

REFLECTIONS

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On the request of many SANA members I agreed to write this column for SANGAT on a more or less regular basis. I have done so with the hope that it will stimulate thinking on some of the crucial questions facing Sindh today. I certainly do not have definitive answers to any of these problems. And I am sure that my views on some of these issues will be challenged by some readers. In the process of dialogue and discussion we might arrive at a better understanding of, if not find solution to, the seemingly intractable problems of Sindh.

We can begin by focusing on the thoughts and sentiments expressed in St. Louis, Missouri, during the fifth annual convention (I prefer this term over "general body meeting") of SANA on July 1 and 2. Amidst a festive atmosphere, enlivened by the melodies of Abida Parveen and joyous performance by the local amateur artists, the pain and agony of Sindh was clearly heard through the many speeches, interventions, questions and answers that were presented or exchanged inside and outside the hall.

While an overwhelming majority of the participants felt that the People's Party government at the center and in Sindh should be given a fair chance to solve the problems of the country and of Sindh in particular, they also seemed apprehensive of the deals being made with the Mohajir Qoumi Movement (MQM), and gave a sympathetic hearing to Mr. Rasool Bux Palejo. This ambivalence accurately reflected the mood of the Sindhi people and other supporters of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan. But few in St. Louis seemed to agree with Mr. Palejo that the Karachi Agreement and other deals made with MQM by the PPP be rescinded. The MQM question is truly divisive. There are sharp differences about the character and role of the MQM within Pakistan, among Sindhis, inside People's Party, between Sindhi nationalist groups, and even within same individuals (like myself).

As the ethnic tensions continue to rise and the law and order situation continues to worsen in Sindh, the sense of exasperation and frustration in the populace also deepens. While the people want an end to acrimony and violence, and solutions to their pressing problems, the opponents of the present government seem to relish the situation in order to make their point. The Sindh PPP's coalition partner in the government, the MQM, seems to have a special knack for weakening its senior partners and strengthening its opponents inside and outside the party, inside and outside Sindh. The MQM has still not grown out of college politics culture of "torh jorh" (wheeling and dealing), blackmailing and demand-making. If it had any maturity, it would have never run to Nawaz Sharif and the IJI. What would it gain by breaking its alliance with the PPP and making one with the IJI? The IJI hardly exists in Sindh, and the Mohajirs have to live in Sindh. They have to cooperate with whatever party enjoying the support of the Sindhi people. At least the PPP has extended its hand