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Now that peace has been restored and sanity is returning to the frenzied people, it is time to coolly ponder over the main causes of mutual hatred and suspicion between the Sindhi and Urdu speaking groups in Sind.

It would be naïve to think that the amicable settlement of the language issue will by itself remove all the barriers that have been raised by the interested parties between the old and new Sindhi population. The controversy over the Language Bill is the symptom of a deeper malady and part of a large socio-economic conflict which has arisen on account of the new ethnological pattern of Sind. Unless serious efforts are made to resolve this basic conflict it might endanger the unity and solidarity of the entire country.

Let us examine its cause in their historical perspective:

Prior to partition, the population of Sind happened to be a composite ethnical unit. An overwhelming majority of the people were Muslims. Their main occupation was agriculture. Most of the land was owned by big landlords, pirs and waderas and cultivated by the haris whose life of privation and misery is too well known to be described here. Literacy among the Muslims was negligible and there was a very small educated Muslim middle class consisting of traders and lawyers. They were mostly concentrated in Karachi.

The urban economy was controlled by the Hindus, although they formed a very tiny minority in the province. They were money lenders, traders and businessmen. Whatever industries there were also belonged to the Hindus. Most of the medical practitioners, engineers, college teachers and lawyers too were Hindus. They dominated the political and cultural life in the major cities.

When the Hindus left the country after partition, the vacuum was filled by the Muslim refugees from U.P., C.P., Bihar, Rajisthan, Kathiawar and Gujrat. Karachi became the capital of Pakistan and its population soon swelled from three lacs to more than a million-and-a-half. Most of the buildings belonging to the Government of Sind were acquired to accommodate the offices of the Central Government and its staff which mostly came from the Punjab, C.P. and U.P.

If any evidence was required to prove that the language controversy is essentially a socio-economic phenomenon, it was provided by the agitators themselves. While the early slogans were quite innocuous “Urdu Sindhi Saath Saath”—the mood changed as the agitation gained momentum. Soon the formality of tying Urdu with Sindhi was discarded and the call was confined to “Urdu only”.

The local Sindhis residing mostly down-town in the metropolis warmly welcomed the mohajirs and assisted them in occupying the houses and shops evacuated by the Hindus. The same thing

happened in other major towns of Sind, with the result that today the new Sindhis form a majority in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Mirpurkhas, Khairpur, Nawabshah and Tando Adam. In Larkana they constitute about half the population. The old Sindhis are in a majority only in Thatta, Sanghar, Dadu and Jacobabad.

The refugees were allotted most of the evacuee property — land, houses, shops, factories, etc. They also occupied most of the vacant and newly created posts in the Administration. Thus the influx of millions of refugees from across the border introduced a new ethnical element in the body politics of Sind. Their mode of life and cultural traditions, their language and literature were substantially different from those of the local people although they all professed the same religion.

But these refugees were not a monolithic body. Among them were shrewd businessmen, industrialists and traders from Bombay, Agra, Sawnpur, Ferozabad, etc. They possessed capital or know how to acquire it. They had talent and business experience. So they were allotted factories in Hyderabad, Sukkur, Kotri and Khairpur — oil mills, tanning factories, rice housing mills, biscuit factories, etc. Their capital increased and today out of ten textile mills in Hyderabad nine belong to non-Sindhis. Similarly, tanneries belong to the Cawnpore group. Glass bangle factories are owned by the Ferozabad group and the shoe-making industry is controlled by the Agra group.

The commercial and industrial growth of Karachi need not be discussed in detail. We know that all banks, insurance companies and the vast manufacturing complex at SITE and Landhi-Korangi belongs to new Sindhis capitalists who came either from Gujrat and Bombay or from the Punjab. The Urdu speaking population of Karachi is mostly employed in offices, factories and workshops or is engaged in petty trades. Some of them are also serving as lawyers, doctors, teachers and engineers. Quite a large number still dwell in jugis and are yet to be properly rehabilitated.

Most of the Urdu speaking inhabitants of other major towns in Sind also professionally belong to the same categories.

LAND

About 40% of the agricultural land was declared evacuee property in Sind and as such was allotted to the refugee landlords who mostly live in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, etc. and visit their estates only to realize the rent. Moreover, most of the barrage lands (Sukkur, Kotri and Guddu) were generously distributed among the retired Army and civilian officers belonging to the Punjab, Sarhad and Karachi. The local haris did not get any share in these valuable lands in spite of solemn pledges by the other fertile lands were allotted on very cheap terms to Gujrati and Punjabi industrialists for large scale farming. These farms are now serving as a very good cover for evading income tax on industrial products.

SERVICES AND EMPLOYMENT

Prior to partition the ratio of the Muslim staff in services in Sind — both Government and private — was not more than 5%. The number of Muslim gazetted officers could be counted on one's fingers! Most of the top officers in every department were Hindus and when they left their vacancies were filled by non-Sindhi Muslims.

Before One Unit was formed in 1956, there used to be a Provincial Assembly and a Provincial Cabinet in Sind. But both were dominated by Sindhi waderas who, like landlords everywhere, pledged their loyalty to the ruling class in their own selfish interests. They never stood for the right of the common man. Moreover, they were always at the mercy of the autocratic Central Government and the bureaucracy. When One Unit was formed, even this façade of provincial

autonomy was removed. Sind was governed from Lahore and when Ayub Khan Shifted the capital to Islamabad the Vicious circle was complete.

But the situation in Sind did not remain static. A new university was established in Hyderabad in 1951-52. New colleges and schools were opened in various other towns and soon an educated middle class of old Sindhis started emerging. This class wanted employment and its legitimate share in the services. But there was no machinery to provide them with these facilities. Resentment among the educated unemployed grew.

Meanwhile, a section of small Sindhi-traders was also aspiring to rub shoulders with the Gujarati and Punjabi big business. It too wanted its share in licences, permits and allotments so generously showered on others in the past. But to their regret they found that they had arrived on the scene too late! They could not compete with the big sharks.

Thus the resentment felt by the indigenous population of Sind, especially waderas, traders and middle class intelligentsia against the new Sindhis can be traced to the following economic realities:

1. Allotment of evacuee property — land, factories, shops, houses, etc. to the refugees;
2. Allotment of barrage lands to the retired civilian and non-civilian officers, not belonging to Sindhi;
3. Grant of licences, permits and other facilities to new Sindhis to install new industries and commercial concerns;
4. Emergence of an educated Sindhi middle class which found all avenues to services closed to it;
5. The establishment of non-democratic and unrepresentative governments both at Centre and in the Province. The Governments never tried to solve any of the problems facing the Sindhi people.

Some of the grievances, especially against the Urdu speaking middle class were imaginary, therefore unreasonable. For instance, if the Urdu speaking intelligentsia occupied most of the posts in the universities and colleges in Sind, it was because they were the only qualified people available. Similarly, if the Urdu speaking artisans and technicians were more skilful in their profession than the local people, it was not their fault. Or, if the Urdu newspapers, magazines and films or radio programmes were more popular than their Sindhi counterparts, it was because the standard of production of the former was higher than that of the latter.

In short, the Urdu speaking new comers were not in the least responsible for the socio-economic backwardness of the indigenous population. The causes for this backwardness are to be sought in most oppressive and decadent feudal system which has been in operation in Sind for centuries.

The general resentment against the authorities as well as the new Sindhis was organized by Mr. G. M. Syed and his supporters. The professed object of the 'Jeay Sind' movement was the (i) abolition of One Unit; (ii) Complete Provincial Autonomy for Sind; and (iii) the protection and development of the Sindhi language and culture.

The economic and political implications of this programme were not lost to the new Sindhi landlords, businessmen and their political henchmen. They had derived all their privileges and benefits during the Ayub regime which they staunchly supported. Therefore they did not want any change in the status quo.

It was to preserve this status quo that the Mohajir-Punjabi-Pathan United Front was formed. This front was patronized by the rightst elements lead by the Jamaat-i-Islami. It received full monetary

assistance from the businessmen of Hyderabad and Karachi and was encouraged by the Urdu Press in the cities.

But neither of these two conflicting groups was strong enough to fight its battle for economic supremacy without the active cooperation of the lower middle class and the common man. Both of them, therefore, used every means, fair and foul, to mobilize the people under their banner and exploited their ethnical differences and cultural and linguistic sentiments.

The haris and the educated middle class among the old Sindhis, were told that the new Sindhis, specially the Urdu speaking ones, were responsible for all their miseries. They were the usurpers who had deprived the local people of all the fertile lands, lucrative posts and economic opportunities. If the old Sindhis did not rise against the domination of the new Sindhis, their ancient culture and language too will soon be wiped out. The new Sindhis were told that they were the real founders of Pakistan and custodians of its ideology. If they did not wake up in time the old Sindhis would destroy their Islamic culture and their language (Urdu) which was the national language of Pakistan and the symbol of its nationhood.

It is on record that the bureaucracy, both Sindhi and non-Sindhi encouraged this controversy, sometimes supporting one ethnical group and sometimes the other.

Slogans were written on the walls and roads eulogising the “meritorious services of Ayub Khan.” And this happened of all places in Karachi which had defeated the tyrant, in 1965 election in spite of his threats to throw the Mohajirs into the Arabian Sea.

However, the country-wide agitation against the military dictatorship of President Ayub Khan pushed the Sindhi-non-Sindhi conflict, and the emergence of the People’s Party of Pakistan as the

biggest political force in Sind upset at least for the time being, the nefarious game played by the reactionary elements.

In spite of the financial assistance of the business community and full support of Karachi's entire Press, both Urdu and English, the Rightists were defeated at the polls in December 1970 but not routed. Nor was their ideology demolished. As a matter of fact they have regained their lost ground and regrouped their forces during the last one year-and-a-half, thanks to the mistake committed by the PPP leadership.

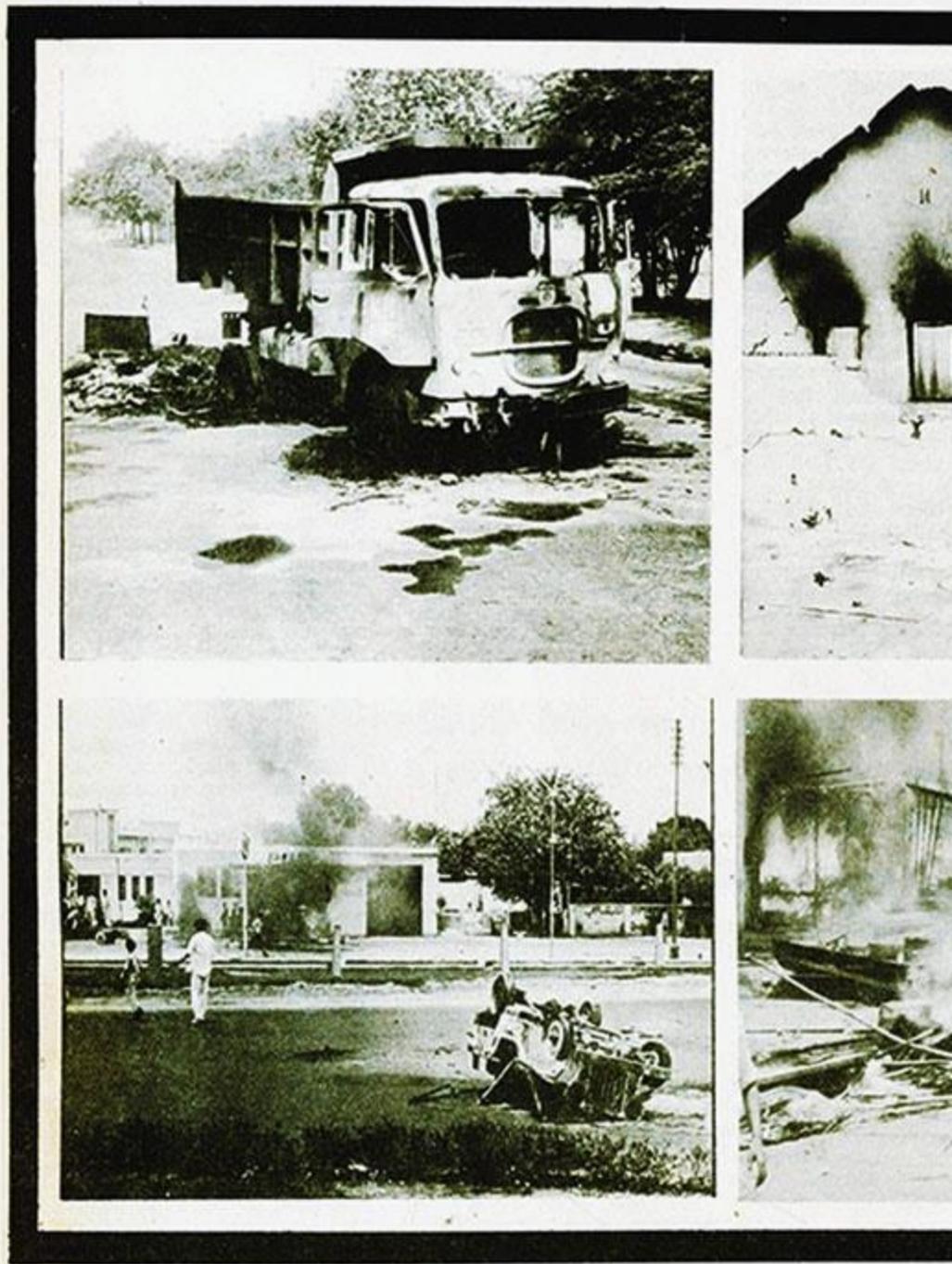
The dependence on bureaucracy to implement the People's Government reforms, the failure of its labour and agrarian policies, the appeasement of big business, the domination of waderas over party machinery in Sind, the factional intrigues inside, the ministerial posts, the total disintegration of party organisation and above all, the shameless acceptance of and compromise with the reactionary ideology of its defeated foes have created a most suitable climate for the anti-progressive forces in Sind and Karachi to spread their tentacles. The opportunity has been provided by the PPP leadership itself in the shape of the Language Bill. It was an ideal example of doing the right thing at the wrong time!

Why did the PPP leadership push through this controversial Bill with such indecent haste? What was the urgency for its enactment at this critical juncture when the government was occupied with other very serious national problems?

Various arguments have been advanced in support of the Bill. For instance, it is said that the Sindhi language is as old as Mohenjo-Daro (which is not correct historically, because the language of Mohenjo-Dar people was Proto-Dravidian, while that of Sindhi people belongs to the Indo-Aryan

family) that it was neglected by the past rulers of Pakistan, that it has been pushed aside to accommodate Urdu, that its age-old position must be restored, that it is the birth-right of every Sindhi to communicate in his mother tongue and develop it to the highest pinnacle.

The mother tongue of a very big ethnological minority (almost 30%) happens to be Urdu and this community is as deeply attached to Urdu as every old Sindhi is attached to Sindhi. Moreover, Urdu has been declared the national language of Pakistan and the provincial language in the Punjab, NWFP and Baluchistan.



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I fully agree with all these arguments and can advance a few more in favour of the Sindhi language.

But — and it is an important but — the mother tongue of a very big ethnological minority (almost 30%) happens to be Urdu and this community is as deeply attached to Urdu as every old Sindhi is

attached to Sindhi. Moreover, Urdu has been declared the national language of Pakistan and the provincial language in the Punjab, NWFP and Baluchistan.

I am sure the authorities were fully aware of the sentiments of the Urdu speaking people as well as the machinations of the rightists, elements who were waiting for some excuse to discredit the PPP Government in Sind. I cannot believe that our efficient Intelligence Service which provided Mir Rasul Bux Talpur with evidence to prove that the June agitation of the SITE workers' was inspired by Russian and Indian agents was caught unawares in July. Or was it that the administration underestimated the mobilising capacity of the rightists elements on the basis of linguistic sentiment? Or was it that the Language Bill was introduced at this inopportune time to appease the chauvinistic section of the old Sindhi intelligentsia? Or was it a deliberate attempt to distract the attention of the people from the basic problems of life, which the PPP is finding hard to solve?

Whatever the motives or lack of motives a government which claims to be socialist has played into the hands of anti-socialist elements and given them a new lease of life.

These reactionaries could not mobilize the masses against the People's Party Government on the basis of any political or economic programme. They failed to arouse even against the Simla Agreement. They also failed to make capital out of the POW issue. But the issue of language was different.

If any evidence was required to prove that the language controversy is essentially a socio-economic phenomenon, it was provided by the agitators themselves. While the early slogans were quite innocuous "Urdu Sindhi Saath Saath"—the mood changed as the agitation gained momentum. Soon the formality of tying Urdu with Sindhi was discarded and the call was confined to "Urdu

only”. Then even Urdu was forgotten and the demand for a separate Province of Karachi was raised. This province was to be “Mohajiristan.” The rate of the millions of Mohajirs living in the interior of Sind never bothered these champions of Mohajiristan.

The Sindhi middle class wants employment and opportunities to fully participate in the industrial, commercial and business life of the province. So does the new Sindhi middle class. Therefore, more and more avenues of employment have to be opened to absorb both the groups. If the loaves are few and the number of hungry persons more, quarrels are bound to occur.

Voices were also raised asking for the dismissal of the Governor and Chief Minister of Sind and for additional seats for the “representatives of Mohajirs” in the Cabinet. Suggestions were also made that, like the Lebanon, where Christians and Muslims are evenly balanced, certain key-posts in Sind should be reserved for Mohajirs. As if this was not enough, slogans were written on the walls and roads eulogising the “meritorious services of Ayub Khan.” And this happened of all places in Karachi which had defeated the tyrant, in 1965 election in spite of his threats to throw the Mohajirs into the Arabian Sea.

An accord has been reached between the champions of Urdu and Sindhi. We sincerely hope that it satisfies the legitimate aspirations of both and its implemented in letter and spirit. But certain drastic measures will have to be taken to remove the socio economic causes of discord. Fervent appeals are being made in the name of God, in the name of Islam, in the name of Pakistani Nationhood, to the inhabitants of Sind to live like brothers and behave like good neighbours. But these appeals will fall on deaf ears if the roots of unrest and resentment are not permanently removed.

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The haris want land. They must be provided with enough land and other facilities so that they can improve their standard of life and educate their children and liberate themselves from the domination of waderas, pirs and other parasitical elements. Today these elements incite the simple minded haris on parochial slogans to grab the lands of the new Sindhi cultivators lest the haris demand the distribution of the waderas' land also.

The conflict between the haris and the new Sindhi cultivators can be resolved when lands belonging to both the old and new Sindhi landlords are taken over and equitably distributed among the peasants — whether new or old. This will also cause a death blow to the feudal system of Sind.

The administrative machinery should be thoroughly overhauled and the power of bureaucracy drastically curtailed. Administration at all levels should be entrusted as far as possible to the democratically elected representatives of the people.

A Five-Year Plan for the development of Sind, with special bias towards the interior, should be started immediately and small Sindhis entrepreneurs be provided with capital, implements and technical assistance to open industrial and commercial concern in the interior.

All private banks and large scale industries, including foreign concerns should be properly and fully nationalised.

The administrative machinery should be thoroughly overhauled and the power of bureaucracy drastically curtailed. Administration at all levels should be entrusted as far as possible to the democratically elected representatives of the people.

Unless these and similar measures are taken in right earnest conflicts between the two groups are bound to occur on one pretext or the other. Today language is the bone of contention. Tomorrow it may be admissions to colleges, or quota in services. We have got to stop this civil war for good, otherwise the future of Pakistan is very bleak indeed!

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