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Editorial Sees MQM 'on the Offensive'

BK0103154798 Peshawar The Frontier Post in English 1 Mar 98 p 6

[Editorial: "MQM on the Offensive"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The MQM and the PML government are clearly pulling in opposite directions. At least this is the impression that the MQM chief Altaf Hussain has been giving in recent days. The simmering differences between the two coalition partners got, in effect, fuelled by last Sunday's killing of eight MQM supporters in Karachi. The MQM issued a 24-hour ultimatum to the government for the arrest of the culprits involved in the bloodbath, but apparently withdrew it when the prime minister intervened to head off what might have been an extremely embarrassing development. The MQM has openly accused its rival Haqiqi faction of having a hand in the killing of its people it named some top Haqiqi leaders in the FIR. Ostensibly, the government is not willing to buy the MQM story, which is just well. It has its own inputs from various sources which might be suggesting the opposite of what the MQM wants everyone of believe. As far as we know, there is no immediate government plan to arrest Haqiqi leaders. This is precisely prompting the MQM to belch more and more anti-government rhetoric. The prime minister and his team are already dangerously stretched, given their inept handling of the Baluchistan crisis. The continuing spin-offs are proving particularly punishing for a government which

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was lulled into believing that, as it had outwitted the president and judiciary in a battle for constitutional supremacy, things would fall into a predictable pattern. The MQM knows the state of prime minister's nerves, hence it may have decided to move in with a decisive plan to milk as many concessions as possible from a wobbly ruling party. The latter has earned a bad name for having readily agreed, at the time of hustings, to all manner of demands from its equally opportunistic allies.

The MQM has now issued a 25-page letter, whose upshot is that the accord with the PML government is in danger of being revoked. Mr Altaf Hussain is upset over the prime minister's statement that foreign elements might have been involved in Karachi's latest killings. He wants the prime minister as well as the people to know that the violence in Karachi is directly linked to the role of intelligence agencies. These agencies, according to him, are conspiring to sour MQM's relations with the government. He would have us believe that some individuals under the influence of these agencies have found their way into the PPP and the PML; some of them have become members of the Parliament and conducting an anti-MQM campaign. Analysis tend to regard the latest MQM's letter as straws in the wind. Are we going to witness an MQM-PML divorce in days ahead, or is it just another manifestation of its pressure tactics? It might well be that the PML government has finally recognised the perils inherent in a no-holds-barred cooperation with the MQM. Previously both Ms Bhutto and Mian Nawaz Sharif were constrained to rethink their ties with Mr Altaf Hussain. The latter now is simply asking for a couple of Haqiqi heads on a platter so that it could rule Karachi with impunity. Another intriguing thing: Mr Altaf Hussain does not want any finger-pointing at the RAW; rather, he is accusing the country's own security outfits. Most Pakistanis are now inclined to believe that Altaf Hussain's politics[0] have remained unchanged regardless of who happens to be at the helm of affairs in Pakistan[0]. He wants others to make necessary adjustments unilaterally, which is bound to leave Karachi as it is. The ball is now in the prime minister's court. He must act judiciously, which means holding consultations with his associates and leaders of public opinion, including Ms Bhutto and other front-line opposition leaders. Mr Altaf Hussain has made a subtle criticism of the role of the army in Karachi. He starts by saying that it is a mistake to treat MQM as a security risk; and then he brings in the army in what seems a rather tenuous connection. The security of the country, he argues, not only lies in the hands of the army, but also in the hands of patriotic Pakistanis. No-one can doubt this. One hopes Mr Altaf Hussain is saying it from the bottom of his heart.

Unfortunately, he is a master of doublespeak.

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Ethnic Violence in Pakistan Viewed

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[Commentary by Pushp Saraf of The Pioneer]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] It is not surprising that the commercial capital of Pakistan, Karachi, is once again in the grip of violence. For too long, the aspirations of the local people have remained unfulfilled. The majority of them are immigrant Muslims from India. Their plight, in fact, is a telling example of the mischief of the two-nation theory which was based solely on religion. In the latest incident last Saturday, at least eight persons have been killed and 25 injured in two bomb blasts. There have been about 40 deaths in widespread violence since 22 February. Fresh violence has again been triggered following the arrest of about 150 people. The recent spurt of violence in the port city of Karachi is linked to a determined attempt by Pakistan's intelligence agencies to weaken the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, MQM[0]. These agencies have propped up a rival faction to malign and damage the MQM[0]. This faction is known as the Haqiqi faction.

The dominant presence of the MQM[0] in Karachi is evident from the fact that it is presently an ally of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League. The MQM[0] chief in exile, Mr. Altaf Hussain,