

## ORAL HISTORY

### **Simla Agreement (1972): From Military Victory to a Diplomatic Defeat?**

K.N. Bakshi

*K.N. Bakshi, member of the Indian Delegation, recalls his experience during the Simla Summit and its outcome by narrating an insider's view on India's Simla strategy.*

**Indian Foreign Affairs Journal (IFAJ):** Thank you Ambassador, for agreeing to talk to us for the Oral History section of the Journal.

Sir, you were actively involved in the Simla negotiation which has been a mystery in the Indo-Pak discourse till today. Kindly enlighten us on the negotiating strategy of both countries and the issues that led to such an outcome.

**K.N. Bakshi (KNB):** Well, before we reach the heights of Simla, let us briefly discuss the plains of Pakistan. At the end of 1969, I heard that I was to go as the Head of Post in Karachi. I took over in 1970.

**IFAJ:** Had the capital been shifted to Islamabad by 1969?

**KNB:** Yes, it had moved to Islamabad some years earlier. We had three offices in Pakistan. The High Commission was in Islamabad and the late Ashoke Chib was Deputy High Commissioner. We had a Deputy High Commissioner's office in Dhaka and an Assistant High Commissioner's (AHC) office in Karachi where I became the Head of Post.

Our AHC's residence was in Clifton, a prestigious area of Karachi, next to the residence of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (ZAB). Of course, there were no neighbourly relations of any kind between us. ZAB would not have liked to be seen anywhere near an Indian, especially an Indian diplomat. But it gave me an incentive and an opportunity to study ZAB. The situation in Pakistan was interesting and promising, but also dangerous. Ayub had already been ousted and ZAB had played a major role in this. General Yahya Khan had taken over; ZAB had also established his political party – the Pakistan People's Party (PPP); Elections were held and PPP had won 81 out of 163 seats in the then West Pakistan. However, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League had swept

polls in East Pakistan, winning all but two seats. We witnessed this promising democratic process. But, we also witnessed how Bhutto succeeded in preventing Mujibur Rahman from becoming Prime Minister. I remember how ZAB warned all new MPs in West Pakistan by threatening to break their legs if they dared to go to Dhaka for a meeting of the Parliament . . . .

We also saw how he used his influence, his relations with the armed forces and how he manipulated public opinion to prevent any compromise from emerging. I remember we had gone to Dhaka for a meeting of the Heads of the three offices towards the end of 1970. We found the atmosphere so charged that it seemed that if the aspirations of the East Pakistanis were not met, there was going to be a civil war. That's exactly what happened. In March, as you know, the Army began what has been called the Rape of Bangladesh.

**IFAJ:** Yahya probably expedited this process . . .

**KNB:** Indeed, he did. Once the military crackdown spread from Dhaka to other areas, refugees began pouring into India, eventually reaching an astounding figure of over ten million. In fairness, Prime Minister (PM) Indira Gandhi tried to find a peaceful solution to this problem of refugees. She toured the world; she asked Pakistan's friends to advise Yahya to find a political solution so that the refugees could return. Nothing happened. And then, on 3 December 1971, Pakistani planes attacked our airfields and the third Indo-Pak conflict began. Apart from other developments, we were all put under house arrest.

**IFAJ:** How could they do it to the diplomatic community?

**KNB:** What diplomatic immunity? We never knew any such thing while serving in Pakistan. Apart from regular and invasive surveillance, there was harassment, occasional kidnapping and even beatings. Hardly any Pakistani nationals met us for fear of being questioned by the authorities. This behaviour continues till today. In any case, a colleague and I were still in the office and we spent the next few days there, sleeping on the sofas and eating the meagre emergency rations we had kept for such a situation.

Eventually I was shifted to my residence but not allowed to go out or meet anyone, except the Swiss Consul General, when our government asked them to look after our interests in Pakistan. Our condition lasted till 22nd December, when we were repatriated to India. After our return, Chib became the Joint

Secretary or Head of the Pakistan Division in the Ministry of External Affairs; I was appointed his Deputy. Later, another colleague, Naresh Dayal, who had served in Islamabad, joined us. We were the core team in MEA that prepared for the Simla Summit. The Prime Minister had asked D.P. Dhar to lead our official delegation. I remember, Dhar Sahib called me one day and asked me to take ten days off and produce a draft of what could be a possible agreement at the summit. I did produce a draft.

**IFAJ:** Produced a draft before the negotiation?

**KNB:** Yes, even before the date and place of the negotiations were fixed. Of course, that draft was changed several times and other drafts were prepared. Dhar Sahib was coordinating our preparations leading to the Simla Summit. He was a very charming and likable person, who inspired confidence and trust. But, he was also a realist, a pragmatic person who understood the Pakistani mindset and our own national interests. His preparations were so thorough that he had even got us to prepare a possible dialogue between the PM and ZAB during their very first one-to-one meeting.

**IFAJ:** He almost intellectually simulated the situation ...

**KNB:** He felt that since we had studied ZAB's persona for a period of time and were familiar with his thought processes, we should recommend how the PM might like to project our point of view so that ZAB was left in no doubt about our concerns and our minimum positions. The dialogue was duly prepared, vetted by our seniors and eventually shown by Dhar Sahib to the PM.

In the course of all these preparations, we tried to highlight a few basic points. The first was that ZAB was not trustworthy; we could not depend upon him. Verbally, we went to the extent of saying that even his mother could not fully trust him.

**IFAJ:** That means you were prompted not to take him at face value at all which was also borne out of, as you said, your close watch on him and your understanding of him.

**KNB:** Absolutely, Let me give you two instances. One is the most obvious. ZAB came from a rich, feudal family of Sind; he had studied abroad, dressed like a dandy, was highly articulate, smart, and even brilliant in some ways. He was barely in his thirties, when Ayub Khan picked him up and made him a minister. But what did he do to Ayub? He dumped him when he sensed that Ayub's time was up and when he saw a chance to become the boss himself.

There is another instance. During the period 1970–71 when all political activities were banned by Yahya Khan, we heard that ZAB was visiting the mausoleum of Jinnah and was likely to make a speech. By the afternoon, thousands of his supporters had gathered at the site. Imagine ZAB standing at the head of the stairs leading to the monument, and thousands of supporters shouting that he should speak to them. ZAB stood there for a while, and then, in a scene reminiscent of the famous speech by Mark Antony in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, spoke. Initially, he said that his lips were sealed; he was not allowed to make any statements, etc. and then proceeded to say what he wanted to. Subsequently, he put his arms around Meraj Mohammad Khan standing next to him and declared that if anything happened to him, they should follow Meraj, a well known trade union leader and a leading light of PPP. In actual fact, nothing happened to ZAB. But not long after, when he took over the reigns of Pakistan, Meraj was behind bars. As you would see, ZAB was also a consummate actor, with an excellent sense of the theatre, which he used to superb effect in the political field.

Secondly, despite his newly acquired professions of peace, the real ZAB was a true representative of the ruling classes in Pakistan. Consisting of the Armed Forces, the bureaucracy, the feudal elements and a bit of the Islamic Right, these classes were intrinsically inimical to India. They wanted parity with India; their definition of Pakistani nationhood was simply that we are not India; they had had dreams of flying their flag on the Red Fort, etc. Apart from psychological and mythological reasons, an adversarial relationship also suited their class interests. Let us also remember that it was ZAB who had discussed a thousand-year war with us. It was difficult to imagine that the leopard had changed its spots so soon, so easily. We wanted to wait and test out his words against his actions.

**IFAJ:** So you were prepared and said that Bhutto should not be trusted . . . .

**KNB:** We did. Some of us also felt that he could not return without an agreement, but others didn't agree with this.

But, it was not easy to convince many of our seniors about this assessment. I remember a meeting in the room of Foreign Secretary (FS) T.N. Kaul. We were speaking on these lines and he was, perhaps, getting somewhat fed up. He turned to us and said: "Look, you fellows have spent a lot of time in Pakistan;

your thinking has been coloured, you have become subjective. The Pakistanis can't be so diehard and impractical; circumstances have changed". In fairness to FS, I must mention another incident. We reached Simla. D.P. Dhar had had a heart attack and was hospitalised; P.N. Haksar, then Principal Secretary to the PM, became leader of the Indian Official Delegation. After a meeting or two, FS saw how the Pakistanis were behaving. As one such meeting was over, and we left the room, he turned to us and said, "Boys, you were right; these fellows are impossible."

It was he who summed up the situation for us on the afternoon of 2nd July. We had the last meeting of the two official delegations soon after lunch. It was obvious that we were reaching nowhere. The meeting ended and FS turned to us, saying, "Boys, it is all over; I am leaving for Delhi right away." And he actually left for Delhi shortly after.

**IFAJ:** Why did T.N. Kaul leave in between? Was he angry or did he think that the negotiations were over?

**KNB:** We all thought that the negotiations were over.

**IFAJ:** I was told that he got angry, and in between said he was not staying.

**KNB:** That was during another meeting, he seemed so upset by the behaviour of Aziz Ahmad, leader of the Pakistani delegation, that it appeared he might simply walk out of the meeting. However, he controlled himself and stayed on.

Since the talks had failed and there was no agreement, we returned to our hotel and told our staff to pack and prepare to leave for Delhi. That is also what the Pakistanis were doing. There was only one official engagement left; that was the return banquet hosted by ZAB, at the place of his residence. We were all there at the appointed time and the atmosphere was depressed. There was a head table for the leadership of the two sides. On our side, apart from the PM, I recall Saran Singh, Jagjivan Ram, Chavan, P.N. Haksar, P.N. Dhar, etc. On the Pakistani side, there was ZAB and his teenage daughter Benazir, Aziz Ahmad, Wali Khan, Rafi Raza (Advisor to ZAB), etc. Mixed groups of Indian and Pakistani officials sat on other smaller tables, making desperate efforts at small talk. Much of the dinner proceeded in vocal silence. I remember, we were waiting for the dessert. All of a sudden, the PM and ZAB rose and simply walked out of the hall. We didn't know where they were going and what was happening. So we all stood up; we did not know what to do. Swaran Singh had

the presence of mind to mention sitting down. So we did. The dessert arrived. In between, P.N. Haksar and Rafi Raza got up and left the hall. Coffee was served. The dinner came to an end. All of us slowly trooped out of the hall. Some of us kept waiting. We realised that something was up, that people were in two or three rooms engaged in discussion. We knew that there were comings and goings, from one room to the other and so on. This took us to almost midnight.

The scene is still vivid in my memory. Benazir, the PM's social secretary Usha Bhagat, ZAB's Press Secretary and I stood outside the room where the two leaders were meeting. Haksar Sahib came out of the room, walked towards us and lit his pipe. Usha Bhagat asked him: "Haksar Sahib ladki hai ki ladka?" (Haksar Sahib, is it a boy or a girl child?) Haksar Sahib took his time, smiled and said: Ladka hua aur wo bhi MA pass. (It is a boy with a Master's degree) We had reached an agreement. A little later, we were given a copy of the agreement. I was given the task of getting the document typed. But then, the whole place was crawling with media men and others. We had brought an electric typewriter along, relatively new those days, but we could not find an outlet to plug it in. Eventually we found that the pantry was the safest place, and there was a power point which was functional. It was then that I got a chance to have a good look at the agreement. I read it and cried. I was so disappointed.

**IFAJ:** For what reasons?

**KNB:** For what we had conceded and what we could have achieved. But, before we come to that, let me touch upon another development. We did not know then but learnt later that, at 6 pm a meeting had taken place between the PM and Bhutto where some significant decisions were taken. When we were preparing for the summit, we had no doubt in our minds that Pakistanis led by ZAB would go for two things: one was the withdrawal of our forces from the territories occupied by us in West Pakistan. I wonder if we remember today that we were sitting on over five thousand four hundred odd square miles of Pakistani territory captured by us. This came to about nine thousand odd square kilometres, from which one million Pakistani people from the villages and small towns of West Punjab and Sind had been displaced. And this was apart from J&K. Second was to get back the Pakistani Prisoners of War (POWs). We had 93,000 POWs. So their strategy was to get their territory back, to get the POWs back, and to avoid committing themselves to anything more than that, apart from

generalities like peace, friendship, coexistence, cooperation, etc that we were talking about. On the other hand, unlike the focus and realism of the Pakistani position, we were fired by idealism. We wanted a new chapter in our relations; we wanted “durable peace”; we considered that moment a historical opportunity for ushering in an era of peace and prosperity, etc. Of course, we wanted the Kashmir question to be resolved once and for all. We had all the cards. We had the POWs; we had the Pakistani territory; Pakistan was broken up; world public opinion was very much with us. We had defied the Americans; the Soviet Union was supportive. Even then, we could not achieve much. We were almost apologetic that we were the victors. We were bending over backwards to accommodate the Pakistanis in our anxiety to have an agreement.

**IFAJ:** Why was this so?

**KNB:** Despite the advantage of hindsight, I am still not sure. We were certainly fired by idealism, by our dreams of building a peaceful South Asia. Perhaps, we suffered from the “Versailles syndrome”. There was a feeling that we should not repeat the mistakes of recent world history; following the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles had imposed humiliating terms on the Germans; therefore, we seemed to believe, the Germans rose and, therefore, there was the Second World War. It followed, that we, the victorious, should not impose any humiliating terms on Pakistan. Second, there was this nearly universal conviction that we not only should solve all our problems with Pakistan but also that it could be done, and that as the bigger country, we should go more than the proverbial half way. We had this feeling, irrespective of the ground realities, irrespective of whether the Pakistanis were also willing and able to respond positively. To us, the logic was clear: we have to live in peace; we cannot continue to waste our resources on armaments. We have to use these resources for the upliftment of our peoples. If we can cooperate, we can do so much. This thesis stood, as if, on its own, without regard to whether the Pakistani ruling classes also wanted peace and cooperation or whether tension and confrontation were perceived by them to be in their best interests. And, I am afraid, this kind of mindset continues till this day.

**IFAJ:** There are two aspects of the Agreement, which have often been discussed. One is, Bhutto accepted bilateralism rather than going to the third party which is a part of the Simla Agreement and the second is, perhaps, some

unwritten understanding was reached to accept the ceasefire line or Line of Control as the international border.

**KNB:** The Simla Agreement or the whole Simla scenario was almost like a joint production of a mass play. While we started writing the script, as the play evolved, the script came to be written, more and more, by ZAB.

**IFAJ:** Then, what is your assessment?

**KNB:** ZAB, who talked of a thousand years of war, was all sugar and honey, peace and prosperity. All this was music to our ears. We were being feasted on sentences like: the peoples of our two countries can make progress only in peace. We must put an end to the history of conflict and war between our two countries. Believe me when I say, I realise that it is the only way we can go forward. He did all his talking like this, both in public and in private. He told the Indian journalists that the new ceasefire line should become the Line of Peace. He kept emphasising his democratic credentials: for the first time after a long reign of military rule, he was the elected leader of Pakistan; he needed support in preserving democracy as only a democratic government could take decisions on fundamental issues like peace; therefore, he needed an agreement that he could sell to his people, etc. That was one aspect of his role playing.

The other role was played by Aziz Ahmed, who was the leader of the Pakistani official delegation, and who was totally negative, inflexible, arrogant and typical of how the Pakistanis have always behaved. It was almost like the Hollywood movies, where there are good cops and bad cops and all cops trying to achieve the same objectives in a coordinated manner. Aziz Ahmed played the bad cop, his nose always at a 45° angle from the ground. He spoke little. But, when he spoke, he said the same thing in different ways. And it was mostly the traditional Pakistani position on all aspects of our relations, including J&K.

There was also a third group of actors in this production. ZAB came to Simla totally prepared. He brought along an 84-member delegation, comprising politicians, civil servants, intelligence officers, journalists, intellectuals, military men, you name it. He brought in Wali Khan who had several friends and admirers in India. He brought along the then Chief Secretary of Punjab, who was a Kashmiri and knew many on our side. And all the time, the messages kept coming through this cast of “extras” that we must help Bhutto, that we can’t allow him to return without an agreement, that he has to reckon with powerful



bureaucrats like Aziz, that the army is waiting and watching, that the political opposition would chew him up if we impose a harsh deal ... .

**IFAJ:** What was our delegation?

**KNB:** We were the host country. We also had many people around. But, what ZAB was doing was planned, orchestrated, and coordinated. The people Bhutto brought along were talking continuously to all their friends and anyone else they could buttonhole.

**IFAJ:** Was bilateralism conceded in the agreement?

**KNB:** He agreed to almost everything that we proposed in general terms. But let's look at the Simla Agreement. The agreement, I think, is divided into two parts: one is concrete, the other ... .

**IFAJ:** The other is platitudes ... .

**KNB:** To us they were not platitudes, we meant when we said that we wanted "durable peace" or we will not have hostile propaganda against each other or will resolve all our problems peacefully, or will normalise relations, resume travel, trade, economic cooperation, exchanges in the field of science and culture. Bilateralism was the cornerstone of these decisions. But, the implementation of such provisions depended entirely on the political will on both sides.

But, even here, there are two clever additions. The very first paragraph 1.1, added by Pakistanis says that "the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations shall govern the relations between the two countries". Then, para 1.5(6), says that "in accordance with the Charter of the UN" they will refrain from the threat of use of force. The most mischievous provision is in para 4.1 which says that the LOC "resulting from the ceasefire of 17 December 1971 shall be respected by both sides without prejudice to the recognised position of either side". This was definitely the last minute addition, after the one-on-one talks between the PM and ZAB on that fateful day.

**IFAJ:** Which means though the line would be modified but Bhutto would not relinquish his claims on Kashmir.

**KNB:** Absolutely. The Pakistani position is that the whole territory is disputed, and that the matter has to be resolved through a plebiscite, in terms of UN resolutions. They maintained that position. There is another interesting

factor. None of the other provisions – trade, travel, communications and even reopening of the Missions has a time frame. But the Indian withdrawal from Pakistani territories was to be completed within a period of thirty days of the agreement coming into force. And then, the last sentence of Para 6, refers specifically to “the final settlement of J&K”.

**IFAJ:** But resolutions are separate from principles ...

**KNB:** Yes, but here it is “without prejudice to the recognised position of either side”.

**IFAJ:** On the ceasefire line being made into an international border, it is generally perceived, as P.N. Dhar’s book says, Bhutto had given this clear understanding.

**KNB:** I was not present at that meeting. In fact, no other person was present. But, soon after Simla, we in the Pakistan division were conveyed the following about what Bhutto had told Indiraji:

- a) Believe me when I say that I want peace with India. I am convinced that conflict cannot resolve anything. I am convinced that our future lies in cooperation with each other. I think this is a historic opportunity, we have got to start a new chapter.
- b) I represent a defeated nation, I don’t have any concessions to make; on the other hand, you are the victor and only you can give concessions. You should show statesmanship.
- c) I have just been elected as President. Democracy is very new in Pakistan; I have got enemies, in the establishment, in the armed forces, in the political spectrum. They will kill me if I do anything against their wishes, so please help me, and help the nascent democracy in Pakistan.

Mrs. Gandhi told him that the only solution to J & K is the present ceasefire line or the line of control becoming the border; there will be no exchange of population, no division, no bloodshed, etc. He said: “I can’t do this just now; this cannot go into an agreement. I will be thrown out. But what I can do is this: I want to go back and tell my people that the Indian Prime Minister and I have discussed and decided to start a new chapter in our relations. I will prepare the public opinion, we will recognise Bangladesh in due course. POWs could then come back. We will have travel, trade, communications, cooperation in different fields; we will move towards easing tensions, creating an

atmosphere of friendship. In the meantime, we will have a soft border in J&K. Eventually we will turn this into a proper border between the two countries.” This was the understanding.

This is what we were told on the basis of which we were to prepare our next moves with Pakistan. Unfortunately, apart from Indian withdrawal from Pakistani territories, nothing much happened. Very soon we were back to where we had started.

**IFAJ:** Did any thing die out?

**KNB:** No, nothing changed. Hostile propaganda resumed. There were no signs on the recognition of Bangladesh; there was hardly any movement on the normalisation of relations; in fact, it took another three years even for the reestablishment of diplomatic relations which could have practically happened in a few days or weeks. But, there was an orchestrated campaign to get the POWs back, quoting Geneva Conventions, humanitarian aspects, trying to put us on the defensive. By that time, some prisoners had tried to escape; some were shot; there were headlines in the international media and increasing pressure. So much so that we started getting letters from our own ambassadors questioning why we were holding the prisoners in contravention of the Geneva Conventions? That is what happened in the immediate aftermath of Simla.

In her book, *Daughter of the East*, Benazir describes a scene where Bhutto walks into her room after signing the Agreement and asks her why he had preferred the return of the territory rather than POWs. She says she is puzzled because the families of POWs were waiting for their return. ZAB replied that the PM had offered to return either the POWs or the territory; he asked for the territory because prisoners are a humanitarian problem; they cannot be kept indefinitely; world public opinion will force India to send them back to Pakistan. On the other hand, territory is not a humanitarian issue; it can be assimilated. He gave the example of the Palestinian territory which had not been returned after all those years. In one of the first statements he made on his return to Pakistan, he announced that, “it is five years since the Arabs have been wanting to get their territory back. I got it within less than five months”.

**IFAJ:** We are raising the question of the LOC and the international border for a very simple reason. Abdul Sattar has repeatedly said that we never gave this understanding. Probably he was in the delegation.

**KNB:** Yes, he was in the delegation but he was not present during the PM-ZAB talks.

**IFAJ:** But people like P.N. Dhar say that there was an understanding. So there are two versions.

**KNB:** I was not there. I speak on the basis of the briefing we got from our seniors in the MEA sometime soon after the signing of the Simla Agreement.

**IFAJ:** Was there any explicit mention of the international border?

**KNB:** Between the PM and ZAB, yes. But, there is no such mention in the Simla Agreement. However, the agreement was finally reached on the basis of an understanding between the two leaders. This understanding emerged during ZAB's call on the PM. During, and after the return banquet hosted by ZAB, part of this understanding was clothed in wording, mainly by P.N. Haksar and Rafi Raza, which became a part of the agreement. Part of the understanding was to take shape as we implemented its various provisions leading to normal relations, friendship and cooperation. In this atmosphere of mutual trust, LOC was to have gradually become the international border. Unfortunately, as Rafi Raza said in his book, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Pakistan Years Later, "the so-called spirit of Simla died soon after the ink was dry on the Accord". In fact, we had problems even on the delineation of the Line of Control.

**IFAJ:** There was a delegation in the form of a group of Generals from Pakistan and India for this purpose.

**KNB:** Yes. The Pakistanis were creating problems. Aziz Ahmed came to Delhi and we had another meeting.

**IFAJ:** Would they have conceded?

**KNB:** They were consistently difficult. You see, the delineation of the LOC was not even linked to the withdrawal of our forces from areas captured in West Pakistan.

**IFAJ:** There is another thing we would like to bring out. The rumour was that RAW probably prepared to tape the whole conversation between Mrs. Gandhi and Bhutto. That's why some people in the Indian delegation were confident that Bhutto had given this verbal understanding to Mrs. Gandhi but they say unfortunately the tapes got damaged.

**KNB:** As far as I know, they were not sitting in a room where their conversation could have been recorded. They were reportedly on the lawns

outside. This was on the 2nd of July, and the agreement itself was signed in the early hours of the 3rd of July. The agreement is wrongly dated as the 2nd of July.

**IFAJ:** There are two other aspects. Farooq Abdullah met Bhutto in his office and Bhutto gave the assurance that he really wanted to solve the Kashmir issue in the talks at Simla but he could not do so. Secondly, Haksar Sahib continued to talk to the Pakistanis in pursuance of the 1972 agreement.

**KNB:** I have no recollection of Farooq Abdullah, but Haksar Sahib did go to Islamabad more than once. At least on one occasion, I was a part of the delegation accompanying him. The main subject was POWs. Instead of following the path outlined at Simla. Pakistan was trying to pressurise us through international propaganda and other means. After discussions with Bangladesh, we had made a joint declaration – “The Bangladesh-India Declaration” – offering simultaneous release of Pakistani POWs, Bangladeshi detainees in Pakistan and Pakistanis stranded in Bangladesh. In pursuance of that, we had gone to Pakistan. Actually, there was an interesting incident during this visit by Haksar Sahib to Pakistan. While going to meet Bhutto, he had noticed a statue of Lord Buddha ... .

**IFAJ:** Actually Bhutto showed the statue of Lord Buddha to Haksar Sahib and said, “this is our civilisation”. Haksar Sahib replied, “but your Excellency you are for a thousand-year war against this civilisation”. Then Bhutto promised that “that was a mistake” and he would “not repeat that sentence again”.

**KNB:** This is another version of the same incident.

**IFAJ:** No, Haksar Sahib told me that he gave him this assurance that he would never repeat what he had said earlier. But Benazir repeated this. Then Haksar Sahib even showed a letter written by Bhutto to Benazir that this was the assurance that her father had given and that he would never repeat this kind of sentence.

**KNB:** Sometimes I wonder whether we would have signed a different kind of agreement at Simla if D.P. Dhar had not suffered a heart attack. Or whether we would have signed an agreement at all on that 3rd of July.

**IFAJ:** That’s true. This is also to Bhutto’s credit that after the Simla Agreement he did move to constitutionally integrate POK with Pakistan in the spirit that this is ours and this is yours.

**KNB:** This is another indication that there was an understanding between him and our PM. But if I am not mistaken, it did not happen in 1972, it took a couple of years.

**IFAJ:** Was trade opened?

**KNB:** Much later. In fact, even diplomatic relations took three years to be resumed.

**IFAJ:** In 1976 they closed the trade again ... it was there for only two years.

**KNB:** Exactly. The question is this: What has the Simla Agreement done for us or peace in the subcontinent in the last 35 years? I was reading the Lahore Declaration. And it uses almost the same words that were used at Simla, For example: "Convinced that durable peace and the development of harmonious relations and friendly cooperation will serve the vital interests of the peoples of the two countries ...." I cannot help quoting veteran diplomat Rajeshwar Dayal who said that, at Simla, we succeeded in snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

**IFAJ:** Anything else of significance, which you recollect?

**KNB:** I will only conclude by saying that, when one initially interacts with Pakistanis, they seem so much like us; they dress like us; they speak like us; their food habits are like ours. It is easy to conclude that they must be thinking like us. But really they don't. They are very different. More than two whole generations have grown up seeing us as an enemy or an adversary. In fact, we are the enemy number one; we are their major preoccupation. And anti-India indoctrination begins very early at home, in school and school books. It continues in the media where our government is derisively called *Bharat ki Brahman-Baniyan Sarkar*. (the Brahmin-Baniya Government of India.) This mindset is reflected in what ZAB told a closed-door meeting: *Hum Ghaas Khaleenge, Lekin Bomb Zaroor Banayenge* (we will eat grass but must manufacture an atomic bomb). We may no longer hear boasts of flying their flag on the Red Fort or of one Pakistani soldier being equal to ten Indians, but the basic attitude of hostility does not seem to have undergone any radical change. So long as such a mental attitude continues, is there any reasonable hope for "durable peace," "coexistence," "cooperation," etc.?

Despite this, I would say, that we should continue to make all efforts to have a dialogue with Pakistan, to try, inch by inch, to move forward. But, we should also be clear that “you cannot clap with one hand”. This is what we can learn from Simla.

**IFAJ:** Thank you ambassador once again for sharing with us this fascinating history which many people are unaware of.

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