecca*. He also produced a monthly journal *Arafat* and an English translation of the Holy Quran.

Let us now turn to Asad's own words on his conversion:

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